

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN:
LA BAHÍA DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO, 1722-1821

THESIS

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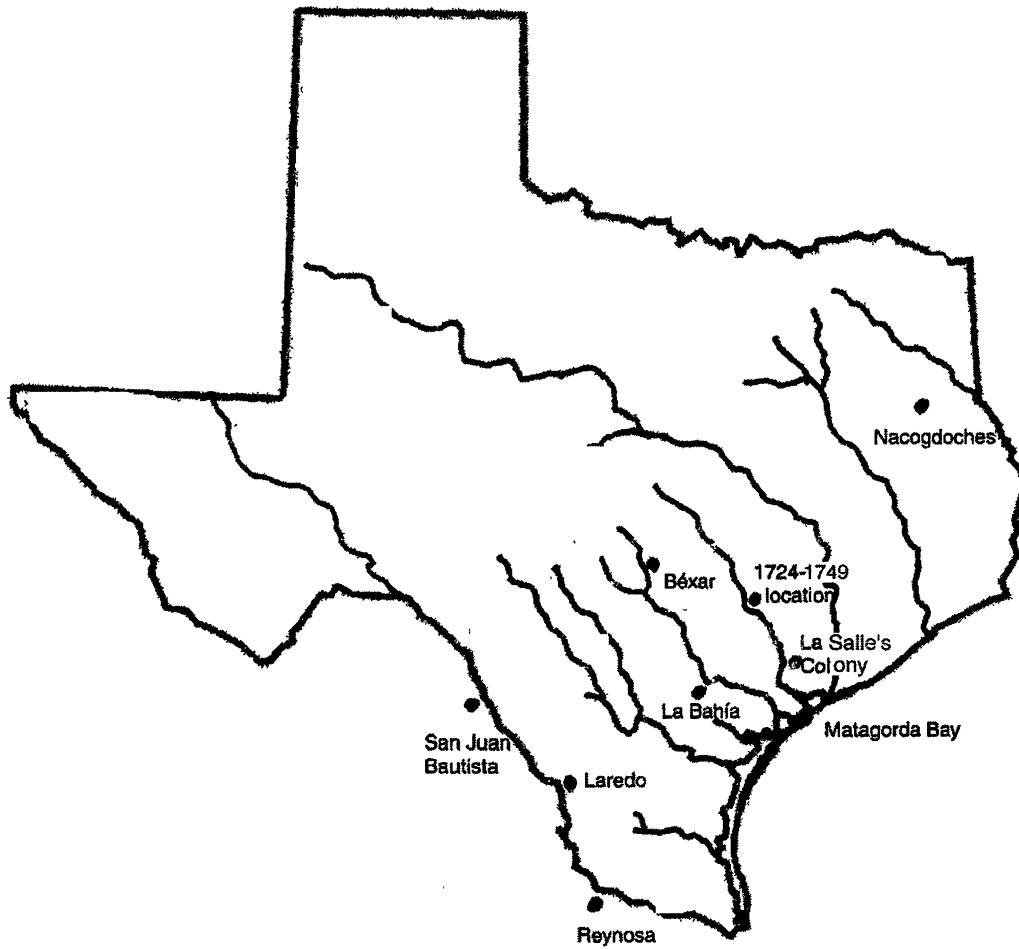
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La Bahía del Espíritu Santo and Texas
1722-1821



CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION

The lands between the Rio Grande and the Red River have long fascinated both historians and laymen alike. Tales of heroic deeds and rugged individuals are sprinkled throughout the hundreds of scholarly efforts aimed at uncovering Texas' rich history. Unfortunately, cultural and religious biases, sparked in part by the Black Legend of Spanish brutality during the conquest of America, prejudiced much of this early scholarship and rendered a significant aspect of our state's heritage undiscovered. First popularized by sixteenth-century Protestant writers, the notion that Spanish culture "suffered from the evil effects of both monarchical absolutism and Roman Catholicism" came to dominate the works of William Hickling Prescott and many others, and is often referred to as "Prescott's Paradigm." Essentially, these scholars believed that "progress required liberty in the guise of democratic institutions, freedom of worship and of expression, and laissez-faire economics," and that because Spaniards enjoyed none of these, their impact on the development of Texas was minimal.¹

This negative image is especially pronounced in works describing the inhabitants of Spanish Texas. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, historians

¹ Richard Kagan, "Prescott's Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain," *American Historical Review* 101 (April 1996): 427 (quotation 1), 429 (quotation 2).

like Henry Foote and William Kennedy justified the decline of Spanish Texas by arguing that Hispanic society was “so debased” that it was futile “to expect. . . an enlightened polity” from a neglected, overburdened frontier population. The works of Henderson K. Yoakum further cemented the notion that Hispanic Texas was of no consequence and that the Anglo-Saxon contributions to Texas’ past were far more significant. Like many of their contemporaries, these men had difficulty separating the romantic myths of Texas history from fact and reality.²

In an effort to legitimize twentieth-century study of Spain’s American possessions, and the borderlands in particular, a new generation of historians began to mine the archives of Mexico and Spain. The work of Herbert Eugene Bolton, Charles Wilson Hackett, and William Dunn helped uncover much of Spain’s contribution to settlement north of the Rio Grande. This scholarship focused primarily on the exploration of Texas, the implementation of Spanish institutions north of the Rio Grande, and the pacification of the indigenous population. These historians erased many misconceptions about not only the sequence of events in the Spanish period, but also the reasons for the demise of the Spanish Empire in North America. More importantly, they did well to relate events in Texas to international happenings in both the Americas and Europe, something noticeably missing from previous scholarship. Like most of their contemporaries, however, these authors essentially wrote about prominent public figures

²Stephen Stagner, “Epics, Science, and the Lost Frontier: Texas Historical Writing, 1836-1936,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 12 (April 1981): 168-70; 168 (quotation.) In 1855 Henderson K. Yoakum described Tejano society as unresourceful, while Henry S. Foote wrote that, among other things, moral degeneracy among Mexican Texans led to the breakdown of state authority and increased limits on individual freedom. See Henderson K. Yoakum, *History of Texas from its First Settlement in 1685 to its Annexation to the United States in 1846*, 2 vols. (New York: Redfield Press, 1855-1856) and Henry S. Foote, *Texas and the Texans: Or Advance of the Anglo-Americans to the Southwest*, 2 vols. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1935).

and the major events of the period. What readers cannot find in these narratives is any real discussion of what life was like for the men and women who crossed the Rio Grande in the eighteenth century looking for wealth and opportunity.³

As the twentieth century advanced, so did the level of scholarship concerning Spain's contribution to the political, religious, and administrative history of Texas. Carlos Eduardo Castañeda's seven-volume *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* (1938-1956) was an excellent synthesis of scholarship up to that time. Castañeda analyzed political issues and mission development, placed Texas within the context of the Spanish empire, and generally provided a much more balanced assessment of Spain's colonial presence in Texas. Unfortunately, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* glossed over the role of Hispanic settlers by focusing on the effectiveness of missionary efforts rather than socioeconomic development within the secular community. Even as late as the 1970s cultural biases lurked beneath the surface of historical analysis. One of the more popular works among general readers in recent years, T. R. Fehrenbach's *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (1968), argued that rather than build a flourishing community on the northern frontier, Spanish settlers instead "became hunters, fishers, loafers, and in some cases, thieves."⁴

Rather than utilize local administrative correspondence, economic records, or

³ Donald Chipman, "Spanish Texas" in *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations*, ed. Walter L. Buenger and Robert A. Calvert (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 106-110. For a thorough discussion of Spanish Texas historiography see Gerald Poyo and Gilberto Hinojosa, "Spanish Texas and Borderlands Historiography in Transition: Implications for United States History," *Journal of American History* 75 (September 1988): 393-416.

⁴ Chipman, "Spanish Texas" in *Texas Through Time*, 112; Carlos E. Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas in Texas*, 7 vols. (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones, 1936-1958); T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1968), 55 (quotation).

other quotidian sources, many of these early historians relied instead on observations of Europeans or colonial administrators from Mexico City, a process that greatly prejudiced their writings. Visitors often viewed the entire New World population as inferior, and many Mexican officials felt the inhabitants of the Spanish frontier represented the lowest levels of society, prone to all manner of indiscretion and vice. The Mexican *Consulado*, a merchant guild, argued the native population in the Americas was “stupid by constitution, without innovative talent nor intellectual force” and that *mestizos*, the dominant ethnic group on the frontier, were “incontinent drunkards, laggards without honor, nor loyalty, cleanliness, nor decency.” Unfortunately the *Consulado*’s description of Hispanic society was echoed by foreign observers and by generations of historians who based their research on such assessments.⁵

Fortunately this deficiency appears to be coming to an end. For the general reader, David Weber’s *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (1992) and Donald Chipman’s *Spanish Texas, 1519-1821* (1992) are both excellent syntheses of the Spanish experience in North America. There is also a growing number of studies focused on the development of a Hispanic identity in what is now Texas; works that not only fill a void within the history of Hispanic culture in Texas, but also help create better understanding and appreciation for all Texans. An excellent starting point is David Weber’s *Foreigners in their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (1973), a compilation of primary documents from the Hispanic Southwest in which Weber speaks directly to the bias of previous generations. In confronting charges of laziness against those living on the northern frontier, he notes that “as we gain more knowledge of the activities of

⁵Timothy Anna, *Spain and the Loss of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 74 (quotation).

Mexican pioneers we may discover that their energy and inventiveness was remarkable, given the odds against them.”⁶

Luckily, Weber’s call for more specific interpretations of local circumstances in the Spanish Southwest has not gone unheeded. The efforts of Oakah Jones, Gilberto Hinojosa, Gerald Poyo and Jesús F. de la Teja bring a clearer understanding of not only day-to-day existence on the Spanish frontier, but how that existence was shaped by the realities of life in a colonial empire. Further increasing our understanding of Spanish Texas is the emergence of studies that examine the development of Native American cultures during the Spanish period. Because of the efforts of these and other writers, the Hispanic contribution to Texas history is slowly starting to emerge. There is, however, more work to be done.⁷

As the seventeenth century drew to a close, the international rivalry between France and Spain set in motion events that would forever change the lands known today as Texas. Though never enamored with the region’s rough environment and untamed Indians, the Spanish Crown nevertheless initiated, in 1716, a process of settlement, pacification, and economic development in the hopes of securing the northern frontier of

⁶ David Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Donald Chipman, *Spanish Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press); Weber, *Foreigners in their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1973), 19 (quotation).

⁷ Gerald Poyo and Gilberto Hinojosa, eds., *Tejano Origins in Eighteenth Century San Antonio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), x, xi. Recent social histories of Spanish Texas include Oakah Jones, *Los Paisanos: Spanish Settlers on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979); Gilberto Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition. Laredo, 1755-1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983); Gerald Poyo, ed., *Tejano Journey* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Jesús F. de la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar: A Community on New Spain’s Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). For more on the development of the Native American culture in Spanish North America, see 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: University of Texas A&M Press, 1975) and Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Indian*

New Spain from foreign encroachment. Long before the draw of cheap land brought thousands of Anglos from the east, settlers from Monterrey, Saltillo, Monclova, and all of northern New Spain moved north into Texas with the hopes of making better lives for themselves and their families. First among the Caddoan peoples in East Texas, then in Central Texas at San Antonio de Béxar, the Spanish slowly began to secure their claim to *La Provincia de los Tejas*.

The last of three original settlements, La Bahía del Espíritu Santo was constructed near the Gulf Coast to pacify the defiant Karankawa natives and protect the Texas coastline. The diverse group of settlers, soldiers, and missionaries that came to occupy the coastal plain often worked toward opposite goals, although they each shared in the struggles that greeted them on the northern frontier. They worked together when necessary, and yet at the same time sought personal gains as well. Isolated from the economic and political infrastructure of New Spain, this small community overcame a variety of natural and human obstacles to form the nucleus of early Tejano society along the coastal plain by the end of the eighteenth century.

Often overshadowed by the capital dwellers at San Antonio de Béxar, or those on the French border in East Texas, La Bahía was in fact an essential facet of Spain's occupation of Texas. Because the province was so far from the administrative capital in Mexico City, some colonial officials had initial hopes of using Matagorda Bay to send supplies and correspondence to the province. Later, when faced with intrusive Americans from the United States and decreasing revenues in Madrid, the coastal plain was mentioned time and again as an avenue for trade throughout Spain's North American

possessions. By the end of the Spanish period, even outsiders could see the strategic importance of the small fort near the coast, and it became the focus of filibuster attempts time and again.

Unfortunately, most administrators in Madrid rarely looked toward the coastal settlement with more than passing interest, and because the needs of the Spanish crown were in stark contrast to the needs of its colonial subjects in New Spain, many policy decisions ran counter to the needs of communities like La Bahía. The traditional mercantilist relationship between Spain and the colonies created an environment in which essential goods, manpower, political decisions, and even bare necessities requested by local officials were the prerogative of royal administrators. Additionally, powerful merchant houses in Spain monopolized the rights to colonial trade and were often able to prohibit inter-colonial commerce. As a result, small communities like La Bahía never reached their full potential.

Regrettably, just as Spanish administrators often overlooked the inhabitants of the coastal plain and La Bahía, most scholars have minimized the role of the community in the course of Texas History. The prevailing image of La Bahía is one of failure, incompetence, and irrelevance, although the reasons for such assumptions are not exactly clear. The first studies of the area focus almost entirely on events after the Spanish period, in particular the infamous massacre of Colonel James Fannin and his men during the Texas Revolution. Textbooks rarely mention the role of La Bahía during the Spanish period, preferring instead to focus on San Antonio de Béxar, perhaps because of its designation as provincial capital or events surrounding the fall of the Alamo in the nineteenth century. For whatever reason, historians of the Spanish period have largely

overlooked the men and women who made their homes on the coastal plain.⁸

The earliest work to focus directly on Spanish La Bahía is Kathryn Stoner O'Connor's *The Presidio La Bahía del Espíritu Santo, 1721-1846* (1966). O'Connor does well to organize a brief narrative of major events in and around the community, however, the book is fairly general and does not treat socio-economic development at all. In *Remember Goliad!* (1994) Craig Roell updates much of O'Connor's work and describes the entire process of colonization in a much more objective manner. The development of the missions is ably covered by Castañeda's *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* (1936-1958), and Herbert Eugene Bolton's "The Founding of Mission Rosario: A Chapter in the History of the Gulf Coast" (1906) and *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century* (1915). More recently, Alicia Tjarks briefly addresses demographic expansion in the coastal community in her essay "Comparative Demographic Analysis of Texas, 1777-1793" (1974), although she states somewhat paradoxically that even though demographic expansion was "more pronounced" in La Bahía than any other Texas settlement near the end of the century, the community "offered little incentive to civilian settlers." Although each of these works does examine a different aspect of La Bahía's history, missing from each is a discussion of socioeconomic development on the coastal plain in general and, more importantly, how the environment, hostile Indians, and the inevitable decline of Spain's mercantilist empire shaped that development.⁹

⁸See Clarence Wharton, *Remember Goliad* (Glorietta, NM: Rio Grande Press, 1931); Irene Hoffman Friedrichs, *History of Goliad* (Victoria: Regal Printers, 1961); Vernon Blake, *Goliad* (Goliad: Goliad Printing Company, 1948).

⁹Katherine Stoner O'Connor, *The Presidio La Bahía del Espíritu Santo* (Austin: Von Boeckman-Jones, 1966); Herbert Eugene Bolton, "The Founding of Mission Rosario: A Chapter in the History of the Gulf Coast." *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 10 (October 1906), 113-39; Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century: Studies in Spanish Colonial Administration*. (reprint, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970); Craig H. Roell, *Remember Goliad* (Austin: Texas State Historical

In light of the considerable obstacles placed in their path, the fact that by the end of the century La Bahía showed dramatic signs of improvement is remarkable and certainly deserving of further consideration. Lost in the scholarship devoted to the Spanish frontier in North America are the significant contributions these *pobladores*, or pioneers, made to the development of Texas during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In spite of constant conflicts with the Karankawas, administrative neglect, the forced relocation of the entire community three times in less than thirty years, and conditions that rendered farming almost impossible, La Bahía was a critical part of Texas as the eighteenth century closed.

For many of the reasons cited above, the development of La Bahía from an often-neglected defense post to the focus of administrative reform, target for foreign attack, and object of rebel occupation has been glossed over by historians of Spanish Texas. Certainly the fact that San Antonio de Béxar has become the largest and most important Hispanic community in Texas today has encouraged most historians of the period to emphasize the role of Bexareños (Béxar residents) in the development of Spanish Texas. Further limiting interest in Spanish La Bahía is the general fascination of Texas historians with the revolutionary decades and the murder of Colonel James Fannin's men during the Texas Revolution. Perhaps the most glaring gap in the historiography of La Bahía,

Association, 1994); Alicia Tjarks, "Comparative Demographic Analysis of Texas, 1777-1793," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 77 (January 1974), 302 (quotation) (hereafter cited as *SHQ*). Robert Weddle's *The Wreck of the Belle, the Ruin of La Salle* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001) is an excellent summary of events on the coastal plain prior to Spanish settlement of the region and clears up many of the misunderstandings concerning the French expedition.

however, is an analysis of the final years of Spanish rule and how the events of those years reflect the inability of Spanish officials to devote enough resources to the struggling frontier province.

CHAPTER 2
CONFLICT AND DISSAPOINTMENT ON THE COASTAL PLAIN,
1722-1749

When Spanish explorers first turned their eyes north of the Rio Grande they found before them a land of hostile natives, rugged terrain, and few resources. Accustomed to exploiting the more settled native populations in central New Spain, and extracting the vast mineral riches of the Sierras, the Spanish initially left their northern frontier unoccupied. After almost two centuries of neglect, however, political intrigues and diplomatic pressures thousands of miles away sparked a flurry of economic, cultural, and demographic development in Texas, much of it centered on the Gulf Coast. The piney woods of East Texas saw the initial wave of permanent Spanish settlers in 1716, followed by a way station for goods and communication at San Antonio de Béxar in 1718. Ever wary of the French presence in nearby Louisiana, however, the Spanish erected yet another settlement, this time on the coastal plain some fifty leagues southeast of Béxar.

Built on Garcitas Creek, northwest of what are now Lavaca and Matagorda bays, in 1722, the community of La Bahía del Espíritu Santo was viewed by many colonial administrators as the most important of Texas's young settlements. The military garrison

and the Franciscans of Mission Espíritu Santo were charged not only with bringing the volatile Karankawa tribes to mission life, but also with protecting the Texas coastline from foreign encroachment. Colonial administrators also envisioned the settlement as an important gateway for essential items and correspondence. Notwithstanding these lofty goals, however, the first group of settlers initially found life along the Texas coast full of disappointment. Food and material shortages, countless confrontations with the neighboring natives, sickness and discomfort brought on by the unpredictable climate, and the cost-conscious reforms of the Spanish Crown limited socio-economic development at La Bahía considerably. Although Badeños (La Bahía settlers) did enjoy relatively peaceful relations with some neighboring Indians, conditions on the coastal plain were such that, even after the entire settlement was twice relocated, not one civilian family made their home in La Bahía by mid-century.

The permanent occupation of Texas, and in particular the coastal plain around Matagorda Bay, is best understood in the context of the Spanish empire as a whole. The search for fame, riches, and the desire to spread the Catholic Faith characterized the Spanish conquest of the New World, and Spanish activities throughout the northern reaches of New Spain were no different. These ideals of “God, gold, and glory” emerged after four centuries of warfare in southern Spain against the Moors, and they formed the rationale for virtually all Spanish efforts during the first century of colonization. In Texas, the failure of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, part of the Pánfilo de Narváez Florida expedition in 1528, to find anything of value to Spaniards, and the confirmation of this

fact by the Coronado and Moscoso expeditions, 1541 and 1542 respectively, lay the groundwork for decades of neglect.¹

After a century and a half of absence, Spain returned to Texas when its possession was challenged by the intrusion of Robert Rene Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, at Matagorda Bay. Iberian legal traditions dictated that possession of any territory could be legitimized only through occupation. This concept, known as *ute posidetis*, dictated that if Spain was to retain control of its northern frontier, then occupation was necessary. In 1685, after French pirates attacked the Yucatán peninsula, several captives informed the Spanish of French activities along the Gulf Coast, presumably at the Bay of Espíritu Santo (now Matagorda Bay). Although history records that the efforts of La Salle scarcely presented a serious threat, the presence of the hated French so near the mines of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí in northern Mexico provided the necessary spark for the Spanish occupation of Texas. After four overland *entradas* and sea expeditions, Alonso de León's discovery of La Salle's post in 1689 confirmed Spanish fears and refocused their attention on the Gulf Coast. Coupled with De León's recommendation that some sort of military presence remain in Texas, Father Damián Massanet and his Franciscan brethren began to push for a mission for the East Texas Indians. Spanish officials responded tentatively, however. Unwilling to commit significant financial resources, and under pressure from

¹ An excellent overview of Spanish Imperial motivations and the *Reconquista* of Southern Spain is J.H. Eliot, *Imperial Spain, 1469-1716* (London: Penguin Books, 1963). For more on the travels and activities of Cabeza de Vaca see Buckingham Smith, trans., *Relation of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca* ([Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell for H.C. Murphy], 1871) and Chipman, "In Search of Cabeza de Vaca's Route Across Texas: An Historiographical Survey," *SHQ* 91 (October 1987):132-35. For more on early Spanish expeditions into Texas see Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (reprint, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963) and Bolton, *Coronado, Knight of Pueblos and Plains* (New York: Whittlesey, 1949).

the friars to minimize the military presence, Viceroy Conde de Galve authorized only a mission.²

Throughout the early 1690's, Spanish attention returned to the coastal plain time and again. During a supply expedition to East Texas, De León learned of several French children held captive by the Karankawa Indians on the coast. He sent a group of soldiers to the area and, after a brief skirmish in which several Indians were killed, the hostages were rescued. While near the Gulf, other coastal tribes informed De León that a French ship stopped along the coast for fresh water and firewood, prompting the governor to recommend a large military occupation of the Texas coast. Although his suggestion was deemed too expensive at the time, administrators were beginning to realize the importance of the Texas coast and, in particular, the region surrounding Matagorda Bay.³

Hoping to alleviate supply problems at the East Texas mission, Viceroy Conde de Galve authorized the Llanos-Cárdenas expedition to search the Texas coastline for a viable inland river, describe and map Matagorda Bay, and determine if the site of La Salle's colony was suitable for a Spanish presidio. A year later the new governor of Coahuila, Domingo Terán de los Ríos, was able to receive supplies for the East Texas missions at Matagorda, undoubtedly signaling a shift in Spanish neglect of the vulnerable Texas coastline. Unfortunately the supplies were too little, too late. In 1693, after several years of frustration, a *Junta General* in Mexico City decided that due to the unlikelihood

²Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 77-88. For more on the search for La Salle, see Robert S. Weddle, *Wilderness Manhunt. The Spanish Search for La Salle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973) and Weddle, *Wreck of the Belle*. Ironically Weddle argues that the object of such despair for the Spanish, Fort Saint Louis, in reality never existed and the French settlement was little more than an emergency encampment by stranded sailors, criminals, and their families. See 196-98. See also Donald Chipman, "Alonso de León: Pathfinder in East Texas, 1686-1690," *East Texas Historical Association Journal* 33 (1995): 3-17.

³Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 89-91.

of any real French threat in the area, and the inherent logistical problems that arose, the missionaries were to abandon their work among the *Tejas* Indians.⁴

For the next decade the Texas wilderness remained a vast, unprotected buffer between what soon became French Louisiana and the mining centers of central Mexico. However, the arrival of a French trader, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, at Presidio San Juan Bautista del Río Grande in 1714, combined with an increasing number of French traders among the Indians of the Texas-Louisiana border, compelled Spanish administrators to rethink their previous neglect. St. Denis had ties to numerous Indian groups throughout Texas and Louisiana, and his presence convinced at least some Spanish administrators of the need for a more effective presence. In 1715 Viceroy Duque de Linares authorized a substantial expenditure of both men and money in the hope of once again securing the northern frontier from French influence. The Spanish did, however, learn from their previous mistakes. Rather than place one small, unprotected mission some four hundred leagues from the nearest outpost, they created four missions in East Texas protected by a presidio garrisoned by twenty-five soldiers. Also, at the request of Father Olivares, Mission San Antonio de Valero and Presidio San Antonio de Béxar were built near the headwaters of the San Antonio River to serve as a way station for goods bound for East Texas.⁵

⁴ Ibid., 94, 100.

⁵Patricia Lemeé, "Tíos and Tantes: Familial and Political Relationships of Natchitoches and the Spanish Colonial Frontier," *SHQ* 101 (January 1998): 348-51; Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 105-16; See De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*.

By 1720 the province of Texas could boast two military posts, presidios San Antonio de Béxar and Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, on the Neches River, and six Franciscan missions. The French influence in East Texas was strong, however, and without a steady supply of trade goods, it was unlikely the Spanish would ever supplant French economic control of the region. It was becoming increasingly clear to Spanish administrators that without a reliable system of supply and communication, the entire province would remain undeveloped and vulnerable. To remedy this deficiency, they once again turned to Matagorda Bay and the coastal plain.

In addition to these logistical concerns, international events reared their head. In 1718 King Felipe V's aspirations toward the French throne led him to declare war against France, England, Holland, and Austria. In 1719, when news of the conflict reached the French at Natchitoches on the Red River, in today's northwestern Louisiana, their commander caught the nearby Spanish unaware, easily taking possession of the mission at Los Adaes. The unsuspecting missionaries and soldiers fled to Béxar in the fall of 1719, and left East Texas to the French.

The Spanish would not remain absent for long, however. Realizing that without an effective presence relations between the French and the East Texas natives would only improve, the Marqués de San Miguel de Aguayo, the newly appointed governor of Coahila, was selected to restore the abandoned missions and strengthen the Spanish presence in Texas. After their previous supply problems the Spanish knew a safe harbor on the Gulf Coast was essential, and in April 1718, Oliván de Rebolledo, a member of the viceroy's *junta de guerra* (war council) informed the king that supplies could be transported easily across Texas from Matagorda Bay. Although the Treaty of the Hague

ended official hostilities between France and Spain in 1720, the viceroy was still not going to take any unnecessary risks. He ordered Aguayo to establish a presidio on Matagorda Bay, at the very site of La Salle's failed settlement.⁶

From their previous experiences along the coast, the Spanish knew the indigenous population to be uncooperative at best. Not only had Karankawas decimated La Salle's original colony, but De León also had trouble with them when he attempted to ransom three French hostages. It was therefore imperative that missionary efforts accompany the military presence at Matagorda Bay. Franciscans Agustín Patrón y Guzmán, Matías Saenz, Diego Zapata, and Ignacio Baena, from the College of Zacatecas, were selected to accompany Aguayo's expedition. Father Patrón had several years experience in Texas, first at Mission San Miguel in East Texas, then, after the Franciscans' retreat to Béxar in 1719, at Mission San José. Father Saenz also served in East Texas, at Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, and made several trips to Mexico City to inform the viceroy of the horrible conditions there before being appointed Guardian of the College of Zacatecas in 1719. Father Zapata was a teacher at the College of Zacatecas before his transfer to Espíritu Santo, though unfortunately both he and Father Baena died at the mission in 1723. It was these four men, two very experienced in Texas affairs and two young teachers, who would try to bring the defiant Karankawas to mission life.⁷

⁶ Rebolledo to King, 28 April 1718, Bexar Archives, translations, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, 2:22, 1:32 (hereafter BAT). For an overview of Spanish and French activities during this period, see Elizabeth A.H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontations of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1975), 155-225.

⁷ O'Connor, *Presidio La Bahía*, 8; Benedict Leutenegger, trans., *The Zacatecan Missionaries in Texas: Excerpts from the Libros de los Decretos of the Missionary College of Zacatecas, 1707-1828* (Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 1973), 138, 146, 155, 111.

Aguayo gathered the men and supplies for his expedition in Monclova in October 1719. He used twelve thousand pesos granted by the Crown and nine thousand of his own to purchase 2,800 horses, 4,800 cattle, 6,400 sheep, and 4,600 loads of provisions from merchants and ranchers in Coahuila. He recruited 84 men in Saltillo and, after arriving in Monclova, set about filling the Viceroy's request for a total of five hundred men from Parras, Coahuila, Zacatecas, and other communities in northern New Spain. The men were to be well-paid, permanent soldiers with families, farming experience, and knowledge of frontier life. Unfortunately the region suffered a dearth of fighting men already, and finding the proper number and type of volunteers proved extremely difficult. In Celaya, for example, the *alcalde mayor* (district magistrate) was accused of selecting only vagabonds and ruffians for Aguayo's expedition, rather than the Spanish families the crown hoped to send into Texas. And although the *alcalde* was instructed to send 120 married men to Monclova, in addition to other single recruits, only 26 of the 110 men that eventually left Celaya were married.⁸

Nevertheless, after a year's preparations in Monclova, Aguayo's expedition entered the province of Texas in March 1721. He brought with him nine military companies, one of which he dispatched to the Matagorda Bay area under the command of Domingo Ramón to begin construction of Presidio La Bahía. Accompanying Ramón were four missionaries and numerous servants. Also, among the twenty-six married soldiers in the original company, it is likely that some of their families accompanied the expedition. The Ramóns and the other officers were handpicked men from influential families in northern New Spain, or from loyal men already in Aguayo's employ, like

⁸Vito Alessio Robles, *Coahuila y Texas en la época colonial* (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1938), 459.

Gabriel Costales, later a captain of La Bahía. Ramón's forty men received 350 horses, 600 cattle, 800 sheep, and 500 loads of food, war provisions, and clothing for their initial occupation of Espíritu Santo Bay. So confident was Aguayo in the viability of La Salle's site that in April or May of 1721, before he had even seen the region, he ordered another 3,500 pesos worth of supplies and provisions from his merchant in Veracruz to be readied for shipment to the Bay.⁹

After first visiting the soldiers and missionaries in East Texas, Aguayo joined Captain Ramón in March of 1722 and found an area he deemed very attractive for future settlement. To insure the security of the presidio he increased the original contingent of soldiers from forty to ninety men, more than doubling the Spanish presence in the region. Aguayo noted an abundance of deer and turkey along the San Antonio-La Bahía road, and he observed plenty of land for raising horses and cattle. All around the presidio there were "beautiful fields of clear land and flowers." He was encouraged by both the docile nature of the local Indians and their willingness to accept the Catholic Faith. Aguayo noted one native family's request that three of its children be baptized in the presence of the Marqués, and soon after his arrival, Father Agustín Patrón preached to large numbers of Coco Indians. Other Indians in the area assured the missionaries that many nearby native groups would be receptive to a mission. After going to great lengths to ensure the garrison was properly supplied, and considering the positive descriptions of the region

⁹ Richard G. Santos, trans., *Aguayo Expedition into Texas, 1721* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing, 1981), 112-18. Note 33, page 113, indicates Costales had previously worked for Aguayo, and note 112, page 118, states that Diego Ramón I succeeded Alonso de León as Governor of Coahuila in 1691. His sons Diego II, Joseph Domingo and Andrés Ramón all served on the frontier at both San Juan Bautista and La Bahía. Joseph Domingo also led the 1716 expedition to East Texas with Padre Isidro Félix Espinosa.

given by earlier expeditions, it is safe to assume Aguayo had the utmost confidence in the security of this isolated frontier community.¹⁰

When Aguayo left La Bahía in April 1722, the men, women, and children that made up the military community were well provisioned, and represented to many officials the most important of Texas' three young settlements. Aguayo noted before his expedition that securing Matagorda Bay meant that supplies would come more quickly to Los Adaes and Béxar, providing immense savings to the Royal Treasury. Furthermore, with the French port of New Orleans just up the Gulf Coast, a defensive presence along the coastal plain was imperative in the minds of many Spanish officials. The fact that the viceroy, the Marqués de Casafuerte, instructed Aguayo to increase the La Bahía garrison's complement of men to ninety effectives, compared to fifty in Bexar, clearly indicated the settlement's importance to colonial administrators at the time.¹¹

Unfortunately, there was trouble almost from the beginning. The extra supplies Aguayo ordered from Veracruz for La Bahía were redirected to East Texas after their arrival on the Texas coast. Furthermore, his original assessment of the neighboring Indians was off the mark. Almost immediately a misunderstanding between soldiers and the native population claimed Captain Ramón's life. When, in 1723, Governor Fernando Pérez de Almazán received word of the death of two soldiers who were guarding the

¹⁰Photostat of Aguayo Diary, *Archivo de San Francisco El Grande*, Biblioteca Nacional de México, photostats, Spanish Materials from Various Sources, University of Texas, Austin, vol. 710, Box 2Q229 (hereafter cited as ASFG), 279-80, 280 (quotation); Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 2:167. In Juan Bautista Chapa, *Texas and Northeastern Mexico, 1630-1690* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 129-30, the chronicler of the Alonso de León 1689 expedition that found La Salle's site on the Bay wrote that the area was an excellent location to defend against any attack, and that there were an abundance of cornstalks still growing nearby.

¹¹ Photostat of Aguayo Diary, ASFG, 227; Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 124; Santos, *Aguayo Expedition*, 76.

horse herd, he decided to investigate the matter personally. He arrived in La Bahía in January 1724 and was not pleased with what he found. Almazán notified the viceroy that conditions on the coast were completely unacceptable. Gambling was rampant, discipline nonexistent, and the garrison was in rags. Rather than gather firewood, the stockade erected under Aguayo's direction was torn down and burned. Even more disturbing to the governor was the attack on the horse herd. According to *soldado* Nicolás Meave, among himself and three other soldiers guarding the horses there was but one pistol, and it was unreliable. None of the four had a horse, and both Meave and Juan Rodríguez had to escape the attack by running toward the presidio.¹²

These were not the only deficiencies Almazán found. Several soldiers informed him they were ill-prepared to defend against any aggression. Although Aguayo left the post fully equipped just ten months earlier, Almazán found the soldiers at La Bahía sorely lacking essential items. Out of 90 soldiers, 32 owned nothing; they were unarmed, had no horses, and possessed no land. Thirteen more could not be counted as fighting men, because their weapons were inoperable. Even more alarming for Governor Almazán was the fact that, even with the 350 horses Aguayo had left, 54 men did not own a horse. Amazingly, less than a year after the presidio's founding, only 21 of 89 men recorded by the governor could boast both a weapon and a horse. In an isolated province inhabited by

¹² O'Connor, *Presidio La Bahía*, 13; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 2:179-81; "Autos hechos en La Bahía de el Espíritu Santo sobre dos Muertes que ejecutaron los Indios en los soldados que guardaron la cavallada de dho Presidio el día de 13 de enero, de este Año de 1724, por Don Fernando Pérez de Almazán, Governador Y Capitan General de esta Provincia de Tejas Nueva Filipinas," 13 January 1724, Archivo General de la Nación de México, Ramo Provincias Internas, vol. 181, Hackett Transcripts vol. 522, frame 304-308 (hereafter PI:T).

numerous hostile Indian groups, Almazán knew these deficiencies could prove disastrous.¹³

Although the governor might have accepted the garrison's shortage of weapons and horses, due to the unpredictable nature of frontier conditions, he could not disregard the lack of discipline and poor decision-making by the garrison's new commander, Diego Ramón. Bernabé de Anza and Fernando Pérez de León, both privates, testified that they heard a scout inform the commander that Indians were nearby and could easily threaten the garrison's horses. Nevertheless, Captain Ramón and Sergeant Ignacio de la Garza decided there was no need to move the herd closer to the fort or increase the guard. Almazán knew that unless conditions along the coast improved immediately, the province as a whole would become very vulnerable. In 1724, therefore, he recommended that Juan Antonio Bustillos y Cevallos replace Ramón.¹⁴

When Captain Bustillos arrived at La Bahía it was considered "the worst organized presidio in the province," and it soon became apparent both to him and to his superiors that La Salle's site near Matagorda Bay was not conducive to a successful settlement. The Karankawa Indians, who remained agitated after their clash with Domingo Ramón, resisted the missionaries' attempts to congregate them permanently at Mission Espíritu Santo. Migratory by nature, these coastal Indians preferred to shift their habitat between the marshy, lagoon-like bays along the Gulf of Mexico in the fall and winter months, and the upland prairies of the coastal plain during the summer. They relied on shellfish and large game animals like deer during the winter months, but

¹³ Almazán to Casafuerte, 3 April 1724, Archivo General de la Nación de México, Ramo Provincias Internas, vol. 32, frame 80-85 microfilm (hereafter AGN:PI).

¹⁴ Juan de Ohván de Rebolledo to Almazán, 4 September 1724, PI:T, vol. 522, pp. 308, 329.

preferred to transfer inland during the summer and subsist on plant life and fruits. Even their social structure seemed somewhat based on this migratory shift, as the large, communal groups along the coast in the winter would divide into many smaller, family-size encampments in the warmer months. The friars soon realized that the concept of mission life, in which daily routines were structured, was simply not attractive to the Karankawas, and Father Patrón agreed with Captain Bustillos's recommendation that the settlement be moved.¹⁵

After four difficult years on Garcitas Creek, Captain Bustillos and Governor Almazán informed the viceroy of a much more attractive location for the settlement ten leagues inland on the Guadalupe River, near present-day Mission Valley. The proposed location, according to Bustillos, had sufficient stone and timber for construction and a permanent river, the Guadalupe, less than a league away. Traditionally, scholars have assumed that the site Bustillos referenced was Mission Valley, near Victoria. Recent archaeological investigations, however, have uncovered a preliminary location, referred to by archaeologists as the Tonkawa Bank Site. There has been unearthed in what is now the Victoria City Park, a Spanish colonial compound, including a stone foundation of approximately one thousand square feet, two rooms, a fireplace, several buttresses, and a stone wall on at least three sides. This discovery has raised several questions about the initial relocation of the mission-presidio compound.¹⁶

¹⁵ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 2: 222 (quotation); Robert Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas. An Ecological Study of Cultural Tradition and Change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 101-104; O'Connor, *Presidio La Bahía*, 13.

¹⁶ Governor Fernando Pérez de Almazán to the viceroy, 4 July 1726, PI:T, vol. 531, pp. 57-59; Kay V. Hinds, Anne A. Fox, and E.H. Schmeidlín, "An Overview of Test Excavations and Documentary Research at 41VT10, the Tonkawa Bank Site, Victoria City Park, Victoria, Texas" *Bulletin of the Texas Archaeological Society* 70 (1999): 80-86 (hereafter *BTAS*).

For example, Bustillos referenced two distinct areas near the Guadalupe, one approximately a quarter league from a small creek in which he had already constructed an *acequia* (irrigation ditch) and another at a much larger creek, presumably the Guadalupe. Although it is unclear when the Spanish abandoned the Tonkawa Bank site in favor of the larger area at Mission Valley, it is possible that the friars had begun construction at the Tonkawa Bank location before given official permission to abandon La Salle's site. Furthermore, it seems curious that although both Almazán and Bustillos referred to the superiority of the Mission Valley location and the need for a large area for the numerous Jaraname Indians, significant physical improvements were made at the interim location, using valuable materials and labor.¹⁷

Regardless of the reasons, by 1726 the missionaries had settled on Mission Valley as their permanent location. After two moves in rapid succession, the friars' hard work began to pay off. There were five structures built for the mission complex, all made of sandstone from a nearby quarry, that formed an L-shaped plaza. There was, presumably, a wooden fence along the east side of the complex to enclose the compound completely and a limestone kiln, twelve to fifteen meters north of the complex, that was probably used to fire clay pots, jewelry, and cooking materials. There were also several hundred Jaraname Indians who seemed relatively pleased with the friars' presence. Apparently the missionaries selected a location with which the natives were familiar, for just west of

Research at 41VT10, the Tonkawa Bank Site, Victoria City Park, Victoria, Texas" *Bulletin of the Texas Archaeological Society* 70 (1999): 80-86 (hereafter *BTAS*).

¹⁷ Hinds, "Tonkawa Bank Site," 86-92.

the mission complex, in the Indian living area, archaeologists have uncovered evidence that indicates a significant level of native activity prior to Spanish arrival.¹⁸

It is clear that the decision to relocate the settlement at Mission Valley brought immediate benefits. During his inspection of the presidio in November 1727 Brigadier Pedro de Rivera commented on the lack of anything to correct. He found the fort to be well built, sufficiently supplied, and garrisoned with trained, uniformed soldiers.

Although Rivera did cite Bustillos for inflated prices (at this time presidio commanders served as commissaries for their units), overall he described La Bahía as the best presidio in Texas, and referred to the surrounding Indians as weak and unthreatening. In fact, Rivera felt the soldiers and missionaries had been so successful in dealing with the native population that he reduced the garrison by more than half, to fifty.¹⁹

Rivera's recommendation was not at all popular among those who remained at La Bahía. Charged primarily with reducing royal expenditures on the frontier, it is likely that Rivera's own interests prejudiced his assessment of Spanish strength in the north. For his inspection to be a success, the cost of frontier installations had to be reduced significantly, and cutting the military payroll was undoubtedly the easiest way to economize. By discounting the aggressive nature of the Karankawas, Cocos, and Cujanes, groups often described as the fiercest in Texas, Rivera put the security of the

¹⁸ Tamra Walter, "A Preliminary Report of the 1997 TAS Field School Excavations in Area A at Mission Espíritu Santo de Zuñiga (41VT11), Victoria County, Texas," *BTAS* 70 (1999): 118-9. The archaeologists uncovered several distinct layers of midden, the lowest of which contained only pre-historic artifacts, no Spanish colonial materials, which indicated that local natives frequented the area prior to the Spanish arrival.

¹⁹ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 2: 222, 256. For more on the presidial supply system, see Max L. Moorhead, *The Presidio: Bastion of the Borderlands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975).

region at great risk. The French in nearby Louisiana were also undoubtedly pleased to learn of the decreasing Spanish presence along the coast.²⁰

To the soldiers and missionaries who remained in La Bahía, the loss of so many fighting men was devastating. As it was, very few men could be counted on to provide protection from Indian attacks due to a shortage in both weapons and horses. The subtraction of so many able-bodied men, along with their families, substantially reduced the garrison's strength and available labor force. It is also likely that those *soldados* transferred to other posts along the frontier were already well equipped, saving the crown the expense of purchasing additional supplies. Rivera's recommendations left only 144 soldiers to occupy and defend the entire province, and, as we shall see, reduced the coastal garrison to little more than a token force.²¹

Shortly after Rivera's inspection, La Bahía and Espíritu Santo began to experience troubled times. Those who remained on the coastal plain were now faced with a dramatic shortage in manpower and were increasingly vulnerable to Indian attacks. Rivera's order to build a dam on the Guadalupe was ill advised, because not only did the river not lend itself to irrigation, but also because the significantly smaller garrison could not spare the time and labor necessary to accomplish such a large undertaking. In addition to attending daily mass and language lessons, mission Indians were expected to care for the livestock, harvest the crops, build their own houses, and help build and repair the mission itself. The presidial soldiers also faced increased responsibilities after Rivera's inspection. His elimination of the military escort for supplies sent from Saltillo

²⁰Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 2: 222-3. For an assessment of the Rivera Inspection see Jack Jackson and William C. Foster, eds., *Imaginary Kingdom: Texas as Seen by the Rivera and Rubí Expeditions, 1727 & 1767* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1995), 61-70.

to Texas left that duty to the local garrison, and the importance of the San Antonio missions dictated that nine of La Bahía's forty men be stationed there. The reduced military contingent was also expected to assist the missionaries in their conversion efforts, search for runaways, and help in any necessary construction activities.²²

Nevertheless, the first of two dam projects was begun almost immediately, on the Guadalupe River some twelve kilometers north of the mission. While this was unusually far away, the bend in the Guadalupe where the dam was located was the only viable site the friars could locate. The dam itself was rather small, and the *acequia* leading to the mission fields was most likely severely damaged after the first hard rain. The second dam project, on Mission Creek, was only two kilometers south of the settlement and was significantly larger. Unfortunately, this dam also proved unworkable, since during dry months, when irrigation would be most needed, the creek dried up completely. For almost ten years the soldiers, missionaries, and neophytes struggled to fulfill Rivera's directive, all the while supporting themselves on foodstuffs purchased in Béxar and San Juan Bautista because they did not have the labor available to sow their own crops. After successive failures, the missionaries realized that dry farming, coupled with the growing livestock population, was sufficient to feed the men and women under their care, and, in 1736, abandoned the dam project. After investing so much time and effort in these irrigation projects, however, the impact of their failure on the local population cannot be underestimated.²³

²¹Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 131.

²² Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 3: 85-86; BAT, 9: 6, 177.

