

INVISIBLE LINES:
THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A BORDERLAND

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Introduction

Invisible Lines

Invisible lines define our world. Geopolitically, these artificial divisions mark the boundaries of nations, states, counties, cities, and even private property. In North America, they define us as Canadians, Americans, or Mexicans. They united those within and separate those outside. More subtle invisible lines exist within the structure of society that categorize us by race, social and economic class, education, politics and religious beliefs.

In the Americas, these divisions began during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. As the major European powers colonized the Americas, cartographers produced beautifully illustrated, brightly colored maps demarcating the boundaries of each claimant's territory in bold outlines. With seemingly scientific precision, they divided the largely unexplored and unsettled areas as if they controlled them as completely as they did their nation-states in the Old World. Yet these maps demarcated only an illusion of imperial control. Instead of borders that clearly separated North American empires from one another, the sparsely settled borderlands at the

intersection of European claims became "melting pots" of social and economic cooperation among peoples of various races, nationalities and cultures. Within these pockets of settlement far removed from metropolitan centers of political and economic power, and social control, native peoples and Europeans often cooperated, intermarried, and developed their own unique and independent engines of self-determination to ensure their survival, safety and prosperity.¹

Borderlands are complex and fascinating places. While borders represent a fixed line of demarcation between nation-states, identified by specific lines on a map which often following natural features, borderlands represent a far more dynamic, zonal area surrounding a border. As such, they often develop cultural characteristics of their own apart from the political entities which they join.

Colonial borderlands were transient. They began in a confrontation between competing peoples and ended when one group became politically, economically and socially dominant enough to establish a border that it could enforce with at least minimal control. Yet during the interim period when no single polity imposed its hegemony, intercultural, interdependent societies arose in which kinship networks, ties to the land, and a strong sense of

independence overshadowed the geopolitical aspirations of European nation-states.

For more than a century, an area of land located in present day Louisiana and Texas, bounded by the Red River on the east and north, the Trinity River on the west, and stretching south to the Gulf of Mexico, formed such a borderland. Located largely within the traditional lands of the Caddoan tribes, the region witnesses the juxtaposition first French and Spanish, then United States and Spanish, U.S. and Mexican, and finally the U.S. and the Republic of Texas's territorial claims. Amid this fluctuating realm of imperial ambition, ordinary people created a society that met the human needs of life on a remote frontier. These human adaptations provide a window into a continental history that moves beyond the customary stories of conquest and resistance, of political and diplomatic interaction among great powers, allowing us to understand the unique role of the borderlands in the interpretation of North America history.²

Invisible lines shape our intellectual pursuits as well. In the case of North American history, the most prominent of these lines came from the mind of Frederick Jackson Turner, whose concept that a frontier line advancing westward from the Anglo-American colonies

explained American development thereafter limited our study of North American history for more than a century. Triumphant, self-righteous, racist and nationalistic, Turner's theory painted Native Americans as a "common danger requiring united action," and doomed Spanish and French colonization to virtual obscurity. As a defining element in American historiography, Turner's "frontier" separated United States' history from that of the rest of North America, limiting our understanding of the rich texture of a more continental and world view.³

Unhappy with Turner's thesis, Herbert Eugene Bolton introduced the "Spanish borderlands" in his 1921 work, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*. That monograph, and Bolton's subsequent career, gave stronger credence to the presence and role of the Spanish in the development of North America. The book also offered an alternative to the Turnerian interpretation that follows settlement westward. Bolton and his successors launched a new historiographical field that has since flourished, producing vast numbers of articles and focused monographs examining those areas of the United States once controlled by the Spanish. For example, in his masterful work, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, David J.

Weber's bibliography of secondary sources covers forty-nine pages.⁴

Bolton's work has aged well during the last three-quarters of a century. It established a geographical scope for the Spanish Borderlands and defined the chronological limits across time. Moreover, Bolton introduced many of the historiographical themes that have occupied several generations of scholars. Yet despite the work's status as a classic, readers should evaluate it carefully. *The Spanish Borderlands* remains an appropriate starting point, but its implicit and explicit assumptions about race, ethnicity, gender, and social history raise troubling questions. Bolton considered Spanish influence fundamental to understanding the southern region of North America. In introducing the term *borderlands* and laying out its organizational scheme, Bolton's book created the parameters for study of the region for future generations of historians and initiated debates that still rage over the definition, focus, and scope of the field.

The "Bolton school" that grew out of Bolton's influence emphasizes narrative history, a focus on institutions and great men, and a pro-Spanish point of view. Bolton devoted about half of his 1921 volume to telling the stories of the great Spanish explorers of the

Southeast and the Southwest and the rest to chronicling colonization according to geographical areas.

Bolton tended to glorify things Hispanic in reaction to the prevailing Anglo-American historiographical perspective. To combat the anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish biases of "Black Legend" history, he and others promoted a "White Legend," recording great civilizing institutions, heroic soldiers, and selfless missionaries. But in so doing, he incorporated a narrative of conquest much like Turner's, which has caused historians who followed to characterize the borderlands as regions of conflict.⁵

The Bolton school's dominance of borderlands history began to wane during the 1960s and 1970s, as younger scholars asked historical questions based on new social, cultural, and demographic interests. While many continued to write in the Boltonian mode, an increasing number have departed from the institutional focus and pro-Spanish perspective. For example, neither Turner nor Bolton gave agency to Native Americans. Painted as either enemies or pawns, the activity of indigenous peoples remained obscured except as foils for European expansion. Historian Elizabeth John's study, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spaniards, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795*, marked a transformation in this

historical viewpoint. Casting aside Bolton's institutional frame of reference, John considered the perspective of Native Americans, presenting a masterful synthesis of European-indigenous relations from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries. Her finely crafted narrative focused on Native American reactions to European encroachment spanning the period from the expeditions of Coronado to the arrival of Anglo-Americans, arguing that the borderlands region between the Mississippi and Rio Grande rivers marked an area of geographical rivalry among the empires of France, Spain, and Great Britain, with Native Americans functioning as both pawns and third-party catalysts in the struggle. John postulated that the advent of the Anglo frontier of the United States ended this rivalry and created an enduring stability in the region.⁶

Storms remains a landmark in the refinement of borderlands scholarship for several reasons. First, it firmly shifted historical viewpoints from the Spaniards to Native Americans. Second, the book employed a transnational European perspective of the borderlands that emphasized Spanish, French, British, and U. S. influences in the region. Third, the book's geographical frame of reference rejoined the frontier of the Mississippi Valley borderlands with that of the upper Rio Grande. Historians of the Bolton

school had long compartmentalized the region into two distinct zones: the southwestern and southeastern borderlands. John asserts that no such conceptual division existed within the historical context. In her view, events in Santa Fe impacted those in New Orleans, while the Red River served as a natural highway that tied the mid-Mississippi Valley to Hispanic New Mexico from the Native American viewpoint.⁷

Building on John's efforts, borderlands scholars reassessed the role of native peoples in the story of North America while expanding the geography of North American borderlands far beyond Bolton's original vision. In the past three decades, historians have realized the major role intermarriage, trade and cultural exchange have played in regional development. The works of such historians as Richard White, Dan Usner, F. Todd Smith, and David La Vere offer a new paradigm for considering Indian-European relations within a much more complex social, political, and economic model.⁸

The scholarly emphasis on Native Americans in the borderlands has also benefitted from work of ethnologists and historical archaeologists. John R. Swanton, of the Smithsonian Institution, who spent a half century studying the Indians of the Southeast, left prodigious materials

from his research on the Indians of the Louisiana-Texas borderland region. More recently, John Griffin, Charles Fairbanks, Charles Hudson, Kathleen Deagan, Jerald Milanich, and John Worth have rejected a Eurocentric frame of reference by studying indigenous groups on their own terms. The most impressive recent example of this orientation is John Hann's *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missions*.⁹

Simultaneous with the emphasis on Native American studies, U. S. borderland historians began to follow the lead of Latin American scholars away from the study of institutions and leaders, toward a social history that focused on ordinary people. Since the 1950s, the study of colonial Latin American social and ethnic history has taken on a distinctive character as scholars have shifted their focus to regional studies and to the application of systematic social analysis in their study of separate groups, communities and institutions. New work in previously unstudied primary documents from regional, local and personal archives, and a new emphasis on methodology have provided scholars with fresh insights for innovative interpretations of the Latin American colonial experience.

James Lockhart offered one of the earliest examples of this new approach in his 1968 work, *Spanish Peru*. In a

departure from traditional "great men" histories, Lockhart included such previously unstudied groups as artisans, women, Blacks and Indians. Lockhart's work created a model that remains a standard approach to colonial social history. Following the trend toward social history, borderland historians left the institutional focus of their predecessors for the study of ordinary people. Their work determined that most borderland settlers came from other settled areas in New Spain rather than directly from Europe. Working class people, mostly agriculturists, ranchers, and artisans, these "borderlanders" lived in frontier communities with land given out as part of community membership, not on the individual homesteads so indicative of the Anglo-American frontier. Only later, after the town establishment grew, did residents disperse into the surrounding areas to obtain larger land grants. Reversing the pattern on the U. S. frontier, urban areas did not form when population density in rural areas increased through random settlement of individuals.¹⁰

Numerous historical differences existed between the primary Spanish cities in the center of the viceroyalty and the settlements of the borderland periphery of New Spain. The middle-class rancho characterized the northern frontier of New Spain far more than the hacienda system common in

the center. Class distinctions, rigid within the metropolis, virtually disappeared on the frontier, where the word *Spaniard* "came to mean anyone of Spanish heritage or 'civilized' life style." *Spaniard* could also include Hispanized Indians, leaving only *indios bárbaros* as outsiders. In this reality, class conflict largely disappeared until the clashes between *criollos* and *peninsulares* at the onset of Mexican independence.¹¹

Significant differences also existed between the Anglo-American frontier experience and that of the Spanish borderlands. In Northern New Spain, people became settlers by government order and, with the notable exception of Nacogdoches, planned communities reflected the nature of Spanish settlement, whereas Anglo-Americans usually decided individually to go out and make their fortune on the frontier. In New Spain, in fact, civilians could not travel without a government pass. Obviously, then, the Spanish borderlands do not accommodate the "safety valve" theory. Nor did "free land" act as an inducement to settlement until Mexico made the unfortunate decision to open Texas to American settlement.

While acknowledging the importance of Bolton and his students, Oakah L. Jones diverged from the Bolton school in various ways in *Los Paisanos*. He did not employ the term

"Spanish Borderlands," preferring instead to identify the region as the "northern frontier of New Spain." He also expanded Bolton's notion of geography to include several northern territories within New Spain that remained part of Mexico after 1848. For Jones, "the frontier is seen as a continuous northward expansion spanning three centuries, and no attempt is made to draw an arbitrary boundary between Mexico and the United States." Jones also transcended Bolton's narrow institutional scope by adopting Silvio Zavala's expanded concept of frontier institutions to include the towns, ranches, and farms of Spaniards. Jones also examined simple people and everyday life, not institutions and their leaders.¹²

Since the original publication of *Los Paisanos* in 1979, the historiography of the borderlands continues to move away from institutional studies toward social and cultural themes, profiting from research in other disciplines in the social sciences, notably anthropology, archaeology, ethno-history, sociology, and geography. While recognizing the importance of traditional sources, more recent scholarship has focused on provincial and state archives which contain more documents with material on local issues and commonplace activities than do national archives. Censuses, church records of baptisms, deaths, and

marriages, legal records of wills and inheritances, and local laws have become part and parcel of the researcher's trade.

Because of the sheer magnitude of the subject, only two historians have attempted a comprehensive, unifying volume on the Spanish borderlands. John Francis Bannon provided one for the *Histories of the American Frontier* series in 1970 with his *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821*. More recently, David J. Weber's outstanding book, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, seeks to incorporate current scholarship and to explore and explain the Spanish impact on the peoples and institutions of North America. While framing his discussion using the modern familiarity of American political boundaries, Weber acknowledges that the Spanish frontier has a history that extends into colonial Latin America and Mexico. Although fragmented and specialized, Spanish borderlands studies infrequently stray beyond the present borders of the United States or go beyond the Mexican colonial period.¹³

Bolton and his students considered Spanish Louisiana, along with the rest of the colonial Southeast, to be part of the Spanish borderlands. The Spanish experience in the lower Mississippi Valley attracted the notice of a number of Boltonian scholars, including John Caughey and Lawrence

Kinnaird. Their scholarly studies subjected the province to the same sort of institutional histories created elsewhere in the literature on colonial borderlands.¹⁴

As the institutional viewpoint waned, the early 1980s marked an era when new sources and new perspectives changed the study of Spanish Louisiana. Derek Kerr's *Petty Felony, Slave Defiance, and Frontier Villainy: Crime and Criminal Justice in Spanish Louisiana, 1770-1803* serves as a benchmark analysis in this transition. Kerr became one of the first historians to consult the extensive records of the *Cabildo* in New Orleans in order to assess the legal culture and social relationships of Spanish Louisiana reflected in these materials. In so doing, he "examined the judicial process in the courts of Spanish Louisiana to determine the extent of criminal activity, the composition of the judiciary, and the specific adaptations to the Spanish system of justice to accommodate the Louisiana situation." Kerr's study heralded a wholesale reorientation in the historical literature on Spanish Louisiana. Within a decade, important studies on the nature of slavery in the colony, the role of free women of color, and the material culture of the province had transformed the basic orientation of this body of scholarship.¹⁵

The historiography of the inter-imperial political struggle over the Texas-Louisiana borderlands is extensive. Such works as Carlos E. Castañeda's *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, Odie B. Faulk's *The Last Years of Spanish Texas, 1778-1821*, and Herbert Eugene Bolton's *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* give an in-depth look at the larger political picture. Yet only a few journal articles deal directly with the borderland aspect of this specific geographic area. Herbert Eugene Bolton's "The Spanish Abandonment and Reoccupation of East Texas, 1773 to 1779," provides an account of the closing of the Spanish Presidio of Los Adaes and the local population's attempts to circumvent a governmental edict in order to re-establish their community. J. Villasana Haggard's "The Neutral Ground Between Louisiana and Texas" considers Spain's approach to "buffer" zones against Anglo-American encroachment, and the background of the area that became "neutral ground" as Spain and the United States settled the question of sovereignty.

Noted historians have not neglected the vast region known in colonial times as Louisiana. Francis Parkman, Justin Winsor, and Frederick Jackson Turner eloquently depicted it as an arena of international contests for empire. Historians based in the Mississippi Valley,

beginning with Charles Gayarre in the 1850s, have vigorously studied French and Spanish Louisiana. But the focus on geopolitical affairs has long obscured the ordinary people who actually shaped society and economy within the region yet who have remained overshadowed by a few great men acting upon the grand stage of diplomacy. The regions conveniently classified as French colonial and Spanish borderlands histories still go slightly noticed by students of British North America and generalists in American history.¹⁶

Yet within this nexus of imperial ambition, everyday people struggled to make a life on the fringe of national claims. The Spanish community of Nacogdoches and the French community of Natchitoches developed close familial, social and economic ties. Two dissertations, Helen Sophie Burton's *Family and Economy in Frontier Louisiana: Colonial Natchitoches* and James Michael McReynolds' *Family Life in a Borderland Community: Nacogdoches, Texas, 1779-1861* provide social analysis of the individual communities, yet only Burton briefly considers the link between the two. Jack Jackson's work on the cattle industry in Texas also contains a worthwhile chapter on the economic links between the two villages. Beyond that, no scholar has looked at the region as a borderland unit.¹⁷

Apparently, the invisible boundaries between Louisiana and Texas, Spanish/Mexican Nacogdoches and French/Spanish Natchitoches, the United States and Spanish/Mexican Texas, and even the U. S. and the Republic of Texas, have created divisions separating a unifying history. Spanish borderlands historians consider the two only between 1763 and 1803. Yet even then the region divides along administrative lines, with Texas forming the eastern most part of the Internal Provinces of the Viceroyalty of Mexico, while Louisiana's administration emanated from Cuba. Histories of Louisiana tend to focus on New Orleans and Cajun country. Scholars of Hispanic Texas stop at the Arroyo Hondo, while Texas historians find little of interest prior to 1836.

In his recent work, *The Nation's Crucible*, Peter Kastor considers the area only from the perspective of the "Neutral Ground" agreement of 1805, and comments that "people were anything but neutral when it came to the Neutral Ground." Since such a portrait of the region dominates historical writing, it hardly seems strange that a picture of violent confrontation has always misleadingly characterized the area. The Neutral Ground certainly became the launching point for filibustering efforts into Texas after 1805. Julia K. Garrett's 1939 book, *Green Flag Over*

Texas and Harris Gaylord Warren's *The Sword Was Their Passport* (1943), firmly linked the region to the concept of armed conflict. More recent works such as Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. and Gene A. Smith's *Filibusters and Expansionists* (1997) have furthered this image. Yet the tradition of conflict in the area does not begin until the Louisiana Purchase.¹⁸

Recent scholarly debates about geographical definition, institutional focus, and ethnic perspective have enlivened a new interest in the borderlands. Enriched by the contributions of scholarly researchers from an array of disciplines, the history of the peoples of the border areas of North America continues to gain acceptance as part of the mainstream of U. S. history. The original vision of the borderlands as defined by Herbert Bolton has been stretched to include the border areas of modern Mexico, refocused to include Native Americans and everyday life, and expanded chronologically to extend beyond 1821.

Before falling under the sovereignty of the U.S., the land between the Red River and the Trinity appears in United States history as an amorphous area sojourned only by French woodsmen, Spanish missionaries, and Indians; a land waiting for Anglo-American settlers to occupy it. Historian Ulrich Bonnell Phillips referred to it as the

home of "redskins and Latins," and more recently, Bernard Bailyn referred to "exotic," "strange," and "bizarre" people living in the southeastern hinterland. The true nature of this borderland, only dimly realized by historians, contains a history of its own and a people with a worthy tale.¹⁹

This dissertation explores the Louisiana-Texas borderlands and the infamous "Neutral Strip," integrating it into the larger diplomatic and political developments of the period between 1721 and 1838. It addresses questions of evolving national identities as Hispanic, French, Native American, African American and mixed blood peoples cooperated in developing an economic and social system, only to see it destroyed as Anglo-American settlers became numerically dominant and imposed their rigid hierarchical social structure. In doing so, this study attempts to illuminate the true nature of this borderland region within a wider North American perspective.²⁰

NOTES:

¹ The concept of borderlands comes from the work of Herbert Eugene Bolton, a student of Frederick Jackson Turner who argued rejected Turner's Anglo-centric "Frontier Thesis" in favor of a common history of the Americas.

² Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 86 (June 1999), 814-41; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

³ In fairness to Turner, his essay entitled "The Significance of the Section in American History" remains virtually forgotten in the battle surrounding the "Frontier Thesis." An interdisciplinary approach to sectionalism in American development became the center of Turner's research for the last thirty years of his life. Regrettably, perhaps, he remains connected to the "Frontier" more than a century after he introduced the idea. Allan G. Bogue's 1998 biography *Frederick Jackson Turner: Strange Roads Going Down*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), provides an outstanding commentary on Turner's intellectual legacy. See also John Mack Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and other Essays*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1994).

⁴ Herbert E. Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest*, Reprint Edition, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁵ To judge the *The Spanish Borderlands* fairly, readers should keep in mind that Bolton wrote in the early decades of the twentieth century. The book's rhetorical style and cultural sensibilities reflect a time when now-discredited theories of Anglo-Saxon superiority over other racial and ethnic groups were accepted by most U.S. citizens. Yet Bolton was ahead of his time in other important ways. Writing in the racist and ethnocentric intellectual milieu following World War I, he stressed the many positive contributions of the Hispanic past in the southeastern and southwestern United States, and set the early history of these areas within a Spanish imperial context rather than as background to the arrival of the Anglo-American settlers.

