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Article Summary: Spanish and Hispanic traditions have long influenced life on the Plains. The Spanish came seeking treasure and later tried to convert Indians and control New World territory and trade. They introduced horses to the Plains Indians. Hispanic people continue to move to Nebraska to work today.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, Fray Marcos de Niza, Esteban, the Turk, Juan de Padilla, Hernán de Soto, Juan de Oñate, Etienne de Bourgmont, Pedro de Villasur, Francisco Sistaca, Pierre and Paul Mallet; Hector Carondelet, James Mackay, John Evans, Pedro Vial, Juan Chalvert, Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, James Wilkinson, Zebulon Pike, Fernando de Melgares, Manuel Lisa, William Becknell

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Photographs / Images: a shelterhouse constructed to resemble a Spanish fortification at Coronado Heights, near Lindsborg, Kansas; map showing how Spanish horses from the Southwest spread rapidly across the Plains through intertribal trade and horse stealing; Father Padilla monument at Herington, Kansas; grass house built by the Wichitas; excavation of the El Cuartelejo site in Scott County, Kansas; George Catlin sketch of Comanche horsemen about 1834; perpetual calendar of Spanish manufacture found at the site of Fort Atkinson; Spanish coins dating from 1767 to 1804 excavated at Fort Atkinson; hide painting of a 1720 battle showing Pueblos and Spanish soldiers guarding a horse herd; signed certificates that accompanied medals presented in the 1790s to an Omaha Indian to gain his allegiance to the Spanish crown; mysterious rock carving near White Clay, Nebraska; Spanish stirrup found in Franklin County, Nebraska, in 1874; Zebulon Pike; Manuel Lisa; detail from Perrin du Lac's 1802 map of the Missouri River; Frederick Piercy's 1853 sketch of Fort John (Fort Laramie); José Merivale; Mexican muleteers loading a pack train for the Santa Fe Trail; homes of Hispanic sugar beet workers near Scottsbluff in the 1920s; inset cover of "Coronado in Quivera" (*Songs of the Ak-Sar-Ben Pageant*, 1922)



Coronado Heights (from southeast) near Lindsborg, Kansas. The structure on the hill is a shelterhouse constructed to resemble a Spanish fortification. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

SPAIN ON THE PLAINS

By James A. Hanson

Spain laid claim to the New World in 1492. In 1541 Vázquez de Coronado explored New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. The first Spanish settlers took up residence in New Mexico in 1598. In 106 years Spain had explored three thousand miles inland and established a permanent settlement two thousand miles from the coast. For the English to have equalled this feat, they would have had to have reached California from Jamestown by 1656 and established an English settlement somewhere in Colorado by 1713. When we consider the vast Spanish colonial empire, extending from Tierra del Fuego in the south uninterrupted to Vancouver Island in the north and from Florida on the east to California on the west, it is with respect and admiration for the tenacity of these

intrepid Europeans.

The movement of objects and ideas and by inference, people, from the Southwest toward the Missouri River in prehistoric times can be documented through archeology and anthropology. Shards of broken southwestern pots have been found in the Wildcat Hills of western Nebraska. Turquoise beads have been recovered from prehistoric village sites in eastern Nebraska. There is an incredible and apparently not coincidental parallel between the bizarre Pawnee Morning Star ceremony, which included the sacrifice of a virgin female captured from an enemy tribe, and an Aztec sacrificial ceremony from the valley of Mexico. These and other instances point to a very ancient connection between the High Plains and Desert Southwest.

The history of the Great Plains begins with the fabled reconnaissance of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado in 1540-41. Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca,

a Spanish soldier shipwrecked on the Texas coast in 1528, reached Mexico with three other survivors eight years later. He repeated fabulous tales of golden cities he had heard from Indians along the way, and these stories eventually excited the cupidity and missionary zeal of higher authorities.¹ Fray Marcos de Niza was so impressed by them that he purchased Cabeza de Vaca's African slave, Esteban, who had accompanied Cabeza de Vaca during his wanderings.

Fray Marcos and Esteban, with over 300 Christian Indians, went north a thousand miles to the pueblos of present-day New Mexico in 1539. When they came in sight of Hawikuh Pueblo, Fray Marcos sent Esteban and the entourage ahead, where he and most of the followers were put to death. Fray Marcos fled back to Mexico, stating that he had seen Cibola, with its doors sheathed in gold and turquoise.²

The viceroy of New Spain wasted no

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time organizing an expedition to pick this fabulous plum. He selected Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, a personal friend and governor of the important province of Nueva Galicia.³ Only twenty-eight, Coronado was a gifted administrator with a well-connected wife and an influential father. He was a man on the rise, and this expedition was the opportunity of a lifetime. He marched out of Compostela, Mexico, in February 1540 with 230 soldiers and 800 servants to find Cibola and the seven golden cities.

Instead, Coronado found a series of Pueblo Indian villages in present New Mexico. There was not the smallest piece of gold or silver, and no great quantity of turquoise. Each community did have extensive gardens, but no livestock except for turkeys, dogs, and parrots. The Pueblos carried on an active trade with the "Vaquero" Indians to the east, exchanging corn, beans, squash, and tobacco for meat, skins, and slaves.

These "Vaqueros" were Apaches, divided into several groups, and inhabiting the Plains from Nebraska and Wyoming to Texas and New Mexico. They were entirely on foot and used dogs to haul their leather tents and other possessions. The Spaniards found the Apaches friendly and helpful, and maintained generally good relations with them for nearly two centuries.⁴

However, friendly relations did not prevail between Spaniard and Pueblo and fighting broke out between them. The thousand or so mouths in Coronado's party placed an incredible burden upon the Pueblos, who must have spent many nights secretly counseling about the best way to get rid of these unwanted guests.

The next spring, the Pueblos convinced Coronado that there was gold in Quivira to the east. Coronado took only forty conquistadors, which must have been a great disappointment to the Pueblos. However, they furnished two slaves from Quivira to serve as guides. One, called the Turk because of his shaved head and scalp lock or queue,

was especially engaging with his stories. When the Spaniards showed him gold, he assured them that it could be found in Quivira.

Coronado and his flying column reached the "Province of Quivira" in central Kansas near present Lindsborg. It turned out to be a series of small Wichita Indian villages along the Arkansas River.⁵ The Wichitas lived in fascinating conical houses made of poles and grass, and relied upon gardening and hunting for their sustenance. There were several related bands, sometimes confederated and sometimes at war with one another. They ranged over much of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas.

East of Quivira, near present Fort Riley, Kansas, was the "province" of Harahey, which Coronado did not visit, but a delegation from there came to him. These Indians were related to the Wichitas and were possibly Pawnees.

Of course there was no gold anywhere, and by this time, Coronado surely saw his future crumbling to dust. The Turk was strangled for lying, but modern scholarship may have vindicated him. When shown gold, he had used the Wichita word meaning metal. The Quivirans did possess native copper from the Great Lakes, and the Turk may not have understood it was different from gold.⁶ The conquistadors returned empty-handed to Mexico. However, for the next 250 years, Spanish explorers would continue to seek the treasure they believed Coronado had missed.

Juan de Padilla, one of the padres accompanying the expedition, saw that there were souls to be saved on the Plains. He left Coronado at the Rio Grande and returned to Quivira with several lay brothers to spread the Gospel. Padilla was slain in 1542 by warriors of a tribe at war with the Wichitas, possibly the Kansa Indians. Three of the lay brothers are known to have escaped and returned to Mexico. Today there is a monument to Padilla's memory at Herington, Kansas.⁷

Coronado, too, had major problems.

He was seriously injured on the return trip to Mexico and was later tried but acquitted on a variety of charges relating to the expedition's failure. He never recovered from the physical and mental strain and died in 1554 at the age of forty-four.

It is perhaps helpful to one's sense of historical chronology to note that while Coronado's army was exploring the Southwest, a Spanish army of 600 men under Hernán de Soto was searching for gold in the Southeast. Beginning in 1539, de Soto's army marched from Florida to North Carolina to Missouri and finally to Texas before turning back. De Soto died of fever and was buried in the Mississippi River; the 311 disheartened survivors sailed for Mexico in 1543. Curiously, a woman actually united these two fabled expeditions. She was an Indian slave belonging to Juan de Zaldívar, and she had escaped from the Coronado expedition in the Texas Panhandle. The woman fled to east Texas, where she was captured by de Soto's men. They believed her story when she recited the names of various captains in Coronado's army. The two armies had been just 300 miles apart at one time, and the slave woman said her travel had taken only nine days.⁸

Although Coronado's failure brought a temporary halt to official Spanish exploration to the north, several Spanish priests were martyred in New Mexico in 1582, and unofficial Spanish explorations reached New Mexico as well. One, led by Francisco Leyva de Bonilla and Antonio Gutiérrez de Humaña, reached Kansas in 1593, where it was wiped out by Indians.⁹

English sea dog Francis Drake's Pacific raid (1578-79) convinced Spanish officials that he had discovered the Straits of Anian or the Northwest Passage, an ocean channel north of Mexico by which to reach China. It became a major concern of New Spain to secure its northern frontier from an expected English invasion.¹⁰

In 1598 an official colonizing expedition of 129 soldiers, 20 clergy, 83

wagons and 7,000 horses, sheep, and cattle arrived in New Mexico. It was the first European settlement in the American Southwest. Its purposes were to guard against the English, Christianize the Indians, and find the great treasure that simply had to be hidden somewhere.¹¹

This substantial colony was organized and led by Juan de Oñate. Born

in Mexico, he was the son of a political rival of Coronado. Oñate's father had become fabulously wealthy in Mexican silver mining. After serving the king for twenty years by conquering Indian tribes in northern Mexico, Oñate personally financed the New Mexico expedition with his own and his friends' money.