²³ Archivo General de la Nación, Documentos Para La Historia Ecclesiastica y Civil de la Provincia de Texas, Center for American History. University of Texas at Austin. Vol. 50. Bolton transcripts (hereafter Bolton transcripts), vol. 347. P. 177; Jennifer Rinker, I. Wayne Cox, and Brit

Unfortunately, even without the dam project, labor and material shortages remained the primary obstacle to progress for Badeños. In April 1731 Captain Gabriel Costales, who had assumed command the previous fall, complained to General Rivera that he was very shorthanded and had virtually no supplies. His detachment was spread all over the province, two soldiers had retired and had not been replaced, and there were only three *soldados* available for repair and construction duties. The captain also mentioned that he was in dire need of salt and requested permission to extract the mineral from deposits discovered south of the settlement by his predecessor. Costales closed by arguing that with such manpower and supply constraints he feared the young settlement would never be able to entice significant civilian settlement. In his response, Rivera wrote that the garrison could not spare the manpower to retrieve the salt, as the Captain argued time and again, and that Costales should obtain the salt through proper channels. While it is doubtful that an increased supply of salt would have improved conditions at La Bahía significantly, Rivera's response was typical of Spanish administrators who were under considerable pressure from European merchants to provide goods to communities in America and typifies one of the primary obstacles facing Badeños.²⁴

Costales's concerns were not, however, unfounded. More than a decade after Agauyo's expedition, settlement of the coastal plain certainly had not developed as

Bousman, "The Dam and Acequia Systems of Espíritu Santo de Zuñiga: Construction, Use, and Abandonment," *BTAS* 70 (1999): 124-8. Using tree-ring analysis near Coletto Creek, Rinker, Cox, and Bousman present a fairly detailed description of rainfall patterns during the 1720's and 1730's. They argue that when the mission was first relocated, sometime in 1726, there was higher than average rainfall. This conclusion is somewhat supported by Captain Bustillos's statement in 1726 that several months of hard rains prevented supply trains from reaching the area. Also, when the dam project on Mission Creek was abandoned, sometime in 1736, tree-ring analysis indicates below average rainfall, which likely reduced the creek to a dry bed. See Governor Pérez de Almazán to the viceroy, 4 July 1726, PI:T, vol 531, pp 57-59.

²⁴ Costales had previous experience in Texas during the Agauyo expedition in 1722-1723, and had served thirteen years as a soldier, sergeant, and *alférez* in Cataluña. Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 2: 257-61; Costales to Pedro de Rivera, 12 April 1731, PI:T vol. 236, Bolton transcripts, vol. 531,

hoped. There had been no recorded civilian immigration--although the Canary Islanders of Béxar were originally destined for La Bahía--and economic activity in the area was reduced to small-scale trading with other frontier settlements. Agricultural production remained below subsistence level, and ranching, a future staple of the Texas economy, was slow in developing because there was little demand. Even physical improvements were few, as most soldiers and all neophytes continued to live in *jacales* (mud and stick huts) rather than stone structures.

Supply problems also continued to plague the coastal garrison. In 1735, after being ordered by the viceroy to send fifteen men to Béxar to help prevent Apache depredations, Costales was accused by Captain José Urrutia of sending useless and unprepared soldiers. Urrutia wrote Governor Manuel de Sandoval that Costales sent only thirteen horses and no other provisions, that he was forced to provide for the men out of his own pocket, and that most were unmotivated at best. Additionally, the individual in Béxar with whom Costales had contracted to provide the salaries and needed supplies for his soldiers while they were stationed in San Antonio, had to sue the captain to receive payment. Although Urrutia fumed at receiving poorly equipped, untrained men, Costales countered that he spared all he could, and that in reality, Urrutia was charging his men inflated prices.²⁵

Contrary to Urrutia's accusation, the men about whom he complained represent a microcosm of the entire garrison at La Bahía. There were those who were relatively new to the frontier, such as Joseph Montes, Agustín Pérez, Juan Joseph Villegas, and

pp. 2-9.

²⁵ Urrutia to Sandoval, 1 April 1735, BAT 5: 24-27; Ibid., 7: 25, 48. De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 94, indicates Urrutia charged three pesos per *fanega* of maize, although he paid only two pesos per

Francisco Xavier de Adalpe, whose names do not appear on governor Almazán's inspection of the presidio in 1724. There were also veterans like Agustín de Castro, Sergeant Miguel Olivares, Antonio Martín, Diego Miranda and Christóbal Thadeo, all of whom were members of the original garrison in 1722 and had over ten years experience in Texas. Furthermore, when surveyed by Governor Almazán, Miranda, Thadeo, Olivares, Benítez and Martín all owned both horses and working pistols, an indication that Costales did select men with at least some possessions for service in Béxar.²⁶

Although supply problems continued throughout the 1730's, fortunately for the men and women of La Bahía, their dealings with the Texas native population varied greatly from the experiences of their counterparts in Béxar. As Comanche, Wichita, and other tribes armed with French weapons began driving the Apaches from their northern hunting ranges, the latter's raids on San Antonio increased dramatically in frequency and severity. Large groups of up to eighty warriors were seen outside of Béxar, raising the question of security time and again. There were several deaths outside of Béxar and horse and cattle thefts became frequent. Of greater concern, however, was the Apaches' increased desire for guns, ammunition, and other metal items. Thus Apaches frequently came into closer contact with the Bexareños, increasing the likelihood of violence, and prompting the already short-handed garrison of La Bahía to send reinforcements.

Although there was some debate as to the cause of these increasingly hostile Apache raids on Béxar, in the first half of the eighteenth century there were very few instances in which the warlike Apaches were seen along the coast. The dense forest of the Post Oak

fanega.

²⁶ Conclusions based on comparison of 1724 Inspection by Almazán in PI:T vol. 181, Hackett Transcripts, vol. 522, 304-8, and list of La Bahía soldiers residing in Bexar, BAT, vol 5, 36-78.

Belt separating Béxar from La Bahía often served as a natural barrier to the marauders from the north, protecting the residents from one of the province's most feared tribes.²⁷

Perhaps because they were not as vulnerable to the violence of the Apaches near Béxar, La Bahía and Espíritu Santo began to show positive signs of both economic and demographic growth by the 1740's. Plagued by apostasy (Indian abandonment of the mission after conversion) and, early on, the vagaries of frontier agriculture, the friars at Espíritu Santo began to enjoy remarkable success in their efforts to reduce the Jaraname and Tamique Indians to Christian life. The early years along the gulf had been very difficult for the Zacatecan missionaries. The Karankawa Indians proved uncooperative and restless, and after the death of two young priests, as well as the presidio's first commander, Domingo Ramón, Father Patrón supported the transfer of the mission and presidio to the Guadalupe in the hopes of converting the various other coastal tribes. This decision proved wise, as the native population at the mission began to grow rather quickly.

In 1729, while Mission Espíritu Santo was far from a flourishing community, there were several positive signs of growth. Missionaries were able to purchase tobacco and other needed supplies to serve as enticements to the natives who had become quite successful at dry farming. Furthermore, the livestock transported by the Marqués de Aguayo in the 1720's flourished on the coastal plain and the friars began to realize that these *mesteños*, or wild, ownerless stock, could provide an economic foundation on which to build. Because there were few markets for the mission herds, their numbers

²⁷De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 9-10; John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 265-66. Many blamed Rivera's reduction in the Béxar garrison for the increased hostilities, although Elizabeth John clearly emphasizes the role played by Indians from the North applying pressure to the Apaches of the Texas

swelled almost immediately, and the nature of the both the terrain and its inhabitants dictated the peculiar evolution of ranching. Few animals could be maintained in a domesticated state, and the dangers of stationing guards on the distant pasturelands along the Guadalupe kept the cattle population in constant flux. Nevertheless, the thousands of unbranded cattle roaming the coastal plain would eventually prove one of the most important assets available on the Texas frontier.²⁸

Building on their most valuable asset, the missionaries slowly began to strengthen their hold on both the native population and the developing economy. By 1747 Mission Espíritu Santo could boast 125 families, totaling over 400 people. All adults and children over fourteen had been baptized and all marriages were performed in the church. Also, after acquiring another large herd of cattle, the mission now controlled thousands of animals that represented the most important economic resource in the province. After abandoning Rivera's dam project, in 1736, agricultural production increased to the point that when the garrison at Los Adaes was confronted with a food shortage in 1747, the missionaries were able to sell some of their foodstuffs to the East Texas presidio. Each of these developments laid the foundation for what would later make the mission on the Guadalupe the wealthiest institution on the northern frontier.²⁹

In contrast to the success enjoyed at Espíritu Santo, the nearby presidio still struggled to secure its position. Several construction projects were either abandoned or remained unfinished because of shortages in both labor and materials, and minor

plans.

²⁸ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 2: 251; Jack Jackson, *Los Mesteños: Spanish Ranching in Texas, 1721-1821* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1986), 18.

²⁹ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 3: 125, 87; BAT 18: 20, 28, 15: 15, 26. One Bexareño noted that without supplies from La Bahía, the entire garrison would have deserted.

demographic advances at La Bahía during the 1740's did little to offset the losses resulting from Rivera's 1727 inspection. In 1744 Governor Thomás Phelipe de Winthuysen wrote that La Bahía had always been in a state of deterioration, that most roofs were still made of *zacate* (straw) and that the humidity along the coast contributed to a high illness rate. Winthuysen also commented that the irregularity of foodstuffs and poor irrigation system led most neophytes to flee the mission during hard times and cost the soldiers a considerable portion of their monthly salary.³⁰

Labor realities also continued to prevent both the execution of royal directives and socio-economic development throughout Texas, and La Bahía was no different. Captain Costales repeatedly complained of a shortage of men and supplies to his superiors in Mexico City, and his successor, Captain Joaquín Orobio de la Basterra, seems to have had trouble fulfilling all of his military responsibilities with such limited resources. In 1743 Father Benito Fernández de Santa Anna complained that Orobio evaded his responsibility to send guards to his mission. Two years later, Orobio wrote to the viceroy that his garrison was stretched too thin, protecting convoys and doing other "regular duties," to perform a thorough search of the gulf shoreline for possible French intruders.³¹

The events surrounding the creation of Mission San Francisco Xavier represent a prime example of the problems associated with frontier labor shortages that affected La Bahía. Throughout the 1740's Father Mariano Francisco de los Dolores y Viana and other colonial administrators had lobbied for a mission in the San Gabriel River Valley, and in 1746 Mission San Francisco Xavier was begun. Demographic limitations,

³⁰ Inspection of Governor Thomás Phelipe de Winthuysen, August 1744, BAT, 15: 59.

³¹ Costales to Pedro Rivera, 12 April 1731. PI:T: 236. Bolton transcript, vol 531, 2-9; BAT : 17,

however, delayed Father Dolores's plan for additional missions, and are indicative of the premium placed on able-bodied men along the northern frontier. Unable to recruit significant numbers to warrant a presidio in the area, Father Dolores requested *soldados* from Béxar, Los Adaes, and La Bahía to defend against the unexpectedly hostile Apaches nearby. The region in which Mission San Xavier was placed was a vital trading region for Texas Indians and represented a significant attempt at improving Spanish control of the province. Captain Orobio, however, wrote to the president of the royal *Audiencia* (high court) that he did not have the manpower to help defend the missions along the San Xavier River. Between guarding convoys to and from San Juan Bautista, assisting at Béxar, and properly patrolling his own jurisdiction, he argued that virtually the entire garrison was absent. Although it is likely that Orobio's assessment was prejudiced by his desire to maintain as many soldiers at the presidio as possible, in reality he could not afford the loss of many more men. Even though the transfer to Mission Valley had improved the overall conditions at both the presidio and mission, after twenty-five years La Bahía had yet to attract a substantial number of civilian settlers, leaving the isolated outpost extremely vulnerable.³²

Like almost all frontier settlers, Badeños experienced their share of hardships in the early years. Although the friars of Espiritu Santo did enjoy some success with the more docile Jaraname and Tamique Indians, they struggled to congregate the Karankawas at the mission, perhaps because of the distrust fostered after the murder of Captain Ramón, or simply because the structured life of the mission was unappealing. For the

33-34;

³² Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 150-153; Captain Orobio to Royal *Audiencia*, 1747, BAT: 19, 16. For more on settlement in the San Gabriel River Valley, see Gary B. Starnes, *The San Gabriel Missions, 1746-*

inhabitants of La Bahía, this resulted in several decades of terror at the hands of these notoriously violent natives. The problem was exacerbated in 1728 after General Rivera reduced the garrison by more than half, a decision that not only left the community exposed to further attack, but also discouraged civilian settlers from moving to such a vulnerable region. In addition, the weather and soil conditions along the Gulf Coast made farming virtually pointless, and irregular rainfall forced the abandonment of several irrigation projects. Without reliable farming, the locals were forced to rely almost exclusively on foodstuffs purchased from Béxar, leaving them at the mercy of the presidio commanders who were regularly cited for inflated prices. Furthermore, even when necessities such as salt could be acquired locally, administrators in Madrid prevented such initiative, as they often proved damaging to Spanish merchants on the continent. As if these struggles were not enough, as the century neared its midpoint, Badeños were forced to confront yet another challenge. Unhappy with the high expenditures along the frontier and slow civilian growth, the Spanish Crown commissioned Don José de Escandón y Elguera to reform the northeastern provinces of New Spain. As a result of Escandón's recommendations, La Bahía would once again be relocated, changing the fortunes of the struggling community forever.

CHAPTER 3

A COMMUNITY COMES TO LIFE

In the middle of the eighteenth century La Bahía would once again take on greater importance in the Spanish efforts to better protect the Texas Gulf Coast. In the process, the small mission-presidio complex would undergo yet another relocation, this time to the lower San Antonio River. Unlike previous moves, however, this transfer was permanent, and the community began to flourish. The ever-resistant Karankawas received a mission of their own, Nuestra Señora del Rosario, which, after some initial difficulties, became one of the wealthiest missions on the northern frontier. Combined with substantial improvements in Spanish Indian policy in the 1760's and 1770's, as well as the transfer of Louisiana to Spanish control in 1762, Badeños enjoyed several decades of relative tranquility. Most importantly, during this period the fledgling Texas cattle industry developed into a reliable avenue of employment outside the presidio and, as the century progressed, sparked significant demographic growth at La Bahía.

The relocation of La Bahía to the San Antonio River was the result of several changes in Spanish settlement along the *El Seno Mexicano*, or the Gulf of Mexico. The coastal strip from Tampico, in northern Mexico, to Texas had long remained the home of independent Indian tribes, and the harsh environment had served as a barrier to Spanish

settlement. Faced with the possibility of foreign encroachment so close to the silver mines of New Spain, viceregal authorities had authorized the successful Indian fighter and colonizer José de Escandón to carry out the settlement of this region, which he named Nuevo Santander. Hoping to emulate his earlier successes in the Sierra Gorda (mountainous region northeast of Mexico City), Escandón focused primarily on recruiting civilian settlers, offering farm and pasture land as incentives and providing one-time cash payments to help purchase necessary supplies. As his first step toward colonization, Escandón ordered a reconnaissance of the entire region, from the Tamaulipas mountains in the south, to the Nueces River in the north. Escandón personally inspected the country along the Rio Grande, while Captain Joaquín de Orobio Basterra of La Bahía explored the lands from the Guadalupe south to the Rio Grande. As a result of his 1747 inspection, Escandón found the climate of La Bahía unhealthy due to the settlement's close proximity to the coast, and he was extremely disappointed that the failed irrigation attempts forced the garrison to purchase most of its supplies elsewhere. Also, although there were a substantial number of neophytes at Espíritu Santo, he was frustrated with the lack of civilian settlers in the area.

After two years of planning, in 1749 Escandón recommended fourteen new settlements within the jurisdiction of Nuevo Santander, including two north of the Rio Grande. Additionally, he suggested that La Bahía be relocated south to the San Antonio River, where the garrison could more closely monitor the South Texas coast. The existing military and religious community, Escandón hoped, would generate a new civilian settlement. He requested that twenty-five civilian families be sent to La Bahía at the crown's expense, so that after two or three years the region would be sufficiently

stable to warrant the discontinuance of the presidio. For many Badeños, the task of uprooting their community once again was likely overwhelming. After two decades of trying to make a living and start a family, Escandón's order to relocate was yet another obstacle to overcome. Although the exact date the soldiers and missionaries abandoned the Guadalupe River is unknown, it is clear that by the end of 1749 the transfer was complete.¹

The new location of the presidio, just south of present day Goliad, Texas, was on the north bank of the San Antonio River, situated on a small hill overlooking the stream. When he arrived on the banks of the San Antonio, Captain Orobio felt that the region he referred to as Santa Dorotea could easily support a large settlement. Specifically, both he and his successor, Captain Manuel Ramírez de la Piscina, noted that the vast prairies surrounding the site were far superior to the previous locations of La Bahía. In his initial report to the viceroy in 1749, Piscina noted that the surrounding lands were extremely fertile, stone and wood were readily available, water could be easily removed from the San Antonio River, and that the improved location would definitely prove more attractive to civilian settlers. Most importantly, however, were the spacious plains surrounding the presidio and mission described by Piscina, who knew immediately that these lands could be used to attract potential settlers to the struggling community.²

¹ Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century*, 288-93; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 3: 177; Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 167. For more on José de Escandón's efforts in Nuevo Santander and Texas, see Lawrence F. Hill, *José de Escandón and the founding of Nuevo Santander: A Study in Spanish Colonization* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1926) and Donald Chipman and Harriet Denise Joseph, "José de Escandón Y Elguera: Competent Colonizer," in *Notable Men and Women of Spanish Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 124-49.

² Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 3: 177; Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century*, 293. Apparently the land surrounding the new presidio has changed significantly in the two and a half centuries since the Spanish arrival. Visitors to Presidio La Bahía in Goliad today find a heavily wooded area that scarcely resembles the open prairies and ranch land that greeted the Spanish on their arrival. Based on the results of pollen analysis in the Goliad region, Bruce Albert theorizes that the

Piscina's assessment proved extremely accurate, and after just six months on the San Antonio conditions at La Bahía showed a dramatic improvement. At Mission Espíritu Santo the Indians and missionaries quickly built a large chapel made of oak, more than forty *jacales* for the neophytes, barracks for the soldiers assigned to the mission, and a stable for the horses and other livestock. During his inspection of the newly erected presidio, in 1749, Governor Pedro del Barrio y Espriella found the troops well-equipped and not overcharged for goods, and the financial records were in good order. The captain's quarters had been built of stone and mortar by skilled workers from Coahuila who were paid by Captain Piscina, although the scarcity of these materials forced subsequent reliance upon wood and caliche. While Espriella was disappointed at the lack of stone buildings and that a labor shortage hampered completion of adequate storehouses, overall he was very pleased with the progress of the young community.³

Perhaps most encouraging to the governor was the presence of several non-military personnel in the area for the first time. Although financial constraints prevented the Crown from sending the civilian settlers Escandón requested, after the relocation to the San Antonio River a small number of men and women began to make their homes near the presidio, often because of the protection it could offer from Indian attacks. Others simply chose to remain in the community after their military enlistment had expired. Don Joseph Martínez, for example, came to La Bahía with Captain Ramón in

vegetation in the surrounding countryside changed significantly both before and after the Spanish arrived. The prehistoric Indians may have set fires to clear the landscape to attract bison, and the Spanish certainly cleared much of the remaining undergrowth for construction and for livestock raising. Bruce argues that the growth of oak mottes and pine trees in the area is a relatively modern phenomenon. Bruce M. Albert, "Early and Protohistoric Agents of Vegetation Change in the Environs of Mission Rosario (41GD2) as Reflected in Palynological Data," *BTAS* 70: 190-5.

³ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 3: 179; O'Connor, *Presidio La Bahía*, 22-23.

1722, and after his retirement decided to settle in the area with his wife and two sons, Juan Joseph and Joseph María, both of whom had become *soldados* at the presidio. Leonardo Gómez and Juan de Dios Paulín, a retired soldier from Los Adaes who moved to La Bahía in 1746, are also listed in the inspection as *vecinos*. By 1750 the military, religious, and civilian population of La Bahía numbered two hundred forty-four, with as many as one hundred of these being children. These families not only represent the first civilian settlers recorded along the coastal plain, but perhaps a sign of things to come for the small frontier community.⁴

In spite of these positive signs, for the next ten years the coastal plain saw only minor economic growth. There were several instances in which Captain Piscina sold cattle and horses from his own ranch to the garrison of Los Adaes, and the improvement of techniques allowed farmers to provide cheap foodstuffs for the growing population. For the most part, however, there was very little activity; as most business transactions were likely limited to Piscina's purchases for maintenance of the garrison or bartering with neighboring Indians. Luckily, after several decades of price-gouging by previous commanders, it appears that Captain Piscina was generally fair with his men, perhaps allowing his soldiers more disposable income to spend on other goods. This increased demand undoubtedly brought at least some consumer goods to members of the community.⁵

For several reasons, La Bahía finally, by 1760, began to resemble the frontier outpost the Spanish had originally foreseen. The coastal plain had enjoyed several years

⁴ Inspection of La Bahía by Governor Pedro del Barrio Y Espriella, 11 November 1749, BAT, 22: 8-50.

⁵Ibid., 30: 51.

of relative quiet after the transfer to the San Antonio River which undoubtedly helped spur development. Although Presidio La Bahía was called on to supply reinforcements to other Texas posts on occasion, particularly following the Comanche-Norteño attack on Mission San Sabá in 1758, Badeños enjoyed a stable, if not peaceful, relationship with many of the tribes living on the coastal plain. Because many administrators suspected French involvement in the violent Indian attack at San Sabá, however, the coastal garrison was also expected to keep a particularly vigilant eye on the Gulf Coast. In 1754, for example, six men were ordered from La Bahía to the Trinity River area to protect the region from French encroachment. It is interesting to note that Captain Piscina felt his post was so secure from Indian attack at the time that these six men were taken from the detachment guarding the horse herd.⁶

While their contemporaries elsewhere were warding off the increasingly hostile Apaches and Comanches, it appears that throughout the 1750s the military and civilian community at La Bahía coexisted harmoniously with most of the Texas Indians on the coastal prairies. This was due in large part to the success enjoyed by the friars after the final transfer of the presidio and mission complex. Although Mission Espíritu Santo did lose a number of converts when the settlement was first transferred to the San Antonio River, by 1758 the efforts of Father Francisco Xavier de Salazar began to bear fruit. The mission, originally made of wood, had been rebuilt of stone and mortar with a rather large friary, a kitchen, and a rectory. The mission housed 178 neophytes, including 49 males, 50 women, and 79 children. Unfortunately, the relatively tranquil environment at La Bahía during these decades perhaps contributed to its neglect by colonial

⁶ Governor Jacinto de Barrios y Jauregui to Captain Piscina, 1754, BAT 28: 61.

administrators who were much more concerned with the Comanche-Norteño alliance.⁷

Additionally, as part of José de Escandón's plan for improving relations with the Indians of the Gulf Coast, another mission was built near La Bahía. In 1754 Mission Nuestra Señora del Rosario was constructed in yet another attempt to reduce the resistant Karankawa Indians. Situated approximately five kilometers upstream from the presidio, Rosario grew rapidly into one of the province's wealthiest mission communities and was instrumental in reducing the threat these Indians posed to La Bahía residents. Just two months after the friars began construction at Rosario, Captain Piscina wrote to the viceroy that the lands around the new mission were the best in Texas and that they should provide ample foodstuffs. He noted that the newly erected church was much larger and more impressive than that of Espíritu Santo, and that dwellings for both the missionaries and the more than five hundred neophytes already congregated at the mission were already completed. Although these restless Indians never fully attached themselves to the mission, preferring to leave the mission at various time of the year for their traditional coastal refuge, their presence at all indicates they perhaps realized their Spanish neighbors were there to stay.⁸

Although many Karankawas persisted in the migratory patterns they had developed over the centuries, Fathers Juan de Diós Camberos and Joseph Escobar were relatively successful in attracting these natives to the mission, at least temporarily. Less

⁷Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 3: 180,187. According to Castañeda, the mission lost a significant number of families after the move to the San Antonio. In 1747 Espíritu Santo contained 125 families and 400 total Indians, compared to 178 neophytes in 1758 (see above, note 43). As early as 1728, when General Rivera reduced the number of soldiers at La Bahía by more than half, the Spanish looked to the coastal plain as a way to streamline expenditures on the northern frontier.