Latin American historian Rafael Altamira credits the "White Legend" particularly to the work of Edward G. Bourne, Herbert Eugene Bolton, and Charles F. Lummis. See Benjamin

Keen, "Main Currents in United States Writings on Colonial Spanish America, 1884-1984" in *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 65: 4 (Nov., 1985), 657-82, n. 17.

⁶ Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795*, Second Edition, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ F. Todd Smith, *The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542-1854*, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1995); David La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms: Caddo Economics and Politics, 700-1815*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Dan Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Society: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Social and Economic Histories*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

⁹ A. L. Kroeber, "The Works of John R. Swanton," in *Essays in the Historical Anthropology of North America*, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections (Washington, D.C., 1940), 100: 2-3; John H. Hann, *A History of the Timucua Indians and Missions*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996).

¹⁰ James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532-1560: A Social History*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968). The term "borderlanders" comes from Oscar J. Martínez, ed., *U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1996).

¹¹ Oakah L. Jones, *Los Paisanos: Spanish Settlers on the Northern Frontier of New Spain*, Reprint, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 246.

¹² Ibid., viii.

¹³ John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970); David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

¹⁴ John Walton Caughey, *Bernardo de Gálvez in Louisiana, 1776-1783*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934); Lawrence Kinnaird, "American Penetration into Spanish Louisiana," in *New Spain and the Anglo-American West*, George P. Hammond, ed., 2 vols., 1932 (New York:

Kraus, 1969), "Spanish Treaties with Indian Tribes," in *Western Historical Quarterly*, 10 (Jan. 1979): 39-48.

¹⁵ Derek N. Kerr, *Petty Felony, Slave Defiance, And Frontier Villany: Crime and Criminal Justice in Spanish Louisiana, 1770-1803*, (New York: Garland, 1993), xv-xvi.

¹⁶ Carl A. Brasseaux notes the emphasis in Louisiana colonial historiography of "great men" in Light Townsend Cummins and Glen Jeansonne, eds., *A Guide to the History of Louisiana* (Westport, Conn., 1982.), 4; Patricia K. Galloway, ed., *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Jackson, Miss., 1982.), xii-xiii. For historiographical assessments of Louisiana colonial scholarship, see Brasseaux, "French Louisiana," and Light Townsend Cummins, "Spanish Louisiana," in *Guide to*

the History of Louisiana, 3-2. The most comprehensive bibliographical guide is Glenn R. Conrad and Carl A. Brasseaux, *A Selected Bibliography of Scholarly Literature on Colonial Louisiana and New France* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana Press, 1982).

¹⁷ Helen Sophie Burton, "Family and Economy in Frontier Louisiana: Colonial Natchitoches, 1714-1803" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Christian University, 2002); James McReynolds, "Family Life in a Borderland Community: Nacogdoches, Texas, 1779-1861." Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1978; Jack Jackson, *Los Mesteños: Spanish Ranching in Texas, 1721-1821*, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1986).

¹⁸ Julia K. Garrett, *Green Flag Over Texas*, (New York: Cordova Press, 1939); Harris G. Warren, *The Sword Was Their Passport: Filibustering in the Mexican Revolution*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943); Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest Destiny, 1800-1821*, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997).

¹⁹ "Redskins and Latins" is the title of a chapter in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips's *Life and Labor in the Old South* (Boston, 1929). Carl Bridenbaugh, in *Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), viii, told an audience in, of all places, Baton Rouge for Louisiana State University's Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History about three "Old Souths" that preceded the more familiar Old South of antebellum America-without once mentioning colonial Louisiana. Granted, his listeners and readers understood that Bridenbaugh meant only to focus on the English colonies that became part of the original United

States, but the speaker imparted a powerful subliminal message when he noted in passing the "redskins and Latins" who walled in the English colony of South Carolina. For Bernard Bailyn's recent characterization of the southern frontier, see *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York, 1986), 112-131. His case is elaborated in *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1986).

²⁰ A redefinition of frontier from a linear to a regional perspective can be traced in Robin F. Wells, "Frontier Systems as a Sociocultural Type," *Papers in Anthropology*, XIV (1973), 6-15; D. W. Meinig, "The Continuous Shaping of America: A Prospectus for Geographers and Historians," *American Historical Review*, LXXXIII (1978), 1186-1217; Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "The North American Frontier as Process and Context," in Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven, Conn., 1981), 43-75; Kenneth E. Lewis, *The American Frontier: An Archaeological Study of Settlement Pattern and Process* (Orlando, Fla., 1984).

CHAPTER 1

"The French will be masters of all this land:"

Foundations of a Borderland

During the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, as the major European powers colonized the fringes of the North American Continent, cartographers produced beautifully illustrated, brightly colored maps demarcating the boundaries of each claimant's territory with bold outlines. With European precision, they divided the largely unexplored and unsettled areas as if they controlled them as completely as they did their nation-states in the Old World. Yet these maps demarcated only an illusion of imperial control. Instead of borders clearly separating North American empires from one another, the sparsely settled frontier regions at the intersection of European claims became "melting pots" of social and economic cooperation among peoples of various races, nationalities and cultures. Within these pockets of settlement far removed from metropolitan centers of political and economic power, and social control, native peoples and Europeans cooperated, intermarried, and developed their own unique and independent

engines of self-determination to ensure their survival, safety and prosperity.¹

Borderlands were transient. They began in a confrontation between two competitors and ended when one became politically dominant enough to establish a border where it could enforce at least some minimal control. Yet during the interim period when no group imposed its hegemony, intercultural, interdependent societies arose in which kinship networks, ties to the land, and a strong sense of independence overshadowed the geopolitical aspirations of European nation-states.²

While the term "Spanish Borderlands" provides a useful identification for Spain's vast imperial claims stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, it oversimplifies disparate regions with vastly different geographies, populations, and economic bases. East and West Florida, in close proximity to the Gulf coast and drained by numerous rivers, offered ample and easily accessible trade routes. Well-watered, the eastern Spanish Borderlands provided excellent opportunities for agriculture and cattle-raising as well as trade in furs and lumber. Louisiana, which came under Spanish control following the Seven Years' War, produced sugar cane, furs, and cotton. Situated on the lower

end of the Mississippi River, the port of New Orleans controlled trade from the interior of the entire continent, becoming the largest, richest and most cosmopolitan city in the borderlands.³

Having discovered major silver deposits in the region of Zacatecas in the 1540s, the Spanish spread their domain further north and established the vast northern province of Nueva Vizcaya, embracing the frontier region from southern Chihuahua to Saltillo. Until the late seventeenth century, the north remained of little interest. The native population proved too dispersed to serve as effective sources of mining labor, and the establishment of *encomiendas* had become a discredited practice especially after the New Laws of 1542. After Juan de Oñate's ill-fated New Mexican venture, the strategy for controlling the northern frontier utilized a combination of missions and presidios. To Spain's later detriment, Spanish civilians never migrated in large numbers to this region nor to Spain's other northern provinces. The semi-arid lands of New Mexico and Texas held little agricultural potential and virtually nothing to entice colonists. Texas, prior to the late seventeenth century, remained devoid of Spanish presence until the threat of French expansion prompted action.⁴

The arrival of the French on the Texas coast during the 1680s changed the dynamic of Spain's policy, accentuating the vulnerability of New Spain's northern frontier. From the 1660s to the 1680s, French foreign policy advocated a friendly relationship with England while harboring a distrust of Spain. In the New World, France contended with each of these powers as it attempted to profit from new discoveries. Frenchmen Jean Nicolet's 1634 journey in search of the mythical Northwest Passage led him to the Green Lake region of modern Wisconsin, where he learned that three days to the south of the Fox River, a "great river" led into the vast unknown of North America. Without geographic information on the Mississippi Valley, French explorers and geographers speculated that the river flowed either into the "Vermilion Sea" (Gulf of California) or the Gulf of Mexico. The French minister Talon favored river exploration in the hope that the Mississippi flowed into the "Vermilion Sea." Louis de Buade, Comte de Frontenac, the newly appointed governor of New France, approved an expedition led by Louis Joliet, an experienced Canadian trader, to chart the river's course. At Michilimackinac (Mackinaw), Joliet joined forces with a Jesuit missionary, Jacques Marquette. Together, they ascended the Fox River,

carried their canoes through the Fox-Wisconsin portage, reembarked on the Wisconsin. On the 17th of June 1673, with "a joy that I cannot express," according to Marquette, the explorers found themselves on "this renowned river." Yet Joliet and Marquette stopped above the latitude 33° 40', when it became clear to them that the Mississippi flowed southward toward the Gulf of Mexico and that continued exploration would bring them into contact, and probable confrontation, with the Spanish. There the matter remained while Louis XIV, never particularly interested in colonial efforts, pursued a war against the Dutch. Not until the 1678 and 1679 treaties of Nimwegen did France again turn its attention to the North America.⁵

In 1684, René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle's expedition, consisting of four ships and two-hundred and eighty people, left France to establish a colony on the lower Mississippi River by way of the Gulf of Mexico. La Salle viewed the colony as an opportunity to secure French control of the entire Mississippi Valley. With this accomplished, France could then strike Spanish shipping in the Gulf of Mexico, launch an attack on Mexico itself, block English expansion from the Eastern seaboard, and

establish a warm water port for the Mississippi valley fur trade.⁶

Luck did not accompany La Salle's voyage. Through faulty maps and subsequent navigational errors, he missed the mouth of the Mississippi River, landing instead on Matagorda Bay, Texas on February 20, 1685. After losing one ship to Spanish privateers in the Gulf, the wreck of the supply ship *Aimable* at the mouth of the bay, and the decision by a group of disgruntled colonists to return to France aboard *Joly* compounded the expedition's problems. By the time the settlers erected a temporary fort on the eastern end of Matagorda Island, a series of other misfortunes had reduced the number of colonists to 180. As the work of building a more permanent settlement progressed, many succumbed to overwork, malnutrition, and hostile Karankawa Indians. During late winter 1686 the bark *Belle*, the only remaining ship, ran aground on Matagorda Peninsula during a squall.⁷

As a permanent settlement took shape on Garcitas Creek in what is now Victoria County, La Salle set out to explore the surrounding country. Between October 1685 and March 1686, he traveled far into Spanish territory, reaching the Rio Grande and ascending it as far as the site of present-

day Langtry. At last realizing that the bay lay west of the Mississippi, he made two easterly marches to the lands of the Hasinai, or *Tejas*, Indians, hoping to find the river and proceed to another Fort St. Louis, on the Illinois River. Traveling northward through open plains, the party hunted buffalo and enjoyed friendly relations with the Indians they met. After about three weeks they turned toward the east and entered, in Douay's words, "countries still finer than those we had passed, and found tribes that had nothing barbarous about them but the name." The most important of these were the Hasinai, whom the French called the "Cenis." Jean Cavelier called them the most numerous of the natives they met. On his second attempt to reach the Mississippi, mutineers from La Salle's party ambushed and killed him. Six of the seventeen men who accompanied La Salle, including La Salle's brother, Abbé Jean Cavelier, Father Anastase Douay, and Henri Joutel, continued to Canada and eventually returned to France.⁸

The survivors on Garcitas Creek suffered quite another fate. Jean Baptiste Talon, who provided the only eyewitness account, related that after La Salle's departure the colonists made peace with the Karankawas, whose enmity La Salle had incurred at the outset. Learning of La Salle's

death, the Indians broke the peace, launching a surprise attack around Christmas 1688. Karankawa women succeeded in saving only four Talon children and Eustace Bréman, the paymaster's son.⁹

The Spaniards, having learned of the French intrusion from captured pirates who turned out to be defectors from La Salle, launched five sea voyages and six land marches in search of the French colony. On April 4, 1687, Martín de Rivas and Pedro de Iriarte found the wreckage of the bark *Belle* on Matagorda Peninsula. Alonso De León, who had led a march from Monclova, located fragments of the *Aimable* in Cavallo Pass, where she had grounded, and the ruined Fort St. Louis. Two Frenchmen living among the Hasinai, Jean l'Archevêque and Jacques Grollet, gave themselves up. The following year, when Franciscan missionaries returned to establish the mission San Francisco de los Tejas as the first permanent Spanish presence in East Texas, their Spanish military escort captured Pierre Meunier and Pierre Talon, also from among the Hasinai. Talon informed them that the Karankawas held his three younger brothers and one sister, whom the Spanish rescued.¹⁰

French incursions into East Texas had prompted the Spanish to action. In searching for the remnants of La

Salle's ill-fated group, the Spanish reached the Hasinai, or Tejas, but not until after the tribe made contact with the French. Unlike the Spanish, matters of religion, conversion, and assimilation mattered little to the French in their dealings with the natives in Louisiana. Instead, the French sought trading partners and, to the Caddo's delight, proved willing to supply guns and ammunition. For the French, it seemed only a matter of good business since such weapons increased the Caddo's ability to provide furs for the lucrative European market. The natives also desired other European goods, such as cooking and farming utensils, cotton clothing, axes, knives, beads, and vermilion, which the French also provided. Yet the Caddo failed to realize that the French used trade to secure territorial claims. By establishing markets for European goods among the tribes, which they later strengthened with a military alliance, the French sought to extend their imperial hegemony into the uninhabited expanses of North America already claimed by Spain. The French knew of the rich mines in northern Mexico and wished to obtain a foothold as close to them as possible. Thus the Caddo, the most important tribe on New Spain's northeastern frontier, became the focus of attention for both the European powers.¹¹

On June 1, 1690, a Spanish party established San Francisco de la Tejas mission, the first among the Caddo. Meanwhile, de León learned that the Frenchman, Henri de Tonty, had visited the village just days before his arrival. Alarmed at the French presence, De León wanted to leave fifty soldiers among the tribe to head off any further intrusions, but the missionaries under Father Damien Massanet opposed this plan, claiming that their orders gave Massanet sole discretion over the number of soldiers that would remain at the mission. De León's men had already caused trouble among the Indians, and the missionaries wanted them to depart. In the end, de León acquiesced, leaving only three soldiers with the three priests who remained at the mission.¹²

An intrinsic misunderstanding between the Spanish and the Caddo as to the nature of their relationship doomed Spain's missionary approach from the beginning. Caddo interest in making direct contact with the Spanish centered on trade and military alliance. The Caddo saw the commercial advantages of adding European goods to their trade, and the defensive advantages of firearms and horses in protecting them against their enemies. While the government of New Spain realized the necessity of

maintaining friendship and alliances with the tribes on their northern frontiers in order to maintain the safety and security of their territorial claims, Spain's restrictive trade policies, particularly the constraint on firearms trade with native tribes, thwarted a major expectation among the Caddo. For the Spanish missionaries, zeal for the conversion of the Caddo to Christianity outweighed all other considerations. Since Spain's weakness in its northern provinces precluded any serious military commitments, it quickly became evident to the Caddo that the Spanish expected them to serve the crown's interests in thwarting French incursion.¹³

Although the Caddo initially welcomed the missionaries, they proved unreceptive to Christianity. Their traditional religion, their leadership, and their way of life had served them well, and they saw no reason to change. They wanted relations with the Spanish for the material goods and the protection they could provide, not for spiritual guidance. The more the missionaries insisted upon conversion, the more resistant and resentful the Caddo became. The priests ran roughshod over tribal customs and ridiculed the Hasinai religion. Although the missionaries admired the people's work habits and their monogamous

marriages, their failure to convert to the "true faith" horrified the friars. With profound indignation, the missionaries challenged the tribe's basic beliefs, confronting Caddo religious leaders. When the Caddo understandably became furious, the Christians threatened to build a mission on the site of the Caddo's sacred temple.¹⁴

An epidemic that swept through the country in early 1691 exacerbated the strained relations between the Hasinai and the Spaniards. On January 28, one of the priests contracted a fever and died eight days later. The disease then spread like wildfire through the Hasinai confederacy and on to the surrounding tribes, including the Kadohadacho and the Natchitoches. Tribal shaman, called *cannas*, whose remedies worked well on native ailments, proved unable to stop the foreign contagion. Before the epidemic had run its course in March, three or four hundred Hasinai had succumbed, together with perhaps three thousand members of neighboring tribes. As their people died, the Hasinai became unsure of what to do. The tribe correctly assumed that the Spanish had brought the disease but blamed it on the baptism ritual, since the priests had been baptizing the sick, who often died soon thereafter. The *cannas* implored their people to resist baptism, and the *caddi* went

so far as to call a council to discuss killing the priests. In the end, the priests escaped death only after an important Hasinai leader who had been baptized during his illness recovered. Yet despite this turn of fortune, tensions remained high.¹⁵

During the summer of 1691, another Spanish expedition arrived in East Texas, accompanied by Father Massanet. Upon returning to Mexico with Governor de León in 1690, Massanet petitioned the viceroy to allow more missionaries to work among the Tejas. He also proposed sending missions to the Kadohadacho, since he had heard that they were "very politic, reasonable, and very united with the Tejas." The peaceful Caddo, he argued, posed no threat to the missionaries, and assured the governor that no soldiers would be needed. Instead, he suggested that carpenters and other craftsmen would prove far more useful.¹⁶

Both the Hasinai's initially warm welcome of the Spanish and de León's report that Tonty visited the area led officials in Mexico City to accept Massanet's proposal. They instructed the priest to return to the Tejas with an expedition headed by the new governor of Coahuila, Don Domingo Terán de los Ríos. Fifty soldiers accompanied ten priests and three lay brothers, but the principal purpose

of the expedition remained a religious one. The search for French intrusion served only as a secondary objective.¹⁷

The Hasinai remained friendly as long as soldiers remained in their villages to enforce the peace and Terán continued to lavish gifts on the tribe. When Terán and his men departed for the coast to meet a supply ship on August 14, the tribe became insolent and hostile. They stole the horses and killed the cattle the Spanish had brought with them. Before heading west to hunt buffalo, the *caddi* warned the priests to leave his lands before he returned. While on their hunt, the Nabedache warriors found further reasons to hate the Spanish. West of the Trinity River, Spanish deserters attacked the party. They stole the *caddi*'s hat, French rifle, and Spanish sword. The Spaniards' behavior at his village also displeased the Nabedache *caddi* when he returned from his hunt. Governor Terán, just back from the coast, accused five natives of killing the Spanish cattle. He had the men bound and brought to him for judgment. His troops also relieved the *caddi* of three mules, maintaining that he had stolen them. Although Terán took no further action against the Hasinai, the Spanish had done enough to further alienate the already unhappy Nabedache.¹⁸

Accompanied by Father Massanet, Terán and a group of soldiers struck north for the Kadohadacho confederacy on November 6, 1691. In late November, they reached the home of the new *caddi* of the Kadohadacho, a boy of about fourteen, who welcomed them and gave them shelter. The young *caddi* impressed both Massanet and Terán with the respect he commanded from his warriors. The leader's older brother received a baton from Governor Terán on the *caddi's* behalf, signifying Spanish recognition of his authority. Father Massanet met with the elders of the tribe to ask if they wanted to become Christians and receive priests. Unsure whether their French friends would ever return and eager to remain on good terms with both European powers, the elders accepted. The Spanish promised to return the next year and Massanet placed a cross above the door of the *caddi's* house.¹⁹

By the beginning of 1692 both the Spanish and the French had staked a claim among the tribes of the Kadohadacho confederacy. In January, the Hasinai people watched with relief as Terán left for his return trip to Mexico. Most of the missionaries, discouraged by the unfriendly attitude of the Hasinai, joined him. Only Father Massanet, two priests, and a few lay brothers remained and

continued the effort to convert the Hasinai. Because of the increasing hostility among the Hasinai, Terán left nine soldiers to protect the remaining clerics.²⁰