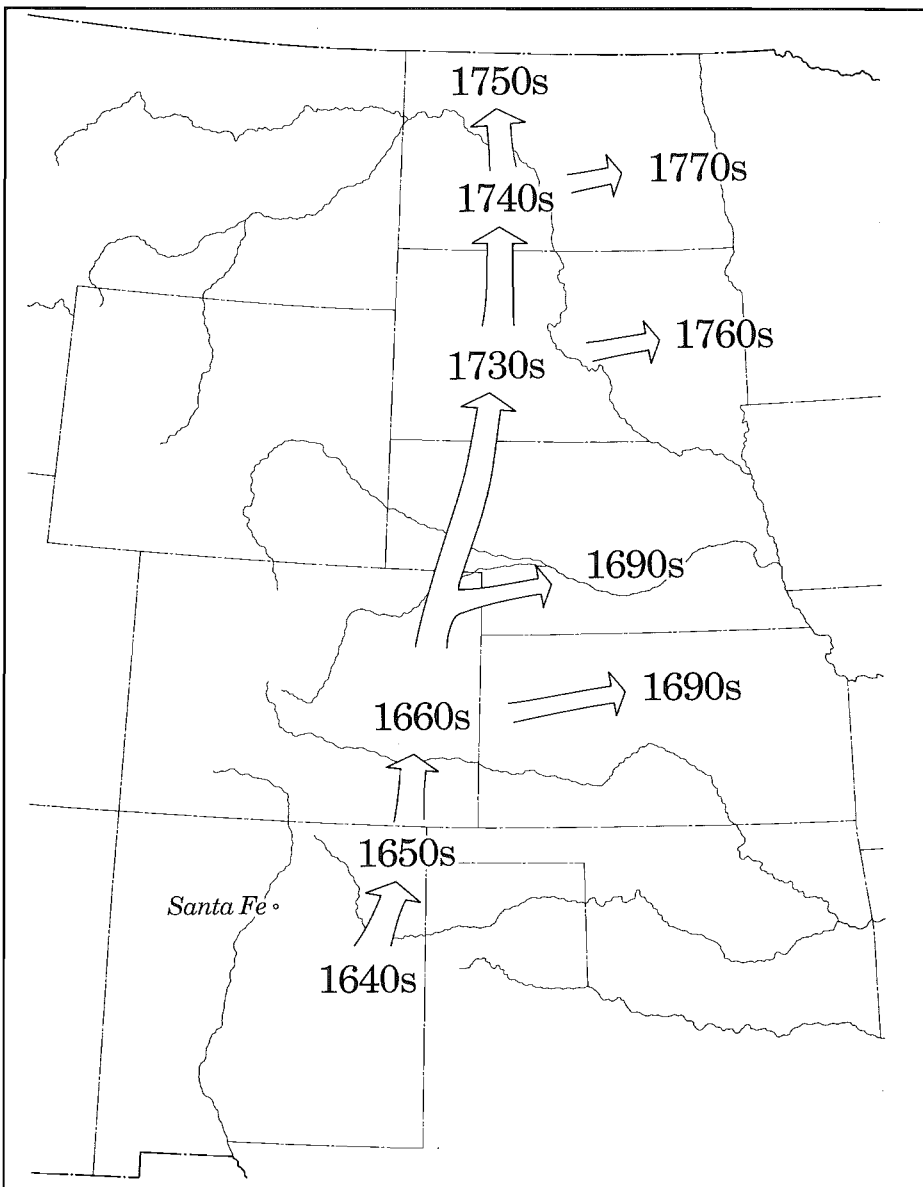
Oñate's New Mexico colony was a

precariously situated little outpost a thousand miles from the nearest Spanish settlement. While the hope of great mineral wealth may have helped lure the Spaniards so far north, the principal economic activities turned out to be animal husbandry, farming, and systematically robbing the local Indians through taxation.

In June 1601 Oñate marched his army with its train of supply carts into present Kansas, the first wheeled traffic on the Great Plains. The conquistadors reached Coronado's Quivira, but the various Indian groups on the Plains were in foul humor and spoiling for war. Although Oñate found the Wichitas wearing sea shell jewelry and concluded erroneously that the strait to China must be near, his men convinced him to return to New Mexico. En route, the Spaniards fought an inconclusive battle with 1,500 Indians near present Wichita, Kansas. These were relatives but enemies of the Wichitas at Quivira.

In 1610 Oñate left the province and returned to Mexico, having lost over 600,000 pesos, the equivalent of many millions today. Rather than abandon the colony, the Spanish king in 1609 declared New Mexico to be a royal province in order to protect the 8,000 Pueblo Indians who had been baptized as Christians. Santa Fe was established in 1608-09 and is the oldest seat of government in the United States.

In New Mexico the Spanish used their standard three-legged bureaucracy of military, civil, and ecclesiastical authority, a cumbersome check-and-balance system which prevented any real decision making without appeal to higher authorities. The harsh frontier life, the greed of the colony's leaders, and the church's inflexible attitudes toward the native people caused tremendous stress. Some time prior to 1664, Pueblos who could not accept Spanish oppression fled to a delightful creek valley near present Scott City, Kansas, where they formed an alliance with a band of Apaches and built a pueblo. Known as El Cuartelejo,



Spanish horses from the Southwest spread rapidly across the Plains through intertribal trade and horse stealing. Map by Dell Darling.

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"the faraway dwelling," it became an important trade center between the Plains Indians and the Rio Grande settlements.¹²

The iron-handed rule of the Spanish in the upper Rio Grande Valley was broken in 1680 when a brilliantly conceived and beautifully executed revolt of the Pueblo people overthrew the Spanish regime. One may draw some interesting parallels between this event and our own revolution a century later. The mauled and tattered Spanish survivors retreated down the Rio Grande to El Paso, where they remained for thirteen years.

Ironically, the Pueblos, having gained their freedom, found themselves in an awkward position. Neighboring tribes had acquired horses through theft or purchase and had become highly mobile raiders. The nature of Plains Indian warfare changed dramatically, from static, set-piece battles to fluid, fast-moving skirmishes. Raiding Apaches and Utes copied the layered Spanish leather armor precisely, providing horse and rider with virtually arrowproof protection. This armor spread north to the upper Missouri, and it was not until firearms and steel arrowheads were plentiful (about 1820) that leather armor disappeared.¹³

Spain could not allow such an affront as the Pueblo revolt to go unpunished, and in 1692-93 the Reconquest took place. The Pueblos, feeling the Spanish to be the lesser of evils, put up only token resistance. While admitting no wrongdoing, the Spaniards were willing to modify their behavior toward the Pueblos somewhat. Realizing that the harsh controls of early New Mexico would not solve the many problems of the reestablished colony, the government and the clerics usually adopted a policy of looking the other way when it came to illegal trade with the Plains Indians or questionable religious practices. It was to Spain's benefit to accommodate the Pueblos, who served them faithfully many times thereafter. Nevertheless many Pueblos left New Mexico and established



Father Padilla monument at Herington, Kansas. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

*Grass house built by the Wichitas.
Courtesy Kansas State Historical
Society.*



fortified "pueblitos" in Arizona or swelled the population of El Cuartelejo.

The New Mexican government set about building buffer zones of friendly Pueblo and Apache Indians to lessen the shocks of attacks from Plains raiders. In order to maintain good relations with the Apaches, who at that time inhabited western Kansas and Nebraska and the Texas Panhandle, and to develop them as bulwarks against Wichitas and Pawnees, the Spaniards encouraged trade between the Apaches and themselves. This trade provided an important economic outlet for the Apaches as well as for the New Mexicans.

The Spaniard possessed many wonderful things which the Indians coveted, such as iron for tools and weapons and sheep for wool, but his outstanding contribution was the horse. It is almost impossible to conceive of human life on the Plains before its coming. Certainly it revolutionized an entire culture. Horses reached Nebraska by the 1680s, and the upper Missouri by the 1750s. Much of the trade was intertribal, whereby Apache

intermediaries took horse herds to Kansas and all the way to the Dakotas. The Spanish also participated in this trade in a major way.