⁸Bolton, "The Founding of Mission Rosario: A Chapter in the History of the Gulf Coast," in *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 10 (October 1906): 132-33.

than a year after its founding, Captain Piscina noted that one thousand *pesos* had already been spent on provisions for the growing native population at Rosario, and after just two years there were more neophytes at the new mission than there were at Espíritu Santo. Father José Gaspar de Solís noted during his inspection of the Texas missions that in 1768 the friars at Rosario had two droves of burros, 40 horses and 30 mules, 200 milk cows, 700 sheep, and over 5,000 cattle. During his visit to the northern province in 1777, Father Juan Agustín Morfi estimated that the number of baptisms and marriages consecrated in the church reached as high as 200 and 35, respectively. Although these numbers pale in comparison to the missions around Béxar, they nonetheless indicate that even the extremely resistant coastal Indians were beginning to assimilate certain aspects of Spanish culture.⁹

There are other reasons to suspect the efforts to reduce these various coastal tribes were not in vain, although their significance might have gone unnoticed by the Spanish at the time. Archaeological analysis of the various layers of midden at both Rosario and Espíritu Santo reveal a high level of acculturation among the Indians of both missions. Debris found outside the compound wall of Rosario indicates that while native technology continued to be used by the neophytes, there was a noticeable decline in the manufacture of aboriginal tool forms as the native population began incorporating Spanish tools into their daily lives. There is also evidence at both missions that the native diet changed considerably after the Spanish arrived. Prior to the introduction of cattle, large herds of bison inhabited the coastal plain and were a substantial component of the native diet. While an early location of Espíritu Santo contains evidence of cattle or bison

⁹Ibid., 135-7; Juan Agustín Morfi, *History of Texas, 1673-1779*, trans. and ed. Carlos E. Castañeda, 2 vols. (Albuquerque: Quivira Society, 1935), 1: 100.

as the primary food source, after the transfer to the San Antonio River, Indians in both missions apparently ate chicken, turkey, duck, five different species of freshwater fish, and various other small game, as well as beef. Although they proved perhaps more resistant than the Indians of East Texas, or those in other Spanish provinces, the Karankawas' slow acceptance of Spanish techniques and foodstuffs is indisputable.¹⁰

Perhaps because of the friars' success with many of the neighboring Indians, frontier settlers began to look toward the coastal plain more and more after 1750. Prior to the move from the Guadalupe, there was very little land available for individual ranching. Most of the area immediately surrounding the settlement was allocated to Espíritu Santo to help feed the neophytes, and it was the responsibility of the local garrison to guard the mission's herds from Indian attacks that were so common early on. Not only were the only available pastures at the previous location far from the safety of the settlement, there was simply not enough time for an individual *soldado* to work his own land and fulfill his military responsibilities as well. The missions, on the other hand, had plenty of available labor and could draw on the military for protection when needed. Other than a few domestic animals, like milk cows, goats, or pigs, private stock-raising simply did not exist among the presidio community prior to mid-century.¹¹

After 1750, however, the nature of frontier life at La Bahía changed considerably. First of all, after decades of unchecked growth, the cattle population on the coastal plain numbered in the tens of thousands and, for most frontier men and women represented the

¹⁰ Robert Ricklis, "The Spanish Colonial Missions of Espíritu Santo (41GD1) and Nuestra Señora del Rosario (41GD2), Goliad Texas: Exploring Patterns of Ethnicity, Interaction, and Acculturation", *BTAS* 70: 158; Susan D. deFrance, "Zooarchaeological Evidence of Colonial Culture Change: A Comparison of Two Locations of Mission Espíritu Santo de Zuñiga and Mission Nuestra Señora del Rosario, Texas," *ibid.*, 180-86.

¹¹ Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 13.

first tangible sign of economic opportunity. Also, the transfer of the presidio and mission from the Guadalupe to the San Antonio River opened up thousands of acres for agriculture and grazing. After the move, Mission Espíritu Santo's cattle ranged from the lands near Mission Valley, south to the San Antonio River, and the missionaries continued to assign several *vaqueros* to *El Rancho Viejo*, the old mission on the Guadalupe. The lands southwest of the San Antonio River, however, as well as those southeast of the new settlement, were open to exploitation.¹²

Captain Piscina was the first member of the secular community at La Bahía to own any significant acreage of land. From 1749 to 1767 his *Rancho San José*, on the west side of the San Antonio River, was extremely profitable and likely served as the first real source of income for the civilian inhabitants of La Bahía. Piscina's ability to use soldiers for labor enabled him to monopolize most of the free land near the presidio at first, however. Many *soldados* worked for the captain when they were not performing other required duties and, oftentimes, in lieu of those duties. Also, retired military personnel, children too young for service at the presidio, women, and mission Indians were likely employed by the captain at one time or another, making his ranch the first avenue of economic opportunity outside the presidio.¹³

One of the most important factors in La Bahía's socio-economic growth in the eighteenth century, however, was Viceroy Conde de Revilla Gigedo's decision in 1754 to allow settlers to round up wild cattle along the northern frontier. Because these *mesteños*, or ownerless stock, were traditionally thought to be descendants of the livestock first

¹²Ibid., 57.

¹³ In 1759 Mission Espíritu Santo was officially granted all of the lands between the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers, reaching north to El Cleto Creek (today Eceto Creek). Ibid., 41.

brought by Aguayo in 1721, they were considered property of the Crown. As such, the missionaries assumed ownership, arguing that these animals should be used to help convert the native population. Increasing conflict between settlers and missionaries, however, led José de Escandón to recommend government support for the settlers' position as a way of reinforcing civilian interest in frontier settlement.¹⁴

It is difficult to underestimate the impact this change had on the community of La Bahía and, indeed the entire northern frontier. In 1758 the friars of Espíritu Santo owned over 3,000 head of branded cattle, 120 horses, and 1,600 sheep. They claimed, however, over forty thousand head of cattle, which roamed from the Gulf Coast to Béxar. For the first time Spanish settlers in Texas saw before them an avenue of economic advancement, and they were going to take it. When the mining districts of Zacatecas and San Luis Potosí in northern New Spain began to grow dramatically in the second part of the eighteenth century, they offered attractive new markets for cattle exports. Not only were the animals used for food throughout New Spain, but they also provided consumer goods such as soap, candles, leather shields, and clothing items. In addition to demand from these growing population centers in northern Mexico, the Spanish cession of Louisiana in 1762 brought yet another market for cattle. Men from Béxar and La Bahía drove cattle out of the province to the Rio Grande settlements, Coahuila, the annual fairs at Saltillo, and now Louisiana. And, after Spain joined France in fighting the British during the American Revolution, Louisiana governor Bernardo de Gálvez looked to the cattle that roamed between Béxar and La Bahía to supply food for his army. In August, 1779 Francisco García arrived in Béxar with an authorization for the purchase and export of

¹⁴Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 25-31.

two thousand head of cattle for the Spanish army. By 1782 between ten and fifteen thousand head of cattle were gathered at La Bahía and driven to Louisiana, marking the first large-scale drives out of Texas.¹⁵

Almost immediately after Viceroy Revilla Gigedo's decision, settlers from both Béxar and La Bahía began seizing the mission's herds in the hopes of selling the animals for profit. The huge number of cattle in the region sparked a small-scale population influx that, combined with the continued retirement of soldiers from the presidio, helped spur significant population growth in La Bahía. During legal proceedings in San Antonio in 1757, for example, Pedro de los Santos, Joseph Martínez, Juan Santos Cevallos, Juan Gómez, Andrés Flores, and Cayetano de los Ríos were all described as *vecinos* from La Bahía. Later, during his provincial inspection in 1762, Governor Angel Martos y Navarette recorded 62 heads of household at La Bahía, 8 of whom were civilian. Of these, Francisco Treviño and Valerio Gonzales had recently retired from the presidio, and 21 of the garrison's number had either just arrived in the area and entered military service, or were born in La Bahía and had matured to the point that they could begin to serve the Crown. By 1768 the civilian sector had increased to over one-fourth of the total population. Out of 70 heads of household recorded by Don Melchor Afán de Rivera, 22 were listed as non-military personnel. Although scarcely noticeable at the time, the growing number of non-military families in La Bahía was certainly encouraging for a community that had struggled so long.¹⁶

¹⁵Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 206; De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 108-10; Robert Thonhoff, *El Fuerte del Cíbolo: Sentinel of the Béxar-La Bahía Ranches* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1992), 74.

¹⁶ BAT 30: 51; *Ibid.*, 32: 86; Inspection of Governor Angel Martos y Navarette, 19 August 1762, BAT 35: 64-128; Inspection of Don Melchor Afán de Rivera, April 1768, AGM: Ramo Historia. Hackett transcripts, 84: 216-76; O'Connor, *Presidio La Bahía*, 25; Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 156-57.

While the people of La Bahía were enjoying the first population boom on the coastal plain, other Spanish settlers in Texas continued to struggle with the realities of frontier life. Colonial administrators soon began to realize that their recently acquired prize of Louisiana was not as easy to manage as they had hoped. First of all, the French method of appeasing Indian groups through gifts and offers of kinship seemed out of place to many Spaniards. This change often resulted in confusion among many of the East Texas tribes that relied on trade in both provinces, and caused suspicion among those that did not. Also, the Spanish were now forced to deal with the British and, after 1783, the Americans on their eastern border. After centuries of dealing with their fellow Catholics from France, it is likely that the proximity of so many land-hungry Protestants made the Spanish very nervous. Even more pressing was the fact that beginning with the destruction of San Sabá in 1758, much of the province fell victim to increased Indian attacks. Faced with such diverse concerns, Spanish administrators began a long and detailed process of reform that would change the face of the northern frontier dramatically.

After several years of increasing Indian violence, and following the transfer of Louisiana to Spanish rule, the Council of Indies, in 1767, ordered the Marqués de Rubí to examine the northern frontier from California to the Gulf Coast. Accompanied by the engineer Nicolás de Lafora, Rubí assessed the viability of each frontier settlement in northern New Spain. He spent nearly a year traveling through Nueva Vizcaya, Coahuila, and Texas, providing a detailed report on frontier conditions at the time. No longer threatened by the French in Louisiana, Rubí argued that the Spanish should adjust their frontier policies to deal more effectively with the native Texas population. He

recommended a war of extermination against the Apache nations and a restructuring of the presidial system throughout the northern frontier. Specifically, the Marqués recommended abandonment of all Spanish settlements north of a line from California in the west, to La Bahía in the east, with the exceptions of Santa Fe and Béxar, and their resources and manpower be allocated to existing communities. He also recommended the suppression of the missions at Los Adaes, in East Texas, and Orcoquisac, on the Trinity River, since their primary purpose had been to monitor the French.¹⁷

When Rubí arrived in La Bahía in 1767, the increasingly aggressive Apaches had already begun their raids on the small community. As early as 1762, when a friar from Espíritu Santo wrote that the community was practically under siege, Badeños had seen a noticeable increase in Indian attacks. After a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Comanches north of Béxar, hundreds of Lipan Apaches began to move south into the region between Béxar and La Bahía. Because they were made to relinquish their buffalo ranges to the Comanches, the Apaches were forced to poach on Spanish lands for food, and, as a result, their thievery increased dramatically on the coastal plain. The increased danger was not, however, sufficient to halt the gradual development of the coastal community. For example, when Rubí arrived at La Bahía, on October 31, 1767, he found that the settlement scarcely resembled the desolate outpost described by his predecessor, Pedro de Rivera, in 1727. There were 50 *soldados* stationed at the presidio, 10 of whom

¹⁷ Jackson, *Imaginary Kingdom*, 71-88; Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century*, 102-13. Through the new *Reglamento de Presidios*, issued in 1773, Rubí completely reorganized the Spanish frontier. Most importantly for Texas, his inspection resulted in the creation of an independent administrative body to oversee operations in the newly created *Provincias Internas*, rather than remain under the jurisdiction of the overburdened viceroy of New Spain. See *ibid.*, 376-86, and Sydney B. Brinckerhoff and Odie B. Faulk, *Lancers for the King: A Study of the Frontier Military System of Northern New Spain* (Phoenix: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1965), 4-7. For more on the administrative changes brought about after the creation of *Provincias Internas*, see Bernard Bobb, *The Viceregency of Antonio María Bucareli: 1771-1779* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962).

had been added after the construction of Mission Rosario, and 46 civilian families living nearby. He also reported that the religious efforts along the coast were proving somewhat effective, as there was a total of 93 Indians at Espiritu Santo, 25 of whom were families. There were also over 100 neophytes at Mission Rosario, raising the total population of La Bahía to approximately 380.¹⁸

In an attempt to better protect the ranches that had developed between Béxar and La Bahía, the inspector also recommended that the abandoned presidio El Fuerte de Santa Cruz del Cíbolo, a small detachment stationed at the Cíbolo Creek crossing of the road from Béxar to La Bahía, be reestablished. Rubí reasoned that the garrison could not only help protect the cattle and horses in the area, but could also respond quickly to threats at both presidios. Although official sanction for the new post was not granted until the publication of the *Reglamento* of 1772, the document that put Rubí's recommendations in place, the small fort was occupied as early as April 1771.¹⁹

The decision to station men between the two settlements drew mixed reactions in Béxar and La Bahía. Perhaps because citizens of Béxar owned almost all of the ranches in the area, most of its inhabitants supported the creation of the new fort. In La Bahía, however, support for the decision was tempered. In 1771 Captain Francisco Thobar wrote to the commander of the fort on the Cíbolo, Rafael Martínez Pacheco, that he felt

¹⁸ Hackett transcripts, 487: 521-24; AGM: Historia, 51, Bolton transcripts, 356: 100; Luis Cazorla to Viceroy Bucareli, 24 March 1775. AGM:PI, 99, Hackett transcripts, 487: 621; William C. Foster, *Spanish Expeditions into Texas, 1689-1768* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 191; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 4: 232. Total population figure arrived at by calculating an average of three persons in each family mentioned by Rubí, as the actual number of children is not given. It is likely, however, that this is a conservative estimate, as many families undoubtedly had more than one child.

¹⁹ Thonhoff, *El Fuerte del Cíbolo*, 22, 46. The fort on Cíbolo Creek was originally established in 1734, but after several unsuccessful attempts to fend off marauding Indians, the post was abandoned in 1737.

the decision to create a new post, rather than simply increasing the detachment at La Bahía, was a waste of manpower. Already, Thobar wrote, his detail was spread all over the area, and he could barely keep watch over his own jurisdiction. Several years later Captain Luís Cazorla wrote to Viceroy Teodoro de Croix that the garrison on the Cíbolo should be transferred to a more advantageous location in order to make room for the incoming settlers from Los Adaes. It is clear that the controversial post was seen as unnecessary in La Bahía, perhaps because very few of its citizens actually owned land in the area in question.²⁰

Further complicating matters on the coastal plain was the emerging spirit of cooperation among two of Texas' most hated inhabitants. Previously separated by many miles, after 1760 the Apache and Karankawa nations developed a mutually beneficial relationship that severely threatened the coastal region of Texas. Cut off from their traditional trading partners in East Texas by the Tonkawas and Comanches, the Lipans turned to the Karankawas, who had long traded along the Louisiana border. The Lipans would steal horses, mules, and other items from the Spanish settlements and then trade them to the Karankawas for guns and ammunition from Louisiana. So concerned were the Spanish about this new relationship that, in 1779, Governor Domingo Cabello temporarily transferred his headquarters to La Bahía.²¹

²⁰Thobar to Pacheco, 26 May 1771, AGM:PI, 99, Hackett transcripts, 487: 529-30; Cazorla to Croix, 13 January 1778. AGM: Ramo Historia, 51: Bolton transcripts, 356: 434. A map of the region in question indicates that almost all of the land in the area whose owner can be identified was owned by settlers from Béxar. See Thonhoff, *El Fuerte del Cíbolo*, front endpaper.

²¹ John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 614. John writes that Cabello was also acting in accordance with the desire of Croix and Galvez to open the Texas coast for shipping, as well as securing the supply trains that were so desperately needed in Louisiana.

The chief antagonist for the Spanish along the coast was the apostate Joseph María, a semi-converted Indian who refused to consider life as a Spanish subject. He held a deep hatred for the Spanish after his days at Rosario and was very knowledgeable of their ways. Just after his arrival Cabello saw firsthand the obstacle that these Indians had become, when apostates from Mission Espíritu Santo joined several Karankawas in stealing a sum of money and other goods from the mission itself. In July of the same year, after gathering over one thousand cattle to drive to Louisiana to sustain Spanish troops there, the entire herd was lost to Comanche marauders. Their brazen attack frightened the local citizenry so much that Cabello wrote to Croix that he could no longer find anyone in La Bahía to escort another shipment of beef. Conditions perhaps reached their worst in 1782 when La Bahía narrowly avoided certain destruction. After growing tired of pursuing the Karankawas to no avail, Cabello ordered a large force gathered for a war of extermination on them. Early in the afternoon of the day of the attack, the governor learned of a large war party of Comanche Indians headed for the settlement. Even with advance notice, the governor was only able to muster fifty soldiers, forty mission Indians, and thirty-two settlers to defend the settlement. Although the attack never materialized, it was certainly a warning for the entire community.²²

Even after the Comanche threat passed, the coastal plain was subject to pressures from native groups in the surrounding area that had traditionally been rather cooperative. In the first two months of 1784, forty-nine Jaranames fled Mission Espíritu Santo to join the ranks of El Mocho, the newly elevated leader of the Tonkawas and an increasingly

²² Cabello to Croix, 5 May 1780, Bexar Archives, microfilm, Center for American History. University of Texas General Manuscript Series. Reel 14, frame 33 (hereafter cited as BAM); Cabello to Croix, 7 July 1780, *ibid.*, reel 14, frame 294; John, *Storms Brewed*, 640-41.

threatening person on the Texas frontier. A few months later, after several of their number were murdered by Apache warriors, over one hundred Taovayas arrived at La Bahía to profess their desire to make war on the Apaches. While they were being entertained at the presidio, a delegation of Lipans arrived and announced that they had a party of three hundred men nearby, but that they had come in peace. Fully aware of their precarious situation, Captain Cazorla and Governor Cabello formulated a plan to eliminate the source of their most recent problems--El Mocho. The Spanish knew he was trying to incite the Apaches to war, in addition to recruiting neophytes from Espíritu Santo and Rosario to join his cause. On the afternoon of July 15, Cazorla lured the Tonkawa captain to La Bahía under the guise of friendship and had him murdered. Such treachery marks a startling break from the typical Spanish policy of appeasement toward Texas Indians, and it is perhaps indicative of their growing frustration with the Indian problem.²³

Although El Mocho's death did help reduce the threat of Apache attack and calm many of the neophytes, Badeños were still forced to deal with their more resistant neighbors, the Karankawas. Efforts to punish Karankawa marauders rarely met with success, as the treacherous coastline proved an insurmountable obstacle to presidio units. In 1787, after several years of frustration, the military experienced a humiliating breach of trust on the part of the coastal Indians. After months of negotiations and empty promises of surrender, a detachment of soldiers from the presidio was sent to escort a large group of Karankawas led by Joseph María to join Mission Espíritu Santo. Just as

²³ Neve to Cabello, 18 December 1783, reel 15, frames 617, 720-1, 774, BAM; Cabello to Neve, 20 July 1784, *ibid.*, reel 16, frames 92-96, 123.

the group left the coast, a rogue band of Karankawas attacked, killing Sergeant Pedro Pérez. Captain Cazorla sent his entire force to search for the attackers, leaving only a civilian guard at the settlement, but they found only the tortured and burned body of Sergeant Pérez. Without canoes, the soldiers were unable to pursue the offenders across the bay to the barrier islands. They returned to the presidio having accomplished nothing.²⁴

After decades of trying to subdue the various Karankawa bands, officials in Mexico City and Madrid were growing frustrated with their inability to use the Gulf Coast to ship goods to the interior. After being chided by Governor Pacheco for repeated horse thefts from La Bahía, in June 1787 Cazorla sent sixteen men to search for the missing animals and the perpetrators. The group searched for days, covering the lands of Espíritu Santo and all surrounding areas south to the Nueces River, though they found nothing. Finally, in November of the same year, men from both Béxar and La Bahía joined in an expedition to the coast to force the Karankawas into mission life or into extermination. Although the expedition did not result in the reduction of the Karankawas, the Spanish finally realized the need for canoes when searching the coastline. Ironically, on the same day that Governor Pacheco wrote Viceroy Juan de Ugalde about the joint civilian-military effort against the Karankawas, Ugalde wrote a blistering critique of the military's efforts in the province. Central to his disappointment was the fact that there was still no route from the Texas coast to Santa Fe, something he deemed vital to the region's commercial development. Paradoxically, the garrison of La Bahía remained woefully understaffed and ill-supplied, rendering virtually all efforts aimed at securing the coastline useless. Regardless of its practicality, the unstable

²⁴ Cazorla to Pacheco, 2 August 1787, reel 18, frame 197-202, BAM.

situation along the coast, coupled with the lack of administrative support for the coastal presidio, prevented the realization of a port near La Bahía during the Spanish period.²⁵

Nevertheless, the increasing Indian menace does not appear to have halted La Bahía's demographic growth in the 1760's. The coastal community gained several families from East Texas and the Trinity River area after Governor Barón de Ripperdá's decommissioning of Los Adaes in 1773 in adherence to the *Reglamento* of 1772, based on the Marqués de Rubí's recommendations. In 1777, according to Father Morfi, there were 515 military and civilian personnel at La Bahía, including children, and 300 neophytes at Mission Espíritu Santo, although his estimate appears somewhat exaggerated. Much more reliable is a later estimate that the total local population numbered approximately 696 in 1777, including 180 neophytes at both missions. While the reasons for this discrepancy are unknown, it is possible that Father Morfi characterized men and women who were actually considered part of the civilian populace as mission Indians. At Rosario, which experienced frequent setbacks due to widespread apostasy among the Karankawas, the friars were unable to provide an adequate count for the census report.²⁶

²⁵ Cazorla to Pacheco, 22 June 1787, reel 18, frame 162, Pacheco to Ugalde, 10 November 1787, reel 18, frame 472, Ugalde to Pacheco, 10 November 1787, reel 18, frame 475, BAM. For years the Indian route from Béxar to Santa Fe was a great mystery to the Spanish. In 1785, Governor Cabello sent Pedro Vial and Francisco Xavier Chávez to the Comanchería to encourage peace feelers and discover the elusive route. While fruitful, their journey did not yield the desired trail, and the trade from Louisiana to New Mexico did not materialize under Spanish rule. For more on Vial's journey, see Elizabeth A.H. John, ed., "Inside the Comanchería, 1785: The Diary of Pedro Vial and Francisco Xavier Chávez" *SHQ* 98 (July 1994): 26-56.