Relations between the Hasinai and the Spanish quickly worsened after Terán's departure, exacerbated by the failure of the tribe's corn crops. Torrential rain flooded the first crop and almost washed away the mission. In one of those quirks of nature familiar to Texans even today, drought destroyed the second crop. As a result, both the Hasinai and the Spaniards nearly starved. In addition to famine, a second epidemic swept through the country from May to November of 1692. Although less destructive than the previous one, it still did not endear the Spanish to the Caddo.²¹

Besides the tensions arising out of the physical hardships, the Hasinai refused to desist from the practice of their religious and cultural ways, which the Spanish labeled "witchcraft, superstitions, and frauds of the devil." They refused the priests' conversion attempts, and declined to leave their farms and congregate in towns as the Spanish wished. Nor did they attend church or bother to listen to the prayers of the missionaries. Although the *cannas* seemed willing to accept the existence of the

Spanish God, they persisted in their ancestral belief in one god, Ahahayo, insisting that the nature of the two gods differed markedly. The Christian's god, they argued, gave the Spaniards clothing, knives and hatchets, while Ahahayo gave the Caddo corn, beans, nuts, acorns, and water for their crops. Once the people began dying of sickness, the *cannas* again became convinced that the Christian sacrament of baptism cause their plight. They prevented the Christian burial of the few who had converted on their deathbeds, performing instead their traditional funeral ceremonies.²²

In October, 1692, Massanet hired two visiting natives to take a message to Mexico asking for assistance. The new governor of Coahuila, Gregorio de Salinas Varona, set out in May, 1693 with twenty soldiers and supplies to relieve the missionaries. In June the expedition arrived at the mission just in time. Father Massanet had finally realized that the tribe actually wanted metal goods, gifts, and protection, from the Spanish - not Christianity. He conveyed his reappraisal of the situation in a letter to the viceroy in which he also indicated that the only possibility for the Hasinai's successful conversion lay with the use of soldiers and a presidio to force the tribe to give up their farms and missionize. In the event that

the officials of New Spain opposed this proposal, Massanet requested permission to leave Caddo country. Upon receiving this shocking document, the viceroy in Mexico City expressed unwillingness to adopt such rash methods. Instead, he ordered Governor to send a force to Texas to escort the priests out of the country.²³

The difficulties of sustaining missions in East Texas had proved overwhelming. The religious outposts had been situated more than four hundred miles beyond the nearest settlement in northern Mexico. Their survival depended above all on winning the continuing friendship and cooperation of the natives, a situation that never developed. The failure of the missionaries to understand or respect native beliefs and customs, and the reticence of officials in Mexico City to station large garrisons near the mission, doomed the enterprise. Yet despite its failure, this initial attempt familiarized Spaniards with the terrain, rivers, and coastline of Texas. It also convinced officials, viceroys and bishops alike, that conversion and Hispanization of even the most tractable Indians would require a combination of coercion and persuasion.²⁴

Little more than a decade later, the French returned to Louisiana to stay. The establishment of French forts on Biloxi Bay and on the Mississippi in 1699 marked the beginning of French hegemony in Louisiana and the end of Spain's claim to exclusive control of the Gulf coast of North America. For another year, the opportunity remained for Spain to dislodge the French from Biloxi, but the Spanish, through indecision if not incompetence, lost the chance. The November 1700 death of the last Hapsburg monarch, Carlos II, dealt the Franco-Spanish rivalry in North America a curious turn. On his deathbed, the childless Carlos II had designated Phillippe d'Anjou, the grandson of the French king Louis XIV, as his heir. Thus, a member of the French Bourbon family, the Hapsburgs' long-standing nemesis, ascended to the Spanish throne. Improbable though it seemed, Phillippe's ascension gave the French colony in Louisiana a measure of protection from Spanish forces during its formative years. In his new role as Felipe V of Spain, Philippe d'Anjou refused to expel his grandfather's colonists from the Louisiana coast. In 1702, when Iberville transferred the post at Biloxi to Mobile Bay, Felipe V ignored this new trespass on Spanish-claimed territory. Felipe's own War Council disapproved of his

magnanimity, and Spain refused to concede France's right to be in Louisiana – a position that it maintained consistently thereafter. Spain took no stronger action, however, than to warn Louis XIV that he could be excommunicated for ignoring the papal donation of America to Spain more than two centuries earlier. Noting that a more recent pope had given his blessing to French Canada, the Sun King ridiculed the Spanish claim.²⁵

French Louisiana secured its foothold on the Gulf coast during this period of harmonious relations with its rival, Spain. As the War of the Spanish Succession, triggered by the Bourbons' acquisition of the Spanish throne, threatened the balance of power in Europe, France and Spain allied against England, Holland, and Austria. For twelve years Spaniards and Frenchmen, no matter how distrustful of each other, cooperated. In North America, where the English attacked Pensacola and St. Augustine, Spanish officials sought and received aid from their French allies in Louisiana. Pensacola, the viceroy later noted, "would have been abandoned had it not been for French aid." With the assistance of French privateers, Spanish forces in St. Augustine went on the offensive, twice attacking Charleston. In North America, where English colonists knew

it as Queen Anne's War, the War of the Spanish Succession weakened Spain's position in the borderlands of the Gulf coast region. Both England and France expanded at Spain's expense.²⁶

In 1712, before the war came to a close, Louis XIV attempted to infuse new energy into Louisiana by giving exclusive control of its economic affairs for fifteen years to a private trading company headed by the financier Antoine Crozat. As an independent money-making venture, rather than as a Crown colony and base for imperial expansion, French Louisiana continued to flounder economically, but it did provoke Spanish officials into reoccupying Texas. Louisiana's new governor, Antoine de la Mothe, Sieur de Cadillac, pinned his hopes for the colony's prosperity on trade with Spanish neighbors; but his dreams seemed dashed when the War of the Spanish Succession ended in 1713 and Spain closed its ports to its former ally. Ironically, that same summer a remarkable letter from a Franciscan missionary in New Spain arrived at Mobile, reigniting Cadillac's plans for trade with New Spain. The Spaniard's letter asked for French help in reestablishing the missions among the Hasinai Indians. Its author, Francisco Hidalgo, had served in Texas with Damien Massanet

two decades earlier. He regretted leaving the deteriorating missions and had promised the Caddo that he would return one day with more missionaries. In 1700, he had helped to found the mission of San Juan Bautista on the Rio Grande (at present Guerrero, thirty miles down river from today's Eagle Pass). There, poised on the northeastern edge of New Spain, he retained interest in returning to make a fresh start among the Tejas, but Spanish officials had offered no encouragement. Hence, as Hidalgo later told the viceroy, "seeing that all the means I had taken had failed, a happy thought occurred to me." Hidalgo did not elaborate fully on his "happy thought," but he had apparently invited French officials to send missionaries into Texas, calculating that their presence would provoke a Spanish counter-response, as it had done during La Salle's lifetime. The result worked predictably. Hidalgo later remembered writing two letters to the governor of Louisiana, and one of those audacious missives reached Cadillac in Mobile in the summer of 1713. Cadillac responded by sending one of his most experienced and shrewdest traders, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, to find Hidalgo.²⁷

During late 1699, Louis Juchereau de St. Denis had sailed from La Rochelle to Louisiana on the second

expedition of Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, his relative by marriage. In Louisiana, St. Denis had commanded a fort on the Mississippi River and another at Biloxi Bay, carrying out important explorations to the west of the bay and upstream, where he ascended the lower Red River and came into contact with the Caddo confederacies.²⁸

Officially, Cadillac authorized St. Denis to search for Hidalgo's mission "in reply to Hidalgo's letter of January 17, 1711," and to purchase horses and cattle for Louisiana. Privately, Cadillac hoped to exploit the opportunity to open contraband trade with Mexico. In the autumn of 1713, Saint-Denis ascended the Mississippi and Red rivers to the heart of the Caddo confederacy of Natchitoches, in northwestern Louisiana. He had first visited the Natchitoches in 1700, trying to find his way to the Spanish settlements, and he knew that his canoes would carry him no farther. Beyond the Natchitoches villages an enormous logjam that Anglo-Americans later named the "Great Raft," blocked navigation further up the Red River.²⁹

From the Natchitoches village, St. Denis struck out overland to the Hasinai villages across the Rio de los Adaes, later known as the Sabine. From there he continued across the uncharted forests and plains of Texas toward

Mexico with three French companions and several Hasinai guides. Two of the three Frenchmen who accompanied him, the brothers Pierre and Robert Talon, had visited Texas previously. As young boys, the two had survived the La Salle tragedy when Karankawa families adopted them. Pierre later lived with the Hasinai while Robert remained with the Karankawa. In 1690, León and Massanet had taken the brothers from Indian custody and the boys had returned to France. There the French minister of marine, Louis de Ponchartrain, tried but failed to exploit the brothers' special knowledge by sending them back to the Gulf with Iberville on his initial journey to Louisiana in 1698. Now the Talons found themselves back in Texas, where St. Denis must have hoped their tattooed faces and knowledge of native languages would assure his party a safe passage.³⁰

When St. Denis's little band reached the edge of the Spanish frontier at San Juan Bautista in July 1714, the elderly presidial captain, Diego Ramón, arrested them. Ramón recognized the threat that the Frenchmen's trek across a province devoid of Spaniards posed. St. Denis's trip confirmed that Texas lay undefended. "If His Majesty does not intervene," Ramón complained to Father Hidalgo, "the French will be masters of all this land." Officials in

Mexico City agreed. Fearing that Frenchmen would flood northern New Spain with contraband and perhaps even invade its mining districts, the viceroy, the Duque de Linares, ordered the reoccupation of East Texas as a buffer.³¹

In April 1716, about seventy-five persons crossed the Rio Grande near San Juan Bautista en route to found a colony. Capt. Domingo Ramón, one of the presidial commander's sons and the leader of the group, counted eighteen soldiers, ten Franciscans (including the instigator of the enterprise, Francisco Hidalgo), and assorted colonists and Indian guides. Astonishingly, through his remarkable ability of persuasion, St. Denis accompanied the expedition as chief of supplies, drawing the same salary from the Spanish government as the expedition's leader. Although the resourceful Frenchman arrived at San Juan Bautista unable to speak Spanish, he had managed to ingratiate himself with his Spanish captors. While nominally under arrest in the comfort of Diego Ramón's house, he had courted the presidial captain's young granddaughter, Manuela Sánchez Navarro.³²

Sent on to Mexico City for interrogation, St. Denis impressed Spanish officials, persuading them of his wish to become a Spanish subject, and affirming his fidelity to the

Spanish Crown with an oath of allegiance. Instead of a prison term - the fate of many French intruders before and after him - St. Denis returned to San Juan Bautista as a Spanish citizen and an appointment as supply officer on the forthcoming expedition.³³

Among the Hasinai, whom they continued to call "Tejas", the Spanish built four missions and the presidio of San Francisco de los Dolores in the summer of 1716. After construction began in the Hasinai communities, Captain Domingo Ramón continued eastward through the dense pine forests to Natchitoches, where he found that Frenchmen had built a stockade on an island in the middle of the Red River. The impetus for fortifying Natchitoches had been intelligence supplied by St. Denis. Even while in Spanish custody, the wily trader managed to keep Governor Cadillac informed of the Spaniards' plans. From San Juan Bautista, he had sent Cadillac a report via the Talon brothers, who had managed once again to slip across Texas, and from Mexico City, St. Denis had contrived to get word to Cadillac of Spain's intention to reoccupy East Texas. Fearful that he would be squeezed between eastward-moving Spaniards and westward-moving Englishmen, Cadillac had ordered the

post constructed at Natchitoches in order to establish a French presence beyond the Mississippi.³⁴

It worked. Tacitly, Captain Ramón acknowledged Natchitoches as the limit of Louisiana, but he tried to assure that the French would go no farther. Just to the west of Natchitoches, Ramón founded two more missions in nearby Caddo communities: San Miguel de los Adaes and Dolores de los Ais.³⁵

This time, Spain had come to Texas to stay. Alarmed by French expansion and the aggressiveness of French traders, Spain moved quickly to reinforce eastern Texas. "Your Excellency can see what a condition the French are placing us," Francisco Hidalgo wrote to the viceroy from the new mission of San Francisco de los Tejas. "They are slipping in behind our backs in silence, but God sees their intentions." One of those Frenchmen who slipped by was St. Denis himself, who in the spring of 1717 crossed Texas with a mule train of trade goods. Arrested for smuggling in collaboration with his new in-laws and confined in Mexico City until he escaped in the fall of 1718, Saint-Denis made his way back to Natchitoches, apparently stopping at the presidio at San Juan Bautista to visit his Spanish wife who joined him in Louisiana a few years later. He remained a

key figure in Spanish-French relations on the Texas-Louisiana border until his death in 1744, despite his vain hope of retiring to Mexico with his wife and children (Manuela remained at Natchitoches until her own death in 1758).³⁶

From Natchitoches, St. Denis often proved a troublesome thorn in the side of Spanish officials in Texas. Pursuing his private interests, Saint-Denis, like Father Hidalgo, had brought the Spanish and French empires together in North America—a remarkable exception to the general rule that the frontier's political boundaries expanded and contracted with decisions made by diplomats in Europe. He insisted that his marriage to Manuela Sánchez indicated a desire to become a Spanish subject, yet suspicious Spaniards saw him as a covert agent of France. For such a complex individual, neither explanation seems entirely accurate. More correctly, St. Denis typifies a type of borderlands entrepreneur who positioned himself to take advantage of the opportunity to become wealthy and powerful through the contraband trade that became a way of life on the borders of Spanish Texas and French Louisiana. By founding the post at Natchitoches, then helping to establish Spanish missions in East Texas, St. Denis brought

Spanish and French settlements into close proximity, creating a ready-made market that would serve future generations of "borderlanders" as well as himself.

French exploration of the lower Mississippi Valley had far-reaching results for both Spanish and French interests in the borderlands. It shifted Spain's focus from western Texas and New Mexico to the threat in the east, and engendered a rebirth of Spanish exploration of the northern Gulf region, which had faltered for almost a century. For the French, it established a claim to Texas that remained until their expulsion from North America after the Seven Years' War. Until a British victory eliminated France from colonial rivalry, virtually every Spanish move in Texas and the borderlands came as a reaction to a French threat, real or imagined. La Salle's entry also gave the United States future leverage, tenuous though it was, to claim Texas as part of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, and also gave rise to a protracted border dispute between the United States and Spain that reached its diplomatic end only with the Adams-Onís treaty of 1819.

Confrontation with France drew Spanish interest to Texas, which in 1691 officially became a frontier province to buffer the more commercially profitable lands to the

south and west. The linchpin of borderland policy involved a profound mutation of Spanish approaches to Indian populations. Rather than create vassal subjects through conquest, envoys went north with instructions to imitate the French and English patterns of signing treaties with Indians, implying a mutual relationship between autonomous peoples and abandoning the principle of paternalistic pacification.³⁷

Spain's declining power in the late seventeenth century left vast areas open to European rivals, especially France and England. While the English settled and developed the East Coast of North America as well as choice islands in the Caribbean, the French began to advance southward from Canada down the Mississippi River toward the Spanish holdings adjacent to the lower Mississippi Valley. Spain's indifference to Texas, which lacked the wealth-producing capabilities of New Mexico, changed abruptly as the French threat loomed, prompting officials to establish a foothold among the Hasinai of East Texas. Yet direct contact proved disappointing for both. The Spanish refused to provide the Caddo with what they desired most—weapons. Idealistic crown policy forbade trade in weapons. Short of money and manpower, Spain also failed to provide the protection of a

military alliance, which the Caddo also sought. The Caddo, in turn, proved less eager than the Spanish had hoped to accept Christianity. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Hasinai bitterly opposed the Spanish and all three Caddo confederacies looked toward France as a prospective trading and military partner.

The Spanish, fearing Indian alliances with the French intruders and alarmed at the prospect of a French overland threat to Mexican silver ordered military expeditions to drive the French back up the Mississippi as far as the Missouri. But France's threat in coming down from the Great Lakes to seal off the English and seek overland access to New Spain's silver encroached on the porous northern frontier and posed a direct challenge to Spanish sovereignty. No longer a Spanish-Indian frontier, the conjunction of Louisiana and Texas became an imperial borderland where competing interests—first France and Spain, and later the United States and Spain, Mexico and the United States, and finally the United States and the Republic of Texas—contended for more than a century.³⁸

The existence of the strong, well-organized, hierarchically structured Caddo confederacies drew both the French and the Spanish to their lands, effectively defining

the Louisiana-Texas borderlands for the next century and a half. Spain initially saw in the Caddo a peaceful, sedentary, agricultural people who should easily convert to Christianity under the beneficent tutelage of Spanish Franciscans, providing a buffer against the French whose power in the Mississippi Valley grew more threatening to Spain's wealthy holdings to the west and south of Texas. Contrary to their hopes, the Spanish attempt to win over the Hasinai failed completely, and the tribe's experience with the Spanish caused them to shift their attention to the French, whose brief encounter with the tribe proved to have significant consequences.

The French concerned themselves far more with the commercial success of Louisiana than with conversions to Christianity or buffers against a foreign power. They viewed the Caddo's vast trade network as an opportunity to interject themselves into a lucrative and profitable market touched only tangentially by the Spanish. The Caddo had access to horses, scarce in the Mississippi Valley, and furs for the European market. The French could scarcely overlook such a bonanza.

For the Caddo, the desire to add the Spanish and their metal tools, weapons and livestock to their economic

traffic among the tribes, as well as to acquire them for personal use, proved fruitless. Their enemies, the Apache and Osage, had guns and horses, and the Caddo could not leave the shifting balance of power in the region unaddressed. While the Spaniards looked upon even such developed tribes as the Caddo with European, Christian disdain, the Caddo saw both groups of Europeans in the only way possible, given their knowledge—as small tribes possessing material goods worthy of inclusion in their lifestyle and trade.

Of the three groups, only the Caddo had the power to expel the other two. Yet the confederacies preferred commerce to war. Even with the rapid changes occurring in their world, the Caddo allowed both groups to establish a presence within the Caddo empire. Yet the Caddo never acknowledged European claims to their lands, thus placing a nexus of empires within an existing empire and providing a stable foundation for the borderlands that developed.

Notes

¹ The concept of borderlands comes from the work of Herbert Eugene Bolton, a student of Frederick Jackson Turner who rejected the Turner Thesis, arguing instead for a less linear and more inclusive view of North American colonization and development.

² Jeremy Adleman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 815-16.

³ On the Florida-Georgia borderlands, see David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Archivo General de Indies, (AGI), 73-2-17. While this file contains no endorsements, dates, place of origin or purpose, its inclusion with files relating to the Junta de Guerra at Cartagena, and its placement with other documents dated between 1640 and 1650 suggests a date or origin within that period. From its character, it appears to be a memorandum to acquaint officials in the Caribbean with English and Dutch activities.

⁴ Peter J. Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico: Zacatecas, 1546-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Philip Wayne Powell, "North America's First Frontier, 1546-1603," in G. Wolfskill, ed., *Essays on Frontiers in World History* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1982), 12-41; Oakah L. Jones, Jr., *Los Paisanos: Spanish Settlers on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 3; see also William Merrill, "Conversion and Colonialism in Northern Mexico: The Tarahumara Response to the Jesuit Mission Program, 1601-1767," in Robert W. Hefner, ed., *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 129-63. For a classic statement of the mission as a Spanish frontier bulwark, see Herbert E. Bolton, "The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish American Colonies" in John F. Bannon, ed., *Bolton and the Spanish Borderlands* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 187-211; Oakah L. Jones, Jr., *Nueva Vizcaya: Heartland of the Spanish Frontier*,

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 99-104; Weber, *Spanish Frontier in North America*, 133-41. See also Ramón A. Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1816*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), esp. 146-48, for a treatment of New Mexico; Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 70-75.