Along with the horse came Spanish saddles, bridles, bits, and even riding techniques. Not until the nineteenth century did wild horses become numerous enough on the High Plains to be captured in large numbers. Until then, horses were usually purchased or stolen. Horse breeding was easier in the Southwest than on the cold northern Plains. A French explorer also noted that few Indian ponies produced colts because the mares aborted from being ridden while pregnant.¹⁴

The Spanish eagerly sought slaves, buffalo robes, dried meat, and leather from the Apaches and other Plains tribes in exchange for horses, sword blades for lances, wool blankets, horse gear, turquoise, and agricultural products, especially dried pumpkin, corn, and bread. While trade outside of prescribed times and places was illegal, it was commonly done. Spaniards and hispanicized Indians, especially from the Pecos and Taos pueblos, traveled

far out on the Plains to conduct business.¹⁵

After the Reconquest, the New Mexicans opened up a major trading trail reaching to the upper Missouri. This trade road followed the path of least resistance through Colorado just east of the Rocky Mountains to the North Platte River in the vicinity of the future site of Fort Laramie. There, three alternate routes took the traders to the desired tribes: up the North Platte to present Orin Junction, Wyoming, then north around the west side of the Black Hills to the Mandan villages on the Missouri in North Dakota; upriver to present Casper, Wyoming, then north to the Crows on the Yellowstone in Montana; or northeast from the present Fort Laramie area across northwest Nebraska to the White River, finally reaching the Arikara villages on the Missouri in South Dakota.¹⁶ This important trail or network of trails was in use by about 1700. In 1706 Sieur de Bienville stated that two French Canadians, who had lived with Indians on the upper Missouri, told of Spaniards coming to the villages to buy

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leather, and the observation was repeated in 1714.¹⁷

The trail continued in use throughout the eighteenth century. In the 1760s British traders reported the Blackfeet in present Montana were well supplied with Spanish horses and horse gear.¹⁸ In 1790 a St. Louis trader was surprised to find large quantities of iron weapons, copper kettles, and horse equipment from Spanish New Mexico in the Mandan villages. He remarked that many of the horses bore distinctly Spanish brands.¹⁹

North West Company trader Francis-Antoine La Rocque visited the Shoshones and Crows in 1805; he noted quantities of New Mexican trade goods in their hands, especially blankets and Spanish battle axes.²⁰ Lewis and Clark found a similar range of New Mexican artifacts among the tribes of the upper Missouri.²¹ St. Louis traders discovered that a Spaniard had taught the art of glassmaking to Indians, who remelted trade beads into large disks and pendants.²² This trail network was later used by American fur traders in the mid-nineteenth century. G. K. Warren, who surveyed the easternmost route in 1855, specifically referred to it as "the Old Spanish Trail."²³

The Spanish empire had other serious problems in addition to its relations with Plains Indian tribes. English pirates in the Pacific and Caribbean took advantage of the failure of Spain's Armada to drive England from the seas, and French heretics (infected as they were with Protestants) had attempted settlements in South Carolina and Texas, threatening Spanish Florida and Mexico. The French moves forced the Spanish to colonize actively in Texas, but the French succeeded in establishing a series of trading posts and settlements from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes. Before long, Spanish and French soldiers faced one another across fortified borders in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida.

On the Plains, French expansion to take advantage of the burgeoning fur trade manifested itself when *coureurs*

de bois pushed farther and farther up the Arkansas and Missouri rivers. In 1664 New Mexican soldiers found French trade goods at El Cuartelejo. The French opened regular trade with the Indians of the central Missouri (Nebraska) by 1703. They provided guns and steel weapons, which gave the Pawnees, Osages, Missourias, Kansas, and Wichitas great military advantage over their enemies, the Apaches. The Spanish did not have enough firearms to supply their own people, and prohibited gun sales to all Plains tribes.²⁴

The Missouri River tribes often warred with one another, but all seemed to reserve a special hatred for the Apaches. Both the Spanish and French encouraged the slave trade among their Indian allies. Pawnee or Wichita slaves are mentioned in Mexico City records, while Apache slaves appear in those of Kaskaskia, Illinois. This intertribal slave trade continued into the 1860s and eventually included Hispanic and Anglo-American victims as well. The Apaches were also faced with a new problem, the Comanches. These predatory nomads, unknown in Santa Fe before 1715, swept out of the Rocky Mountains with murderous exuberance, making and breaking alliances at will.

French traders continued to advance into territory the Spanish claimed. In 1714 French explorer Étienne de Bourgmont reached the mouth of the Platte, which he called the Nebraskier River, the first to approximate our state's name. The French concluded treaties of peace and friendship with the Missouri River tribes, including one with the Skiri Pawnees in 1719. French presents and trade goods flowed up the Missouri and overland from the Great Lakes to the tribes in Nebraska.²⁵

For the Spanish in New Mexico, each day brought news that the Pawnees, supplied by the French with new weapons, were growing in military strength at the expense of the Apaches. In 1719 war broke out between France and Spain and evidence increased

alarmingly that the French were near New Mexico. French cloth, firearms, swords, and religious objects had become commonplace among the Apaches in western Kansas, who obtained them in the course of war with the Pawnees in Nebraska. Spaniards saw wounded Apaches who had been hit by bullets fired from French guns. These events led to Spain's most spectacular involvement with Nebraska, the Villasur expedition of 1720.²⁶

The New Mexican government assembled an army to enter Nebraska and learn what the French were doing there. The commander was General Don Pedro de Villasur, who selected the best, most experienced troops in the province, forty-five in all, and appointed José Naranjo as his chief of scouts. Naranjo, the son of an African man and a Hopi Indian woman, was a skillful and intrepid explorer, scout, and interpreter. Beginning about 1714 he had apparently made at least three trips to the Platte River of Nebraska. The viceroy in Mexico City was so impressed that he ordered the governor of New Mexico to confer upon Naranjo the title "Captain of War." Three civilians, including a priest and a trader with six pack animals loaded with goods, completed the Spanish force. Accompanying them were sixty Pueblo auxiliaries, who were excellent skirmishers.

The army left Santa Fe about the middle of June and marched 350 miles to the stronghold of El Cuartelejo. There Villasur recruited a dozen or so Apaches to serve as guides. The Apaches had been mauled by the Pawnees the previous year and were spoiling for revenge.

The precise route of the expedition is unknown, but it apparently followed a hunting and raiding trail of the Pawnees. The Spanish route is shown on an early eighteenth century French map, and it appears to be identical with the Pawnee trail delineated by Pike in 1805 and Long in 1820. Surviving portions of Villasur's journal state they were following an Indian trail.²⁷

The trek brought Villasur's army to the Platte somewhere around Grand Island. The troops crossed the Platte and then the Loup River. Oto and Pawnee Indians began making their appearance at this time, and Villasur attempted to negotiate with them at various intervals using a Spanish slave, a Pawnee named Francisco Sistaca. Near present Schuyler, Nebraska, Sistaca disappeared. The Spaniards became so alarmed at the belligerence and numbers of the local Indians, whose villages were south of the Platte - near present-day Bellwood and Linwood - that they about-faced and returned to the Loup. They forded the river and went into camp in a meadow covered with very tall grass, apparently located just south of modern Columbus, Nebraska.

At dawn the next morning, August 14, 1720, a huge force of Indians, possibly accompanied by French traders, attacked the camp. Most of the Spaniards were still asleep. The tall grass had made it easy for the Indians to slip in close, and probably Sistaca had informed his people of the best time to attack.

General Villasur fell dead in the first onslaught, and the Spanish troops quickly formed into a hollow circle, bristling with guns, swords, and lances. The horseguard, some distance away and also under attack, managed to saddle some of the horses, and three of the men undertook a desperate charge through the swarming enemy. Two of the Spaniards were shot down, but the third man reached the circle, and seven soldiers escaped on the horses he brought. One of these survivors had been shot nine times and had already been scalped.

Camped separately, the Pueblos did not absorb the brunt of the assault, although eleven of them died in the fighting. The battle lasted only a few minutes, and when it was over, thirty-five Spaniards including the priest lay dead. Among them was intrepid José Naranjo. One civilian, one lieutenant, one corporal, the quartermaster, and

eight soldiers, forty-nine Pueblos and all the Apaches escaped. The survivors retreated to Santa Fe by way of El Cuartelejo, reaching home September 6, twenty-four days after the fight.

This battle was the biggest defeat for the white man in Nebraska. It was a major reversal for the Spanish, who investigated the details of the disaster for nearly seven years. The French in Illinois heard of the fight October 5; they embroidered the story as Spanish guns, swords, clothing, and even a few pages from Villasur's diary, were brought in by Indians.

It is hard to imagine the demoralizing effect of this disaster upon New Mexico. The province had lost a general, its finest scout, a distinguished businessman, a priest, and the flower of its frontiersmen. As well, New Mexico was unable to assess the French threat, which must have seemed awesome at the time.

In fact, it was. Étienne de Bourgmont negotiated peace in Kansas with the Apaches on behalf of France in 1724. This removed the final barrier to French access to the fabulous mines of northern Mexico. However, the opportunity did not long exist. The Comanches swept like quicksilver over the Plains, and the promises made to the Apaches at Bourgmont's treaty council near present Lyons, Kansas, were not remembered by more eastern tribes with old scores to settle.

The Apaches finally collapsed under the incessant pressure, moving southward and westward into Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The White Mountain Apaches had retreated south earlier to the Jicarilla Apaches in Colorado. The Paloma Apaches from western Nebraska retreated to El Cuartelejo to escape the Pawnees and Wichitas. Following the Villasur debacle, the Jicarillas were driven from the Plains to New Mexico, where they settled in 1726. The northernmost Apaches, the Gattakas, joined the Kiowa tribe but both were driven out of Nebraska about 1814 by the Sioux.