²⁶ "Provincia de Texas: Estado general de la tropa del Presidio La Bahía del Espíritu Santo y su correspondiente vecindario empadronado y revisitado por mi, el coronel de los reales ejércitos, don Domingo Cabello, gobernador de dicha provincia en los días 3, 4, y 5, del mes de Enero, de 1780," Archivo General de Indias, Ramo Audiencia de Guadalajara, microfilm, legajo 283 (hereafter cited as Cabello Inspection). In 1780, Governor Cabello reported that there were ten men living in La Bahía with their families that were from Los Adaes. Unfortunately, the report does not indicate when the families

Not only did the size of the community increase, but the nature of the population itself underwent significant changes during the last decades of the eighteenth century. In 1768, for example, there were 22 civilian heads of household listed, comprising approximately one fourth of the total population. By 1780 there were 122 civilian households out of 168 total homes, an increase of almost fifty-percent in just twelve years. Even more impressive is the fact that by 1780 there were 257 children at La Bahía, seventy-eight percent of whom were from civilian rather than military families. Contrary to those who have argued that the land surrounding La Bahía could not sustain its population, this high birthrate indicates that the inhabitants felt increasingly secure in their ability to provide for their families. The census report from 1790 shows even more growth, when the total population, including Indians, reached 767 people. There were 232 heads-of-household, 158 of whom were civilian. Compared to Béxar, where almost 1,900 people made their home, La Bahía remained rather small, although it was more than twice the size of Nacogdoches, and represented almost one quarter of the total population in Texas at the time. In fact, the community continued to increase steadily in size through 1796, when the population reached 1,138.²⁷

The reasons for this sustained growth during such tumultuous times are uncertain. What is certain is that the lands surrounding the community of La Bahía continued to hold the key to almost all of Texas' economic resources. After decades of controversy surrounding the ownership of the *mesteño* stock roaming the coastal plain, Commandant-General Teodoro de Croix decided not only to regulate the number of animals leaving the

immigrated. Morfi, *History of Texas*, 79, 100; Tjarks, "Comparative Demographic Analysis," 303.

²⁷ Cabello Inspection; Alicia Tjarks, in "Comparative Demographic Analysis," 302, writes that La Bahía "offered little incentive to civilian settlers, mainly because of the lack of irrigation for agriculture and

province, but simultaneously increase royal revenues. After his controversial decree in 1778, Texas citizens could pay six *reales* per horse and five *reales* per cow in the hopes of selling the herd for a higher price in Coahuila or Louisiana. Interestingly, the proclamation read at La Bahía allowed for a grace period in which Missions Rosario and Espíritu Santo could gather any unbranded stock they owned and mark it. By this point, however, the missions were no longer able to dominate Texas ranching, due primarily to the scarcity of neophytes remaining in South Texas. Espíritu Santo had scarcely over one hundred persons remaining, and Rosario was completely abandoned by 1781. Without large quantities of free labor at the missions, the friars were simply unable to protect their interests, signaling a shift in the nature of Texas ranching.²⁸

For the rest of the eighteenth century the economy of La Bahía, and indeed all of Texas, revolved around the export of cattle. Between 1779 and 1786 over eighteen thousand head of cattle were officially exported from the province, although it is likely that this total is an undercount, as it allowed for only two official drives to Louisiana and does not include numerous unrecorded transactions. These long cattle drives through hostile country required men with ranching experience and knowledge of Indian warfare, as well as seasonal laborers, blacksmiths, merchants, and related craftsmen, all of whom La Bahía was by this time ideally suited to provide. By 1780 there were sixteen herdsmen, thirty-five day laborers, three muleteers, and three blacksmiths in the area. There was also a merchant to help the *vaqueros* acquire lariats, saddles, and other necessary goods, and a growing number of men and women who indirectly benefited because of the threat of raids from the Indians of the Gulf coast.”

²⁸ Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 156-57. Jackson calls Croix’s declaration the “cornerstone of all future attempts to regulate the cattle industry in Spanish Texas,” 155 (quotation).

from the developing cattle industry, either as a stable food supply or for clothing, shoes, and other consumer goods.²⁹

The continuous flow of livestock out of the province certainly brought tangible benefits to the local community. By 1780 eighteen citizens owned land in or around La Bahía, several head of cattle, and a significant number of horses. Carlos Martínez, for example, a soldier at the presidio for sixteen years, was able to purchase land just north of Mission Rosario's lands in 1773. His *Rancho del Señor San José* lay northwest of the presidio, between the Escondido River and Hondo Creek. In 1776, Governor Cabello granted an export license to Marcos Hernández, a muleteer living in La Bahía, to drive cattle to Louisiana. Perhaps because of this newfound market, by 1780 Hernández owned a parcel of land, as well as 2 *jacales*, 40 mares, 20 mules, 6 horses, and 25 bulls.³⁰

By 1787, exports were becoming fairly frequent, although a disturbing trend was becoming evident. Even though Martín de Amondarán, a *vecino* from La Bahía, was granted permission to export an unlisted number of cattle, apparently few other Badeños could afford the initial investment required to export the animals themselves, although they were not completely excluded from the process. For example, in 1787 Captain Cazorla issued export licenses to Ignacio Treviño, Francisco Ardila, Felipe Flores, and Mariano Gutiérrez, none of whom lived in La Bahía, for a total of two thousand cattle. Because the herds were gathered from lands surrounding Espíritu Santo, however, it is likely that many Badeños were used to drive the herds, as they would be most knowledgeable of the terrain. While these men certainly could not hope to become

²⁹Cabello Inspection.

³⁰ Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 311-12; Cabello Inspection; Weddle and Thonhoff, *Drama and Conflict*,

wealthy working as hired hands, the demand for skilled horsemen did provide an avenue for advancement outside the presidio.³¹

La Bahía's remote location and military origins bred a tight-knit community in which economic differences were barely perceptible. These men and women, after decades of living in close proximity and sharing in the struggles of frontier life, undoubtedly developed numerous ties to one another through kinship and economic necessity. Whereas in Europe and other more established regions of the Spanish Empire elites could be distinguished by clothing, customs, or even diet, there were few socio-economic divisions at La Bahía. Most everyone conformed to a diet of maize, beef, and beans, and personal luxuries were scarce. There were also very few stone or wooden buildings to distinguish one's wealth, and possessions in general were limited to the barest essentials. In fact, not one person in La Bahía owned a stone house in 1780, almost sixty years after the settlement's founding and thirty years since the relocation to the San Antonio River. Rather, almost the entire community was still living in make-shift huts, or *jacales*, although Joseph Contreras, Ignacio García, Francisco de la Garza, Mathiana de Guizar, and Blas Ramón each owned two *jacales*.³²

The frontier in general has been traditionally thought of as dominated by men, because women had difficulty surviving the rugged environment. The presence of women on the frontier was required, however, if a community was to sustain itself, and

159; Thonhoff, *El Fuerte del Cíbolo*, 74.

³¹Thonhoff, *El Fuerte del Cíbolo*, 74; Cazorla to Pacheco. 15 May 1787, reel 18, frames 128, 143, 247, BAM.

³²Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 315-19.

by the end of the eighteenth century the ratio of men to women throughout Texas was remarkably balanced. As a whole, there were approximately 125 men for every 100 women in the province in 1790. In the same year the proportion in Béxar was even more balanced, as there were only 108 men for every 100 women. On the coastal plain there were 149 men and 130 women, a ratio of 114 men for every 100 women. Ten years later, the ratio had changed very little. For every 100 women living in La Bahía in 1800 there were approximately 112 men.³³

The presence of women on the frontier made it possible for communities to increase their number naturally, without migration. Families were ideal inhabitants on the frontier because they would fight to defend themselves, saving the Crown additional expenses. In 1780 Béxar had a total of 330 families, 246 of which had dependents, almost seventy-five percent. In the same year, the 139 households living in La Bahía contained the same percentage of families with dependent children. The vagaries of life on the frontier made family formation and maintenance particularly difficult, however, and by 1790 the percentage of families with dependent children had dropped significantly in both communities. Although Béxar had grown to include over 400 families at the time, only 64 percent of the married couples living near the San Antonio River had children under the age of 14. In La Bahía the change is even more noteworthy. Among the 233 families living on the coastal plain, only 132 had children, approximately 56 percent. This change can likely be attributed to the increase in Indian depredations after 1762 and the economic uncertainty they produced.³⁴

³³Tjarks, "Comparative Demographic Analysis," 305; De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 21; Census Reports of 1790, 31 December 1790, reel 21, BAM.

³⁴Tjarks, "Comparative Demographic Analysis," 318.

Although frontier conditions throughout northern New Spain made starting a family difficult, the process proved particularly difficult in La Bahía, as choices for marriage partners were very limited. As was the case elsewhere on the frontier, because the community was so isolated unions between members of various racial and social levels were very frequent, leading to extended families encompassing several socio-economic divisions. Unfortunately the absence of marriage and birth records from La Bahía make a detailed study of these subjects impossible. However, a census report from 1780 is helpful in determining the number of local births in previous decades.

Governor Cabello found thirty adults living in La Bahía who had been born in the area between 1740 and 1760. Amazingly only thirteen of these were referred to as being of *color quebrado*, or mixed color, and only one, Cayetano de Castro, the son of one of La Bahía's original settlers, was listed as a *mestizo*, the term commonly used to signify the offspring of a Spanish-Indian union. The rest of the non-Spanish heads of household were listed as *mulatos* or *lobos*, the offspring of Spanish-African unions and Indian-African unions, respectively. As there were actually very few Africans on the frontier, one can assume these terms were used interchangeably in La Bahía, as was the case in other frontier communities. Interestingly, seventeen of these men and women born on the coastal plain were identified as Spanish. This was likely due to the traditional requirement that all members of the military be of Spanish origin; a policy that was obviously flexible in an under-populated province like Texas.³⁵

³⁵ The house list in 1780 indicated each head of household by both ethnicity and place of birth. It is important to note, however, that the ethnicity of most married women is not listed. Cabello Inspection; De la Teja, in *San Antonio de Béxar*, 24-26, notes that the term *negro* was rarely used in Béxar and indicated a slave, although no mention of the term is found in the records of La Bahía. David Weber, in *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 328, writes that in 1777 California, only one third of the men and one fourth of the women who founded San José and San Francisco were of Spanish origin.

Although Spanish law required that members of the military be native Spaniards, by the end of the eighteenth century New Spain was composed primarily of mixed-blooded Hispanics, Indians, and Africans, with peninsular Spaniards representing a very small percentage of the population. Of these social groups, frontier life was only attractive to the lower levels of society, those who had the most to gain by settling in an undeveloped region. The lure of wealth and land that the frontier provided appealed in particular to those classes traditionally excluded from elite society. Additionally, people of mixed descent found the frontier much more accommodating, as ability and accomplishment went a long way toward negating any racial obstacles. Priests, who were most often responsible for recording personal information regarding their subjects, frequently neglected to record a person's race, or simply accepted ethnic classification at face value, resulting in someone "passing" up the social ladder.³⁶

The process of "passing" was especially pronounced in military communities like La Bahía, where the majority of the population was of mixed descent. Because of the requirement that all military personnel be of Spanish origin, many *soldados* were simply elevated in ethnic status by the parish priest. For example, Jacinto and Damacio Adalpe were born in La Bahía and enlisted in the military when they reached maturity. Although the identity of their mother is not known, in 1780 their father, Francisco Adalpe, was listed as a *mulatto*. Regardless of these circumstances, both boys were listed as Spanish in the census report. Similarly, Anna María de Lara, the wife of retired soldier Rafael de Lara, was listed as an Indian in 1768. By 1780, after the death of her husband, she was

³⁶ John F. Bannon, *The Colonial World of Latin America* (St. Louis: Forum Press, 1982), 38-39.

considered a *loba*, only to be classified again an Indian in 1790.³⁷

Unlike Béxar, where the Canary Islanders initially formed a distinct socio-economic group within the community, most of the available evidence indicates that an individual's ethnicity had virtually no bearing on his or her place in the social hierarchy of La Bahía. Even land ownership, traditionally the prerogative of only the highest levels of society, lost much of its cachet on the frontier, where land was the most plentiful resource. For example, within La Bahía there were 106 individuals listed as Spanish in 1780, and only 7 owned any sort of land. However, there were 11 other landowners in the area, all of whom were of mixed origin. There were 8 *mulatos*, 2 *mulatas*, and even 1 *loba*, María Guadalupe Gonzales. Even within this small group of landowners it appears that ethnicity had very little to do with one's socioeconomic position. Although Marcos Hernández and José Garza-Falcón, both of whom were Spaniards, did own considerably more livestock than the other landowners in the area, there was clearly no distinctive sector that could be considered elite.³⁸

For example, Juan Bautista Luna, a *mulato*, owned 4 horses, 25 calves, a team of oxen, and 5 bulls, in addition to a parcel of land in the area. Joseph Cayetano de Lesa, a *mulato* from Saltillo, owned 7 horses, a team of oxen, several bulls and 10 calves. On the other hand, Fernando Galán an *español* living in La Bahía, did not own a horse or any other livestock. In fact, out of 46 *españoles* in La Bahía in 1780, 19 did not even possess a *jacal*, and 24 claimed their hut as their only possession. Conversely, of the 40 *mulatos*

³⁷"Padrón formado por el Teniente de Cavallería don Manuel de Espadas, Commandante del Presidio de la Bahía del Espíritu Santo perteneciente al año de 1790," 23 December 1790, reel 21, frames 25-26, BAM; Cabello Inspection.

³⁸Bannon, *Colonial World of Latin America*, 38-39; Cabello Inspection. There were cases in Texas in which the authorities did issue different punishments depending on an individual's ethnicity. See

in La Bahía the same year, 17 owned their own *jacal*, and 7 owned both a parcel of land and a *jacal*. Even women were not precluded from acquiring land and possessions, although ordinarily this occurred only after the death of their husbands. María Francessa de Flores, a widowed *loba* from Monterrey, owned a piece of land, a market garden, a team of oxen, 3 calves, and 2 bulls. These represent considerably more possessions than many of her *español* contemporaries on the frontier.³⁹

Ironically, whereas in many areas of New Spain the ranching industry served as a source of wealth and prestige, in La Bahía it appears to have done little to distinguish one person from another. By 1780 there were a total of 16 herdsmen in La Bahía, each of whom earned a daily wage of one peso. These men were expected to assist in gathering, branding, and driving cattle. The census report also indicated 21 *jornaleros*, or day laborers, men who probably assisted in fence building, planting, or any other manual labor that needed to be done. All of these wage earners certainly sparked minor growth in the demand for consumer goods such as lariats, clothing, saddles, and other essential items, and perhaps more importantly, represented a group of individuals on whom the crown could rely for defense.⁴⁰

However, even though records from Béxar indicate that stock-raising was much more profitable than day labor, it appears that in La Bahía the situation was somewhat different. Normally farmhands and other manual laborers were paid in kind, and usually on a subsistence level only. Also, while laborers were paid only for days they worked, in

De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 26-27.

³⁹Cabello Inspection.

⁴⁰Cabello Inspection. Wages based on data for Béxar, as such information for La Bahía is unavailable. See De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 121-22.

Béxar there are instances in which ranch hands were paid for as long as a month without doing any significant work. By the 1770s the standard wage for skilled ranch hands in Béxar was one peso a day and many were even provided a horse by the landowner for whom they worked. In La Bahía, however, there was no significant difference in the material possessions of either group. Antonio Arriola, a herdsman from Monterrey, owned ten horses and twenty-three mares. Ignacio Ramón, perhaps the wealthiest of local herdsmen, owned six horses, two mules, a small market garden, and a parcel of land. Blas Ramón, a *jornalero* from Coahuila, owned nine horses, seven bulls, a piece of land, and several mules. Diego Rodríguez owned a piece of land, four horses, three teams of oxen, a garden, two pistols, and even a servant. Also unlike Béxar, where there was a noticeable absence of both landowners and *españoles* listed as laborers, in La Bahía eleven out of twenty-one day-laborers were identified as *españoles*.

If land is to be used as a measure of wealth, then ranching was certainly not always more profitable. Out of seventeen landowners in La Bahía in 1780, six are identified as laborers, while only two herdsmen claimed land ownership. Rather than indicating that day laborers in La Bahía were as well off as their ranching counterparts in Béxar, it is much more likely that working on a ranch was not as profitable on the coastal plain, where kinship ties to larger landowners were minimal. In addition, whereas Bexareños benefited from the support of a municipal organization, the *ayuntamiento*, the inhabitants of La Bahía enjoyed no such protections. Land ownership, daily wages, and work responsibilities were significantly different in the capital, where *vecinos* exerted considerable influence over the Governor. Even the availability of animals was greater

for the capital dwellers, as many of their number were granted special permission to gather animals from the lands of Espíritu Santo.⁴¹

As the turn of the century neared, the people of La Bahía seemed well prepared for the challenges that lay ahead. The Spanish government had finally begun to relax its stringent trade restrictions, which allowed a dramatic rise in cattle exports to surrounding regions. The American Revolution combined with a demographic explosion in what is today northern Mexico to create vibrant new markets for the Texas economy. This increased level of commercial activity attracted men and women from all walks of life, and, for the most part, financial opportunities were open to virtually all members of the community. Although avenues for advancement remained rather limited compared to other communities in the Spanish empire, there was nevertheless an increasing number of wage earners in La Bahía. Many families were close-knit, extended groups that likely protected each other's interests, and, by the 1790s, even the rebellious Karankawas had begun to succumb to mission life. After several decades of growth, it seemed only logical that the trend would continue into the next century. Unfortunately, political maneuvering in Mexico City, financial pressures in Madrid, and the growing tide of discontent among the American-born population of New Spain, brought dramatic changes to the inhabitants of the coastal plain.

⁴¹ Cabello Inspection. De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 121-22. De la Teja does state that "although job and ethnicity (in Béxar) were related to some degree, there were no clear racial boundaries in work." 122 (quotation).

CHAPTER 4

OPPORTUNITY LOST

In the last decades of the eighteenth century the small community of La Bahía developed from an isolated military outpost into a predominantly civilian settlement over one thousand strong. Although the Karankawas and Apaches remained a source of concern, there are clear indications that the Indians of Missions Espíritu Santo and Rosario had adjusted well to their new environment, with many adopting aspects Spanish culture and marrying into the civilian community. The presidio continued its role as a stable market for what few locally produced goods there were, as well as a consistent avenue of employment for local sons. Also, Spanish administrative policies regarding trade with neighboring provinces changed considerably in the second half of the eighteenth century, creating commercial opportunities previously unavailable in the province. Most importantly, the growing cattle industry in Texas on the coastal plain, brought consumer goods, numerous job opportunities, and, as a result, a noticeable increase in the size of the civilian population of La Bahía. Combined with similar progress at nearby San Antonio de Béxar, and the imperial government's ever-improving methods of dealing with the Indians of Texas, the soldiers, civilians, and converted Indians living on the coastal plain were in a relatively secure position as the new century

approached. Unfortunately, just when the first real signs of progress appeared, pressures within both continental Europe and the borders of Texas resulted in the reversal of almost a half-century of growth.

In 1786, after several years of pleading for reassignment for health reasons, Governor Domingo Cabello was finally granted his transfer from Texas. After Rafael Martínez Pacheco arrived as his replacement, however, Cabello felt that his successor was ill-prepared for the challenges of his new position. When a group of Lipans took advantage of Pacheco and made off with a large quantity of gifts earmarked for some of the Apaches' enemies, it appeared that these concerns were not unfounded. Added to Pacheco's inexperience was the arrival of several other new officials on the northern frontier. Juan de Ugalde was named *Commandante de Armas*, a newly created position that encompassed Texas, Coahuila, Nuevo Santander, and Nuevo León. Taking over as *Commandante General* was Jacobo Ugarte y Loyola, and in 1786 supreme command of the internal provinces was returned to the viceroy, a move that likely slowed decision-making on important matters. Such administrative reorganization was very confusing to the various Indian tribes throughout Texas and New Mexico, and came at a critical juncture in the development of the frontier provinces.¹

Due in large part to the efforts of Governor Cabello from 1778-1786, conditions in Texas continued to improve under Pacheco. In September 1787, for example, Comanche delegates arrived in Béxar with Pedro Vial, a blacksmith from Béxar who spent several years among the Taovayas, and agreed to a peace with the Spanish that

¹ John, *Storms Brewed in other Men's Worlds*, 722-24. John argues that the complicated bureaucracy caused confusion and distrust among the various native Indian tribes, in particular the Comanches, who by the 1790's ranged from the Gulf Coast to the mountains of New Mexico, regions in

would last the rest of the century. In addition to reducing dramatically the threat of Comanche attacks and opening more land for settlement, this agreement also placed the Apaches on the defensive, as it gave the Spanish a powerful new ally. Also, even though he was repeatedly criticized by both his superiors and underlings, Pacheco was nevertheless very popular among the growing number of ranchers in Texas. Whereas Governor Cabello and ranchers in Béxar and La Bahía clashed numerous times over statutes designed to regulate cattle exports and provide revenue for the Crown, Pacheco was a close friend of José Menchaca, one of Cabello's staunchest opponents and one of the region's largest landowners. Under Menchaca's guidance, ranchers in Béxar and La Bahía were able to exploit more fully the wild cattle roaming the coastal plain, often at the expense of Mission Espíritu Santo. As a result, control of cattle exports shifted dramatically in favor of the private stock raisers in the province after this point, and the number of cattle leaving the region increased dramatically in a very short time.²

Without the strong arm of Governor Cabello to limit their influence, ranchers on the coastal plain were able to export thousands of cattle with few restrictions, and, although the available sources indicate that few individuals in La Bahía could afford the initial investment required to export the animals, Badeños were certainly not excluded from the developing economy. Many local men had prior experience in cattle raising, either in Texas or one of the numerous *ranchos* in northern New Spain. Also, because most of the animals were gathered from the lands of Espíritu Santo, a growing number of families living in La Bahía found their fortunes tied to the fledgling cattle industry. In

which there were numerous Spanish officials who pursued very diverse goals at the same time.