⁵ Frederic Austin Ogg, *The Opening of the Mississippi: A Struggle for Supremacy in the American Interior* (New York: Haskell House, 1968, 46-9, 60-1; John Gilmary Shea, *Discovery and Exploration of the Mississippi Valley* (New York, 1852), xxxvii, 18; Mathé Allain, "Colbert's Policy Crumbles" in *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History: The French Experience in Louisiana*, Glenn R. Conrad, ed. (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995), 31-47.

⁶ Isaac Joslin Cox, ed., *The Journeys of René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle* (2 vols., New York: Barnes, 1905; 2d ed., New York: Allerton, 1922); Pierre Margry, ed., *Découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique septentrionale, 1614-1754* (6 vols., Paris: Jouast, 1876-86) ; Robert S. Weddle et al., eds., *La Salle, the Mississippi, and the Gulf: Three Primary Documents* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987) ; Peter H. Wood, "La Salle: Discovery of a Lost Explorer," *American Historical Review* 89:2 (April 1984), 294-323.

⁷ Cox, *The Journeys of René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle*.

⁸ Henri Joutel, *Joutel's Journal of La Salle's Last Voyage* (New York: Corinth Books, 1962), 80.

⁹ Alan Gallay, *Voices of the Old South: Eyewitness Accounts, 1528-1861*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Peter H. Wood, "La Salle: Discovery of a Lost Explorer" in *American Historical Review*, 89:2 (April 1984), 294-323.

¹¹ Fray Nicolas López to the Viceroy, 1686, in *Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya and Approaches Thereto, to 1773*, Charles Wilson Hackett, ed. (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1923-27),

3:361; Carlos Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1936-58), I :318; La Salle, "Account of La Salle's Voyage to the Mouth of the Mississippi, His Landing in Texas and March to the Mississippi," in *The Journeys of Rene-Robert Cavalier*, Isaac J. Cox, ed. 1:286. Carta e Informe del Padre Damian Manzanet al Virrey Conde de Galve, June 14, 1693, in *Primeras Exploraciones y Poblamiento de Texas, 1686-1694*, Lino Gómez Canedo, ed., 50; John Anthony Caruso, *The Mississippi Valley Frontier: The Age of French Exploration and Settlement*, (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966.

¹² Massanet, "Letter to Don Carlos de Sigüenza," 382-3, 386.

¹³ Casañas to the Viceroy, August 15, 1691 in "Descriptions", Hatcher, *SWHQ*, 209-10.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 288-89.

¹⁵ Casañas to the Viceroy, August 15, 1691, in "Descriptions", Hatcher, *SWHQ*, 294-95, 299, 303; Diary Kept by the Missionaries, in "The Expedition of Don Domingo Terán de los Ríos into Texas," Hatcher, 57.

¹⁶ Massanet al Virrey, September, 1690, in *Primeras Exploraciones y Poblamiento de Texas, 1686-1694*, Lino Gómez Canedo, ed. (Monterrey: Publicaciones del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, 1968), 159-65.

¹⁷ Instructions Given by the Superior Government to be Observed in the Expedition to the Province of Texas, January 23, 1691, in "Expedition of Don Domingo Terán", Hatcher, 6.

¹⁸ Itinerary and Daily Account of Terán, in "Expedition of Don Domingo Terán," Hatcher, 28-29.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 33-34; Massanet al Virrey, 1692, in *Primeras Exploraciones*, 263.

²⁰ Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry*, 137.

²¹ Carta e Informe del Padre Damian Manzanet al Virrey Conde de Galve, June 14, 1693, in *Primeras Exploraciones*, 109-10.

²² *Ibid.*, 311-13.

²³ Diario de Gregorio de Salinas Verona, in *Primeras Exploraciones*, 295; Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry*, 141-42.

²⁴ Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 154-6; Dunn, *Spanish and French Rivalry*, 144-5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 158-60.

²⁶ Viceroy to Alejandro Wauchope, Mexico, 1722, quoted in William B. Griffen, "Spanish Pensacola," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 37 (Jan - Apr, 1959): 256. See also, *ibid*, 252-53; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 62-68.

²⁷ Hidalgo to the Viceroy, San Francisco de los Tejas, November 4, 1716, in Mattie Austin Hatcher, ed. and trans., "Description of the Tejas or Asinai Indians, 1691-1722" in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 30-31 (Jan., Apr., July, and Oct. 1927): 206-18, 283-304, 50-62, 150-80.

²⁸ Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 103-16.

²⁹ Formed around the 13th century when the Mississippi blocked and reversed the flow of the Red River, the "raft" grew to nearly 100 miles in length by 1800. See Dan Flores, "Ecology of the Red River", 19. For St. Denis on the Red River see Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry*, 218.

³⁰ For a geographical background, see Jackson, Weddle, and De Ville, *Mapping Texas*. For the composition of St. Denis' party and an account of their journey, see Weddle, "Talon Interrogations", 209-24.

³¹ Diego Ramón, *Captain Diego Ramón's Diary*, 4, 5, 8-9, 10.

³² Little information exists about St. Denis' wife. St. Denis said her name was Manuela Sánchez. Frequent references to her in the Natchitoches church records identify her as Emmanuela María Sánchez Navarro. See Shelby, ed. & trans., "St. Denis' Declaration," 169; Chabot, *With the Makers of San Antonio*, 48.

³³ Weddle, *San Juan Bautista*, 126, 140.

³⁴ St. Denis wrote messages to Cadillac on February 21 and September 7, 1715. See Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry*, 234-8. Weddle, "Talon Interrogations," 222, identifies the Talon brothers as couriers of the first message.

³⁵ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, 2:66-7. The Adaes and Ais did not belong to any of the three Caddo confederacies. It appears that they may have been the remnant of an earlier Coles Creek culture, and are generally identified as independent Caddo tribes. See Stephen Williams, "The Aboriginal Location of the Kadohadacho and Related Tribes" in *Explorations in Cultural Anthropology*, edited by W. H. Goodenough (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 545-70, for a discussion of the problems with imprecise identifications such as "confederacy" and "Caddo" in referring to tribes in this

area. See also Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1975); American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, (Washington, 1832-1834), 721-4. John Sibley said that the language "differs from all others, and is so difficult to speak or understand that no nation can speak ten words of it." See also J. W. Powell, *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1885-1886* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1891), 45-6; John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States*, [reprint of the 1946 edition published by the U. S. Government Printing Office, issued as Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 137] (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979), 84; Swanton, *The Indian Tribes of North America*, [reprint of the 1952 edition published by the U. S. Government Printing Office, issued as Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 145], (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1969), 196-7, 318. Although Dr. Albert Gatschet later concluded that the Adais language was an aberrant Caddo dialect, Swanton considered it only "remotely connected."

³⁶ Charmion Clair Shelby, "St. Denis's Second Expedition to the Rio Grande, 1716-1719" in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 27 (January 1924):190-216.

³⁷ John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974) 117; Jones, *Los Paisanos*, 43-44.

³⁸ Weber, *Spanish Frontier in North America*, 148-59.

Chapter 2

"Twenty-five barrels of corn:"

Confrontation and Cooperation

Borderlands evolved from the confrontation between two imperial competitors. In 1719, François Blondel de La Tour, the French commander at Natchitoches, led a party of seven men to invade Texas. Interestingly enough, Blondel's force proved adequate to the task: to capture and destroy the Spanish mission of San Miguel de Linares, some fifteen miles west of the French post. When the commandant's force arrived, they found only one missionary and one soldier—half the Spanish population. The other missionary and soldier had journeyed to a mission further west. Delighted, the French ransacked the small log structures that served as the mission, stealing anything of value, including the chickens. Blondel warned both Spaniards to leave east Texas immediately, assuring them that a large invasion force already made its way to the remote French settlement to drive the Spanish from Texas. As the distraught survivors rushed to report the incident, missionaries, soldiers and neophyte alike abandoned the missions in east Texas once again.¹

The "Chicken War," as the episode has become known locally, resulted from a confrontation of the imperial powers in Europe manifested in a remote quarters of North America. In this "War of the Quadruple Alliance", Spain fought alone. France aligned itself with England, Holland, and Austria to check Spanish ambitions in Italy. France and England also regarded the conflict as an opportunity to divest Spain of its North American holdings, from its new outposts in Texas and Pensacola to its long-established colonies in New Mexico and Florida. Spanish officials harbored opposite intentions, hoping to make preemptive strikes that would eliminate their rivals from Carolina and Louisiana. On the Atlantic coast, Spaniards anticipated renewed attacks from the English in the Carolinas, who inflicted considerable damage to Spanish Florida during the War of the Spanish Succession. After that experience, Spain had increased St. Augustine's defenses, and had reclaimed Apalachee, previously lost in 1704. In 1718, in an effort to win the allegiance of the Lower Creeks, the Spanish reestablished the coastal fort of San Marcos on Apalachee Bay. Regarded as a link between Pensacola and St. Augustine, the Apalachee post endured as long as Spain held Florida.²

While Spain had strengthened its position in Florida, British Carolina had lost ground. During the Yamasee War of 1715, abused and indebted Yamasees turned against the Carolina colonists. Joined by members of powerful inland tribes, particularly the Lower Creeks, the Yamasees and their allies nearly destroyed the colony. After slaughtering hundreds of Carolinians, the Yamasees withdrew to Florida and joined the Spaniards, some settling near Pensacola and others at St. Augustine. That same year, Spanish agents lured many Lower Creeks out of the English trading orbit and brought them over to the Spanish side. For the moment, most of the tribes from Pensacola to Carolina leaned toward Spain. In fact, a delegation of seven Creek leaders even traveled from Pensacola to Mexico City in 1717 to offer their allegiance to the Spanish viceroy.³

Devastated and deprived of key Indian allies, the English Carolinians proved unable to take the offensive against Spanish Florida during the War of the Quadruple Alliance. Instead, they anticipated an invasion from Florida and an attack by a Spanish fleet assembled in Havana specifically designed to strike Charleston.⁴

Those attacks never materialized because France unintentionally diverted Spanish attention to the Gulf Coast. In May of 1719, a French fleet embarked from Louisiana and took Pensacola by surprise. The shocked Spanish *commandant* knew nothing of the declaration of war, and the key Spanish defensive position fell. Yet Pensacola proved easier to take than to hold. The rotting wooden fort at Pensacola changed hands twice more that year, as the Spanish fleet originally destined for Charleston retook it, only to lose it to France once again.⁵

On the western frontier of New Spain, French officials in Louisiana conspired to expand westward at Spain's expense by invading New Mexico and Texas, as far as the Rio Grande, where they believed, incorrectly, that silver mines existed. The "Chicken War" became the modest opening salvo of this ambitious campaign.⁶

In response to this French offensive, the king accepted the offer of a wealthy Coahuila resident, the Marques de San Miguel de Aguayo, to reconquer east Texas. A *peninsulare* who became Marques through a fortunate marriage to one of the richest widows in New Spain, Aguayo offered to journey into Texas as a knight-errant, risking his life and his wife's fortune in what he saw as a glorious quest.

Fearful that the French in Louisiana had grown prosperous, powerful, and a real threat to northern New Spain, the king granted him the title of captain general and governor of Coahuila and Texas. The Marques de Aguayo raised the most imposing force Spain ever sent into Texas. It consisted of some five hundred men and enormous herds of horses, cattle, sheep, and goats—animals that would play an important role in the economy of East Texas.⁷

Initially, Spanish King Felipe V ordered Aguayo not only to recapture East Texas, but also to invade Louisiana in an effort to "force the French to abandon the territory they unjustly hold." At the same time, Spain assembled a fleet in the Caribbean for a simultaneous invasion by sea. But on the eve of his departure from Mexico, Aguayo received a disappointing change in instructions. Fighting had ceased in Europe and Felipe V, anxious to rebuild Spain's broken alliance with France, had called off the invasion of Louisiana. Aguayo had to content himself with retaking east Texas. In the heat of the Texas summer, the Marques de Aguayo led his expedition toward the French in the woodlands on the edge of Louisiana. On the Neches River, near the end of July, 1721, he met Louis Juchereau St. Denis, who had distinguished himself in France's second

successful assault against Pensacola in 1719, and who had received a promotion to command French Natchitoches.

Unknown to Aguayo, St. Denis had planned a raid on San Antonio, with the approval of the French governor. But faced with Aguayo's superior force, he agreed instead to abandon East Texas to the Spanish.⁸

Over St. Denis' adamant protests, the Marques de Aguayo built the presidio of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar de Los Adaes* on a forested ridge near present-day Robeline, Louisiana, and approximately fifteen miles from Natchitoches. The wooden presidio of Los Adaes, with its garrison of one hundred men and six cannon, became the first capital of Texas, and held that position until the French ceded Louisiana to Spain in 1763.

Building and garrisoning the fort at Los Adaes did not complete Aguayo's quest. Additionally, he constructed a presidio and mission at San Antonio to serve as a supply base for the Spanish settlements in east Texas. He initiated construction of a new fortification at the scene of La Salle's failure on Matagorda Bay, which Spaniards called the Bay of *Espiritu Santo*. Twice French forces had tried and failed to occupy Matagorda Bay. To forestall further attempts, Aguayo had ordered the presidio of

Nuestra Señora de la Bahía del Espiritu Santo constructed on what he believed to be the site of La Salle's Fort St. Louis. There, one of Aguayo's party reported, "we found nails, pieces of gun locks and fragments of other items used by the French."⁹

When Aguayo left Texas in 1722, the province had four presidios instead of one, more than two hundred and fifty soldiers, ten missions including the six East Texas missions that had been abandoned in 1719, and the nucleus of a small civilian settlement beginning at San Antonio. France's abortive attempts to drive the Spanish from Texas had caused Spain to strengthen its hold on the northern province. At the conclusion of the War of the Quadruple Alliance, French negotiators even tried to reach an agreement that would push Louisiana's boundaries to the Rio Grande. Their diplomacy, like their military attempts, failed.¹⁰

The establishment of the presidio of *Los Adaes* less than twenty miles from the French post at Natchitoches set into motion the development of a borderland community where the vicissitudes of frontier life expanded the ordinary pattern of cross-cultural interaction. Despite the initially adversarial nature of the imperial confrontation

between Spain and France, local populations quickly realized the advantages of close association with the other, and with the Caddo upon whose land they had established themselves. The Caddo, too, saw advantages to be gained through association with each group. During the next century, these ordinary people shaped a society and economy that served as their engine of self-determination amid the ebb and flow of far removed geopolitical affairs.

The Caddo tribes claimed the land between the Red River and the Brazos for perhaps eight hundred years before the first Europeans crossed it, and their social and economic networks had functioned for centuries. Within the confederated tribes' extensive kinship networks, relationships solidified powerful social and economic ties. These ties allowed the Caddo to take advantage of the French emphasis on trade and adapt to the many changes the French and Spanish presence brought to Caddo country.¹¹

Positioned between the Southeastern woodlands and the Western prairies, the Caddo traditionally functioned as intermediaries connecting the indigenous trade between the Southwest and the Southeast. From the west they acquired buffalo hides and meat as well as turquoise, cotton and pottery. From the tribes to the east came seashells,

copper, galena, and a variety of stones and minerals. Caddo artisans fashioned these into items of prestige that could be traded east or west. From their own land they traded salt, maize, and other foods. The Caddo also controlled the market for what the French christened "bois d'arc," known to be among the finest wood available for making bows.¹²

As intermediaries, the Caddo developed the practice of sealing commercial ventures with a system of gifts, reciprocity and kinships. Such kinship could be either through marriage or adoption, and carried with it responsibilities to ensure continuing commerce between the Caddo and their extended family. When the Spanish and French arrived, the Caddo's political and economic systems provided a ready-made system of "frontier exchange." These Europeans quickly adapted to the Caddo network, supplying a host of manufactured goods in return for the essentials of survival as well as marketable items for European trade.¹³

When the French established the trading post at Natchitoches, they chose their location with the full understanding of the Caddo's trade dominance in the region. The Caddo's commercial networks ideally suited French efforts to extend their influence to tribes west of the Sabine, in Spanish Texas. Existing roads connecting the

Caddo with neighboring tribes quickly became major arteries of transportation and trade for the French. Eventually, the main trail from the French post to Texas became part of the Spanish *Camino Real*, connecting Natchitoches with the capital of Texas at the *Presidio de Los Adaes*, and continuing through east Texas to San Antonio. The French success at Natchitoches confirms their ability to secure the favor of the Caddo tribes who controlled the economy of the region. Unlike the Spanish, and the Americans who later followed, they neither insisted on changing the Caddo way of life or owning the land. Instead they cooperated with the Caddo, taking advantage of the existing networks of trade and kinship.¹⁴

After the Spanish and French settled among them, the Caddo became producers of Indian goods for European consumption. They exchanged deer and buffalo hides, horses, bear's oil, and food, which they either grew themselves or acquired from other Indian peoples. They also became both consumers and suppliers of the European manufactured goods that they acquired either as gifts or through trade. As consumers they used these goods either for their own subsistence or as commodities for trade to other tribes. With the skills adapted from centuries as "middle-men" in

trade relations, they enhanced their position by acquiring European manufactured goods, which they then exchanged with other Indian peoples for horses and hides. With these commodities in demand by the Europeans, both French and Spanish, they then traded for even more European goods. Essentially, they became consumers of European goods, exchange middlemen between the Europeans and other Indian peoples, and producers of raw materials for mercantile capitalism.¹⁵

Trade drove the French effort in the borderlands. Poor Frenchmen traded with the Indians in the belief that hides and horses offered an avenue to wealth. Propelled by the desire for profits, they worked within the Caddo system, trading manufactured goods to Caddo and Wichita in return for deer and buffalo hides. The tenets of mercantile capitalism demanded that the individual French trader acquire large quantities of hides to be sent to New Orleans and on to La Rochelle, France, where they became leather goods. In addition to hides, horses became a demand item among the burgeoning populations in south Texas, south Louisiana, and further east in the English colonies. Moreover, France followed the European practice of allying with Indian peoples in case of war against each other.¹⁶

Though France had general policies concerning the Indian trade, anyone could participate. Unlike Spain, France did not issue licenses to control and restrict the Indian trade. Merchants in Natchitoches credited large quantities of manufactured goods to individual traders, demanding payment the next year in hides or horses, with each valued at a set price. Anything the trader made in excess of that debt became profit. At the Caddo and Wichita villages, traders exchanged manufactured goods acquired in Natchitoches for deer hides and horses, hoping to make enough to payoff their debt to the Natchitoches merchants and have something left over for themselves. French traders soon found themselves caught between the obligations to their new Caddo and Wichita kin and the demands of the mercantile system. Demanding as many hides or horses as possible from the Indians would normally constitute shrewd trading, but such practice did not ingratiate a trader. Since a great deal of competition existed among French traders, individual traders realized that they had to make kinships, give gifts, cut bargains, and uphold their reciprocal obligations in order to maintain good relations with the Indians.¹⁷

The Caddo and Wichita rapidly drew the French traders into kinship relations, some through marriage and some through adoption, and often referred to them as "brother" or "father." They expected their new and apparently very wealthy French kin to supply them with gifts of guns and other merchandise, provide sage counsel when they had to deal with European governments, assist them in their wars against the Lipan Apache to the west and the Osage to the northeast, and offer them good deals when it came time to set the number of hides accepted in trade for European goods. To uphold their own reciprocal obligations, Caddo and Wichita provided food, lodging, protection for French outposts from Indians unfriendly to the French, and alliances with the French in the event of war with Spain, England, or some other Indian nation. In fact, the Caddo sent warriors to aid the French at Natchitoches when a party of Natchez Indian warriors besieged Fort St. Jean Baptiste in 1731. The Caddo and French, with the help of a few Spaniards from nearby *Los Adaes*, broke the siege, pursuing the Natchez and virtually wiping out the war party.¹⁸