The Apache nation's collapse caused

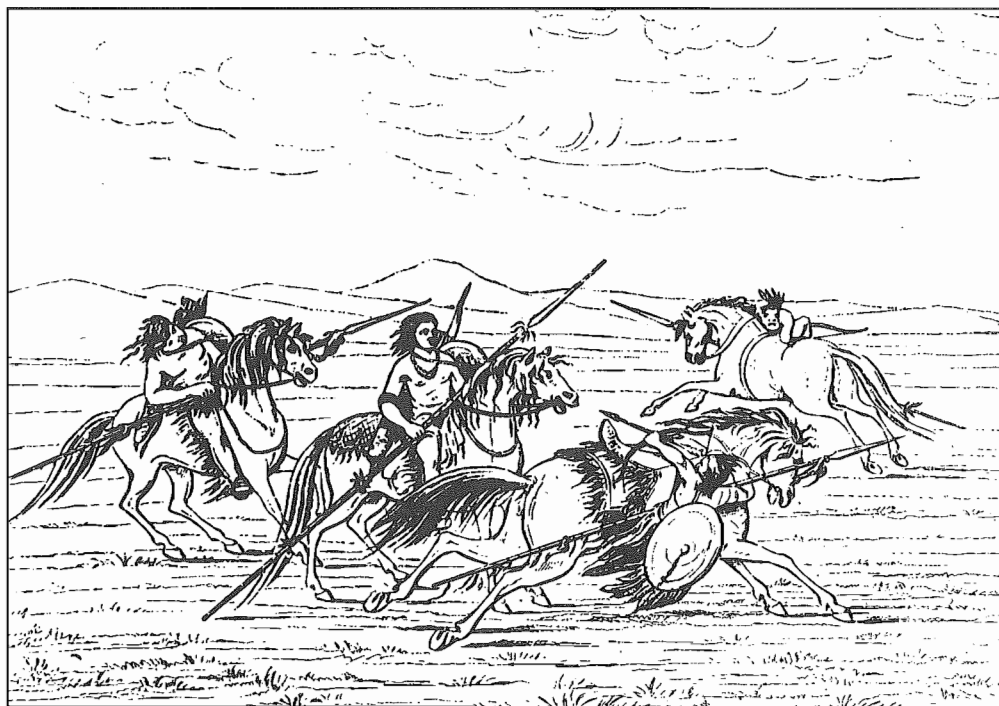
its various tribes to assume new relationships with the Spaniards; friend, enemy, or more often, at war or at peace in one province of New Spain and the reverse in another to the tribe's best advantage. But the withdrawal of the Apaches also enabled the New Mexicans to make friends of old enemies. In 1753 Santa Fe traders were with the Pawnees on the Loup River in Nebraska. According to Zebulon Pike in 1806 a regular caravan traveled every three years from New Mexico to the Pawnees. Annual Spanish trading caravans also rendezvoused with the Arapahos and Utes in Colorado and the Comanches in Kansas. The Comanche trade grew to such proportions that all New Mexican Indian traders came to be called "Comancheros."

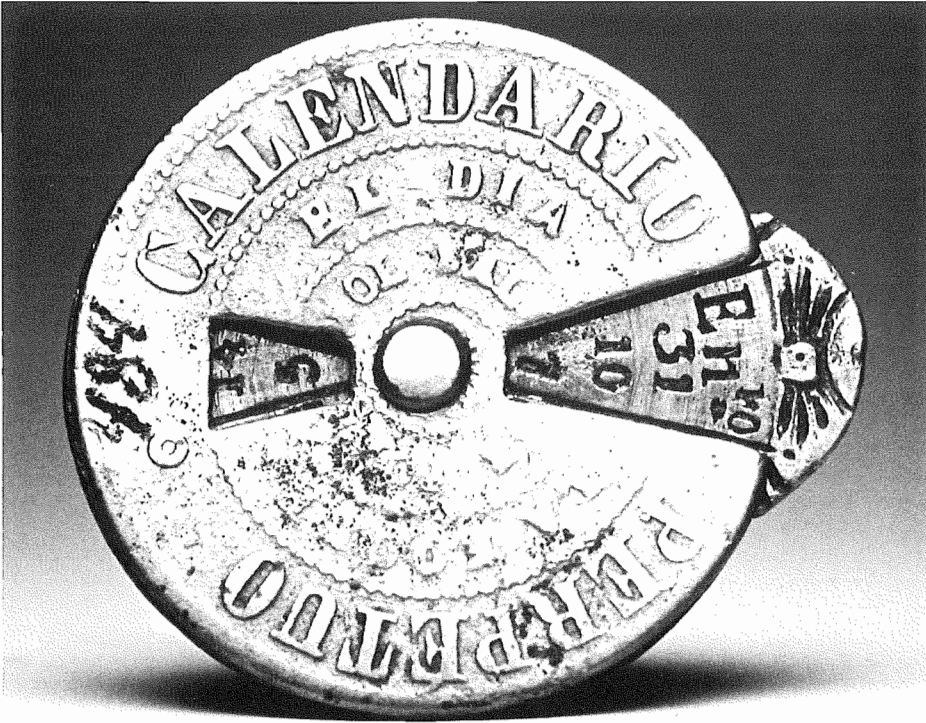
The destruction of Villasur's elite army was followed by a series of French incursions that fueled Spanish hysteria. In the 1730s, 1740s, and 1750s, Frenchmen from Louisiana and Mackinac (traveling by way of Nebraska), turned up in New Mexico, at first amazing the Spanish and then infuriating them. The most publicized expedition was that of the Canadian brothers Pierre and Paul Mallet in 1739. With eight or nine men, they left Mackinac Island to trade with the Pawnees in Nebraska. Then they proceeded overland to Santa Fe, where they were well treated and sold their goods for high prices. They returned to Santa Fe in 1741 by a route across Oklahoma.

However, the Mallet visits upset Spanish authorities in Mexico City. After that, all foreigners were treated badly, but still they came. Jacques Velo arrived from Illinois in 1744. In 1748 thirty-three French traders were in New Mexico. In 1749 three French deserters arrived, and seven more came in 1750. In 1752 ten French traders headed for New Mexico but only two, Chapuis and Foissy, arrived in Santa Fe with goods. They were imprisoned, and all their property was sold to pay for the costs of incarceration. Pierre Mallet and three others made one more trip to Santa Fe in 1750, this time



Excavation of the El Quartejejo site in Scott County, Kansas. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society . . . (right) George Catlin sketched Comanche horsemen about 1834. NSHS Collections.





This perpetual calendar (left) of Spanish manufacture was found at the site of Fort Atkinson, Nebraska. The calendar is about twenty millimeters in diameter. Courtesy Washington County (Nebraska) Historical Association . . . (below) Spanish coins dating from 1767 to 1804 were excavated at the site of Fort Atkinson, Nebraska. Such coins were often cut into sections known as "bits." A quarter section, "two bits," represented one-fourth of the coin's face value. NSHS Collections.



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across Texas. The third time was Mallet's unlucky charm; he was sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to Spain in chains as a galley slave.²⁸

The French finally ceased trying to open trade with New Mexico and relied upon Indians, especially the Comanches, to act as middlemen, selling French guns to the Spanish in Santa Fe and bringing Spanish horses to Louisiana. However, a 1748 English map distinctly shows a road marked "to New Mexico" heading west from French Louisiana, which makes one wonder if the English knew of a trade route that Spanish officials ignored or were ignorant of.²⁹

In the last half of the eighteenth century, New Mexico was beset with almost constant Indian raids. If not Comanche or Apache, the pillagers were Pawnee, Wichita, Osage, or even Blackfeet. They carried off women, children, and livestock and left dead men and ruins. An Osage raiding party in 1790 ran off over 800 horses. In 1783 Osages captured a caravan of silver, and 250 Blackfeet did the same in 1787. Still, the Plains Indian trade was very good, and horses, mules, and slaves taken in Sonora or Texas could be bought cheaply in New Mexico.

In the midst of this period of provincial turmoil, events in Europe took a dramatic turn. England and France had been sparring around the world for nearly sixty years. In 1754 the last of these colonial wars erupted. By 1759 it was clear that Great Britain had the upper hand; in America, Quebec City had fallen, and all French trade down the St. Lawrence was cut off. The French managed to convince the Spanish to enter the war in 1761 to prevent the British from achieving world domination.

Instead British forces took Spanish Cuba, the most important island in the Caribbean. Peace came in 1763, and with it France ceased to be a North American colonial power. Great Britain kept Canada and exchanged Cuba for Florida. All French territory east of the Mississippi passed to the British.

France ceded its territory west of the Mississippi to Spain as compensation for her belated help, and to prevent Great Britain from laying claim to it. French Louisiana became Spanish Louisiana.

A European war that caused France to bow out of North America left Spain and Great Britain facing each other along the Mississippi. However, neither was able to occupy its new territory immediately. Pro-French Indians under Ottawa chief Pontiac warred against the British until 1765. An anti-Spanish revolt in New Orleans prevented complete Spanish occupation of Louisiana until 1768.

Probably the last thing the Spanish needed was an expensive new colony to administer. Still, Spain did what it could to protect Louisiana. It fortified the lower Mississippi and built Fort Carlos III in 1768 at the junction of the Missouri and Mississippi. St. Louis, founded in 1764, became an important fur trade center and the capital of Spanish Illinois – all of Louisiana north of the Arkansas River.

The Spanish tried to control the Indian tribes west of the Mississippi with gifts amounting to \$100,000 a year and with trade, as had the French. Unfortunately for Spanish efforts, by 1773 the British had reached as far as Nebraska from the Mississippi with better, cheaper, and more plentiful goods. It was an unequal contest, but the Spanish did fairly well despite government interference, lack of capital, and a limited supply of trade goods. Another major and unnecessary problem was that Louisiana was administered from Cuba, while New Mexico and Texas continued under the viceroy in Mexico City. Old fears of trade between the Missouri and New Mexico persisted, even though both colonies were Spanish.