² John, "Inside the Comanchería," 28-30; Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 322, 425.

addition to the wages derived from working on nearby ranches, thousands of animals were slaughtered for their hides, to make clothing and soap, or simply for food. Perhaps more significantly, there were also rumors in Mexico City that administrators were once again considering the Gulf Coast near La Bahía as an entryway for goods. Combined with Governor Cabello's recent agreement with the Comanches, which not only quieted their fierce attacks, but likely induced many Apache groups to pause as well, conditions would never again look so promising on the coastal plain.³

For Badeños, the dramatic improvement in relations with the Karankawas after 1790 was just as vital to their quality of life as economic improvement. After some initial successes when Mission Rosario was first founded in the 1750's, friars in 1779 watched in horror as the few remaining neophytes abandoned the mission and returned to their marauding ways. The Indians complained that the military commanders treated them too harshly, and it is possible that the location of the mission, which was well outside their traditional zone of habitation, left them feeling isolated and exposed to their enemies. For the next decade the Karankawas were a constant source of concern for the *soldados* and a drain on the limited manpower available for planting crops or building homes and fences. In 1785 Fray José Francisco López noted that after Rosario was abandoned in 1781, the coastal tribes joined the Apaches in destroying mission herds and harassing the settlers. They attacked small groups of Spaniards, stole horses and cattle, and prevented any substantial sea-bound commerce from developing on the Texas Coast. Captain Cazorla grew so frustrated in trying to prevent and punish these transgressions that, in 1787, he asked the governor if he could lure many of the Karankawas to the

³Cazorla to Pacheco. 15 May 1787, reel 18, frames 128, 143, 247, BAM.

community and exterminate them. His request was denied, but once again indicates how frustrated the Spanish had become with their neighbors on the coastal plain.⁴

Perhaps because of increased Spanish vigilance, the growing presence of Comanches on the coastal plain, or their dangerous new relationship with the Apaches, several of the remaining Karankawa tribes appeared at Espíritu Santo in 1789 and asked if they could return. Without waiting for official permission, Father José Mariano Reyes of La Bahía gathered over one hundred Indians at the old church. Though relatively successful with the natives, Reyes was not well thought of by his superiors, and in 1791 he was replaced by Father José Francisco Jáudenes. Unfortunately neither man was able to motivate the Karankawas to perform the daily duties required in the mission, and it was not until 1793, with the opening of Nuestra Señora del Refugio, that many of the remaining Karankawas finally accepted mission life. From that point on, the community enjoyed relatively peaceful relations with the Karankawas, who had undergone a noticeable shift in their attitudes towards the Spanish. The friars taught the women how to spin and weave cotton cloth to sell and, reportedly, the natives made blankets of very fine quality. More importantly, when they encountered intruders on the Gulf coast, the Karankawas informed the Spanish of their presence, although it is possible they often exaggerated in the hopes of receiving rewards for their service.⁵

Without the constant threat of Karankawa attack, civilians could settle further

⁴Benedict Leutenegger, ed. and trans., "New Documents on Father José Mariano Reyes," *SHQ* 71 (April 1968): 592; Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas*, 148-53. Ricklis notes that archaeological evidence suggests that for centuries the Karankawas ranged only forty miles inland, well short of the position of La Bahía, and that they felt very exposed to Comanche attacks at Rosario.

⁵Leutenegger, "New Documents on Father José Mariano Reyes," 585-86; Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 201; Ricklis, *The Karankawa Indians of Texas*, 154-57. Interestingly, Ricklis makes clear that the Karankawas chose to settle in the missions and were not forced to do so, noting that the combined tribes were still more than twice the size of the entire population of La Bahía, numbering as high as 2,500.

from the safety of the presidio, and by the end of the eighteenth century the total population of the La Bahía jurisdiction peaked at 1,370. The size of the community brought not only greater protection and more men to call on for service, but increased demand for consumer goods and skilled workers. Perhaps because they could turn hides into leather goods like clothing and protective coats, the 1790 census indicates eight tailors living in La Bahía. There were also one shoemaker, thirty-one farmers, one blacksmith, and fifteen servants, compared to only three of the latter just ten years earlier. Such a noticeable increase in the number of servants is significant, and indicates that at the turn of the century at least some families in La Bahía had the ability to pay for domestic help.⁶

Several inhabitants even had resources to provide for others in the community when needed, a clear indication of a developing social hierarchy and sense of civic responsibility. For example, *español* Don Domingo Otón arrived in La Bahía sometime between 1768 and 1780. Although he was never employed at the presidio and listed few possessions on the census rolls, his position in town as the only merchant brought him enough income to donate 100 pesos to the rebuilding of Mission Rosario. Otón also donated clothing to the naked neophytes and, according to Father Reyes, played a substantial role in providing for the Indians in general. Don Antonio Rosales, the paymaster, and Juan Barrera, the tithe collector, also gave alms to the missionaries at Rosario to help care for the Indians. Their contributions indicate at least some sense of

⁶While Alicia Tjarks indicates that demographic decline began on the coastal plain in 1796, when the community numbered 1,138 (“Comparative Demographic Analysis,” 302) in the census report of 1797 Captain Cortés states over 1,200 souls lived in La Bahía, and Carlos Castañeda indicates 1,370 lived there in 1798. Census Report of 1797, 1 January 1797, reel 27, frame 1, BAM; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* 5: 194, 285-92.

civic-mindedness, and a measure of affluence within the population.⁷

Also, after decades of clamoring for repairs and renovations by various captains, there was a concerted effort to improve the presidio during the 1790's. Governor Manuel Muñoz ordered engineer Pedro Huizar to the coast to investigate the possibilities of constructing an irrigation system to enhance crop production. The governor also recommended that the presidio be rebuilt completely of limestone to better protect the surrounding community. Ramón Castro, the recently appointed commander of the Eastern Interior Provinces, supported the project, noting that the small garrison represented the only post on the Gulf Coast from the Rio Grande to the Mississippi. He also suggested the new walls of the presidio be built around homes so as to provide better protection from attack. Although the irrigation project was deemed too expensive (though, interestingly enough, not impossible) the *Junta Superior de Hacienda* (viceregal treasury council) approved reconstruction. Much to the dismay of the community, however, the renovations were never implemented, as they were, according to one scholar, lost in a wave of bureaucratic paperwork.⁸

Unfortunately, the optimism and promise at La Bahía during the 1790's was short lived, and the opportunity to build a profitable and effective buffer to foreign encroachment along the Gulf Coast disappeared. After several decades of unrestrained cattle exports, it is clear that the number of available cattle had dropped significantly by

⁷Domingo Otón was first listed in the local census in 1780. That year he had only one shield and a few horses to his name. Cabello Inspection; Leutenegger, "New Documents on Father José Mariano Reyes," 595.

⁸Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* 5: 176-80. In reference to the reconstruction project Félix Almaráz argues that "in Hispanic Texas worthwhile enterprises originating in a whirlwind of words often perished in a hot gust." See Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier: Governor Manuel Salcedo of Texas, 1808-1813* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 89-90.

the end of the century. Time and again Governor Rafael Martínez Pacheco granted export licenses for hundreds of cattle from Espíritu Santo to be sent to Louisiana, Nacogdoches, and other frontier communities. Between May and September of 1787 alone, he allowed over two thousand cattle to be exported from the lands surrounding Espíritu Santo. By 1791 the viceroy himself forbade roundups of cattle from mission lands, as there was a growing concern over the small number of beasts remaining. By 1793 the situation was so bad that the largest license granted by Governor Manuel Muñoz for export was 120 bulls, and the following year he forbade the export of any cow capable of reproducing. In fact, there was such a scarcity of cattle available for export or consumption that by 1796 most transactions with neighboring provinces involved horses. Ironically, during this same period the Spanish commander at Natchitoches, Louisiana, Louis de Blanc, noted that his jurisdiction had plenty of cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses, perhaps due to years of importations from Texas.⁹

Unlike the settlers of Béxar, who were the primary landowners in the region and still had access to their own personal herds of cattle for food and export, those at La Bahía were for the most part laborers who owned little land or livestock of their own. Like the religious community, both the military and civilian populations of La Bahía were dependent on maize purchased in Béxar or stock they received as payment for labor. As the end of the century approached, however, cattle were so difficult for most individuals to find that many settlers had to resort to thievery for their food. As early as 1791 Father Jáudenes begged the presidial commander to prohibit Badeños from slaughtering cattle on Rosario's lands, as he already had difficulty feeding the neophytes.

⁹ Reel 24, frame 130, BAM; Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 383, 391; De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 110-11.

San Antonio ranchers often accused La Bahía settlers of stealing cattle from their lands, and even the military was not above such transgressions. In 1793, several *soldados* were caught by the friars one evening returning to the presidio after midnight with loads of meat. After the opening of Mission Refugio in 1795, the region's supply of beef was taxed even further, as almost four hundred bulls were sent there in just the first six months. Noting that Mission Rosario claimed only thirty-four animals, Captain Juan Cortés wrote to the governor later that year that the only solution was to stop all slaughtering on mission lands for an indefinite time. Unfortunately, this did not occur, and it would be several decades before the Texas cattle population recovered.¹⁰

The dwindling supply of cattle on the coastal plain affected the entire population of Texas, but none more than the Zacatecan missionaries. Without sufficient cattle, the friars found it difficult to feed their neophytes, prompting widespread apostasy. By the time the census of 1790 was conducted Espíritu Santo had only fifty adult Indians, and there were only twenty-seven adults at Rosario just one year after Father Reyes reopened its doors. The situation at Mission Rosario was so bad that the friars had to purchase several herds of cattle from Zacatecas to feed the Indians, ironically one of the traditional markets for Texas cattle in earlier years. Just a few years later Father Manuel Silva of Espíritu Santo wrote to Governor Muñoz that he had only two skinny bulls left to feed his entire congregation, and that this state of affairs was the reason the Indians had abandoned the mission.¹¹

¹⁰ De la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar*, 111. In 1793 the *ayuntamiento* of Béxar complained to Governor Muñoz in an official document that sixteen men from La Bahía were seen slaughtering sixty or seventy animals that belonged to Béxar ranchers. Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 404.

¹¹ Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 201-02; "Provincia de Texas-Estado que manifiesta el Número del vasallos y habitantes que tiene El rey en esta Provincia, con distinción de clases, estados, y castas, de estas

Also of concern for the mission fathers was the ever-dwindling pool of converts. The goal of the Spanish had always been to help the natives assimilate into Spanish culture, and by the end of the eighteenth century there is substantial evidence throughout the frontier that this process was well underway. Many neophytes wore Spanish clothing, ate a mixture of native and Spanish foods, spoke Spanish, attended church regularly, and even understood Spanish law. At Mission San José in Béxar the Indians were a vital aspect of civilian life, far removed from their unsettled ways, and many had even entered Spanish families through marriage. Unfortunately for the friars, with a limited labor supply and a dwindling food source, they became increasingly unable to support themselves under the increased pressure from secular ranchers.¹²

Father José Francisco López realized the predicament of the Zacatecan missions. In 1792 he recommended to his superiors at the College of Zacatecas that the missions around Béxar be completely secularized, as most of the Indians there were well-instructed Christians and children from mixed marriages. This process involved the transfer of the mission from Franciscan control to diocesan control in spiritual matters. Viceroy Revilla Gigedo was very interested in the proposal, not only because it would relieve the Crown of the financial burden of the missions, but also because it would change the remaining neophytes from wards of the state into tax-paying citizens.¹³

las personas de ambos sexos y incluso los párbulos” 31 December 1790, reel 21, frames 53-56, BAM.

¹² Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 383-84; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 302-306. Weber notes that in New Mexico a Pueblo Indian wrote a legal petition to a Spanish official claiming his rights had been violated. This is just one of many instances throughout the New World in which native cultures utilized the Spanish legal system in their favor. See also, Sergio Serulnikov, “Disputed Images of Colonialism: Spanish Rule and Indian Subversion in Northern Potosí, 1777-1780,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 76 (May 1996): 194-226.

¹³ Benedict Leutenegger, trans., “Report on the San Antonio Missions in 1792,” *SHQ* 77 (April 1974): 490; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* 5: 38.

While the missionary support in Mexico City was on the wane, however, the friars from the Béxar missions did not turn their backs on Texas. After an unsuccessful attempt to bring their teachings to the Comanches, in 1792 Fathers Manuel Julio de Silva and José Mariano de la Garza shifted their energies toward the Karankawa groups that tormented the garrison of La Bahía. These Indians had not only hampered the spread of commercial activity through the region by harassing ships in coastal waters, but their marauding also prevented settlers from occupying the vast ranch land surrounding the community. After several decades of defensive action, however, the Comanche-Spanish alliance forged by Governor Cabello in 1785 brought increased pressure on the Karankawas to accommodate their Spanish neighbors. Improved relations with these natives fostered a more stable and productive environment on the coastal plain and, perhaps more importantly, sparked renewed interest in a port of entry near La Bahía.¹⁴

After finally settling on a site after three transfers, in 1795 Mission Nuestra Señora del Refugio opened and brought immediate changes for the community of La Bahía. Initially, the increased resources directed toward reducing the coastal tribes were likely very helpful and, amid growing concern over the inability to ship goods to Texas through Matagorda Bay, the endeavor was heartily supported in the Mexico City. Though the friars could never rely on steady attendance by the independent-minded Karankawas, from this point forward their depredations not only decreased dramatically, but many of their number served as scouts along the coastline. However, the euphoria was short-lived, as it soon became apparent that the responsibility for protecting and supplying the new mission would fall on the already overloaded garrison at La Bahía. In

¹⁴ Elizabeth A.H. John, ed., and John Wheat, trans., "Governing Texas, 1779: The Karankawa Aspect," *SHQ* 104 (April 2001): 575-76; Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 201.

September 1793, Captain Muñoz sent a detachment to the new mission to relieve those sent from Béxar, and in July of the following year commandant-general Nava ordered him to help feed, clothe, protect, and instruct the neophytes of Refugio. By February 1795 the viceroy decided that La Bahía would have sole responsibility for feeding the Indians of Refugio, and by 1797 the mission owed the coastal garrison 1,055 pesos.¹⁵

Although clearly the gradual reduction of the region's most defiant Indians brought tangible benefits to both Badeños and the rest of Texas, the added costs and headaches associated with the undertaking stretched the commander's resources to the breaking point. With men guarding mule trains to the interior, some stationed in Béxar, others watching the horses or tending to private cattle herds, the civilian inhabitants perhaps had mixed feelings about their new neighbors. Not only were they forced to share many of the remaining *mesteños* with the mission, but any decision that drained resources from the military garrison was an unpopular decision in isolated regions like La Bahía. While certainly the overall improvement in relations with the Karankawas allowed more freedom for commerce, ranching, or farming, the demands of providing for another mission community quickly outpaced the presidio's capabilities. Combined with yet another postponement of the port on Matagorda Bay, the community was unable to take full advantage of the Karankawas' change of heart.

Ironically, the Viceroy's decision to secularize the Texas missions initially included the missions of Espíritu Santo and Rosario. This process, in which the government released the members of the religious community from their obligations and elevated them to citizens of the tax-paying community, was popular among many

¹⁵Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* 5: 87-102.

Spanish administrators because it freed government funds for other projects. Unlike Béxar, however, where the order seemed to make sense to Governor Muñoz, when he arrived in La Bahía the following month to enforce the viceroy's decision he immediately had reservations. Describing the natives of Espíritu Santo as helpless children, the governor noted that few of its one hundred twenty-five Indians could even speak Spanish and that most had not yet learned the value of work. At Rosario the situation was even worse. Only eight of the one hundred thirty-nine Indians at the Mission at that time were instructed Christians, and none could speak Spanish. In fact, many of their number had only recently entered the mission. It was immediately clear to the governor that these Indians were not yet ready for civilian life, and that the missionaries had a great deal of work yet to do. Considering the missionaries' essential role in maintaining a cordial relationship with the Karankawas, it was clear that missionary efforts along the coastal plain must continue. Saved from immediate closure, it would be another twenty years before the two missions were fully secularized, although neither Rosario, Espíritu Santo, or, later, Mission Refugio, could boast more than a handful of natives for the rest of the Spanish period.¹⁶

The friars were not the only administrators in Texas concerned with demographic decline as the nineteenth century approached. In 1790 the United States surpassed New Spain in population, and Spanish Louisiana had over fifty thousand non-Indian inhabitants, the great majority of whom were French, German, British, and American. The same year the Hispanic population of Texas was only 2,500, while the neighboring provinces of Nuevo Santander and New Mexico numbered over 25,000 and 20,000,

¹⁶Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 202; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas* 5: 57-65.

respectively. Although between 1778 and 1810 the eastern settlement of Nacogdoches almost doubled in size, due in large part to immigration from Louisiana, for the first time in decades the coastal plain experienced a decline. After 1798 La Bahía began a slow retreat from its high-water mark of 1,370 people to just over four hundred by 1809. Dwindling manpower in Texas did not go unnoticed, and after 1800 officials in Madrid developed a plan to send thousands of civilians from Santo Domingo to Texas. Funds were also allocated for a survey of Matagorda Bay and plans to establish more settlements along the coast to help guard against foreign influence. The Council of Indies approved financing for the project, and over three thousand Spanish immigrants gathered in Cádiz while their expedition acquired the necessary supplies. Unfortunately, war with the British brought a blockade of Spanish ports on the continent, preventing the civilian transfer and ending the last real hope for a Matagorda port. By the time Governor Manuel Salcedo arrived in Texas in 1809 the province had seen little growth for almost a decade, and the small coastal community of La Bahía had dwindled to only 405 adults.¹⁷

Exacerbating the drop in able-bodied men was concern over the growing number of *forasteros*, or strangers, found residing in the province. While the presence of foreigners on the northern frontier had long been a concern for the Spanish, and was in fact one of the motivating factors for settlement north of the Rio Grande to begin with, once again events in Europe brought the issue to the forefront. As early as 1765, when six hundred fifty Acadians seeking refuge from the British were settled in Attakapas and Opelousas, Louisiana, Spanish America became an attractive destination for men and women of various nationalities. After a royal decree in April, 1786, in which Carlos III

¹⁷ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 272-74.

allowed Anglo-Americans approved by the governor of Louisiana to settle wherever they chose, there began a noticeable influx of American, Irish, British, and French settlers west of the Sabine River. After the overthrow of the French monarchy in 1793, however, the Spanish began to fear their revolutionary neighbor, and the viceroy ordered the arrest of all French nationals living on Spanish soil. Although exceptions were made for many of the Louisiana-born Frenchmen married to Spanish women, this decision signaled a noticeable shift in Spanish policy.¹⁸

Although there were a considerable number of foreigners living in Nacogdoches after 1790, the central Texas settlements of San Antonio and La Bahía had very few *forasteros* before 1800. In 1792, for example, Castañeda lists just thirty-one in Béxar and only eight in La Bahía. Four years later, Captain Juan Cortés of La Bahía identified only two foreigners on his census report. Francisco Montán was a blind man who had lived in the community for over forty years, although originally born in France. Lorenzo Rainier, a Frenchman from Marseilles, was described by Cortés as a *traficante del comercio*, a profession that certainly hints toward commercial ties to Louisiana. Interestingly, even though Montán had made his home on the coastal plain for over twenty years, the growing tenor of distrust must have been clear even in La Bahía. In 1796 both men requested permission to return to their native land.¹⁹

Regardless of the number of foreigners permanently residing in the province, the activities of Phillip Nolan clearly indicate that many foreign merchants crossed the border only temporarily, preferring to live in Louisiana, where regulations on commerce were

¹⁸Mattie Austin Hatcher, *The Opening of Texas to Foreign Settlement, 1801-1821* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1927), 10-13, 41.

¹⁹ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 5: 31; Cortés to Nava, 12 December 1795, reel 26.

not as stringent. Carrying a passport from Louisiana governor Esteban Miró, Nolan began gathering horses in Texas in 1791. In 1794 he was allowed to take 250 horses from Texas and sell them in Louisiana, and in 1797 even Commandant General Pedro de Nava authorized Nolan to round up horses in Nuevo Santander. When he arrived in New Orleans with over twelve hundred animals, his total profit amounted to over sixty thousand English pounds. In 1804 Commandant General Nemesio Salcedo allowed a similar transaction when he authorized a former French officer to export 120 horses from the La Bahía jurisdiction to Louisiana, less than a year after prohibiting the residents of Texas from taking any animals across the border. Clearly, the fact that it was easier for an American to make money in Texas than it was for the loyal Spanish subjects hindered demographic and economic development and likely fostered distrust of colonial officials among the general populace, who were left at a decided disadvantage.²⁰

As a result of their constant inroads, American traders began to ingratiate themselves with the various Indian groups west of the Sabine, a factor that certainly added to Spain's growing discomfort in Texas. In July 1799 several Americans from Louisiana appeared at friendly Indian settlements, trading furs and firearms for horses. Not only did the Spanish fear the natives would encourage further contraband activity, Commandant General Pedro de Nava believed the Indians must have been either unhappy with their treatment at the hands of the Spanish or, even worse, no longer intimidated by the weakened state of Spanish forces in Texas. Apparently Nava's concerns were not unfounded, and La Bahía in particular fell victim to increased raids by Comanche

frame 12, Cortés to Nava, 1 January 1796, Report on Foreigners at La Bahía, reel 26, frame 120, BAM.