French traders also utilized the Caddo trade system to reach the Wichita and Comanche far to the west. Although

these tribes lived in areas claimed by Spain, traders from Natchitoches paid little attention to imperial jurisdictions when conducting business, and carefully avoided patrols sent out to apprehend unlicensed traders. Such risks paid handsomely more often than not. By 1763, merchants in Natchitoches shipped almost fifty thousand deerskins a year downstream to New Orleans. Women also formed a particularly important part of this exchange system. French, Spanish and slave women raised domestic animals such as chickens and pigs. Dairy cattle were in short supply, so goats provided milk, and women made cheese and butter for home consumption and exchange. Free women and slaves tended household gardens. In addition to providing for the family, they often made available excess crops that could be sold or bartered. Caddo women farmed on a larger scale that also provided surplus. They gathered edible wild plants, cooking and medicinal herbs for sale or trade. Caddo women also supplied household goods such as baskets and pottery, the latter of which often emulated European styles to increase their value.¹⁹

Despite the difficulties imposed by Spain's commercial system, the people of Los Adaes found a way to capitalize on a commodity they had in abundance—livestock. The Aguayo

expedition introduced a new element to the local trade networks when the first herd of cattle, sheep, and horses arrived at Los Adaes. Livestock thrived in the region, and their numbers quickly increased. The Caddo realized the commercial advantage of this new bounty and developed an affinity for raising livestock. During his travels through Louisiana and Texas in 1767, Pierre Marie François De Pagés commented in his journal "the Tegas, the savages of Aisses, and Adaes, and Naquadoch have applied themselves to the rearing of horses for the purpose of conveyance."²⁰

Unlike Natchitoches, which had a river connection to New Orleans, Los Adaes maintained a tenuous connection with New Spain. Saltillo, a major source of supply, lay eight hundred miles away, and San Antonio three hundred miles distant over little more than a buffalo trace. For wagons, the journey took a month under ideal conditions. Yet conditions seldom proved ideal. Rivers flooded during the rainy season, and in summer and winter draft animals found scant forage. Parties of marauding Indians or bandits often preyed on slow-moving caravans. Such difficulties endangered cargoes of desperately needed supplies.²¹

Shortages of food and clothing plagued the Spanish at Los Adaes, aggravated by the rigidity of imperial trade

policies and the post's remoteness from other Spanish centers, combined to create a desperate situation. In 1735, St. Denis relocated the French Settlement at Natchitoches from the east bank of the Red River to higher ground on the west bank. The post commander at Los Adaes, Lieutenant José Gonzalez, strongly objected to this move, since Spain considered the Red River the eastern boundary of Texas. Unable to persuade St. Denis to reconsider, Gonzalez imposed an embargo on trade with Natchitoches. Unfortunately for the Spanish, the tactic backfired, and Los Adaes found starvation looming as winter came. Realizing his error, but attempting to save face, Gonzales arranged to have grain from Natchitoches smuggled into the fort under cover of darkness in order to stave off starvation.²²

Out of dire necessity the Spanish at Los Adaes turned to the French at Natchitoches for assistance. The imaginary line between French and Spanish imperial claims gave way as the Spanish outpost came to rely on the French for its survival. The French at Natchitoches welcomed the opportunity for a commercial alliance with the Spanish in east Texas. The Spanish obtained corn, beans and wheat from the French in exchange for livestock, particularly horses

and mules, a constant shortage in French Louisiana. Though Los Adaes remained the capitol of Texas until 1773, Spanish authorities there understood the necessity of this exchange for the survival of their outpost, and modified trade prohibitions to allow the acquisition of food.²³

For the people of Los Adaes, Spain's restrictive trade policies doomed any effort to compete with the French. Based on an antiquated mercantile system, Spain's economy, by the late seventeenth century, suffered from a severe trade imbalance that cause productivity, as well as wealth, to decline. Spiraling inflation, fed by bullion from the Americas, raised the cost of Spanish goods, thus reducing their competitiveness. As less expensive foreign goods flooded the Spanish market, Spain found itself a consumer nation with virtually no production. With a dwindling manufacturing sector, Spain proved unable to absorb raw materials from the colonies. Further exacerbating the problem for the colonial economy, Spanish policy generally limited trade to goods handled by Spanish merchants, transported on Spanish vessels, and making port at selected locations in the New World.²⁴

When the Spanish established Los Adaes they brought with them twenty-eight hundred horses, almost five thousand

cattle and six thousand sheep and goats. Over the years their numbers increased substantially, and livestock became the wealth of Los Adaes. Natchitoches, and in fact all of Louisiana, remained critically short of these commodities, which quickly became the main product in the overland trade with Natchitoches, first from Los Adaes and later from Nacogdoches. The Native peoples also adapted to the livestock trade, rounding up horses and sometimes stealing horses to trade to both the Spanish and the French.²⁵

In 1735, the Spanish Lieutenant Governor at *Los Adaes*, José Gonzalez, laid the groundwork for expanding the livestock trade with Natchitoches. He offered land to Texas cattlemen in exchange for participation in a roundup of wild horses and cattle west of the Sabine River to increase their herds. The cattlemen of Los Adaes, including Gonzalez, profited handsomely from the vast increase of cattle that could be sold to the Natchitoches market. Residents of Natchitoches also profited. By the spring of 1739, Natchitoches had enough livestock to supply cattle to the government of Louisiana.²⁶

The Caddo, the French at Natchitoches, and the Spanish at Los Adaes developed an exchange economy within the regions cross-cultural network. Indians, settlers and

slaves produced and distributed goods or provided services. Garden products, livestock and wild game formed the basis for this network, augmented by manufactured trade goods. Owing to the abundant crops produced by the Caddo the French concentrated on trade instead of subsistence agriculture as they established their outpost. French traders at Natchitoches provided the Caddo with a variety of manufactured goods. In return the Indians provided Natchitoches's citizens with buffalo hides, bear and deerskins for the European market, and a host of byproducts such as bear oil, meat and buffalo tongues for local consumption.²⁷

The commerce that evolved between Natchitoches and Los Adaes did not remain limited to food. Commerce in less essential goods such as wine, silk, and tobacco took place despite imperial edict outlawing "contraband" trade. That *Los Adaes* served as the capitol of Texas and the residence of the governor for fifty years further demonstrates that the system of social and economic intercourse developed in the borderlands superseded political considerations. At least two of the governors resident at Los Adaes, Martos y Navarette and Jacinto de Barrios y Jaurequi, participated in the very active traffic in wine, brandy, horses and

Indian trade goods that crossed the imaginary border between French Louisiana and Spanish Texas.²⁸

The commercial intercourse between Natchitoches and Los Adaes, in its turn, exerted a significant influence on the French at Natchitoches. Although Spain's exclusive trade policies prevented a flourishing exchange, there remained enough commerce to develop Natchitoches as a frontier trade center. As long as the Spanish post endured, the exchange of prohibited goods continued across the frontier. The economic decline that occurred in Natchitoches following the closing of Los Adaes in 1773 demonstrates the importance of this exchange to Natchitoches' economy.²⁹

When Spain took control of Louisiana the people of Natchitoches grew alarmed about their economic welfare. In 1769, Louisiana Governor Alexandro O'Reilly limited the Indian trade to licensed traders. Citizens of Natchitoches complained, "The trade that is carried out with the Indian nations is one of the principal branches of commerce." Spanish policy directly contradicted the French practice of unrestricted Indian trade. Further, Spain restricted the exchange of firearms and ammunition, a mainstay of the French trade. Predictably, traders simply ignored the

regulation.³⁰

The Spanish abandoned Los Adaes in 1773, temporarily disrupting the economic system of the borderland. With the French cession of Louisiana to Spain in 1769, Los Adaes no longer represented the political frontier between French and Spanish claims. Spanish authorities saw no reason to continue to support either the mission or the presidio. In mid-May, 1773, the people of Los Adaes received orders to stop all work and begin gathering their livestock and personal belongings for the evacuation. The *Nuevo Reglamento*, part of a master plan to reallocate defensive resources in the Northern Provinces of New Spain, required the residents of the missions and presidios in East Texas to move to San Antonio de Bexar, where they would receive grants of land.³¹

Economic interests almost immediately overcame national loyalty. Many residents of Los Adaes did not leave their homes permanently. Some fled to avoid the forced evacuation, staying in the Caddo villages, or with friends in Natchitoches until after the convoy to Bexar had departed. In fact, some simply remained on their ranches and continued operating them. *Rancho El Lobanillo*, belonging to Antonio Gil Ibarvo, for example, was the first

resting stop on the journey to San Antonio de Bexar. As the party continued its journey, the ranch owner's mother and other relatives—totaling twenty-four people—remained behind because they were too sick to travel. In addition, thirty-five stragglers dropped out along the march and crept back to their homes. Perhaps the most revealing statement of all concerns the estimated twenty-five people who remained at Los Adaes. When these numbers are considered, it is apparent that only a small group of Adaesaños obeyed the order.³²

Even those who obeyed the order had no intention of giving up the economic and social ties they had established on the frontier. Eight days after their arrival in San Antonio, they drafted a petition to the provincial governor in Mexico City, seeking permission to return to their homes in east Texas. The lack of enthusiasm among these people for relocating and beginning a new life around San Antonio clearly reflected their anger and dejection at having been forced to leave their homes and economic base. Realizing that the provincial governor could not reverse an imperial decision and allow them to return to the settlement of Adaes, their petition asked that they be allowed to locate to the abandoned mission of the Ais, near present day San

Augustine. They explained that such a move would allow them to recover much of their lost property.³³

The decree that forced the abandonment of *Los Adaes* ordered the same for *Los Ais*, and the Viceroy considered it politically unwise to reverse an imperial ruling. Instead, he gave the petitioners permission to establish a new settlement on the Trinity River at Paso Tomas, where the *Camino Real* crossed the Bahia Road, in what is now Madison County, Texas. Approximately seventy families traveled north to the site of the new settlement, which they named *Nuestra Senora del Pilar de Bucareli*, echoing the name of their former church, *Nuestra Senora del Pilar de los Adaes*. However, the settlement quickly acquired the nickname *La Trinidad* for the river on which it stood. The settlement at *La Trinidad* lasted only five years. Poor crops, floods, raids by the Comanche, and finally a devastating fire caused its abandonment.

By 1779, when the remaining settlers from *Los Adaes* deserted the village on the Trinity, many of the people had already left, filtering back among the Indians of East Texas. Local leaders gathered those they could find, and moved their settlement to the site of the old *Nacogdoche* mission, where they founded the pueblo of *Nuestra Senora*

del Pilar de Nacogdoches. This move put the Adaesanos back in east Texas, and close to their former homes, which they quickly proceeded to reoccupy, reestablishing their social and economic ties with Natchitoches. The move was potentially volatile since it was made by consensus of the settlers and had not been approved by Spanish authorities. But faced with an accomplished fact, the authorities in San Antonio conceded.³⁴

The assertiveness of the people of Los Adaes in the face of Spanish policy proved remarkable. Their lives, remote from government and centers of supply, their kinship relations with the Indian and French population, and an economic system that depended on their own entrepreneurial skills nurtured an independent spirit that subordinated national allegiance. Spanish policy in this case represented another imaginary line that disappeared in the borderlands system of social and economic interdependence. During the period between the founding of Nacogdoches in 1779 and the sale of Louisiana to the United States in 1803, ranchers, farmers, townsmen and vaqueros resumed their trade activities with Natchitoches and the Indians, reestablishing the economic opportunities that they enjoyed in a frontier exchange system.³⁵

Even when Spain controlled both Texas and Louisiana, trade between the two remained illegal. Spain assigned the administration of Louisiana to the captaincy general of Cuba, while Texas belonged to the separate jurisdiction of the Internal Provinces administered by the Viceroyalty of Mexico. This arrangement provided benefits to the people of Natchitoches that their counterparts in Texas did not share. Because of its link to Cuba, Natchitoches did not have to pay the normal mainland taxes imposed on imports. The citizens of Nacogdoches did. Natchitoches also enjoyed a wider selection of goods, obtained cheaply from New Orleans via the water route up the Mississippi to the Red River. The people of Nacogdoches had to buy expensive and highly taxed goods that came overland from Vera Cruz. Although imperial edict again banned trade between Natchitoches and Nacogdoches, the invisible boundary meant nothing to the people of the borderland. The people of Nacogdoches continued to trade their most abundant resource, livestock, to Louisiana for essentials. In 1802 alone, fifty-seven shipments of horses and mules moved between Nacogdoches and Natchitoches, along with nine shipments of pelts. On fourteen separate occasions the residents of Nacogdoches purchased food in Natchitoches.³⁶

Don Teodoro de Croix, commandant general of the Internal Provinces wrote to the king urging that Spain legalize trade between the two provinces. De Croix confessed that he saw no reason for such a prohibition since the French no longer held Louisiana, and suggested that the overland trade could benefit both Texas and Louisiana. The Spanish government denied Croix's request with the convoluted logic only understandable to an accomplished bureaucrat. Typically, the people of Nacogdoches quietly ignored the order. Between October 1796 and January 1799 the people of Nacogdoches traded more than one thousand horses to their counterparts in Louisiana.³⁷

The Indian segment of this trade triangle continued as well. In 1798 alone the tribes traded twenty thousand hides and four hundred horses to traders in Nacogdoches, who in turn sent them to Natchitoches. In exchange, they received hardware and articles of jewelry valued at six thousand pesos. In 1803 the commandant at Nacogdoches estimated that William Barr, a licensed Indian trader, purchased an average of five hundred horses each year from the tribes for markets in Louisiana.³⁸

The lack of food continued to plague the citizens of Nacogdoches just as it had when they resided at *Los Adaes*.

Supply lines to San Antonio de Bexar remained tenuous, forcing the people of Nacogdoches to turn to their friends, relatives and trading partners in Natchitoches for aid, often with the knowledge and tacit approval of local officials. In May 1801 the mayor of Nacogdoches informed to the governor of Texas that the pueblo continued "in constant want" due to the scarcity of corn. "This lack has forced me," he lamented, "to ask in the Post of Natchitoches for twenty-five barrels of corn, which I have gotten for three pesos." On June 6, 1805 the Journal of Operations for Nacogdoches noted that three men left for Natchitoches with pelts "to bring back provisions from there."³⁹

The United States acquired Louisiana in 1803 and the Spanish government prohibited all trade between foreign controlled Louisiana and the province of Texas. Fear of American expansionism caused Spanish officials to emphasize this new edict by forbidding the sale of livestock and making such sales an offense punishable by hanging. In a lengthy letter dated May 23, 1803 the commandant-general of Texas, Nemesio Salcedo, wrote to Governor Elguezabal that, despite Nacogdoches' remoteness from a Spanish base of supply, the inhabitants would simply have to provide for

themselves. When the commandant at Nacogdoches, Sebastian Rodriguez, received the order he objected violently to enforcing it, arguing that such an action would seriously affect the people of Nacogdoches and the friendly Indian tribes in the area. Lacking trade facilities with which to maintain themselves and supply the tribes, the people of Nacogdoches would undoubtedly suffer from a lack of basic necessities.⁴⁰

In June 1803, Governor Elguezabal approached the commandant general in support of Commandant Rodríguez' argument. In a lengthy letter the governor presented a detailed analysis of the resources available in Texas. Texas had only three population centers - San Antonio, La Bahía and Nacogdoches. Although San Antonio served both as the capital and the center of commerce for the province, the great distance between it and Nacogdoches made regular supply to East Texas impossible. He argued that the people of Nacogdoches had always relied on Natchitoches for subsistence. Without their network of trade, "the families would be reduced to perishing or change of domicile."⁴¹ The governor's letter confirms both the economic necessity of frontier exchange and the fluidity of national identity within the borderlands. Given the choice between loyalty to

Spain and survival, the people of the borderlands identified more strongly with the social and economic ties of their region than with national identity.

Despite the regulation that made trading between the people of Nacogdoches and Natchitoches illegal, the commandant general realized the need for supplies from Louisiana to survive and maintain the good will of the Indians. He quietly informed the governor of Texas "confidentially, to manage by whatever indirect means Your Lordship may consider best, to prevent total exhaustion of the tobacco supply with ensuing consequences."⁴²

The commandant general understood that no practical way could be found to stop the illegal trade between Nacogdoches and Natchitoches. Numerous entries in the Journal of Operations for Nacogdoches illustrate the necessity of ignoring national policy in favor of survival. "Today Mr. Barr's pack train left for [Natchitoches] with furs and to bring back provisions, as I asked, since this post is in the greatest confusion because of the great suffering from hunger that was experienced."⁴³

In the years between 1803 and 1806 tensions involving runaway slaves, the Indian trade and international borders brought the two powers to a confrontation along the Sabine

River between Natchitoches and Nacogdoches. In the end, these tensions focused on ownership of the land between the Arroyo Hondo, a stream flowing between Natchitoches and the site of the abandoned presidio of Los Adaes, and the Sabine River. As war seemed imminent, both nations agreed to withdraw their armies from the disputed area, the Americans to Natchitoches and the Spanish to the west bank of the Sabine River. The area became known as the Neutral Strip, and remained outside the control of either nation until 1821, when the Transcontinental Treaty settled the question of ownership. During that fifteen-year period the Neutral Strip became a haven for outlaws, renegade Indians and filibusters. Moving goods across the land between Natchitoches and Nacogdoches became virtually impossible, and although small amounts of trade continued, frequent intercourse between Spanish, French, Africans and Indians along the frontier diminished.

The commercial history of this borderland began with the Caddo. When the French established the post near the Natchitoches village on the Red River, they introduced European goods that the Caddo quickly incorporated into their network of trade with tribes to the west. As an established agricultural people, the Caddo produced a

surplus of food which quickly became an important commodity in trade with the Europeans. The French, freed of the struggle to survive through an adequate supply of food, took advantage of the opportunity to expand their commercial interests into Spanish Texas. A scant dozen miles or so from St. Denis's post at Natchitoches, Spanish officials envisaged the fort at Los Adaes as the instrument to halt French encroachment, weaken French influence among the neighboring tribes, and prevent French traders from using Louisiana as a base for illicit commerce with northern New Spain. Los Adaes, more than eight hundred miles from the nearest Spanish market, suffered from spiraling costs and a lack of consistent availability of even essentials such as food, proved incapable of advancing those goals. Instead, they turned to the French to supply more reasonably priced goods, creating a system of contraband trade in order to survive. As the communities moved from confrontation to cooperation, they established the basis for an economic system that, while in direct violation of Spanish law, remained critical to their subsistence.

The economic interdependence among the Caddo, Spanish and French people in the borderlands between Natchitoches

and Nacogdoches created an inclusive society where the vicissitudes of survival blurred national identity, ignored governmental policy, and promoted independent commerce. In this zone of intercultural penetration a complex network of kinship within a frontier exchange economy provided the tools for survival. The fluidity of society on the border of Louisiana and Texas involved Native Americans, Europeans and Africans in the process of creating a community where economic interaction also ignored political boundaries, initially in an effort to survive, and later because of the familial, social and business ties that bound borderlands peoples to one another.

Notes

¹ Ralph A. Smith, trans., "Account of the Journey of Bernard de la Harpe: Discovery Made by Him of Several Nations Situated in the West," in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXII (July, 1958 - April 1959), 75-86.

² David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 163-4; John J. TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida, 1700-1763*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964), 122-25, 203-5; Lawrence Carroll Ford, *The Triangular Struggle for Spanish Pensacola, 1689-1739*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1939), 99.