Meanwhile, the global thinkers in Spain's highest circles perceived a potential threat to Mexico from Russia and Great Britain. Spain moved to occupy California as a buffer to encroachment, and New Mexico gover-

nor Juan Bautista de Anza laid out a supply road to connect it with New Mexico. Father Escalante explored Utah, and other explorations from Santa Fe reconnoitered eastern Colorado. Despite its own difficulties, New Mexico did its part for the empire.

Spain had received many injuries at the hands of England, beginning with Drake's piracies and culminating with the loss of Florida. When the American colonies revolted against the mother country, Spanish authorities were quick to aid the rebels. Even though the Spanish government detested democratic revolutions, it despised England even more. Tons of Spanish gunpowder went up the Ohio from St. Louis to American troops in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. American raiders were granted safe havens along the lower Mississippi, from which they attacked British Florida.

Undoubtedly the greatest Spanish aid to the American cause was the resupply of George Rogers Clark's Virginian army in 1779. His forces had swept the British from the Ohio Valley, but they had exhausted their supplies and worn out their uniforms and weapons. When the British counterattacked from Canada, Clark's men were able to defeat them only because of the generosity of the Spanish commandant at St. Louis. The cause of American liberty also owes a great debt of gratitude to Oliver Pollock, Irish native, naturalized Spaniard, and St. Louis merchant. He was purchasing agent for the Americans and bankrupted himself in the process of aiding them.

The French declared war on Great Britain in 1778, and Spain followed in 1779. The British saw that St. Louis was the key to what influence the Spanish had among the Indians of the Missouri and Mississippi valleys. If St. Louis could be captured, Great Britain could claim a huge piece of territory and eliminate an important rebel base. However, there were no spare troops available, so British army officers and fur traders were dispatched to various upriver tribes. They dispensed pres-

ents and promises and recruited over 750 warriors with which to assault St. Louis.

On May 26, 1780, the British-led Indians attacked the Spanish at St. Louis and the Americans at nearby Cahokia, Illinois. Outnumbered more than two to one, the Spanish won a handy victory. In retaliation for the British offensive, Spanish and American troops burned a pro-British Sauk and Fox village at Rock River, Illinois.

There were persistent rumors that another attack on St. Louis was being planned at Fort St. Joseph, Michigan. A force of sixty-five Spanish soldiers and sixty Indians marched from St. Louis, captured the fort on February 12, 1781, and burned it and the supplies the British had collected.³⁰

The upper Louisiana region was thus preserved in Spain's hands. Despite this success, British trade goods and traders dominated the economic interests of the Missouri and Mississippi tribes. For obvious reasons neither the Spanish nor the Americans were able to obtain the high quality and inexpensive English guns, textiles, and jewelry during the war. Even pro-Spanish Indians were forced to do business with the British, and the Spanish could not prevent it because they had nothing to offer.³¹

Elsewhere, Spanish arms were very successful. Troops from New Orleans and Cuba captured Baton Rouge, Natchez, Mobile, and Pensacola. At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Spain regained Florida from Great Britain. The end of the war also found Spanish troops east of the Mississippi in territory ceded to the United States by Great Britain. Various refugee Indian groups, some from as far away as New England, clamored for Spanish protection from the land hungry Americans. Not until 1795 did Spain finally withdraw its troops from the disputed lands in the Southeast and abandon the tribes to the rapacious frontiersmen.³²

Spain now had to deal not only with the Americans but with increased Rus-

sian and British activity in the Pacific Northwest and British control of the fur trade in Spanish Louisiana. It seemed clear to the Spanish that some grand plan must be developed to protect their American interests. Baron Hector Carondelet, governor of Spanish Louisiana, was instrumental in putting together a scheme that was visionary in its approach and monumental in its failure.

Two Spanish forts were established on the Northwest Coast, one at Neah Bay in present Washington and one at Nootka on Vancouver Island, where the Spanish seized some British ships and property.³³ They were to serve as the western anchor of Spain's new line of defense. Carondelet then envisioned a fleet of fast, light, armed galleys to sweep up and down the Mississippi, cowing American frontiersmen and interdicting British traders to end their clandestine trade and their influence with the Indian tribes west of the Mississippi.³⁴ As a final barrier to the Canadian traders, Carondelet proposed a chain of fortified trading posts all the way up the Missouri to a Pacific link with Nootka.³⁵

The two Pacific forts were finished, and eleven gunboats went into service on the Mississippi. These vessels, comprising "His Majesty's Light Squadron," patrolled the Mississippi from its mouth to Wisconsin. Because the Spanish tried to drive away British traders, Indian tribes often prevented the crews from putting ashore, and the boats seem to have had only minimal effect on curtailing British trade west of the Mississippi.

To finance the chain of forts up the Missouri as well as to explore it, Carondelet granted an exclusive fur trade monopoly in 1794 to a consortium of St. Louis merchants called the "Company of Explorers of the Upper Missouri." Several traders had already advanced up the Missouri, one reaching as far as present North Dakota in 1790. Just as the company was organizing, Spain backed down to Great Britain over Nootka, abandoning its

forts and withdrawing to California. The merchants chose to proceed with the Missouri plan anyway, and hired the able James Mackay as their field manager.

Mackay brought his trading expedition up the Missouri to a site a mile above the mouth of the Platte. There, on October 14, 1795, they commenced building the first European settlement in what is now Nebraska. This trading post served the Oto Indians, who lived a few miles upstream. It was relocated eight miles south of the Platte in 1797, then abandoned later that year. In November 1795 Mackay laid out Fort Carlos IV on a tiny rise of ground in the Missouri floodplain a mile from the Omaha Indian village of Chief Blackbird near present Homer, Nebraska. It was an impressive, stockaded post with corner bastions, storehouse, living quarters, and a trade room for the Omahas. Posts were also established for the Ponca and Arikara tribes in present South Dakota.

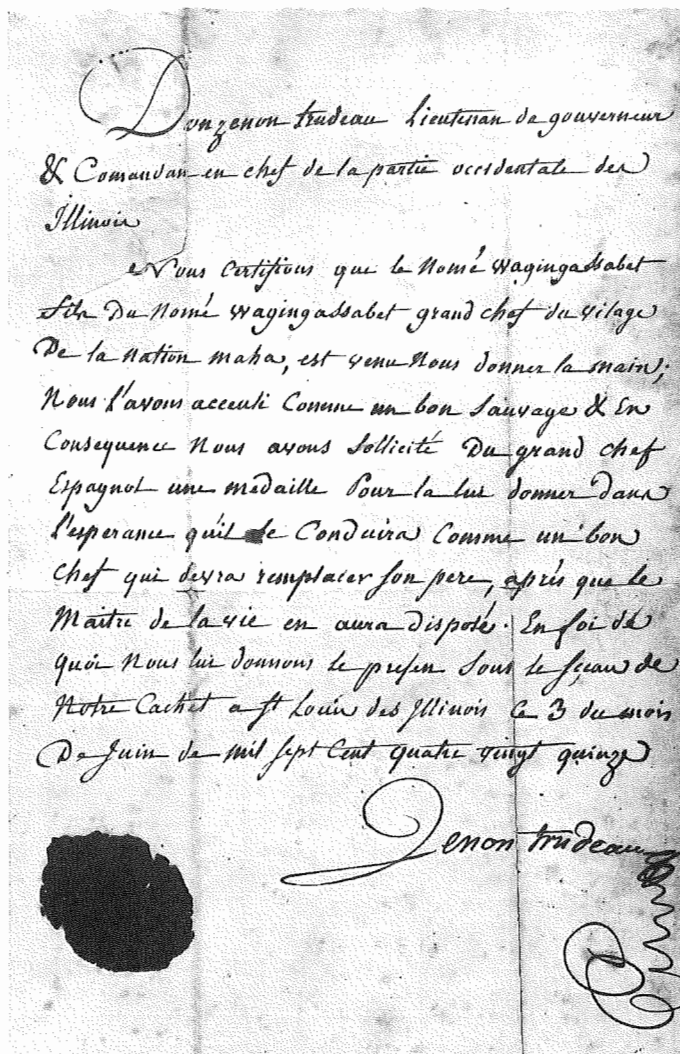
Mackay stayed at Fort Carlos IV and dispatched Bernard Lecuyer upriver with instructions to head for the Pacific. Lecuyer proceeded barely a hundred miles before giving up. The next year Mackay sent another employee, John Evans, who reached the Mandan villages in present North Dakota. He kicked out some Canadians who were trespassing on Spanish territory, then raised the castles and lions flag over their abandoned post, the farthest upstream outpost of the Upper Missouri Company. Evans simply had run out of supplies to go farther.

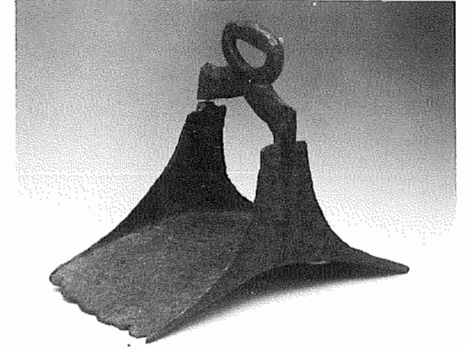
While Evans pushed upstream, Mackay made the first known reconnaissance of the Nebraska Sand Hills. He made a great circle, traveling along the Niobrara, Loup, and Elkhorn valleys. He found fossil bones six and seven inches in diameter and remarked about a few other natural curiosities. On the upper reaches of the Loup, however, he recorded a "Great Desert of moving sand where there is neither wood nor soil nor stone nor water nor animals except little multicolored tor-

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Sixty Pueblo Indians accompanied Villasur's army to the Plains in 1720. This detail from the Nebraska State Historical Society's replica of the hide painting of the battle shows Pueblos (foreground) and Spanish soldiers guarding the horse herd. NSHS Collections . . . Certificates (right) signed by Zenon Trudeau, lieutenant governor of Western Illinois, and Baron de Carondelet, governor of Louisiana, accompanied medals presented in 1795 and 1796 to an Omaha Indian to gain his allegiance to the Spanish crown. NSHS Collections.