²⁰Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 452-57.

warriors upset with assistance being given to the *Mescalero* Apaches by the Karankawas of Rosario and Refugio. There was also a growing sense of distrust among even the reduced Karankawas, perhaps because they felt the Spanish were unable to protect them from the Comanches. In September 1798 a small band of Karankawas from Refugio attacked a group of soldiers driving cattle, and the Karankawa leader, Frazada Pinta, continued to be a source of irritation along the coast for the rest of the century.²¹

Complicating matters even further for the community were the constant rumors of foreign attack. Not only was there tension between Spain and the United States over the eastern border of Louisiana, there was also a growing rift regarding control of the Mississippi River. When the United States signed a preliminary treaty with Great Britain in 1795, with whom Spain was at war, Spanish administrators began to see both nations as a direct threat, particularly on the northeastern frontier. The following year Commandant-General Pedro de Nava wrote to Governor Muñoz that the utmost care should be taken to “prevent the passage to this kingdom of persons from the United States of America.” Perhaps in response to Nava’s directive, Captain Juan Cortés of La Bahía sent seven *soldados* to the Nacogdoches presidio the following year, presumably for extended duty, since he sent thirty bulls and three hundred pesos for their maintenance. Several years later, however, when a group of Indians arrived in La Bahía to warn of foreigners on the coast, the Spanish must have noticed the vulnerability of the Gulf Coast. The predicament was certainly not lost on the newly appointed presidio captain, José Miguel del Moral, who went into a panic when the Indians arrived at his

²¹Hatcher, *The Opening of Texas*, 50; Hatcher, “Conditions in Texas Affecting the Colonization Problem, 1795-1801” *SHQ* 25 (October 1921): 89-90; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 5: 184-

dilapidated presidio, which had recently suffered the collapse of one of its walls.²²

By the fall of 1801, reports of foreign activity on the Gulf Coast, coupled with the constant fear of Indian attack, left La Bahía a very uncertain future. Unfortunately, when Napoleon sold the recently re-acquired province of Louisiana to the United States in 1803, a direct violation of the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso signed three years earlier, things took a decided turn for the worse. Commandant-General Nemesio Salcedo ordered the captains of both La Bahía and Nacogdoches to stop all trade with Louisiana until further notice. He further mandated that all foreigners in the province have official passports issued by the governor of Louisiana, and he ordered an audit of all stock exported from the La Bahía jurisdiction under Captain Javier Uranga since his arrival in May 1799. Perhaps because he was under considerable pressure from the locals, who were sorely lacking in both food and other essential items, Captain Uranga apparently followed the policy of *obedezco pero no cumplo*, or “I obey, but I don’t comply.” As a result, he was convicted of allowing numerous illegal transactions and was quickly replaced.²³

Also, in spite of efforts to limit their number, the transfer of Louisiana to the United States prompted hundreds of Spanish subjects living east of the Sabine to request residence in Texas. Several census reports from the early nineteenth century, listing both individuals of foreign birth and those of Spanish descent who had recently moved from other parts of the Spanish Empire, show a dramatic change from the last decades of the

87.

²² Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 212-14 (212 quotation); Cortes to Muñoz, 21 July 1796, reel 26, frame 661, BAM; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 5: 184-87.

²³ Nemesio Salcedo to Governor of Texas. 13 September 1803, reel 31, frame 609, BAM; Jackson, *Los Mestizos*, 471.

eighteenth century. Ironically, in 1803 Nacogdoches had fifty foreigners from France, Louisiana, England, Italy, and, of course, the United States, down from over eighty just ten years earlier. Elsewhere in Texas, however, there was a noticeable increase in the number foreigners after 1803, due to the fact that Spanish policy expressly forbade their settlement in East Texas in an effort to prevent illicit transactions. In Béxar, for example, there were sixty-eight men identified as having moved from regions outside of Texas, although only one could be considered a foreigner, and he was from Louisiana and was recently a Spanish subject. Similarly, in La Bahía, there were twenty-four men described as strangers, the great majority of whom were Spaniards from east of the Sabine River area whose loyalty was questionable. While the Spanish did try to distinguish between those settlers simply trying to escape the rule of the United States and those bent on illegal pursuits, many of these immigrants had ties to commercial agents in what was now U.S. territory and their presence was likely very unsettling to the Spanish.²⁴

For the rest of the Spanish period every frontier official was focused on preventing the entry of foreign goods at the minimum, but often using every means at their disposal to prevent an outright invasion from the east. In 1805, in response to U.S. military activity on the eastern border, three hundred soldiers and seven hundred militia were dispatched to Texas from Coahuila and Nuevo Santander, in one capacity or another, would remain in the province for virtually the remainder of the Spanish period. Most of these reinforcements were sent to East Texas to prevent intrusions at Nacogdoches, while the rest remained stationed in Béxar to protect the provincial capital.

²⁴ “Padrón que manifiesta por menor los forasteros que hoy día de la fecha, existen avecindados en el mencionado presidio,” 13 April 1804, reel 31, frames 190-91, 31 December 1804, reel 32, frames 855, 875, BAM.

Although some administrators were concerned that their vigilance in East Texas was being thwarted by individuals entering Texas by a more southern route, one that would bring them into the La Bahía jurisdiction, Captain Francisco Amangual apparently was left with his standard troop contingent. In April 1805, Amangual wrote to Governor Juan Bautista de Elguezábal that he was unable to police his jurisdiction effectively, as the local population was too poor and ill-equipped to supplement his regular forces, and were of little use in defending the province. Most civilians were without effective firearms, and even fewer had mounts capable of prolonged excursions. Unfortunately, the coastal garrison was, as usual, of secondary importance to administrators in Chihuahua and Mexico City, who likely viewed the capital and the eastern border as prime concerns. By the end of the decade, however, this oversight would prove very costly, as the exposed Texas coast became an inviting target for foreign aggression.²⁵

When Manuel Salcedo assumed his post as governor of Texas three years later he was certainly not unaware of the weakened state of his command. In 1808, after traveling through several bustling U.S. cities, including the flourishing port of New Orleans, his sparsely populated province must have appeared somewhat disappointing. In one of his first assessments of the province, Salcedo submitted a report on conditions in Texas and his recommendations for improving the situation. The young governor, the product of a well-respected family and a proven administrator, formulated very specific plans for the future. From experience Salcedo knew that Anglos in Louisiana looked longingly at Texas, prompting him to request 4,000 additional men for defense. He also

²⁵Almaráz, Jr, *Tragic Cavalier*, 16-17; Amangual to Elguezábal, 29 April 1805, reel 33, frame 128, BAM.

petitioned for engineers, hospitals, tools, and factories, noting somewhat pitifully that “there is nothing [in the province] and everything is needed.” Significantly, after making it clear that the greatest danger facing the region was a dearth of able-bodied men, the governor reiterated the decades-old request for a port at Matagorda Bay to provide a conduit for materials and commerce for the foundering province. There had already been two thorough surveys of the bay, in May and July, which likely bolstered the governor’s feeling that the project was feasible.²⁶

Ironically, while royal advisors in Madrid were afraid to encourage trade through Matagorda Bay and La Bahía because they felt it would invite illegal transactions, all four governing officials in Texas in 1809 were in favor of the port. Governor Salcedo, Brigadier General Bernardo Bonavía, Simón Herrera, and Antonio Cordero all agreed that the key to securing the province for Spain was allowing Hispanic Texans to enjoy the benefits of commerce. As early as the 1770s, under Teodoro de Croix, frontier officials had begun to realize that the centuries-old system, in which goods were shipped from monopoly houses in Cádiz, through Veracruz and Mexico City, and finally to the frontier, resulted in both inflated prices and limited supplies. While this had been the norm in Spanish dominions for three centuries, between 1795 and 1808 war with England brought a British blockade of Spanish ports. The resulting collapse of virtually all colonial trade led to a dramatic decrease in revenues for the crown and Spanish merchants, and extreme shortages on the frontier, particularly in Texas. Without ammunition, horses, food, shoes, manufactured goods, and sometimes clothing, even law-abiding citizens were forced to

²⁶Nettie Lee Benson, trans., “A Governor’s Report on Texas in 1809”, *SHQ* 71 (April 1968):610-15, (615 quotation); Bonavía to Viceroy, 26 May 1809, reel 41, frame 477, Salcedo to Bonavía, 26 July 1809, reel 42, frame 31, 53-54, 674, BAM.

resort to subterfuge just to survive. Rather than simply ignoring the problem, a situation many believe was common to the Spanish frontier, it is clear that virtually every important official in Spanish Texas realized the significance of securing the coast as an avenue for goods.²⁷

Regardless of what the new governor might have hoped for, political turmoil in Madrid set in motion a dramatic sequence of events that would send repercussions throughout the Spanish Empire. Not content with the direction of policy in Spain, Napoleon forced the abdication of Carlos IV, placed the crown on his brother Joseph Bonaparte's head, and arrested the heir to the throne, Ferdinand VII. The presence of a French usurper on the throne sparked the gathering of the Spanish *Cortes*, a representative body summoned to govern in the king's stead, and for the first time the American provinces were to be allowed a voice in their own affairs. After centuries of governance from afar, Spanish subjects throughout the Americas began to discuss the framework of their government and, in the shadow of both the French and American revolutions, may have perhaps started to question the benefits of absolutism. Even from sparsely populated Texas the *Junta Central* requested a representative.²⁸

Although there is a good deal of debate on how influential the egalitarian concept of representative government really was in creating dissention on the northern frontier, by 1810 the level of deprivation in Texas made its population fertile ground for revolutionary ideas. On the night of September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo's cry

²⁷Weber, *Spanish Frontier in North America*, 275; Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 481; Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 30-35. The volume of illicit commerce was such that David Weber writes that a full two thirds of all transactions were illegal. See Weber, *Spanish Frontier in North America*, 173-75.

²⁸For more on the role of ideology in the Spanish-American independence movements see, Colin MacLachlan, *Spain's Empire in the New World The Role of Ideas in Institutional and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

for Mexican independence sent shock waves from Madrid to California. As Governor Salcedo began planning for the defense of his command, he realized his best hope was to secure supplies and material through Matagorda Bay. At the end of October he wrote to the Marqués de Someruelos, a Cuban merchant, requesting not only men and supplies, for which he would pay cash on their arrival, but yet another survey of Matagorda in the hopes of securing an alternate supply line from the interior. Also, to ascertain more accurately the resources at his disposal, Salcedo ordered the acting commander of La Bahía, Andrés Mateos, to formulate a detailed inventory of the buildings, weapons, livestock, and number of able-bodied men available for duty.²⁹

Although he was also charged with investigating the sentiments of the community, Captain Mateos, who had only recently assumed command of the garrison, wrote the governor that he was not fully acquainted with area residents and was unable to draw conclusions about their political leanings. For decades Spanish administrators believed that by transferring frontier commanders frequently they could eliminate some of the illicit activities that were so common in isolated areas, and the coastal plain was no different. From 1798, when Captain Juan Cortés assumed command, through 1821 and the arrival of Mexican Independence, ten different officials governed the settlement of La Bahía. Unfortunately, while this system may have helped limit the spread of contraband somewhat, it also hindered the presidio commander's ability to make decisions regarding which families or individuals were suspect and which ones could be relied upon for support. Nevertheless, the census report Mateos prepared for Governor Salcedo in

²⁹Andrés Mateos to Salcedo, 10 October 1810, reel 47, frames 121,681-87, 749-50, BAM.

January 1811 provides at least a glimpse of the conditions in La Bahía during the initial phases of Hidalgo's revolt.³⁰

Although the socioeconomic environment of La Bahía was certainly considered disappointing to many Spanish observers, Mateos' report nevertheless indicates that there were still reasons for optimism. Although the small village had decreased in size since 1800, from a high of 1,370, to 875 Spanish men, women and children, and a total of 256 Indians at missions Espíritu Santo and Refugio. There were 170 Spanish families, 291 children, and 51 *sirvientes* (servants). The community also had 14 blacksmiths, up from only 3 in 1790, and there were now 3 shoemakers, compared to only 1 in 1780. Unlike previous decades, when virtually the entire community lived in *jacales*, both the presidial captain and the tobacco inspector owned stone houses, and almost eighty percent of the civilian families lived in wooden homes. Moreover, while there were only 17 landholders in La Bahía in 1780, none of which could have been considered significant, by 1811 some 54 adults owned a portion of land, either a personal spot for gardening or a portion of land outside the community for grazing animals or growing crops.³¹

Most importantly, however, was a noticeable increase in families who chose to migrate to La Bahía after 1800, many of whom were able to build homes far outside the immediate protection of the presidio. Unlike Béxar, where settlers had, during various times of peace with the Apaches, been able to maintain property outside the protection of

³⁰Mateos to Salcedo. 31 December 1810, reel 47, frame 121, BAM; O'Connor, *Presidio La Bahía*, 39.

³¹Padrón General de Toda la Jurisdicción de La Bahía del Espíritu Santo," 4 January 1811, reel 47, frames 749-63, BAM.

the military, since it inception La Bahía had remained in a state of constant conflict with the Karankawas. After their acceptance of mission life at Refugio, however, thousands of acres of land was opened for prospective settlers and, beginning in 1800, the complexion of the community changed considerably.

Among the military and civilian community in 1811, over half of the adults were born in other communities, and a full twenty percent had arrived on the coastal plain in the past decade, some from as far away as Sonora and California. In 1807, for example, several families migrated from Nuevo León to the coastal plain and quickly became some of the community's wealthiest families. Manuel Vásquez moved his family to La Bahía from Cerralvo, Nuevo León, in 1807 and by 1811 was one of the largest landowners in the area. He owned 20 mares, 5 horses, and 300 goats and sheep. Juan Angel Salinas arrived the same year, and he too quickly acquired a grant for a *rancho* in the La Bahía jurisdiction. By 1811, Salinas had two servants, 500 sheep and goats, 16 mares, and 8 horses. Even one of the more historically notable members of the local community benefited from the increased availability of land. Martín de León, who would later become an important colonizer during the Mexican period, moved to the area in 1805 from Nuevo Santander and built a ranch near Refugio. His holdings were by far the largest in the community, with over 350 cattle, 800 sheep and goats, 40 horses, and 5 teams of oxen. Though far from the traditional confines of the town, the men and women who lived on each of these ranches were nevertheless considered members of the community, who engaged in commerce, supported the church, were parties to judicial

proceedings, and participated in other official events.³²

Unfortunately for these Badeños, by January 1811 a growing number of Texas residents were becoming disillusioned by the royal government's heavy hand in everyday affairs. While traditionally some royal decrees were only tacitly implemented along the frontier, the increasing level of destitution led many colonials to question the nature of their government. For almost a generation the authority of the Crown had grown steadily and, as in all colonial empires, royal interests often conflicted directly with the needs of the provincial populations. In Béxar, for example, when Governor Cordero reduced the size of the *ayunatamiento* in an effort to limit its influence in community affairs, there was certainly resentment, particularly among the *Isleño* elites. Meanwhile, throughout the province the government's constant efforts to limit illicit commerce sparked disaffection among the masses, especially as many officials continued to circumvent the very restrictions they were charged with enforcing. Some colonials even feared that royal administrators were agents of France and that the Spanish Empire was nearing its end. Sensing their discontent, Salcedo urged the people of Texas to take up arms in defense of their king if necessary, as rumors persisted that Hidalgo's army would turn its attention to the exposed northern frontier in the hopes of gaining assistance from the United States. On January 19 Captain Mateos asked the governor what procedure he should follow for enlisting the civilians of La Bahía, as he had recently learned that several ships from New Orleans were bound for the Texas coast. Before Salcedo could respond, however, Juan de las Casas, a retired militia officer from Nuevo Santander living in Béxar, and a group

³² Ibid.

of disgruntled Béxar soldiers arrested the governor and his aides.³³

After sending Governor Salcedo to Coahuila for detention the rebels went about consolidating their victory in Texas. Casas first dispatched agents to Nacogdoches, where they met almost no resistance, and on January 23 he sent Luciano García to La Bahía to secure the presidio's support for his cause. Although there is no record of the events, apparently the community could muster little resistance, particularly after Captain Mateos abandoned his post when he saw the rebels approaching. Shortly after his arrival García wrote to Casas that he would send all remaining treasury funds to Béxar. In the initial phases there was little armed resistance to the rebellion in Texas, although many of the elites in Béxar rather quickly grew tired of the revolutionary rhetoric and vulgar tactics employed by the insurgents. While he did have the support of commoners in Béxar, Casas lost favor among the higher levels of society when he began confiscating the property of all Europeans, arresting those who tried to escape to Louisiana, and jailing anyone he suspected of royalist leanings, particularly the well-to-do.³⁴

In La Bahía, where there were few wealthy individuals to prey upon, the rebels seized only the property of Captain Mateos and *vecinos* Melchor Ruiz and Miguel de la Concha, the tobacco inspector. The locals were not entirely supportive of the Casas revolt, however, preferring instead to switch their allegiance after the tide had turned against the movement. Not unlike the discontent apparent in the capital, after a short time under the insurgent's rule the presidial chaplain, Father Miguel Martínez, Postmaster Bernardo Amado, and Inspector de la Concha began exhorting Badeños

³³ De la Teja, "Rebellion on the Frontier," 22-23; Frederick Chabot, *Texas in 1811. The Las Casas and Sambrano Revolutions* (San Antonio: The Yanaguana Society, 1941), 24-25.

³⁴ Luciano García to Las Casas, 23 January 1811, reel 47, frames 889, 988, 1018, BAM.

toward counter-revolution. Interestingly, whereas it is likely many local *soldados* initially followed orders issued by the insurgents, including arresting members of their own community, the community was later praised by Commandant General Salcedo for its loyalty during the insurrection. This indicates that not only were administrators concerned with rebuilding support for royal government, but also that Badeños were pragmatic in their approach toward rebellion.³⁵

After just thirty-nine days of rule, on March 1 Father Juan Manuel Zambrano led several prominent Bexareños in a counter-revolution that overturned the las Casas regime and returned Texas to royal control. The restoration of royal government that followed Zambrano's actions unfortunately did not reverse the troubles facing Texas at the time. On the contrary, Governor Salcedo knew that even after Hidalgo's defeat there were forces that desperately sought Mexican independence, particularly in Texas, where most citizens were deprived of even subsistence living. Hoping to find supporters among the disenchanted, José Gutiérrez de Lara, a landowner from Nuevo Santander, embraced Hidalgo's revolutionary ideology wholeheartedly and, with the assistance of Augustus Magee, a former lieutenant in the U.S. Army, began organizing the Republican Army of the North in June 1812. Recruiting primarily inside the Neutral Ground east of the Sabine River, Gutiérrez enticed men with promises of wealth that would follow the opening of unrestricted trade with Louisiana, as well as a monthly salary of forty dollars and one Spanish league of land (about 4,500 acres). With financial support from the

³⁵José Agabo de Ayala to Casas, 2 February 1811, reel 48, frame 45, BAM; J. Villasana Haggard, "The Counter-Revolution of Béxar, 1811" *SHQ* 43 (October 1939): 224-30; Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 119-23; De la Teja, "Rebellion on the Frontier," 24-25.

United States and at least tacit approval from General James Wilkinson, the commander of the U.S. Army in the Old Southwest, Gutiérrez entered Texas in June 1812.³⁶

The invaders had no trouble capturing Nacogdoches and were, in fact, bolstered by the enlistment of numerous Spanish *soldados* intrigued by the opportunities the invaders offered. In mid-September the Republican Army headed for the interior of Texas, its ranks having swelled to 740 men after several months recruiting in East Texas. Upon learning of the invasion Governor Salcedo, concerned with protecting the capital, recalled dozens of men from La Bahía, leaving the coastal garrison with only a token force. Coupled with the fleeing soldiers from Nacogdoches and other settlements, the governor had a force of 1,500 men to defend his post, although La Bahía was left virtually defenseless. Rather than face the bulk of Spanish army at Béxar, Gutiérrez instead turned his forces toward the coast and, on October 18, aimed for the small community of La Bahía.³⁷

When Gutiérrez's army began its attack on Espíritu Santo on November 7 the few remaining soldiers fled to Béxar. Although there is no mention of the townfolk doing the same, it is likely that some did abandon their homes and possessions, fearing their lives were in danger. Though it is not clear how many remained, it is certain that for those who did, the experience was somewhat different than they may have expected. After the initial shock of occupation many civilians and Indians welcomed the invaders with "manifest joy." However, the Badeños delusions of victory and independence were short-lived. First of all, while many among the rank and file supported the Casas regime

³⁶Harry McCorry Henderson, "The Magee-Gutiérrez Expedition," *SHQ* 55 (July 1951): 43-47; Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 532; Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 157-63.

³⁷Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 160-68.

initially, the American-financed filibusters were likely seen as invaders who acted as such, taking whatever they needed to survive and treating the poverty stricken Badeños as a conquered people. Also, as early as November 23 there are indications of dissent within the foreign camp when a military council led by Magee agreed to surrender, primarily because the Spanish civilian and military population had been reluctant to join their cause. However, after preliminary talks with Salcedo and Herrera, who refused to discuss pardons, Magee died under dubious circumstances and with him perhaps much of the restraint that he may have exercised.³⁸

After receiving reinforcements from Coahuila and the Rio Grande settlements, Governor Salcedo and General Herrera began a four-month siege on the presidio during which 1,600 men bivouacked at Mission Espíritu Santo. For a community that had struggled for years to find sufficient food or clothing for itself, the destruction wrought by both the invaders and so many Spanish forces on the landscape likely sapped what few remaining resources the area offered. Also, after several clashes between the two armies, the last of which resulted in over six hundred Spanish casualties, many of the wooden homes and other structures around the presidio had certainly been damaged by cannon fire or simply used for firewood. When, on February 19, the invaders left the fort to pursue a fleeing Governor Salcedo, what had been a promising young community just a decade before remained a shadow of its former self. While much has been written about the brutality of the filibusters on their arrival in Béxar, and particularly the assassination of Governor Salcedo on April 4, missing from the historical record are the atrocities that

³⁸Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 6: 93-95, (94 quotation); Henderson, "The Magee-Gutiérrez Expedition," 33-47.

were likely committed within the confines of La Bahía, where there were few Spanish witnesses remaining. In light of the dissention mentioned above, one can assume that the assorted rabble that joined the Gutiérrez cause inflicted great harm on both the social and physical environment of the coastal plain, much as they did in Béxar.³⁹

It is almost impossible to underestimate the impact of the Gutiérrez-Magee expedition and the Casas rebellion on the inhabitants of La Bahía. It is likely that thousands of domestic animals, gardens, clothes, weapons, horses, and other possessions were lost. Many of those who fled their homes likely never returned, preferring instead to stay in Béxar where the governor maintained most of his forces. Those who did return to the coastal plain were faced with rebuilding not only their homes, but likely the walls and buildings of the presidio, as well as storehouses, fences, and crops. Also, after decades of forging a tenuous relationship with the Karankawas, Tonkawas, Apaches, and Comanches, the depleted Spanish forces in Texas, and La Bahía in particular, could no longer maintain the upper hand in their dealings with these native groups. From 1811 to the end of the Spanish period, Indian attacks returned to the frequency and brutality of earlier years, leaving the defenseless citizens of La Bahía little hope for the restoration of commerce, ranching or farming, or even securing needed supplies.⁴⁰

³⁹ Félix Almaráz writes that Salcedo had 1,500 men at his disposal before being joined by 190 militia from Coahuila and the Rio Grande settlements. Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 164-68; Henderson, 48-50. Although Henderson does provide some details of the siege, he wrote almost entirely from the American perspective. Almaráz is much more current and provides a more balanced interpretation of the siege.