³ Gregorio de Salinas to Juan de Ayala Escobar, Pensacola, Sept. 9, 1717 in Manuel Serrano y Sanz, *España y los Indios Cheroquis y Chactas en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII*, (Seville: Tip. de la Guía Oficial, 1916), 241-2; Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 163-7; Ford, *Triangular Struggle*, 94-7.

⁴ Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732*, reprint of the 1928 edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 162-86; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Anglo-Spanish Rivalry in North America*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 81-3.

⁵ Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry*, 253-7; Jack D. L. Holmes, "Dauphine Island in the Franco-Spanish War, 1719-22" in John Francis McDermott, ed., *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), 103-25.

⁶ While many historians have dismissed Spanish fears of French attacks on Texas and New Mexico, the letters of Isidro Félix de Espinosa and Fray Antonio Margil de Jesus to the Viceroy, Mission Purísima Concepción, dated July 2, 1719, and Margil to Francisco de San Esteban, Mission San Antonio de Valero, dated September 1, 1720, in Marion Habig, ed., *Nothingness Itself: Selected Writings of Ven. Fr. Antonio Margil, 1690-1724*, Benedict Leutenegger, trans., (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979), 254-7, 273-4, present clear evidence that a genuine threat existed. See also Charmion Clair Shelby, ed. and trans., "Projected French Attacks Upon the Northeastern Frontier of New Spain, 1719-1721," in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 13 (Nov. 1933), 457-72; Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry*, 265-7, 273-4; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 2: 115-9.

⁷ Several summaries of the Aguayo expedition exist, including Eleanor Buckley, "The Aguayo Expedition into

Texas and Louisiana, 1719-1722" in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (July 1911), 1-65; Charles Wilson Hackett, "The Marquis of San Miguel de Aguayo and His Recovery of Texas from the French, 1719-1723" in *SWHQ* 49 (Oct. 1945), 193 - 214, which adds more detail from Aguayo's own correspondence. The best first-hand account is Richard G. Santos, ed. and trans., *Aguayo Expedition into Texas, 1721: An Annotated Translation of the Five Versions of the Diary Kept by Br. Juan Antonio de la Peña*, (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1981), which serves as my primary source on the topic. Also see Aguayo to the king, Coahuila, June 26, 1720, in Hackett, "Marquis of San Miguel de Aguayo," 200-201.

⁸ Felipe V to the viceroy, Nov. 1, 1719, quoted in Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry*, 267. See also Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 2:132-35. Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry*, 259, wrote of negotiations in 1720, but the Treaty of the Hague, signed on Feb. 17, 1720, effectively ended the war. Negotiations did continue between France and Spain, with whom Felipe succeeded in signing a treaty of alliance on Mar. 27, 1721. See Felipe Gonzalo Anes, *El antigua rigimen: Los Borbones* (Madrid: Alianza, 1975), 349-50. Santos, ed., and trans., *Aguayo Expedition into Texas*, 57; Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry*, 269-70, and Folmer, "Report on Louis de Saint Denis' Intended Raid," 83-8; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 2:140-41.

⁹ In 1721, Antonio de la Peña referred to Matagorda as "La Bahia del Espiritu Santo which the French call San Bernardo" Santos, ed. and trans., *Aguayo Expedition into Texas*, 66. Although Spaniards located the ruins of La Salle's fort easily in 1721, Frenchmen had forgotten its location and had come to believe it had been on Galveston Bay, which they tried to occupy during the war. Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry*, 274-75. Santos, ed. and trans., *Aguayo Expedition into Texas*, 78.

¹⁰ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 2: 142-8.

¹¹ Letter from Fray Isidro Felis de Espinosa, 1722, R B. Blake Research Collection, vol. XXXVI, 253, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas, hereafter cited as Blake; Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1975), 165-70.

¹² Jean-Baptiste Bernard de La Harpe, *The Historical Journal of the Establishment of the French in Louisiana*.

Translated by Joan Cain and Virginia Koenig. Glenn R. Conrad, ed. (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1971), 73-4; Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Athanase de Mezieres and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1768-1780* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1914), Vol. 1, 44-5; Ralph A. Smith, trans., "Account of the Journey of Bernard de La Harpe: Discovery Made By Him of Several Nations Situated in the West," in *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXII, (July, 1958 to April, 1959), 75-86; John R. Swanton, *The Indians of the Southeastern United States* (Bureau of American Ethnology Report, Bulletin No. 137, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979).

¹³ David La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms: Caddo Economics and Politics, 700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 3. For more information on "frontier exchange" economies see Dan Usner, *Indians, Settlers and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Clarence H. Webb and Hiram F. Gregory, *The Caddo Indians of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Archaeological Survey and Antiquities Commission, 1978), 15-22. See also La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms*, 4-5.

¹⁴ Frederick Webb Hodge, ed. *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, I, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1902-10), 13.

¹⁵ David La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms: Caddo Economics and Politics, 700-1835*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 40-73.

¹⁶ La Vere, *Caddo Chiefdoms*, 40-73.

¹⁷ Daniel H. Usner Jr., *Indians Settler, and Slaves in A Frontier, Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1783*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 252-6; William Joyce Griffith, "The Hasinai Indians of East Texas as Seen by Europeans, 1687-1772," *Philological and Documentary Studies*, II, 3 (part of Publication No.12 of the Middle American Research Institute of Tulane University), (New Orleans, 1977), 137-8.

¹⁸ Louis Juchereau de St. Denis to Sr. Edme Gatien de Salmon, French Commissarie Ordonnateau, November 2, 1731, copy in the Denise Palmer Huggins Collection, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA. See also Bustillo y Ceballos to the Viceroy, November 26, 1731, Blake, 1:6-8; Manie Lyles

Culbertson, "Selected Materials from a Research Paper Entitled The Caddo Indians," Manuscript in Louisiana Collection, Shreve Memorial Library, Shreveport, Louisiana, 14; Richard Seale, "St. Denis's Battle with the Natchez Indians in 1731: San Pour Sang Hill - Myth or Reality" in the *North Louisiana Historical Society Journal*, XXIV, 4 (Fall, 1993), 101-17; "Report by de Mezieres of the Expedition to Cadodachos, October 29, 1770," in Herbert E. Bolton, ed. and trans., *Athanase de Mezieres*, 1:210; *ibid.*, 23-24; Frederick Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico*, 1: 179-80, and 11: 947-50; and Smitb, *Caddo Indians*, 49.

¹⁹ Helen Sophie Burton, "Family and Economy in Frontier Louisiana: Colonial Natchitoches, 1714-1803" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Christian University, 2002), 279-80, 283.

²⁰ Marilyn McAdams Sibley, ed., "Across Texas in 1767: The Travels of Captain Pages" in *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXX,4 (April, 1967): 593-622.

²¹ Carlos E. Castaneda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936*, vol. III (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1938), 80-81; Castaneda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, vol. II, 175; Lawrence Kinnard, trans. *The Frontiers of New Spain: Nicolas de la Fora's Description, 1766-1768* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 166.

²² William Joyce Griffin, "The Hasinai Indians of East Texas as Seen by Europeans, 1687-1772" in *Philological and Documentary Studies*, Vol. 2, Middle America Research Institute, 1954, (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1977), 140-1.

²³ Castaneda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 2:144, 178, 265-6; Castaneda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 4:39; Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1915), 32.

²⁴ James Lang, *Conquest and Commerce: Spain and England in the Americas*, (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 224; J. H. Elliott, *Spain and Its World, 1500-1700: Selected Essays*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 215; Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Colonial Heritage of Latin America: Essays on Economic Dependence in Perspective*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 44-53; Murdo J. Macleod, "Spain and America: The Atlantic Trade," in Leslie Bethell, ed., *Cambridge History of Latin America*, 1:341-88.

²⁵ Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 10-12; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 172-3.

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- ²⁶ Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 252-9.
- ²⁷ La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms*, 66.
- ²⁸ Castaneda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 2:178, 3:85, 4:1, 238-9; Bolton, *Texas*, 9, 38-9.
- ²⁹ Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Athanase de Mezieres and the Louisiana Texas Frontier, 1768-1780* (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1914), 1: 22, 167-8.
- ³⁰ Alcee Fortier, *A History of Louisiana*, 4 vols. (New York: 1904), 1: 177-204.
- ³¹ Juan Augustin Morfi, *History of Texas, 1673-1779*, trans., Carlos E. Castaneda (Albuquerque: The Quivara Society, 1935), pt. 1, 420-1.
- ³² Herbert Eugene Bolton, "The Spanish Abandonment and Re-Occupation of East Texas, 1773-1779," *Texas State Historical Association Quarterly* 9, 2 (October, 1905): 88-9. See also Castaneda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 4:299-300.
- ³³ Petition of the Adaesanos to the Governor, October 4, 1773, BA; Don Juan Maria Ripperda to the Viceroy, December 7, 1773, BA.; Castaneda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 4:304; Jackson, *Los Mestenos*, 112-5.
- ³⁴ Bolton, *Texas*, 116-9.
- ³⁵ Elguezabal to Pedro de Nava, June 20, 1803, Blake, Supplement 4:211.
- ³⁶ Jackson, *Los Mestenos*, 120-1; Jose Joaquin Ugarte to Governor Elguezabal, August 1, 1804, BA.; Journal of Operations, Nacogdoches, Blake, 20:17-95.
- ³⁷ Manuel Munoz to Jose Maria Guadiana, January 29, 1799, Blake, Supplement 4:6; Caballero de Croix to Don Joseph de Galvez, June 2, 1783, BA.
- ³⁸ Jose Joaquin Ugarte to Governor Elguezabal, August 1, 1804, BA; Ugarte to Elguezabal, November 26, 1803, BA.
- ³⁹ Manuel Musquis to Juan Bautista Elguezabal, May 1, 1801, BA; Journal of Operation, Nacogdoches, Blake, Supplement 4:36.
- ⁴⁰ Nemesio Salcedo to Elguezabal, May 23, 1803, Blake, Supplement 4:204-6; Sebastian Rodriguez to Antonio Cordero, November 2, 1805, BA.
- ⁴¹ Elguezabal to Salcedo, June 20, 1803, Blake, Supplement 4:211-4.
- ⁴² Nemesio Salcedo to Antonio Cordero, December 16, 1805, BA.
- ⁴³ Journal of Operations, Nacogdoches, 13 March 1804, Blake, vol. XX, 213.

Chapter 3

"Very decent families:" People, Family, Kinship, and Community

During the spring of 1736 a wedding ceremony occurred inside the French post at Natchitoches, uniting a Spanish family from the nearby *presidio* of *Los Adaes* to a family of French descent. Victoria Margarita Gonzales, the fifteen year-old daughter of Lt. José Gonzales married Jean Baptiste Derbanne, the twenty-five year-old son of the deceased François Derbanne, a prominent merchant from French Natchitoches. Lieutenant Gonzales, the officer left in charge of *Los Adaes* while the governor attended to Apache raids in the vicinity of San Antonio de Béxar, opposed the union of his daughter with her French paramour. Still, the young couple eloped under the cover of darkness following mass at the *Nuestra Senora del Pilar de los Adaes* chapel. The Gonzales-Derbanne union marked the first recorded instance of Franco-Spanish familial ties in the Louisiana-Texas borderlands.¹

Intercultural, interdependent societies arose in the borderlands, where kinship networks, ties to the land, and a strong sense of independence overshadowed the geopolitical aspirations of European monarchs. The

Louisiana-Texas borderland provides a model that appreciates the extended cohabitation between natives and newcomers that prevailed on the perimeters of European colonial empires.²

The heterogeneous population of the Louisiana-Texas borderlands came from all walks of life and represented a relatively fluid society. People intermarried and assimilated into a mixed-blood society much more easily than those subjected to the stricter racial and class hierarchies imposed in more metropolitan areas. Those who settled the borderlands adapted themselves to their new social environment, modifying traditional values to suit frontier conditions. The further one moved from metropolitan centers, the less hierarchical society became. Within the Louisiana-Texas borderlands, native peoples and Europeans cooperated, intermarried, and developed their own unique and independent society.³

By the late 18th century, the caste system in Northern New Spain had eroded, opening an opportunity for ethnic "migration," thus allowing upward social mobility not possible under an otherwise strict caste system. In Nacogdoches, as in other frontier communities, priests afforded the sacrament of matrimony to any consenting

couple regardless of caste. Based on census records from 1792 to 1804, and in descending order, these castes included Spanish, *Mestizo* (Indian - Spanish), Indian, Coyote (*Mestizo* - Indian), *Mulatto* (Spanish - Negro), Lobo (Indian - Negro or Indian - *Mulatto*), and Negro (Free). Slaves, whether Indian or Negro, held no social position.

A study of census records from Nacogdoches for this period provides extremely helpful information in determining the demographics of the community. Almost every census records ethnicity (caste) allowing easy identification of upward caste "migration." Many residents of Nacogdoches had already gained "Spanish" caste recognition as soldiers, government officials, or on the basis of their position in the community, by the time they reached Nacogdoches, even though the majority of the pueblo's population still consisted of *Adais*, *Ais* and Lipan Indians as well as people identified as *mestizo*, *mulatto* and *coyote*. The occupations of these Indian people included craftsmen, housewives, hunters, vaqueros and farmers.⁴

Juana Bautista Acosta provides one example of upward caste mobility. In 1792, the Nacogdoches census identified her as Indian; in 1793 as *loba*. Yet by 1795, her

designation became *mulata*, and ten years later, *mestiza*. Julian Rosales and his wife Maria Alamillo provide another interesting example. In the 1792 Census of Nacogdoches, both appear as Indian. A year later, census-takers identify them as *lobo / loba*. By 1796, he is listed as *coyote*, and she as *mulata*. In 1804, their status has risen again, this time to *mestizo / mestiza*.⁵

While caste "migration" seems prevalent, it did not affect everyone. The December 31, 1796, Census of San Antonio de Valero Mission records Antonio Acosta, *Indio, de los Adaes*, a laborer. A year later, (Dec. 31, 1797) Acosta had acquired a trade—that of shoemaker. Normally, such a tradesman would merit a higher status than *indio*, yet Antonio did not, perhaps because he still resided in the mission. Similarly, Francisco Carmona, born around 1755, remained identified as Indian, despite his marriage to Catarina Espada, identified as Spanish. Regardless of the official records, Hispanized Indian people predominated in east Texas. As late as 1830, a visitor to Nacogdoches observed the "great number of Indians" living in and around Nacogdoches.⁶

Both census records and land titles in the Spanish records clearly illustrate that extended family groups

formed the basis of community in the borderlands. Such groupings within might appear a result of life in any small town-dictated as much by circumstance as choice. But census records for the far-flung settlements at Bayou Pierre, on the Attoyague River and La Nana Creek, and on the large grants such as *Santo Domingo*, *La Lunaca*, and *El Lobanillo* show the same pattern. For example, in the 1809 Census of Nacogdoches, Concepción Padilla, with her husband Andrés de Acosta and their children, lived next door to her brother, his five sons and one daughter. José Antonio Mora, with his wife Catrina Vasqués, his mother, and three children lived adjacent to his sister, Maurícia Mora, her husband, two children and three stepchildren. José Córdoba's family lived next to José María Córdoba's family. José Procela, with his wife and son lived next to José María Procela and family.⁷

Franciscan friars facilitated family links between *Presidio Los Adaes* and French Natchitoches through evangelization beyond the missions, following a precedent set earlier when Father Margil de Jesús from the mission at Los Adaes celebrated the first mass at French Natchitoches in October 1716. Although the imperial conflict in 1719 between Spain and France abruptly halted these services

with the abandonment of the East Texas missions, they resumed in 1721 with the founding of the *Presidio de los Adaes*, when Spanish priests again offered mass on Sundays at the Natchitoches post. In 1724 Texas's Governor Almazán, recognizing an opportunity to ensure that lines of communication with the Natchitoches post remained open, informed the viceroy that "missionaries took the initiative of administering the Holy Sacraments, and saying mass on some feast days of whose comfort has been greatly appreciated by the French who lack a religious minister."⁸

Although they constructed the Mission San Miguel de Cuellar along with the presidio of Los Adaes, the Spanish had little success in convincing the Caddo to relocate to it. The missionaries reported that only a few old Indians lived at the mission, whereas others frequented it at times. They always seemed very friendly toward the *padres*, but they positively refused to move from their traditional homes and congregate at San Miguel. In 1767, Father Gaspar de Solís lamented that, while many Indians lived in the vicinity, none of them stayed at the mission. He also commented that those who did live among the Spanish preferred to congregate at the presidio.⁹

Despite the Caddo's refusal to congregate at the

mission, Father Solís noted that missionaries had baptized 103 children and adults. He went on to enumerate 256 baptisms at the presidial chapel. Author Roger Baudier suggests one reason for the lack of enthusiasm among the Caddo for mission life. The Spanish system, he observed, operated as "the direct opposite of the French system which sent missionaries to "live among [Indian] villages and thus strive to Christianize them."¹⁰

Missionizing the Caddo proved impossible, so Franciscan missionaries assumed the role of chaplains, providing religious services at Presidio Los Adaes and at French Natchitoches, cementing relations between the border communities through religious observance. The often public ritual of baptism, marriage, and burial ensured *relaciones parentescas* (kinship relations) and *compadrazco* (co-parenthood) among the Spaniards and French, just as kinship played a pivotal role for Caddo-French trade. The imperial goal of maintaining a distinctly "Spanish" or "French" community became increasingly challenged on the Louisiana-Texas frontier, where the Spanish royal prohibition against intermarriage proved virtually impossible to enforce.

The first recorded baptism of a French child at the Natchitoches post officiated by a missionary from Los Adaes

occurred in 1730. During 1737, Lieutenant General Ybiricu, already in legal trouble for his questionable business dealings at Natchitoches, also testified that various French settlers specifically requested services from Spanish missionaries paid by Spanish Governor Sandoval. During 1751, Friar Arellano from Mission Los Adaes certified that he went to Natchitoches "from time to time for the purpose of having frequent recourse to the holy sacraments."¹¹

In all, Franciscan friars performed or witnessed thirty-two baptisms at the Natchitoches post prior to 1765. Baptisms of children from Franco-Spanish unions also occurred at Natchitoches, and *Adaeseños* from Presidio Los Adaes became godparents, further uniting borderlands families. The largest number of these occurred during 1763. Spanish Governor Martos y Navarette himself became the godfather of Eulalie Marie Anne de Soto at her baptism on December 22. Eulalie Marie's father, Manuel Antonio de Soto Bermúdez, deserted from the garrison of Presidio Los Adaes in the early 1750s and married the daughter of St. Denis (the elder) at Natchitoches in 1754.¹²

Baptisms, weddings and funerals bound the *Adaeseños* with the French across a vaguely defined imperial border.