The origin of this rock carving near White Clay, Nebraska, remains a mystery. The name "Celedonio Garcia" suggests a Spanish connection. Courtesy Omaha World-Herald . . . (above) Spanish stirrup found in Franklin County, Nebraska, in 1874. NSHS Collections.

toises."³⁶ Mackay noted that the South Platte's source was very near the "Santa Fe River" or Rio Grande, once again reinforcing the New Mexico connection. Despite these efforts the tremendous cost of getting started on a large scale, competition from the British, and mismanagement forced the Missouri Company to liquidate in 1797, leaving over \$100,000 in debts.

With the plan to build barriers against the British in shambles, the government of Louisiana returned to issuing tribal trade monopolies to individual traders. By the late 1790s, some 115 Spanish citizens were engaged in the St. Louis fur trade. They had 100 boats on the rivers, and annually brought in peltries valued at \$100,000. Another \$100,000 in furs came from lower Louisiana. By contrast, the British had 150 boats on the Mississippi alone and brought in \$450,000 each year. More exasperating was that sixty-five British boats plied the trade on the Missouri, and British pack trains reached the Pawnees 150 miles to the west. The Omahas, after the closing of Fort Carlos IV, were completely in British hands. In 1800 they destroyed a final Spanish trading expedition trying to ascend the Missouri to the Pacific.

While the British leapfrogged across the continent, the Spanish dawdled. In 1801 they did build a trading post at the mouth of the Des Moines River in Iowa and another for the Arikaras in South Dakota. One intrepid St. Louis trader wintered with the Cheyennes in the Black Hills before Lewis and Clark ascended the Missouri.

Although Spain's involvement in the central and northern Plains during the last third of the eighteenth century was centered in St. Louis and extended up the Missouri as far north as North Dakota, New Mexico tried to participate but was at a distinct disadvantage economically. Long, tenuous supply lines all the way to Vera Cruz meant that everyday items like iron cost a dollar a pound and empty glass bottles fetched a dollar each. Since Spain ruled Louisiana, it seemed logical to open trade by a shorter and easier road to New Orleans or St. Louis, and that is what New Mexico Governor Frederico de la Concha tried to do. He hired an itinerant explorer, Pedro Vial, to search out the best route.³⁷ In 1792 Vial and two companions left Santa Fe for St. Louis. They were captured by Kansa Indians and eventually ransomed by fur traders, who took them to St. Louis. The next year Vial returned

to Santa Fe, via the Nemaha River in southeast Nebraska.

Nothing came of this work, for officials in Mexico City could see no reason to divert Mexico's trade to Louisiana. Vial continued to explore routes connecting New Mexico to Texas and Texas to Louisiana. Born a Frenchman in Louisiana, Vial worked hard to keep the Pawnees from accepting American control. He brought Pawnee delegations to Santa Fe in 1803 and 1804.

Vial was assisted in his efforts with the Pawnees by Juan Chalvert, an interpreter and explorer for the Spanish in the period 1800-1820. It is known that he was a trader on the Plains and had a ten-year-old son living among the Pawnees in 1806. Chalvert, like Vial, was not Spanish. New Mexican records reveal that he was born in Philadelphia and was baptized a Presbyterian. His real name is unknown.³⁸

Through more than two centuries and at tremendous cost the Spanish had tried to build chains of presidios and missions, buffer zones of Indian allies, and colonies and settlements to protect the northern flank of its empire from foreign encroachment. Spain itself, however, had fallen increasingly under the domination of France. The Bourbon royal family sat on the thrones

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of both countries, and following the French Revolution, Spain was forced to look to Napoleon for leadership in foreign affairs.

Meanwhile, Bonaparte dreamed of rebuilding the French colonial empire lost in the Seven Years' War (or French and Indian War). He negotiated a treaty with Spain in 1800 whereby Louisiana was ceded back to France. However, the cession was kept secret to forestall a possible British attack on the province. When it became clear to Napoleon that Europe required France's exclusive attention, he sold Louisiana to the United States in 1803. Spanish forces departed in 1804. Spain was probably glad to be rid of a province that cost six times as much to govern as it generated in taxes. However, New Mexico was stunned to realize that the U.S. border, previously 800 miles away, now ran less than 150 miles from Santa Fe.

One of the first things the United States did was to send the Lewis and Clark party up the Missouri to the Pacific. The Spanish had fumbled, dispatching three expeditions in five years, but nevertheless, during their first year's work, Lewis and Clark simply retraced the route explored by Spain. They saw the ruins of Mackay's Fort Carlos IV, recorded Cruzat's post near the Council Bluff on their maps, observed the Spanish post at Isle aux Cedres in the Missouri, and talked to Indian chiefs wearing medals bearing the Spanish king's portrait.

The explorers began the process of gaining the Indians' allegiance to the United States. In fact, William Clark noted that while the Otos, Missouris, and Osages were pro-American, the Omahas, Poncas, and Kansas were pro-Spanish, and the Pawnees refused to meet with the expedition. Amos Stoddard, the first lieutenant governor of Louisiana Territory, wrote in 1809 that Americans had been unable to make any headway with the Pawnees, who traded exclusively with the New Mexicans and the British from Mackinac. Pedro Vial's diplomatic ef-

forts clearly had been successful. Stoddard also mentioned that the New Mexicans brought kegs filled with Spanish silver coins to the mouth of the Platte River, where American traders exchanged their goods for cash.

The Lewis and Clark expedition frightened the New Mexicans considerably. They dithered about what to do long enough to avoid doing very much. Finally, they paid some Comanches to ride to the Missouri and report when the expedition passed by. No report has survived, and Lewis and Clark did not mention seeing any Comanches. Enough time elapsed for the Spanish to develop a strategy to deal with these upstarts, who now posed the greatest threat to New Spain. Veteran dragoons from Spain were sent to bolster the defenses of New Mexico and Texas.

In 1806 Jefferson sent out a second exploring expedition. This was the Lieutenant Freeman party of forty men, which ascended the Red River of Texas. Two hundred Spanish soldiers under Captain Francisco Viana intercepted them in eastern Texas and forced them to turn back. However, Freeman's men apparently told Viana that another expedition was exploring to the north, and troops were dispatched to intercept it.³⁹

This expedition was led by Lieutenant Zebulon Pike, and it lacked any official sanction from President Jefferson or the government in Washington. It was the brainchild of General James Wilkinson, newly appointed governor of Louisiana Territory. Among his various schemes were plans to invade Mexico, Panama, California, and the Rio Grande Valley. He was a major participant in the Burr Conspiracy. In July 1806, less than a month after becoming governor, Wilkinson sent the Pike expedition toward Spanish territory, possibly to spy, possibly to provoke a war.⁴⁰

The man looking for Pike was Lieutenant Don Facundo de Melgares, and he commanded a troop of dragoons recruited in northern Spain, who must have looked absolutely resplendent in

their bright green and canary yellow uniforms with silver braid. When he left New Mexico his army consisted of 105 dragoons, 400 New Mexican militia, 100 Indian allies, and 2,000 riding and pack animals. The army proceeded down the Red River across the present Texas Panhandle.

Viana then ordered Melgares to swing north with half his command and intercept Pike at the Pawnee village near present Guide Rock, Nebraska. The Spaniards were unable to find Pike, but they cemented friendship with the Pawnees, then abandoned further searching because their large horse herd invited trouble from marauding Indian raiders. Melgares returned to Santa Fe, having led the last official Spanish military reconnaissance on the central Plains.

Pike had been delayed en route, and his little party of twenty finally arrived at the Pawnee village after Melgares had departed. Pike found much evidence of Spanish trade and influence; most notable, the Pawnees were flying the Spanish flag. Pike finally induced the Indians to replace it with the Stars and Stripes, at least temporarily. He cautioned them that the Spanish would no longer come to the Pawnees.

At this time Pike was on American soil and Melgares had no right to be there. Pike and his men proceeded west into Colorado, which was Spanish territory, and floundered about in the mountains during the winter until the Ute Indians reported their presence to Santa Fe. Melgares mercifully arrested them, and they were eventually repatriated.

These three expeditions caused the Spanish to reinstate their old xenophobic policy of treating all interlopers harshly. An American trading caravan reached Santa Fe in 1807, but thereafter, all foreigners arriving in New Mexico were arrested and imprisoned, including four Americans trading with the Comanches in 1812, and nine American traders who entered Taos in 1816. All lost their property, and some

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were even sold into slavery. These occurrences embittered many Americans toward the Spanish, and there was war talk on the streets of St. Louis.⁴¹

One American who tried to break through the new barriers was Manuel Lisa. Born at New Orleans in 1772, he was a dynamic figure in Spanish Louisiana. He fought against the endemic bureaucracy and monopoly, but he also understood the Spanish system. By 1802 he was deeply involved in the Osage Indian trade in Missouri. In 1807 Lisa embarked on a trading expedition up the Missouri and financed the successful 1807 caravan to Santa Fe. Trading with the Mandans from 1807 to 1813, Lisa tried but failed to open a north-south trade from the Missouri to Santa Fe. He financed parties of white beaver trappers in the Rockies as well, worked hard to reduce British influence among the Indians during the War of 1812, and induced the Western Sioux to attack the pro-British Santee Sioux in 1815.