⁴⁰ After defeating the invaders at the Battle of Medina, Arredondo began killing many prominent citizens for supporting the foreigners. Throughout 1813 more than 1,000 Indians and Texans fled to Louisiana, abandoning crops, homes, herds, and even their families. Those in Béxar alone lost over 4,500 head of cattle when they left Texas. Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 537. Several sources indicate that after 1810 the Indians of Texas resumed their offensive posture toward the Spanish, whom they likely viewed as much less threatening. See Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 145-46 and Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 547-48.

Indeed, the violence and uncertainty that gripped Spanish Texas after 1811 reversed almost all of the gains realized along the coastal plain since 1722. The vengeance visited upon many loyal Spaniards by General Joaquín de Arredondo's army, which defeated Gutiérrez's forces at the Battle of Medina on August 18, 1813, undoubtedly created a surreal environment for the many Badeños just trying to survive. Many who fled the general's initial sweep for traitors found themselves at La Bahía where not only were the missions of Espíritu Santo and Rosario both abandoned, but the chapel of Espíritu Santo was completely destroyed. Later, when General Arredondo ordered the local commander to make the necessary repairs to both the barracks and the chapel, it was discovered that there were no funds for such an undertaking. As a result, by the end of Arredondo's purge the coastal garrison hardly resembled a military post at all, making it extremely vulnerable to foreign attack.⁴¹

From 1815 to the end of the Spanish period the various commanders of La Bahía faced constant Indian attacks, foreign threats both real and imagined, extreme shortages in both food and material, and even increasing criticism from superiors. Governor Antonio Martínez, who arrived in May 1817 and governed Texas through the end of the Spanish period, wrote time and again of the deprivation he faced in Béxar, Nacogdoches, and La Bahía. After writing to General Arredondo shortly after his arrival that he needed troops to reinforce the garrisons of Béxar and La Bahía, Martínez got his first taste of frontier reality when he was flatly refused, as all able-bodied men in the interior were needed to defend against rebellion. When reinforcements did arrive, many of them were

⁴¹Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 6: 125-28.

prisoners sentenced to ten years duty on the frontier, most of whom quickly deserted their posts when the first opportunity arrived.⁴²

Such conditions undoubtedly shocked the new governor, who was specifically charged with protecting the Gulf Coast and the eastern frontier from foreign and Indian attack, preventing contraband, securing the province from revolution, improving the region's internal economy, developing at least a subsistence agricultural economy, and securing the lines of communication from the interior. Nevertheless, Martínez forged ahead with his task of maintaining Spain's control over Texas. Unfortunately, in June 1817 he was forced to confront another invading force, this one under filibuster Henry Perry, late of the United States Army. Although the governor and Captain Juan de Castañeda of La Bahía were able to defeat Perry's force on Coleto Creek, the event certainly brought to light more glaring deficiencies on the coastal plain. Though charged with watching the entire Gulf Coast, as well as the roads to and from the United States, Castañeda had been unable to even search the coast for the intruders when news of their presence first arrived. He wrote Governor Martínez that he had neither the personnel nor the horses for such an expedition, and that what few men he could draw upon were entirely on foot and reduced to begging the local citizenry for food. The following year, after receiving orders from the viceroy to expel a group of French and Americans camped at Galveston Island, Governor Martínez wrote that he was unable to comply. He did not have the mounts necessary to cover the two hundred leagues, he had no boats with which to reach the island, no men to spare for the excursion, and few working weapons.

⁴²Virginia Taylor, trans., *Letters of Governor Antonio Martínez, Last Governor of Spanish Texas, 1817-1821* (Austin: Texas State Library, 1957), 3, 58. Of the ten dragoons sentenced to frontier duty, five were sent to La Bahía and within a month four had deserted. *Ibid.*, 70.

Martínez subsequently ordered an additional thirty men to La Bahía to safeguard the coast, but illness, desertions, and death meant that by 1820 there were only 64 men remaining at the presidio, down from 120 in 1812.⁴³

The *soldados* stationed at La Bahía were certainly not the only ones enduring hardship. There were desertions reported from presidios throughout the northern frontier, and the garrisons in Monclova and in Nuevo Santander had no shirts, shoes, or hats. In Béxar only one unit had clothing, and few men had healthy horses. In September 1817 the governor learned that the fifty horses recently allocated for his garrison would not be arriving, as they were too weak to make the trip from Coahuila. The following month this shortage of animals proved significant when a large group of Comanches approached the capital, killed one *vecino* and kidnapped a young boy. Without the shipment of horses the governor was unable to mount even a token pursuit of the marauders. As if conditions were not bad enough, in September 1818 disaster struck when a hurricane landed on the Texas Coast. The storm destroyed the entire harvest at Béxar, which usually also provided foodstuffs for La Bahía, and the high winds and flooding ruined Mission Refugio. At La Bahía the devastation was even worse, as the rampart, guardhouse, and sixty-one homes were completely leveled.⁴⁴

Not only were the men and women of La Bahía faced with rebuilding their homes once again, the governor was becoming increasingly convinced that he was losing control

⁴³ Roell, *Remember Goliad*, 21; Taylor, *Letters of Governor Martínez*, v, 5-8; Félix Almaráz, *Letters from Gov. Antonio Martínez to the Viceroy Juan Ruiz de Apodaca* (San Antonio: Research Center for the Arts and Humanities, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1983), 3, 17. Castañeda indicates there were 1,308 troops in Texas in 1812, 120 of whom were stationed in La Bahía. *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 6: 127.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Letters of Governor Martínez*, 42, 60-62, 71; Almaráz, *The Letters from Gov. Antonio Martínez*, 27.

over the coastal community. In April 1818 he wrote the viceroy that interim commander Corporal Antonio de León disobeyed orders and likely hid in the forest for several days rather than search the lands north of the presidio for Indians and other intruders. In May of the following year the *vecinos* of La Bahía registered a formal complaint with the governor about their new commander, Don Juan Manuel Zambrano, the leader of the counter-revolution in Béxar. Apparently the community was in no mood for the heavy-handed tactics employed by the interim commander, as one priest left the coastal plain for Béxar, several *vecinos* threatened to abandon their homes, and one *alférez* (second lieutenant) was even arrested for questioning the methods used by his new captain. Perhaps hoping to limit Badeños' desire to abandon the only Spanish post on the Gulf of Mexico, Martínez ordered the arrest of Zambrano, noting that his "arrogant character" would cause too many problems for his overburdened government.⁴⁵

It was within this environment of hunger, fear, deprivation, and dissention that the Spanish subjects of La Bahía experienced the last days of Spanish rule. In the final months of 1820 Governor Martínez was forced to face the reality of his situation. From a peak of over fifteen hundred men just a decade before, desertion and death had reduced the royal military presence in Texas to fewer than three hundred troops. Also, after months of begging for food and supplies from the interior, the governor wrote that he was no longer responsible for defending the province, as the few men remaining under his command did not have the strength to follow orders. After taking numerous loans from *vecinos* to pay for food, the governor wrote that he was out of options and unable to repay his creditors. Unfortunately, Spanish administrators could not concern themselves with

⁴⁵ Almaráz, *The Letters from Gov Antonio Martínez*, 15; Taylor, *Letters of Governor Martínez*, 225.

the needs of a colonial population thousands of miles away when events on the continent once again demanded their immediate attention.⁴⁶

After the restoration of royal government under Ferdinand VII, in 1812, many of the liberal reforms enacted by the *Cortes* went by the wayside, as no Spanish monarch wanted to be subject to the rules of representative government. In 1820, however, the king was no longer able to resist pressures from liberal reformers and was forced to reinstate the Constitution of 1812. Though far from the representative government found in the United States, the Constitution of 1812 nevertheless implemented serious checks on the Spanish Crown for the first time. In particular, it called for an end to the Catholic Church's dominance over Spanish affairs and a truly representative body to work in concert with the monarch.

For most colonial subjects this political restructuring meant a greater voice in their own affairs. For the inhabitants of La Bahía, the changes were somewhat more tangible. Unlike their contemporaries in Béxar, where the town council was made up of residents who could somewhat protect private interests in the area, for almost a century the community of La Bahía had been beholden to the presidio commander. As a result of the growing fervor of liberal reform on the continent, the arrival of representative government spread to the colonies as well. In August 1820 the people of La Bahía gathered to elect municipal officials for the first time. Because the community was still relatively small, however, a full *ayuntamiento*, or town council, was not chosen. Rather, there was one *alcalde* (magistrate) two *regidores* (councilmen) and one *síndico* (attorney). Unfortunately, these officials were barely sworn in when once again events

⁴⁶Almaráz, *Letters from Gov. Antonio Martínez*, 4, 48-50.

thousands of miles away brought sweeping changes to both La Bahía and all of New Spain.⁴⁷

After a few half-hearted attempts to impose the constitution on the Mexican populace, on February 24, 1821, Agustín de Iturbide issued his Plan de Iguala, which called for an independent, Catholic state of Mexico. In an effort to defend his province from the rebellious sentiments gaining popularity in the interior, Governor Martínez called on the *ayuntamientos* to rally against the insurgents. Ironically, the governor issued pardons for many of the refugees who fled Texas after the Casas and Gutiérrez insurrections, hoping that more manpower would prevent the loss of his command. By early June, however, he was forced to confront the inevitable. On July 19 Governor Martínez summoned his *cabildo* and, after what was likely a very somber address to the men gathered before him, the Governor and his subjects swore allegiance to Iturbide and Mexican Independence. Two days later the same process occurred in La Bahía, and changed the face of Texas history forever.⁴⁸

For Badeños, the nineteenth century brought with it changes that no one on the coastal plain could have anticipated. After generations of conflict with the Karankawas and, after 1760, the Apaches, by the 1790s La Bahía began to see direct benefits from the assimilation of these natives into mission life. Once settled at Missions Rosario and Refugio, these Indians provided blankets, clothing, and other manufactures, and many warriors served as scouts for the presidio. More importantly, as the constant fear of Karankawa attack diminished throughout the century, the coastal plain became the focal

⁴⁷José Ramírez to Governor Antonio Martínez, 30 August 1820, reel 65, frame 39, BAM.

⁴⁸Almaráz, *Letters from Antonio Martínez*, 5-11.

point of the growing Texas cattle industry. As a result, Badeños became a primary source of hired help for the numerous ranches along the San Antonio River, and La Bahía became the destination of several ranching families from northern New Spain. The addition of these families, coupled with the increased commercial activity, sparked renewed interest in a Spanish port on Matagorda Bay, and drove the population of La Bahía to its peak of 1,370. Unfortunately, most of this development was reversed in less than two decades. The transfer of Louisiana to the United States in 1803 brought an aggressive neighbor to the borders of Texas, and the forced abdication of King Ferdinand VII in 1808 undermined colonial administration throughout Spanish America. Furthermore, centuries of heavy-handed government and restrictive trade policies sparked Father Hidalgo's rebellion in 1810 and the turmoil of the Casas uprising in Texas. Although La Bahía survived the Casas incident, and even earned praise for its loyalty under duress, the Gutiérrez-Magee occupation two years later sealed the region's fate. After a destructive siege outside the mission-presidio compound, Badeños faced the end of the Spanish period with little support from the Spanish Crown. Long accustomed to revenues from the Americas, the royal treasury was virtually empty, and a growing chorus of liberal reformers on the continent applied constant pressure to reform colonial administration. Unable to reverse the decline in supplies, manpower, and even food, La Bahía was, by 1821, reduced to a barren village of fewer than four hundred.

CHAPTER 5

LA BAHIA AND THE END OF THE SPANISH EMPIRE: A CONCLUSION

No longer subjects of a king thousands of miles away, it is possible that many Badeños believed they would fare much better with the seat of government in Mexico City. Whether they were immigrants from Coahuila, refugees from Spanish Louisiana, *criollos*, or native Texans, most Badeños arrived on the frontier with visions of making a family and a successful living. Like their Anglo counterparts in the United States, these frontier men and women hoped to find opportunities that were not available in more established areas and should be commended for what they did accomplish, rather than criticized for what they did not. Although there were certainly obstacles around almost every corner, there were also opportunities to gain land, livestock, and military promotions. In spite of decades of neglect by colonial administrators and the constant fear of Karankawa marauders, the coastal plain became a vital region in the development of Spanish North America. The pastures surrounding the community held the most important resource in the province, and, after 1780, La Bahía was well positioned to

benefit not only from the explosion in cattle exports, but also from the often-repeated Spanish goal of constructing a port on Matagorda Bay.

Though rarely the recipient of Spanish resources, colonial administrators nevertheless viewed La Bahía as an essential component in their permanent occupation of Texas. In addition to serving as the primary defensive presence for the western edge of the Gulf of Mexico, the Spanish hoped that by locating the community near the Texas coast they could ensure reliable communications and efficient transportation of goods bound for settlements throughout the northern frontier. Because of numerous run-ins with the Karankawas, not to mention problems with mosquitoes, unbearable humidity, and futile attempts at farming, the settlement was transferred three times in less than thirty years. Combined with the hostility of the Karankawas, the repeated uprooting of the young community hindered socio-economic development at La Bahía considerably. However, once situated along the San Antonio River, Badeños enjoyed over fifty years of steady, albeit limited, demographic and economic progress. Their achievements in the face of these obstacles stand in stark contrast to the picture painted over the centuries of a backwards and unmotivated society, and further erodes the foundation on which over a century of prejudiced scholarship was based.

In contrast to those who have argued that the lands surrounding La Bahía were unsuitable for the needs of the community and could not support a settlement of significant size, the evidence clearly indicates otherwise. Both Captain Orobio Joaquín de Basterra of La Bahía and colonizer José de Escandon believed the site on the San Antonio, which Orobio named Santa Dorotea, was perfectly suited for a frontier community. Although several irrigation projects in the initial years would fail to

materialize and prevented any surplus food production, by the turn of the century almost every family had a personal garden of some sort. It is also important to note that between the corn that was regularly purchased in Béxar and the steady supply of wild cattle available for slaughter, extreme hunger was not a serious problem until the end of the Spanish period, when livestock resources were depleted, and war in Europe prevented the shipment of even bare necessities to the colonies.

As Spanish administrators became more familiar with the various native cultures in Texas, conditions in the province continued to improve throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, particularly on the coastal plain. In spite of continued hostility by several Karankawa bands, Badeños were relatively isolated from the Apache and Comanche raiders that plagued Béxar, although they certainly appeared at La Bahía occasionally. Indeed, the proximity of La Bahía to the developing markets for Texas cattle in Louisiana, and the relative protection from Apache and Comanche attacks provided by the garrison of Béxar, made it an ideal staging point for cattle drives out of the province. As the century progressed and cattle exports reached their zenith during the 1780s, an increasing number of civilian families joined the *soldados* of the presidio. With the gradual reduction of the Karankawas occasioned by the opening of Mission Rosario, in 1754, and Mission Refugio, in 1792, the community began to draw on their number for scouting the vast stretch of coastline. Improved relations with these natives resulted in several families moving from the interior to settle on ranch lands between La Bahía and Refugio without fear of Karankawa attack. In fact, in a time span of just fifty years, from 1748 to 1798, the military-religious outpost developed into a predominantly civilian community of 1,370.

The landowners, stockmen, tailors, seamstresses, shoemakers, merchants, farmers, and soldiers living on the coastal plain, though they constituted a small colonial enterprise, represented perhaps Spain's best chance to secure the lands known today as Texas. Notwithstanding the notion favored by many historians that the coastal community was of secondary importance, the evidence indicates clearly that, after 1803, when Tejanos found themselves forced to confront aggressive Anglo frontiersmen, La Bahía became a vital component in the defense of Spanish Texas. As early as 1770, when Athanase de'Mezeires argued that the best way to secure Texas from both hostile Indians and foreign encroachment was through trade, the notion of transforming the Texas coast into a way-station for goods bound for the entire northern frontier came increasingly to the forefront. Though long considered an insignificant outpost, in reality the labor provided by the families of La Bahía was essential to the fledgling cattle industry and, though much of it was illegal, a large portion of Texas' commercial development centered on the lands surrounding the small community.

Clearly this fact was not lost on Spanish administrators in Texas. After assuming office in 1809, Governor Salcedo, General Bernardo Bonavía, and several other officials recognized the importance of the long-awaited port and requested funds for the both the dredging of the Bay and government sponsored immigration to the vulnerable coastline. By 1810, even administrators in Madrid realized the advantage that could be gained by shipping directly to the Texas coast, and hundreds of men and women were readied in Spain, their destination the coastal plain and La Bahía. Events in Europe, however, once again conspired to nullify the endeavor. Forced to defend an empire that stretched from California to South America, as well as deal with traditional diplomatic pressures on the

continent, Spain had simply run out of luck. Napoleon's removal of King Ferdinand VII set in motion events that would lead inevitably to the rebellions of Father Miguel Hidalgo, Juan Bautista de las Casas, and Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara. However, contrary to those who have argued that those officials charged with governing Texas were incompetent men who all but handed the province over to rebels, it is clear that there were many forces pushing the region toward the inevitable break.

Bureaucratic indecision within New Spain, where volumes of paperwork could be created with no tangible results, negated the efforts of capable frontier officers who often knew exactly what was needed to improve conditions in their communities. Captain Luís Cazorla of La Bahía, for example, in spite of operating without an engineer and short of manpower, completed a detailed plan and cost analysis for the dredging and construction of the port at Matagorda Bay, and was well aware of the benefits to be gained by increased trade. In fact, one could successfully argue that it was the structure of the Spanish Empire itself that stymied growth on the coastal plain. Similar to British mercantilist policy in North America, administrators within the Spanish government placed the needs of the mother country squarely at the forefront of any significant decision, a situation that invariably meant that the right decision for the colonies was not always in the crown's best interests. In particular, commercial transactions between Badeños and Spanish subjects in other provinces were severely restricted until the end of the eighteenth century, a fact which forced many law-abiding citizens to violate the King's law time and again.

While this neglect and insensitivity had been the case for centuries, the onslaught of financial and military pressures brought on by the presence of a French usurper on the

Spanish throne reversed development in communities throughout Texas. Policy decisions made in Madrid reduced the size and effectiveness of frontier garrisons, and Badeños in particular were affected, as their dilapidated presidio became the focus of numerous foreign intrusions. Also, unlike their contemporaries in Béxar, where military authority was somewhat checked by the civilian *ayuntamiento*, La Bahía was not granted a municipal institution until 1820. There was therefore no mechanism for protesting any decision issued by the presidio commander that damaged local interests. When both Béxar ranchers and the friars of Espíritu Santo leveled complaints of cattle thievery at the community, Badeños did not have an institution to voice their concerns. Unable to protect its interests through official channels, La Bahía instead struggled to develop an identity until the end of the Spanish period, when it was too late.

Although the decline of Spanish Texas and the reversal of two generations of growth in La Bahía were not inextricably linked, it is safe to assume that Spain's inability to encourage economic development at La Bahía, particularly by investing the funds required to construct the long-awaited port on Matagorda Bay, played a significant role in weakening Spanish control of the northern frontier. The dearth of even bare necessities after 1800 created disaffection, not only among many loyal subjects in Texas at the turn of the century, but also within the military. For Badeños these circumstances certainly must have been frustrating after almost of century of building their lives on the coastal plain. Instead of a promising young settlement filled with merchants, laborers, European luxuries, and Indian trade goods, the few civilians and soldiers remaining on the coastal plain at the end of the Spanish period were instead faced with hunger, neglect and ridicule by administrators, and exposure to both the elements and hostile Indians. Left

with few weapons or horses, and on the verge of starvation, La Bahía offered little resistance to foreigners with designs on Spanish lands.

The struggle of these men and women to build a community on the periphery of Spanish America was not in vain, however, and in light of the considerable obstacles placed in their path, their efforts are to be commended. Notwithstanding the image of Badeños as an insignificant segment of Hispanic society, this community of soldiers, ranchers, missionaries, and converted Indians laid the framework for Tejanos whose families have called the coastal plain home for centuries. In spite of limited resources, constant reductions in manpower, unpredictable weather, and the constant fear of Karankawa attack, by the end of the eighteenth century La Bahía was well positioned to become an important gateway into Spanish North America. After decades of conflict, the missionaries of Refugio and Rosario managed to settle most of the remaining Karankawas, a fact that not only made the coastal region more secure, but also improved Spanish knowledge of foreign activities on the Gulf Coast. Also, time and again Badeños were commended for their loyalty and perseverance, in spite of receiving fewer supplies and charged with patrolling a larger area than the Béxar garrison.

It is also important to note that although Badeños experienced many of the same problems as their contemporaries throughout the frontier, certain circumstances on the coastal plain made their story unique. Unlike the capital dwellers, *vecinos* of La Bahía could not count on a civil institution, like the *cabildo* of San Antonio, to protest royal decisions deemed injurious. Furthermore, the bewildering Texas coastline proved a formidable environmental obstacle during attempts to punish marauding Karankawas, Indians often referred to as the fiercest in Texas. As a result, there were rarely any

retaliations for their destructive raids, a fact that likely encouraged further depredations. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the looming presence of Mission Espíritu Santo, whose land and cattle holdings were far superior to those surrounding Béxar, made land ownership difficult for most Badeños. Most local sons were instead relegated to day labor jobs on the lands of wealthier Béxar residents, or temporary help driving cattle out of the province.

Regardless of the vagaries placed in their path, however, these isolated men and women endured the rigors of life on the coastal plain and formed the nucleus of Tejano society in Southeast Texas. Unfortunately, there is much more to the story than can be related in this preliminary study. Because the birth and marriage records for Mission Espíritu Santo remain as yet undiscovered, we can only speculate as to the social and ethnic composition of the community in its formative years. Also, in light of recently unearthed archaeological evidence, the approximately twenty-five years spent along the Guadalupe River should be examined more closely to present a more detailed description of the community on the eve of the final transfer. Additionally, because the mission fathers were such an important facet of Spain's occupation of the northern frontier, study of the often-strained relationship between the civilian community and its religious leaders should also prove fruitful. Lastly, although the lack of available sources is disappointing, there is a growing trend to identify and explain the role of women in Spanish Texas, and certainly the mothers and daughters of La Bahía are deserving of such study. It is hoped, however, that this study provides a clearer picture of Texas' Hispanic history, and that it will offer some insight into its many cultures.

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