In 1749 Pierre Barrio, the son of Spanish Governor Pedro del Barrio, became the godfather of Marie Jeanne Madere at her baptism in Natchitoches. Jeanne Rougot, a French woman, became the godmother. During Governor Barrios y Jáuregui's command at Los Adaes, Catherine Marie Castro, daughter of Francisco Castro and a Frenchwoman named Marie St. Croix, both of whom listed themselves as Spanish subjects received her baptism at Natchitoches. Cesar de Blanc, the commandant at Natchitoches, and Marie Dolour de St. Denis de Blanc took on the responsibility of godparents.¹³

The marriage between Victoria Margarita Gonzales and Jean Baptiste Derbanne in April 1736 reinforced commercial and familial ties following the example set twenty years earlier by Louis Juchereau St. Denis and his Spanish wife.¹⁴ One of the witnesses to the Gonzales-Derbanne union, Frenchman Jacques de la Chaise, later married into the St. Denis family. Victoria's father, Lt. José Gonzales, accused his wife's foster brother, surnamed de la Cerda, of acting as liaison for Jean Baptiste and Victoria. Lieutenant Gonzales also blamed another *Adaeseño*, Juan de Mora, for their escape and placed de Mora in prison to await the governor's return. The lieutenant, angry over the flagrant disregard for his wishes, even disowned his daughter,

possibly because of the embarrassment he felt that the elopement occurred under his temporary command at Los Adaes. Yet the birth of Victoria's sons, who later served with their grandfather at Presidio Los Adaes during the 1750s, and the improvement in his fortunes upon becoming kin by marriage to a wealthy French merchant family, ultimately mitigated Gonzales initial misgivings.¹⁵

Another wedding occurred at French Natchitoches during July 1763 between a young Spanish woman from Los Adaes and a Frenchman from a prominent family. Juana Victoria García, aged thirteen, and daughter of the soldier Pedro García and Marie Joseph Condee, married François LeMoyne, a forty-year-old French soldier, whose father pioneered the Natchitoches post along with St. Denis and François Derbanne. Unlike Lieutenant Gonzales' daughter, this Spanish maiden already lived at French Natchitoches prior to her marriage. A procession then traveled from Natchitoches to celebrate Mass at Mission Los Adaes, suggesting perhaps that LeMoyne sought to solidify ties with the Spanish community as well as his in-laws.¹⁶

Manuel De Soto successfully parlayed marriage with St. Denis' daughter in 1754 into accumulating wealth at Natchitoches beyond what most *Adaesanos* ever dreamed. By

the late 1750s and 1760s he and his wife had entered into multiple transactions involving land and slaves, increasing their already significant wealth. Spanish-Franco weddings at Natchitoches, combined with worship and the other sacraments, drew the Franco-Spanish community into broader social networks.¹⁷

Spanish Franciscan missionaries also performed or witnessed burials for the French, Caddo, and African residents at Natchitoches, just as they did baptisms and weddings. Historians often cite the funeral for the pioneer-commandant of French Natchitoches, Louis de St. Denis, which the Spanish governor from Presidio Los Adaes and Father Vallejo from Mission Los Adaes attended. Governor Boneo y Morales allegedly reported to the viceroy that "Saint Denis is dead, thank God; now we can breathe easier." Although Spanish royal officials seem somewhat callous, frontier settlers and Indians on both sides of the Louisiana-Texas border mourned St. Denis's loss.¹⁸

While a few marriages occurred between Spanish and French settlers, far more unions existed between the soldiers at Los Adaes and the Caddo. Coahuiltecan Indians and *mestizos* from the estates of the Marques de Aguayo composed the original garrison of Los Adaes. As time

passed, recruiting men for service on the frontier, with its dangers and primitive conditions, became increasingly difficult. The ethnic composition of the garrison at the *Presidio de los Adaes* remained primarily Indian over the years as the Spanish recruited soldiers from the local Caddo population. Since Spanish law required that soldiers be "Spanish," those recruited for military duty almost always appear in the official records as "Spaniards" regardless of their actual caste. In addition, the number of *mestizos de los Adaes* increased as these "Spanish" soldiers married Indian women. Some families in this border outpost became a mixture of Indian, Spanish and French blood. Still others appear to be of mixed Indian and African parentage.¹⁹

By 1773, when the Spanish abandoned the presidio, a sizeable community of farms and ranches had grown up near Los Adaes. Archaeological evidence from the area strongly suggests that these included some Caddo farms, as well as those developed by the Spanish. Sent to remove Spain's soldiers, missionaries and settlers from East Texas to Béxar in May, 1773, the Baron de Ripperdá noted a population of more than five hundred persons at and in the vicinities of Los Ais and Los Adaes.²⁰

At least two generations of this mixed-blood population of *Adaesanos* had grown to adulthood in a melting pot of Native American, Spanish, French, and African cultures, where many native peoples assimilated European dress, spoke Spanish, French, and their own Caddoan dialect, and incorporated European customs into their own. Spanish missionaries had given those who accepted baptism Christian names, which appear in the official records of the Church and the Spanish government. Many also had family ties among the French in Natchitoches, and it is not unusual to see the same person mentioned in Spanish and French documents, with the name being rendered in either language.²¹

Marriages such as that of Victoria Gonzales and Jean Baptiste Derbanne, and the use of relationships to promote business transactions, reflect the fundamental need for survival and security on the Louisiana-Texas frontier. Many factors affected the union of husband and wife. Church law, particularly important in the earliest years, maintained extensive control over marriages. Later, rapid turnover in governments also established guidelines for the family union. Local traditions and accepted social *morés*, such as the rights and responsibilities of a married couple

and the social equality or inequality of males and females, directly affected husband-wife relationships. External factors such as the ratio of single men and women had a bearing on marriages. Men and women in eighteenth and nineteenth century borderlands considered matrimony an extremely important decision. Although parents of the prospective bride and groom frequently gifted their children with some of the possessions needed to "keep house," tradition expected that the couple be self-supporting after the union. Family life most often necessitated a dwelling separate from parents and other kin, as well as tools, equipment, animals, seed, and home furnishings. Because many families engaged in agriculture, the newlyweds had to have land in order to survive. Besides these economic considerations, the Catholic faith that dominated both early settlements rarely sanctioned separation or divorce, causing men and women considering marriage to exercise mature judgment in determining if they could live amiably together for the duration of their lives.

Priests in Nacogdoches had no reservations in offering the sacrament of matrimony to desiring couples from any caste. This included marriages among slaves. In 1793, José

Tomás Blas, a slave living in Nacogdoches, traveled to San Antonio to seek help in getting a new master for his wife, a slave of Don Nicolas Mora of Nacogdoches. Mora denied Blas the right to cohabit, or even to communicate orally with his wife. Blas believed this "contrary to liberty and purposes of matrimony, and in its entirety repugnant to the provisions of the laws." Jose Toraya, the *procurador* for the poor in San Antonio, petitioned the governor of Texas on Blas' behalf, arguing that "My party is married according to the order of Our Holy Mother Church with Maria Luisa, from which marriage they have had two children." Obviously, the Church sanctioned slave marriages. Upon reviewing this case, Governor Manuel Muñoz ruled cohabitation a privilege of married couples, and ordered Antonio Gil Ibarvo to issue an order to Nicolas Mora allowing Maria Luisa to come to San Antonio "where she will be able, with more liberty to find someone to purchase her, in consideration of the village of Nacogdoches being composed of poor people" In the event that Maria Luisa could not find a new master, Ibarvo agreed to purchase her husband so that they could live together.²²

While the Blas case remains unusual in Texas records, it points out that the nature of slavery in the borderlands

of East Texas differed greatly from the practice under later Anglo-American domination. Although a slave, Blas had access to the court and the governor, along with the right to sue his master. That Blas traveled to San Antonio to present his petition indicates a freedom of movement accorded those in servitude. Finally, Gil Ibarvo's willingness to find Blas a new master or purchase him from Nicholas Mora indicates the communal spirit among the people of East Texas regardless of their caste.

Society in Natchitoches developed far differently than its Texas counterpart. A majority of Natchitoches free settlers claimed French descent. Within Natchitoches, they developed a society that allowed them to create and maintain a hegemony over the Africans or Indians living among them. Unlike Nacogdoches society, they imposed racially based laws that controlled entry into free society and maintained distinctions in status based on racial derivation. Although no French or Louisiana authority prohibited marriage between French men and Indian women, the Superior Council ordered that colonial officials must approve all such marriages. The 1724 *Code Noir* forbade white subjects of any gender from marrying blacks, whether free or slave. As a result, intermarriage among free people

of different races became a rare occurrence in Louisiana, leaving Natchitoches' upper-class free to use the institutions of marriage and colonial law to strengthen their hegemony as a prerogative for people of French descent.²³

Although not as prevalent in Natchitoches as in Nacogdoches, racial mixing did occur despite French ascendance. During the French period, documents record four marriages between French men and non-French women. Louis Juchereau St. Denis married Manuela Sánchez Navarro, a Spaniard. The couple resided in Natchitoches for the rest of their lives, founding the most powerful family dynasty in the region. Of their children, three married French officers, including the second daughter, Petronelle, who became the wife of Athanse de Mézières. Two other St. Denis daughters wed Spaniards; Marie married Emanuel Antonio Marcel Bermúdez, an officer from Los Adaes, who moved to Natchitoches after the wedding, and Louise married Martín de Land Gutiérrez, a resident of Saltillo.²⁴

Despite attempts by some French in Natchitoches, marriages outside the social order did occur. Frenchmen from Natchitoches also married the daughters of soldiers from Los Adaes. In addition to the Derbanne-Gonzalez union,

François Lemoine, a soldier from Tours, married Los Adaes Resident Juana Victoria García in July, 1763. Their union proved brief. With Lemoine's death only two years later, Juana found herself a widow. But within slightly more than a year, she married another Frenchman, Louis Lemalathe.²⁵

At least five Frenchmen, resident in Natchitoches, married native women. Surprisingly, two of the brides for whom records exist did not come from local tribes, but from tribes in southern Louisiana. François Derbanne, a French Canadian trader and associate of St. Denis, and Jacques Guedon, a settler from Nantes, married Chitimacha Indians sisters Jeanne and Marie Anne Thérèse de la Grande Terre. Charles Dumont married Angelique, a Natchitoches Indian woman, and Jean Baptiste Brevel took a Kadohadacho wife, Anne.²⁶

French and Spanish men and Indian women also produced a large population of mixed-blood children. These metís, or mestizo/a, had several options open to them. In the matrilineal society of the Caddo Indians children were recognized as Indian and accepted by the Indian community. In patriarchal societies like the French and Spanish, the children became legitimate heirs of the father. This biculturalism allowed mixed-bloods to circulate in both

worlds, and men such as François Grappe, the son of Alexis Grappe, and Louise Guedon, became interpreters and Indian traders. As United States Indian Agent John Sibley observed in 1805, "The French inhabitants have great respect for this nation [the Natchitoches Caddo], and a number of very decent families have a mixture of their blood in them."²⁷

While marriage and family formed the basis for survival and success in the borderlands, kinship networks extended far beyond the nuclear family. Members of kinship networks often had no blood relation at all, but assumed other obligations, such as god-parenting, mutual protection, business partnerships, and friendships, through which individuals developed and maintained close personal ties. Prestige, wealth, power, and success depended upon these networks, particularly in areas far removed from metropolitan centers. To survive and prosper, peoples of the borderlands devised an inclusive system of exchange relations based on reciprocity and kinship networks. In addition to blood relations, social ties cemented two parties into a fictive or ritualized kin relationship that carried with it social obligations on the part of each of the parties involved.

In Caddo society the bonds of kinship necessitated the exchange of gifts. Gift giving created obligations of reciprocity from which the giver might receive, among other things, a spouse, food, and other various forms of assistance, trade items, even military allies. As both Caddo and Europeans became part of an evolving community, gift exchange became a form of insurance in the form of an obligation to repay the giver. The recipient of gifts, whether in the form of material goods or aid, assumed an obligation of honor to reciprocate. Marriage, god-parenting, taking on any other obligation, or providing assistance, maintained kinship bonds. In effect, the more generous an individual appeared to be, the higher their status in the community.²⁸

When the Spanish and French established themselves among the Caddo, each provided the other with increased potential for kinship networks. As a keystone of diplomacy, the French and Spanish governments provided regular distribution of gifts of European goods to the Caddo, who, in return, provided military and economic assistance to their new neighbors. Pierre Talon advised that giving gifts ensured Caddo friendship. He recognized the power of gifts and reciprocity, and the problems that could develop when a

kinsperson did not uphold the expected reciprocal obligations.²⁹

Both Frenchmen and Spaniards in the borderlands often found themselves dependent on each other and the Caddo for both their physical and economic survival. The Spanish missions and presidios of eastern Texas lay far from the Mexico, and the French in northwestern Louisiana found themselves isolated from the main French population along the lower Mississippi River valley, twenty-five days' travel by boat. Mutual exchange provided food and other goods to both the Spanish and French, and manufactured goods for the Caddo. Their hope for the future lay less in governments far away than in local cooperation.

After Spain acquired Louisiana from France, Spanish administrators found extremely strong kinship ties between the French and Indians. When Spain's first commandant at Natchitoches, the Frenchman Athanase de Mézières, ordered all Frenchmen living among the Indians to turn themselves in at Natchitoches, François Morvant, a gunsmith and *contrabandista* who had for eight years been living at the Kadohadacho village on the upper Red River, complied. Years before, Morvant had run with a gang of French outlaws on the Arkansas River. He killed the gang leader and fled to

the Caddo. At Natchitoches, de Mézières jailed Morvant on a charge of murder. Tinhionen, the Great Chief of the Kadohadacho, learned of Morvant's incarceration and personally visited de Mézières to beg for Morvant's release. De Mézières refused, instead explaining Spanish law. Yet Tinhionen insisted, and according to de Mézières, the chief "became very, very sad, protesting that he would not depart from my side whilst his petition remained ungranted." De Mézières, a longtime resident of Natchitoches, understanding the bonds of kinship, finally relented so as not to displease the powerful chief. Morvant went back to the Kadohadacho and later became the officially licensed trader to them. With such intense loyalty prevailing among the peoples of the borderland, Spanish officials found it impossible to prevent the contraband trade they wished so desperately to curtail.³⁰

Strong kinship ties among French creole families in Natchitoches caused another problem for Spanish officials. During the French years, the original old Canadian families who had come to Natchitoches with Louis Juchereau de St. Denis had intermarried and developed large extended families with reciprocal obligations of their own. Members of these families, usually cousins and in-laws, often

created trading partnerships. Kin looked after kin and nepotism became an accepted fact of life and business. Even after the death of St. Denis in 1744, his son of the same name continued the family's control of much of the Indian trade. This control expanded as new blood invigorated the old family. Powerful young Frenchmen, like Athanase De Mézières and Cesar De Blanc, married St. Denis's daughters and became heavily involved in the family's trading concerns.³¹

De Mézières had served as a French officer and participated in the Indian trade before the Spanish appointed him lieutenant governor of the Natchitoches area. In this role, he found himself in an excellent position to advance the interests of the St. Denis family. During the early Spanish period, his aristocratic ancestry and Parisian birthplace also helped him forge important connections with New Orleans suppliers. As a result, the extended St. Denis family dominated Natchitoches society, politics, and the Indian trade for the rest of the century.³²

The kinship networks among Indians, Spaniards, and Frenchmen lent to Spain's inability to control Indian affairs as well. François Grappe's journal notes that,

during September 1783, a detachment of militia cavalry from Spanish Natchitoches received orders to rendezvous with Captain Antonio Gil Ibarvo, lieutenant governor of Nacogdoches, for a trip to the Kichai village in Texas. The Kichai, a Wichita people, traditionally lived on the upper Red River in east Texas but, at the invitation of the Caddos, had moved east toward Louisiana and begun exchanging their deer hides with a St. Denis family trader from Louisiana rather than with licensed Spanish traders from Nacogdoches.³³

A detachment of French creoles from Natchitoches, placed under the command of a Spanish officer for an expedition deep into east Texas might seem unusual, but the kinship networks between Natchitoches and Nacogdoches provide the explanation. Etienne Vaugine, the commandant at Natchitoches since the death of de Mézières in 1779, was an outsider and the leader of a growing contingent of New Orleans-based traders in Natchitoches who tried to break the St. Denis family's Indian trade monopoly. Vaugine planned to undermine the St. Denis family monopoly by allying with Gil Ibarvo, his Texas counterpart. Vaugine hoped that sending the Natchitoches militia under the command of Ibarvo would intimidate the Kichai into

abandoning their St. Denis connection and accepting only Spanish traders from Nacogdoches. Vaugine intended to supply the Spanish traders with goods.³⁴

Vaugine played a dangerous game. Most of the members of the militia came from old Natchitoches families. In fact, the captain of the militia cavalry was Louis De Blanc, grandson of St. Denis and head of the St. Denis family's trade network. Despite the power of the St. Denis family and their presence in the militia, Vaugine decided on a bold move against them. He arrested De Blanc and detached the cavalry militia under the immediate command of Coronet Jean Jacques David, one of Vaugine's own men from New Orleans and an outsider in Natchitoches. Vaugine still had to rely upon some insiders, and he named François Grappe second in command. Grappe represented the most important person in the detachment because of his familiarity with the indians and his ability to interpret their language. As the mixed-blood son of Alexis Grappe, a trader to the Kadohadacho, and Louise Marguerite Guedon, his mixed-blood wife, François spoke perfect Caddoan, well understood Caddo and Wichita cultures, and had close kinship ties with the Indians. Yet he had also become tied to the St. Denis family through his sister's marriage.³⁵

The detachment left Natchitoches on September 14, 1783, to rendezvous with Gil Ibarvo. Coronet David turned command over to the elder Spaniard, and they departed on the road to the Kichai village. Yet even outside the environs of Natchitoches, the St. Denis family connections proved inescapable. The militia passed through the ranches of several St. Denis family members and on the evening of September 16 arrived at the ranch of Paul Bouet Laffitte. In 1770, Laffitte had married Madeleine Grappe, the daughter of Alexis Grappe and Louise Marguerite Guedon, making him the brother-in-law of François Grappe. In 1781 Madeleine had died, and Laffitte then married one of St. Denis's granddaughters. Laffitte's ranch, located on the road from Texas to Natchitoches, made an ideal spot for trade. To take advantage of this, Laffitte formed a trading partnership with Louis De Blanc, his cousin-in-law and the grandson of St. Denis. Laffitte traded with the Kichai, and Spanish officials wanted to stop him.³⁶

Shortly after the militia left Laffitte's ranch, tragedy struck. A kick from a horse killed Coronet David, making François Grappe the highest ranking officer of the Natchitoches detachment. The expedition continued on, crossed into Texas and arrived at the Kichai village on the

evening of September 19. The next morning, Gil Ibarvo began his parley with Kichai Chief Nicotaouenan. Gil Ibarvo asked the chief why the Kichai took their deerskins to Laffitte instead of to Nacogdoches. The chief's reply embodies the essence of kinship obligation. He answered that Laffitte traded fairly with them. When they visited Laffitte's house they ate as much as they wished. Laffitte, he said, always treated them well and provided them with goods even when merchandise proved in short supply. Gil Ibarvo responded to the chief by explaining that Spain ordered his people not trade with Laffitte. The Spaniard warned that soldiers would arrest Laffitte or any other French Louisianan found in the village. From this point forward, the Kichai would have a Spanish trader from Nacogdoches to exchange their deerskins.³⁷

The Kichai laughed, informing Ibarvo that they had always traded with the French and would continue to do so. In fact, they would fight to support the traders and would never do the French any harm. The Indians adamantly refused to go to Nacogdoches and insisted on continuing to welcome French creole traders from Natchitoches to the village. Angered by the tone, Ibarvo lost his temper. He told the Kichai that the land belonged to the Spanish in Texas and

that all the land west of the Red River fell under his jurisdiction. Insulted, one of the Kichai warriors grabbed a handful of dirt and threw it at the Spaniard saying that, since the land was his, he could take it with him."³⁸

Enraged, and trying to establish his authority, Ibarvo bellowed out that he had become the great chief. Grappe recorded that the Kichai chief replied that the real chief for them was the chief with the big leg (the late St. Denis). He first opened the trails in all their nations and he had made the peace. St. Denis, he continued, had provided all manner of help to them, and although he had died, he had left one of his descendants. They regarded him as their great chief, and that they would look the same way upon all his descendants. As a final gesture, the chief took a gold medal given to him by the Spanish from around his neck and tossed it to Ibarvo, who finally relented. He told the chief that if the Kichai would exchange their hides at Nacogdoches he would give them ten musketballs per hide. Again the Kichai refused. The problem lay not with the fairness of the trade, but with the obligations of kinship. Seeing the futility of continuing, Ibarvo left the village, leaving Grappe and the Natchitoches detachment there. According to Grappe, after Ibarvo's departed the

Kichai chief told him that "his gesture of throwing the medal was not directed at us [the French creoles from Natchitoches], that we had nothing to do with all this. That it was only directed to this man who said that all the land was his. ...we shouldn't be angered by that, and to show him that we were not angry, we had to spend with them the rest of the day."³⁹

The essence of family and kinship reflected in this encounter provides a glimpse of the personal loyalties that existed among the people of the borderland. In this instance, Laffitte upheld the obligations of kinship that the Kichais expected. He paid them more for their hides. He proved a generous host, and, as Nicotaouenanan pointed out, he supplied them with goods even when merchandise became hard to get. Equally as important, the Kichais saw Laffitte as heir to Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, whom they regarded as their first and most important French kinsman. Indeed, Laffitte became St. Denis's heir through marriage to his grand-daughter. Such familial and kinship connections remained a constant through the eighteenth and into the early nineteenth century. A year or so after the expedition to the Kichai, Spanish Governor Estevan Rodriguez Miró of Louisiana recognized Laffitte's ties with them and

officially granted him their trade concession. About the same time, Commandant Vaugine lost his office, replaced by Louis Carlos de Blanc, grandson of St. Denis.