Lisa later built a trading post in Nebraska for the Omahas. In 1819 he was there when the Yellowstone Expedition arrived at the Council Bluff. Lisa's wife, Mary, was the first known white woman to ascend the Missouri or live in Nebraska. Lisa, who died in 1820, was an energetic and resourceful leader, who truly bridged the gap between Spanish and American culture, politics, and economics.⁴²

There was a last shudder of nerves in New Mexico when news arrived in 1818 of the U.S. Army's "Yellowstone Expedition." Thinking that this was a subterfuge for an invasion, the governor of New Mexico sent spies under Juan Chalvert to the Yellowstone River in Montana in 1819.⁴³ Chalvert reported that the river was farther away from Santa Fe than was St. Louis. The Yellowstone Expedition actually stopped in Nebraska, where it built Cantonment Missouri (later Fort Atkinson) at the Council Bluff, but the Spanish were frightened by Major Stephen Long's 1819 exploration of Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado. They

fortified the mountain passes leading to Santa Fe.

In fact, the higher powers and perhaps cooler heads in Washington and Madrid were concerned about friction all along the murkily defined border. Both parties realized that the situation, if left alone, would lead to bloodshed. America had annexed West Florida and seized Amelia Island between Georgia and Florida. General Andrew Jackson had taken control of Florida Indians into his own hands. American freebooters were roving across east Texas.

The Adams-Onís Treaty, negotiated in 1819, solved these problems by selling Spanish Florida to the United States. A fair and easily recognized Mexican boundary was drawn, and Spain also ceded its Pacific Northwest claims to the United States. The treaty was ratified in 1821; the boundary remained intact until the Mexican War of 1846-48.

The year 1821 also marked the final collapse of Spain in Mexico. Spain's power and wealth had been gradually but surely eroded over two centuries by aggressive merchant nations. More important, it proved to be impossible for Spain to seal its colonies from the radical political and religious ideas that swept the world after the American and French Revolutions. Spain was further devastated by the Napoleonic Wars. Colonial administration became chaotic, and there were few resources to prop up royal control.

Between 1800 and 1815 revolutions swept the Spanish Americas. There was an abortive Mexican revolution in 1810. Several Americans who heard of it travelled across the Plains from St. Louis to Santa Fe with goods in order to be the first to establish trade with an independent Mexico. Instead, they were arrested and imprisoned.

A revolution in Spain in 1820 brought an end to absolute monarchy and established a liberal constitution. In that year, most foreigners were released from Spanish prisons in Mexico. Spanish liberalism was also sweeping

across New Spain. This convinced conservative elements in Mexico to join with liberal forces who had supported the 1810 revolution. Thus, virtually all of Mexico supported a new government which forced the Spanish viceroy to recognize its independence in 1821. From California to Tierra del Fuego, Spain was finally ousted from the New World by the descendants of its own people.

Once again, news of a Mexican revolution prompted Americans to try to open trade with Santa Fe, this time with resounding success. In 1821 William Becknell arrived with a caravan and returned to St. Louis with rawhide bags filled with Mexican silver.

Becknell's new route lay directly across Kansas. Until Lewis and Clark proved otherwise, most people believed that the Missouri River had its source in the mountains close to Santa Fe. Even after Pedro Vial proved beyond a doubt that the shortest route from Santa Fe to the Missouri lay across Kansas, people continued to use the much older route pioneered by the Mallet brothers in 1739. They ascended the Missouri to Nebraska, proceeded west to the Pawnee villages, then followed the Pawnee trail to the Arkansas River, where the road west to Santa Fe was plain. This trail was used by James Clamorgan in 1807, and James O. Pattie and other American trappers and traders through the 1820s. Fort Atkinson, in present-day Nebraska, was abandoned in 1827 in favor of Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, located on the Santa Fe Trail. The Missouri River ceased to play a role as part of the road to Santa Fe.

However, one final drama linking Fort Atkinson and New Mexico deserves mention. Pawnee raiders had discovered that New Mexico's portion of the Santa Fe Trail offered lucrative sources of horses and other loot of war. Because the Pawnees lived in U.S. territory, Mexico sought American assistance in negotiating an end to Pawnee raids.

In 1825 twenty-six Mexican com-



Frederick Piercy sketched adobe Fort John (Fort Laramie) in 1853. (NSHS-L323-6) . . . Mexican José Merivale (seated, wearing hat) was one of the interpreters for this delegation of Sioux leaders. (NSHS-J82-78) . . . (below) Mexican muleteers loading a pack train for the Santa Fe Trail. From Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies.



Spain on the Plains

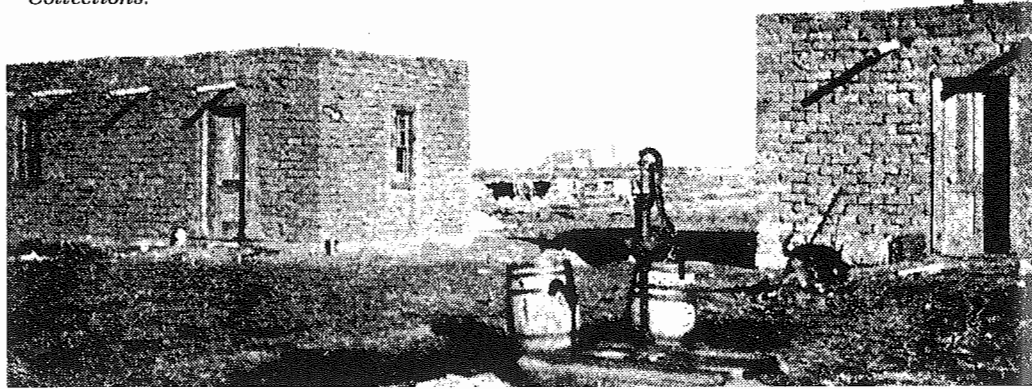
missioners left Chihuahua, passed through Santa Fe, and arrived at Fort Atkinson. There, Indian Agent Benjamin O'Fallon negotiated a treaty to stop Pawnee raiding into Mexico.⁴⁴ The Pawnee raids decreased but did not stop until the 1840s, when disease and enemy Indians reduced the Pawnee population to the point where the tribe needed the protection of the U.S. Army.

The Santa Fe Trail proved to be the stuff of which western legends are made. Each year, hundreds of wagons hauled manufactured goods to Santa Fe, and many of the goods were then shipped south to Chihuahua. Silver came to Santa Fe from there, and tons of wool and textiles were shipped to Missouri by the freighters. After the Mexican War more Mexicans than Anglo-Americans hauled goods on the Santa Fe Trail. The trail ended with the construction of railroads after the Civil War.

American commercial development in the Missouri basin, most notably the fur trade, created some friction with the New Mexicans, but it also afforded new economic opportunities for them. In 1827 New Mexicans reached the annual mountain man rendezvous in Wyoming ahead of the American traders and made a fortune selling liquor, textiles, saddles, and other goods. In 1835 New Mexicans were trading with the Arikaras in the Black Hills. A Mexican trader and interpreter was living with the Blackfeet in Montana in the 1830s, and in the 1840s New Mexicans were trading with the Crows in Montana. At that time Mexican traders were also near Ft. Laramie selling food-stuffs, blankets, whiskey, and brandy.

The large fur trading posts such as Bent's Fort, Colorado, Fort Benton, Montana, Fort Hall, Idaho, and Fort Laramie, Wyoming, were built by labor battalions from Santa Fe and Taos.⁴⁵ New Mexican laborers settled near Fort Laramie in 1841 and built the first irrigation system on the Platte. The site of their colony is called Mexican Hill today. Other New Mexicans took up work as herders, boatmen,

Homes of Hispanic sugar beet workers near Scottsbluff, Nebraska, 1920s. NSHS Collections.



packers, interpreters, and guides for fur traders, emigrants, and the army. The American fur traders themselves went to New Mexico to buy whiskey, blankets, fancy ironwork, jewelry, corn, and wheat flour to supply the Plains tribes.

The Mexican War intervened in 1846-48 and heightened racial tensions. Mexico was forced to cede a third of its territory to the United States: California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. This amounted to over half a million square miles or one-sixth of the United States, and by it the last of the Plains passed out of Hispanic control.

Nevertheless, as the Great Plains were settled, Hispanic people continued to play a pervasive role. Military records of civilian employment at army posts in the West reveal Spanish names on the payrolls. One of the last fur traders was Andrew García, born south of the Rio Grande and working as late as 1879 in Montana.⁴⁶ Mexicans employed in the fur trade and Mexicans working for the army in the West were followed by Mexican cowboys, Mexican railroad construction crews, and Mexican farm hands.

There was not a beginning when Vásquez de Coronado reached the High Plains in 1541, for prehistoric Indian people had done it first. There was nothing new, different, or really un-

usual when large numbers of Hispanic people moved to the North Platte Valley in the early 1900s to work in sugar beet production, for their ancestors started irrigated farming there over 150 years ago. It is one of those wonderful ironies of history that one of Nebraska's principal Hispanic communities, Scottsbluff-Gering, lies within sight of the Wildcat Hills, where archeologists have found 700-year-old southwestern pottery. The legacy of the Spanish in Nebraska and on the Plains, especially their effect upon Plains Indian culture through the introduction of the horse, is indeed a treasure that should not be allowed to be forgotten. Spain's contributions to our history should not be underestimated. After all, half of what is now the United States once belonged to Spain, and thirty million Americans can trace their heritage to Spanish colonization in the New World. For Nebraskans, Ak-Sar-Ben rituals centered around the story of Quivira may not be so farfetched after all.

NOTES

Cabeza de Vaca's story is told in Cleve Hallenbeck's *Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca: The Journey and Route of the First European to Cross the Continent of North America, 1534-36* (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1940).

²Adolph F. Bandelier, "The Discovery of New Mexico by Fray Marcos of Nizza," *New Mexico Historical Review* 4 (January 1929): 28-44, is a good source on the priest and his activities.

³Herbert Eugene Bolton's *Coronado on the Turquoise Trail, Knight of Pueblos and Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1949) is the best and most readable account of the expedition.

⁴James H. Gunnerson and Dolores A. Gunnerson, "Apachean Culture: A Study in Unity and Diversity," in Keith H. Basso and Morris E. Opler, *Apachean Culture, History, and Ethnology* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1971); and James A. Hanson, *Northwest Nebraska's Indian People* (Chadron, Nebraska: Chadron Centennial Committee, 1984), provide information on the early historic period of western Plains groups.

⁵Waldo R. Wedel, "Coronado's Route to Quivira, 1541," in *Plains Anthropologist*, 15:49 (1970), 161-68.

⁶Mildred M. Wedel, "The Indian They Called Turco," in Don G. Wycoff and Jack L. Hofman, eds., *Pathways to Plains Prehistory: Anthropological Perspectives of Plains Natives and Their Pasts* (Duncan, Oklahoma: Cross Timbers Press, 1982), 153-62.

⁷Bolton, "Friars Remain in the New Land," in *Coronado*, 335-43.

⁸De Soto's route in America and the history of his expedition is the subject of careful scholarship in Jerald T. Milanich and Susan Milbrath, eds., *First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570*, Ripley P. Bullen Monographs in Anthropology, Number 9, Florida Museum of Natural History (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1989).

⁹For the various expeditions to New Mexico before Oñate, see George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, *The Rediscovery of New Mexico, 1580-1594: The Explorations of Chamuscado, Castano de Sosa, Morlete, and Leyva de Bonilla and Humana* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966).

¹⁰Spain's troubles with English pirates and concerns over the "Strait of Anian" can be found in Peter Gerhard, *Pirates of the Pacific, 1575-1742* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

¹¹Marc Simmons, *The Last Conquistador: Juan de Oñate and the Settling of the Far Southwest* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), is a classic of scholarship on this subject.

¹²Waldo R. Wedel, *An Introduction to Kansas Archeology, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 174* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959), 23-71.

¹³An excellent source on the evolution of Indian fighting methods is Frank Raymond Secoy, *Changing Military Patterns on the Great Plains* (Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin, 1953).

¹⁴Garrick Mallery, "Pictographs of the North American Indians," in *Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1886), 108; and Frank Norall, *Bourgmont, Explorer of the Missouri, 1698-1725* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 77.

¹⁵Charles E. Hanson, Jr., "The Mexican Traders," *Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 6:3 (Fall 1970): 2-6.

¹⁶David Lavender, *Bent's Fort* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1954) advances these routes, and his thesis is confirmed by G. K.

Warren's delineation of the "Old Spanish Trail" in his field notes, which are in the Warren Collection, Box Five, New York State Library, Albany.

¹⁷Addison E. Sheldon, ed., trans., "The First White Explorers," *Nebraska History Magazine* 8 (1925): 7.

¹⁸Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales' Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1971), lii.

¹⁹Abraham P. Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804* 1 (St. Louis: St. Louis Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), 82, 160-61.

²⁰W. Raymond Wood and Thomas D. Thiessen, *Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains: Canadian Traders Among the Mandan and Hidatsa Indians, 1738-1818* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 189-220.

²¹Reuben Gold Thwaites, *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 1804-1806* 6 (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 103, 106-08.

²²Annie Heloise Abel, *Tabeau's Narrative of Loisel's Expedition to the Upper Missouri* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), 139.

²³James A. Hanson, "A Forgotten Fur Trade Trail," *Nebraska History* 68 (Spring 1987): 3.

²⁴An amazing compendium of Spanish-French rivalry on the southern and central plains can be found in Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1975).

²⁵Norall, *Bourgmont*, is an important key to understanding French political aggression and Spanish fear of it among the Plains tribes.

²⁶The best work on the Villasar expedition is Gottfried Hotz, *Indian Skin Paintings of the American Southwest: Two Representations of Border Conflicts Between Mexico and the Missouri in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), but see also Alfred Barnaby Thomas, ed., trans., *After Coronado: Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico, 1696-1727* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935) for documents relating to it. Two substantive questions remain about the battle. First, where did it occur? All sources agree that it was northeast of El Cuarteletejo at the junction of two rivers. Thomas incorrectly assumed El Cuarteletejo was in Colorado, thus locating the battle site at the forks of the Platte, which error was repeated by Addison E. Sheldon in his writings. Hotz located the site at the junction of the Loup and the Platte, which fits the information we have.

The second question is whether French were present at the battle. Spanish sources do not give the answer, but I believe the artist who did the buffalo robe painting of it was present, and his accuracy in delineating French clothing and equipment is unerring. There were French traders in Nebraska by 1720 doing business with the Pawnees. The French in the painting are civilians, not soldiers.

²⁷The western parts of the trail may have been used in prehistoric times. After 1650 some Pawnees began moving northward from Kansas to the Loup Valley of Nebraska. The trail was actively used by Pawnees who travelled west and south twice a year to hunt buffalo. It was

their war road to New Mexico, where there were riches in the form of horses, slaves, and other booty. The trail also became important to French and later, American explorers and traders. For nearly eighty years, travelers ascended the Missouri River to the vicinity of the Platte's mouth, then headed southwest across Kansas to Santa Fe. The Pawnees continued to use the trail until after the Civil War.

²⁸Thomas, *After Coronado*; and Thomas, *The Plains Indians and New Mexico, 1751-1778, a Collection of Documents Illustrative of the History of the Eastern Frontier of New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940); James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 34.

²⁹Emanuel Bowen, *A New Map of Georgia with Part of Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, 1748* (Ithaca, New York: Historic Urban Plans, n.d.).

³⁰Two important compilations of documents relating to the Spanish period in Louisiana are Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark*, and Lawrence Kinnaird, "Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765-1794," in the *American Historical Association Annual Report for 1945* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946-49). For the Battle of St. Louis, see John Francis McDermott, "The Myth of the Imbecile Governor: Captain Fernando de Leyba and the Defense of St. Louis in 1780," in McDermott, ed., *The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley, 1762-1804* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 314-91.

³¹Kinnaird, "Spain in the Mississippi Valley," 1: xxiii; Amos Stoddard, *Sketches, Historical and Descriptive of Louisiana* (New York: AMS Press, 1973), 297. This latter work is an extremely important and seldom-used source on Louisiana at the time of its acquisition by the United States.

³²This fascinating period of American expansion and Spanish reaction is outlined in Arthur Preston Whitaker, *The Spanish American Frontier: 1783-1795: The Westward Movement and the Spanish Retreat in the Mississippi Valley* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969).

³³W. R. Manning, "The Nootka Controversy," in *American Historical Association Annual Report for 1904* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 279-478, is an excruciatingly detailed account of this incident.

³⁴Abraham P. Nasatir, *Spanish War Vessels on the Mississippi, 1792-1796* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), is a tantalizing introduction to this arcane episode in frontier naval history.

³⁵Nasatir, *Before Lewis and Clark*, 77.

³⁶Waldo R. Wedel, "An Introduction to Pawnee Archeology," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 112* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1936), map 7.

³⁷See Noel M. Loomis and Abraham P. Nasatir, *Pedro Vial and the Roads to Santa Fe* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967).

³⁸Abraham P. Nasatir, *Borderland in Retreat: From Spanish Louisiana to the Far Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), is the standard work on this period. See chap. 7 for a discussion of the New Mexico situation and what is known of Chalvert.

³⁹For the record of this expedition, see Dan L. Freeman, ed., *Jefferson and Southwestern Exploration: The Freeman and Curtis Accounts*

of the Red River Expedition of 1806 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984).

⁴⁰Pike's original journals have been republished as *Zebulon Montgomery Pike, Sources of the Mississippi and the Western Louisiana Territory* (Ann Arbor: University of Microfilms Inc., 1966).

⁴¹Nasatir, *Borderland in Retreat*. See chap. 5, "The Road to Santa Fe: Genesis of the Santa Fe Trail," and chap. 7, "The Last Frontier of Spanish Louisiana: North from Santa Fe."

⁴²Richard E. Oglesby's book on Lisa is nicely summarized in his article, "Manuel Lisa," in Leroy R. Hafen, *The Mountain Men and the Fur Trade of the Far West 5* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1968), 179-201.

⁴³Nasatir, *Borderland in Retreat*, 156.

⁴⁴Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 189, 200.

⁴⁵Hanson, "The Mexican Traders," 2-6.

⁴⁶Andrew García, *Tough Trip Through Paradise, 1878-1879* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1967), is a classic of the American West.

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