Interestingly, Spanish officials later removed Gil Ibarvo, on charges of smuggling and dealing in contraband. François Grappe continued to be respected by all, with the Caddos even providing for his sons in their land cession treaty with the United States in 1835.⁴⁰

The heterogeneous population of the Louisiana-Texas borderlands came from all walks of life and represented a relatively fluid society. People intermarried and assimilated into a mixed-blood society much more easily than those subjected to the stricter racial and class hierarchies imposed in more metropolitan areas. Those who settled the borderlands adapted themselves to their new social environment, modifying traditional values to suit frontier conditions. The further one moved from metropolitan centers, the less hierarchical society became. Within the Louisiana-Texas borderlands, native peoples and Europeans cooperated, intermarried, and developed their own unique and independent society. Through kinship, both real and fictive, they supported each other, provided assistance, conducted business, and developed ties of

loyalty that superseded the concerns of politics and statecraft, and that easily crossed the invisible lines of empire.

Notes

¹ Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729-1803: Abstracts of the Catholic Church Registers of the French and Spanish Post of St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches in Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1977), 4, Entry No. 8 (hereafter abbreviated "NACCR"). Lt. Joseph Gonzales was among the original soldier-settlers from Mexico who arrived in East Texas with the Marqués de Aguayo and established Presidio Los Adaes in 1721; Letter, Lt. Joseph Gonzales to Gov. Don Manuel de Sandoval, August 29, 1736, Presidio Los Adaes, Archivo General de la Nación, 395, in Mission Dolores Historical Materials Collection, Mission Dolores Visitors Center, San Augustine, Texas, Microfilm, Box 5, 236v., 238, 238v, Photostat; see also, Charles Wilson Hackett, *Pichardo's Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas* (Austin, 1946), III, 488-491; Confesión ("Confession" in a legal proceeding), Lt. Gen. Don Fermín de Ybiricu, June 6, 1737, Presidio Los Adaes, during investigation proceeding against former Governor Sandoval, Archivo General de México, *Historia*, 524, in Catholic Archives of Texas, Austin, Texas, Box 39, Folder 2c, 574, Transcription.

² Jeremy Adleman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 815-16.

³ For an excellent demographic analysis of Texas, see Alicia V. Tjarks, "Comparative Demographic Analysis of Texas, 1777-1793" in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* LXXVII: 3, Jan 1974.

⁴ The original Spanish censuses for Nacogdoches are found in the Bexar Archives, Census for Nacogdoches, 1792, B.A., December 31, 1792, Census for Nacogdoches, 1796, B.A., December 31, 1796, Census for Nacogdoches, 1799, B.A., December 31, 1799, Census for Nacogdoches, 1804, B.A., January 1, 1804, Census for Nacogdoches, 1809, B.A., May 31, 1809.

Most of the early censuses included head of family's name, sex, age, occupation, nationality, place of birth, marital status, spouse's name, nationality, place of birth, number of children, and number and names of male and female slaves. The census for 1809 also includes the families' possessions, specifically land, homes, and livestock and explains the means by which they acquired them.

⁵ Census records for Nacogdoches are found in the Béxar Archives.

⁶ Census of San Antonio de Valero, Dec. 31, 1797, Béxar Archives; George W. Smythe, quoted in R. B. Blake, "Aboriginal Nacogdoches," R. B. Blake Collection, XXVII, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

⁷ Census of Nacogdoches, May 31, 1809, Béxar Archives.

⁸ Vivian C. Fisher and W. Michael Mathes, eds., *Apostolic Chronicle of Juan Domingo Arricivita: The Franciscan Mission Frontier in the Eighteenth Century in Arizona, Texas, and the Californias*, with George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, trans., 2 vols. (Berkeley, 1996), 139-140, 289; François Derbanne, "Report of the Post of Natchitoches," in Katherine Bridges and Winston De Ville, eds. and trans., "Natchitoches and the Trail to the Rio Grande: Two Early Eighteenth-Century Accounts, By the Sieur Derbanne," *Louisiana History*, 8 (Summer 1967): 256; Informe, Governor Almazán to Viceroy Marqués de Casfuerte, March 24, 1724, Presidio San Antonio de Bexar, ASFG, Box 20251, 10: 111; Transcription, "los Religiosos han ocurrido á administrarles los Santos Sacramentos, y decir les misa algunos días festivos, cuio consuelo han apreciado mucho los Franceses por no tener Ministro Eclesiastia." The Roman Catholic Church did not directly serve Louisiana until after the French Crown took control of the colony away from the Company of the West in 1731, and a Jesuit priest named Father Vitry arrived in Natchitoches three years later; see Helen Sophie Burton, "Family and Economy in Frontier Louisiana: Colonial Natchitoches, 1714-1803 (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Christian University, 2002), 32-33, who adds that the Louisiana colony had always served French commercial interests over evangelization throughout the colonial period.

⁹ Fray Gaspar Jose De Solis, "Diary of a Visit of Inspection of the Texas Missions, 1767-1768," Margaret Kenney Kress, trans. in the R. B. Blake Research Collection, XXXVI, 231-2, compiled in the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas, Austin. See also Charles Wilson Hackett, ed., *Pichardo's Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1931 - 1946) 1: 186-7. Pichardo quotes Solis' *Historia de la Conquista de Mexico, Poblacion y Progresos de la America Septentrional Conocida por el Nombre de Nueva Espana*, published in 2 volumes, Madrid, 1783, in which

Solis notes that "There are no Indians assembled at the mission proper because, although there are many of them, they do not wish to congregate, and had rather go to the presidio rather than to the mission." See also "1728 Report of Pedro de Rivera: Los Adaes," in Morfi, *History of Texas*, 244-5 (178 [278]); Casteñeda, *Our Catholic Heritage: The Mission Era*, 221, 225; Antonio de Solis [y Rivadeneyra], *Historia de la Conquista de Mexico, Poblacion y Progresos de la America Septentrional, Conocida por el Nombre de Nueva Espana*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1783), quoted in Pichardo, *Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas*, Charles Wilson Hackett, ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1931-46), 2: 186-7. See also "The Solis Diary of 1767," Peter P. Forrestal, trans., Paul J. Foik, ed., *Preliminary Studies of the Texas Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. VI, March, 1931; Carlos E. Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, 3, 127.

¹⁰ Forrestal, trans., "The Solis Diary of 1767," in *Preliminary Studies of the Texas Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 1, No. VI (March, 1931). See also Pichardo, *Pichardo's Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas*, 1: 186-7. In Hermenegildo de Villaplana's *Potentosa Vida del Americano Septentrional Apostol*, el V. P. Fr. Antonio Margil de Jesus, records 103 baptisms for the mission, 256 baptisms, 64 marriages and 116 burials for the presidio, and 20 baptisms, 13 marriages and 15 burials in Natchitoches. See also Roger Baudier, *The Catholic Church in Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1939) [reprinted in 1972 by the Louisiana Library Association, Public Library Section], 35; Lawrence Kinnaird, "Spanish Treaties with Indian Tribes" in *Western Historical Quarterly*, 10: 39-48. Kinnaird comments that "the tribes had long been in contact with French traders, were fairly well armed, and not amenable to being "brought to the knowledge of the true religion."

¹¹ Baptism, Louise Lage, 1730, Natchitoches, born the 29th of same month, "Pierre Campo" missionary from the Adailles [Adaes] officiating, in Mills, *NACCR*, 64, entry no. 522. Confesión, Lieutenant General Ybiricu, June 6, 1737, Presidio Los Adaes, *AGM - Historia*, vol. 524, in CAT, Box 39, Folder 2c, 551-554, Transcription. Certification, Fray Pedro Ramírez de Arellano, October 6, 1751, Mission Los Adaes, investigation of Caddo Indian visit at Mission Nacogdoches and French movements in Louisiana, Béxar Archives, quoted also in Hackett, *Pichardo's Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas*, IV, 14-15; Report,

Governor don Jacinto de Barrios y Jáuregui to the viceroy, Marqués de Revilla Gigedo, Nov. 8, 1751, Presidio Los Adaes, in Hackett, *ibid.*, 15-17.

¹² Baptism, Eulalie Marie Anne De Soto, Dec. 22, 1763, legitimate daughter of Manuel de Soto and Maria de Niebas [Marie des Nieges de St. Denis], Godparents: Governor Angel de Marthos y Navarreti and Madama Borme, entered in Latin by Fr. Ygnacio Fran.co Laba of Los Adaes, *NACCR*, 61, Entry No. 490.

¹³ Baptism, Marie Jeanne Madere, September 22, 1749, Natchitoches, *NACCR*, 38-39, Entry No. 308; Baptism, Catherine Marie Castro, February 6, 1756, legitimate daughter of Francois Castro and Marie Sta. Croix, Spaniards, Godparents: Cesar de Blanc, Chevalier and commandant, and Marie Dolor de St. Denis de Blanc, *NACCR*, 75-76, Entry No. 618.

¹⁴ Marriage, April 8, 1736, Natchitoches, "after publication of bans," Jean Baptiste D'Herbanne of this parish, aged 25, son of deceased Francois D'Herbanne and of Jeanne de la Grande Terre, habitants of this parish, and Victoire Marguerite Gonzales of the Spanish post of Adays, 15 years, daughter of Messire Joseph Gonzales, general of the post, and Dame Marie Gertrude de la Cerda, Witnesses: Pierre Marets de la Tour and Jacques de la Chaise, *NACCR*, 4-5, Entry No. 13. Louis R. Nardini, *My Historic Natchitoches, Louisiana and Its Environment: A History of Natchitoches, Louisiana and the Neutral Strip area of the State of Louisiana and its Inhabitants* (Natchitoches, 1963), 61, 68, Nardini claims that despite any misgivings Lieutenant Gonzales might have had with his own daughter's elopement, he profited from her marriage to Jean Baptiste Derbanne, having presented his son-in-law sometime in 1740 or 1741 with a sack of gold coins with instructions these were for her daughter's dowry. Lieutenant Gonzales, Nardini said, traveled to Natchitoches for the baptism of his grandchild.

¹⁵ For example, see Mills, *NACCR*, 7, Entry No. 38, and 9-10, Entry No. 60, for Jacques de la Chaise's kinship ties with St. Denis and his wife, Manuela Sánchez y Navarro. Letter, Lt. Joseph Gonzales to Governor Sandoval, Presidio Los Adaes, AGN - *Historia*, vol. 395, in MDHMC, Mf, Box 5, 236v., 238, 238v.; see also the full text of Lieutenant Gonzales' letter translated in Hackett, *Pichardo's Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas*, III, 488-491; see also Father Francisco Vallejo's similar version of the

events in his own letter to the governor dated that same day of August 29th, in Hackett, *ibid.*, 484-485. The controversy surrounding the Derbanne-Gonzales wedding also appears in Ross Phares, *Cavalier in the Wilderness: The Story of the Explorer and Trader Louis Juchereau de St. Denis* (Baton Rouge, 1952), 224-225, which states that the soldiers Lieutenant Gonzales dispatched toward French Natchitoches "found no trace of the eloping couple."

¹⁶ Marriage, July 17, 1736, Natchitoches, after publication of bans, Francois LeMoine, soldier, dit La Vidette, age 40, son of Francois LeMoine and Marguerite Gentin of the town of Amboise, diocese of Tours, and Jeanne Victoria Garcie, previously of the Spanish post of Adays, living two years in this parish, aged 13, daughter of Pierre Garcie, soldier, and of Marie Joseph Condee, Witness: Pierre Marets de la Tour, officer of Mr. Tourangeau, Claud Bertrand dit Dauphine, and Pierre Alorges, both sergeants, *NACCR*, 4, Entry No. 8. On the background of the Le Moyne family, see Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry in North America*, 216-217; and Folmer, "Report on Louis de San Denis' Intended Raid on San Antonio," 86, note 10.

¹⁷ Marriage, June 2, 1754, Natchitoches, after publication of two bans and dispensation of third, Manuel Antoine Bermudes, a native of St. Jean [San Juan] Dorrion, archbishopric of St. Jacques [Santiago] de Gritierce, Kingdom of Spain, legitimate son of Dominique Bermudes and of Marie Joseph de Soto, and Marie des Neges de St. Denis, native of this parish, legitimate daughter of deceased Louis Jucherot de St. Denis, chevalier and commandant of this post during his life, and Dame Manuel Sanchez Navarre, widow of deceased St. Denis; Consent given by the Spanish Missionary, Father Pierre [Pedro], who was sick and could not participate in the ceremony; Father Eustahce, officiating, also signed: Fr. Pedro Ramirez, No other witnesses named, *NACCR*, 90, Entry No. 731. For example of their commercial dealings, see De Ville, *Natchitoches Documents*, 9, 11, 16, 27, and 42: Land donation, Manuel [De] Soto to Widow Catin, Negress, November 12, 1759; Land sale, Sr. Don Manuel [de Soto] to Sr. Prudhomme, December 29, 1759; Sale, Negro, Sr. Don Manuel Soto to Sr. Borme, March 4, 1760; Power of Attorney, Mr. St. Denis to Mr. Don Manuel Soto, July 14, 1763; Return of a Negro by Sr. Don Manuel Soto at the request of Sr. Roble, June 15, 1767; Sale of Three Slaves by Dame Marie De St. Denis Soto,

December 17, 1772; Sale of four young mulatto slaves by Dame Marie De St. Denis, wife of Don Manuel Soto, to Pierre Metoyer, March 21, 1776.

¹⁸ Burial, Louis Jucherot [sic] de St. Denis, June 12, 1744, Natchitoches, aged 70 years, Chevalier of St. Louis, commandant of the Fort of Jean Baptiste, who died on the eleventh of the same month, witnesses: Juero Bonet [Justo Boneo y Morales, governor of Texas] , Father Francisco Vallejo, and Verchus de Terrepuuy, *NACCR*, 48, Entry No. 369; see also, Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century*, 41, and Lemée, "Tios and Tantes: Familial and Political Relationships at Natchitoches and the Spanish Colonial Frontier," 354. Burial, Cesaire DeBlanc, April 19, 1763, Natchitoches, aged eighty years or about, commandant of the royal fort of Natchitoches, who died the previous evening, witnesses: LeCour, Pain, and De Mézières, *NACCR*, 61, Entry No. 493. Burial, Rene Dubos, January 30, 1745, Natchitoches, a habitant of this parish, in the parish cemetery by a Spanish priest during Father Eustache's absence, *NACCR*, 49, Entry No. 381; Burial, Marie Louise Laberry, October 22, 1763, Natchitoches, born September 22nd, legitimate daughter of Jean Baptiste Laberry, burial by Spanish priest, *NACCR*, 61, Entry No. 494.

¹⁹ Hiram F. Gregory, "Los Adaes: The Archaeology of an Ethnic Enclave" in *Historical Archaeology of the Eastern United States: Papers of the R. J. Russell Symposium* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 53-7. See also Odie B. Faulk, *The Last Years of Spanish Texas, 1778 - 1821* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964), 45. Faulk notes that, because of the difficult, dangerous and unrewarding life of officers and men on the Spanish frontier of Texas, "most of the troops had to be enlisted in the area [of the presidio] itself." It must be remembered that, once an Indian joined a presidial garrison, he became a "Spanish" soldier, with rights to vote and own property under Spanish law. A distinct pattern of racial "migration" becomes clear in Texas, where the ethnicity shown in official documents reveals more about social status than about genetics. For a complete discussion of this see Alicia V. Tjarks, "Comparative Demographic Analysis of Texas, 1777 - 1793" in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXXVII, 3, (Jan. 1974).

²⁰ Herbert Eugene Bolton, *Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century*, (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), 113.

²¹ Hiram F. Gregory and James McCorkle, *Los Adaes: Historical and Archaeological Background*, (Natchitoches: Northwestern State University, 1980-1981), 88-9. See also Odie B. Faulk, *The Last Years of Spanish Texas, 1778 - 1821* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964), 45. Faulk makes particular note of the fact that, because of conditions on the Texas frontier, presidial reports confirm that "most of the troops had to be enlisted in the area itself...."; Louis R. Nardini, Unpublished Notes, Vol. I, in the private collection of Louis Nardini, Jr.. Nardini relates an incident that clearly illustrates the interaction of the Native American, Spanish and French communities. In 1719, Jacques Guedon, a Lieutenant of militia at Natchitoches, married an Indian girl, who was christened Marie Anne Therese de La Grand Terre. They were married at the presidio chapel at Los Adaes by one of the Spanish priests attached to the Adais Mission. (Nardini found the original documentation of this wedding in the Natchitoches Historic Records Collection. The document is now missing from that collection.)

²² Petition of José Tomás Blas to the Governor of Texas, September 5, 1793, Béxar Archives.

²³ Elizabeth Shown Mills, ed, comp., trans., "1726 Census of Natchitoches," *Natchitoches Colonials: Censuses, Military Rolls, and Tax Lists, 1722-1803*, (Chicago: Adams Press, 1981), 3-4; Helen Sophie Burton, "Family and Economy in Frontier Louisiana: Colonial Natchitoches, 1714-1803," diss., Texas Christian University, December 2002, 54-8.

²⁴ Léeme, "Tios and Tantes," 342.

²⁵ Marriage of François Lemoine and Jeanne Victorie Garcia, July 17, 1736, in Mills, ed., *Natchitoches 1729-1803, Abstracts of the Catholic Church Registers of the French and Spanish Post of St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches in Louisiana*, (New Orleans, Louisiana: Polyanthos Press, 1977), 4; Burial of François Le Moine dit La Vidette Boudin, January 4, 1737, *ibid.*, 17; Marriage of Louis La Malathie and Jeanne Victorine Garcie [sic], April 14, 1738, *ibid.*, 21.; Marriage of Barthelemy Rachal and Marie Françoise Malathie, November 29, 1741, *ibid.*, 26; Marriage Contract of Ignace Anty, August 5, 1763, Natchitoches Parish Church Records, book 1; Marriage of Maturin David and Marie Jeanne Lamathy, March 20, 1768, in Mills, ed., *Natchitoches Abstracts*. 123; Marriage of Jean Baptiste D'Herbanne and Victoire Marguerite Gonzales, April 8, 1736, *ibid.*, 4; Marriage of Louis Rondin and Marie Berard

de la Gace, February 6, 1757, *ibid.*, 92; Marriage of François Langlois dit San Regret and Marie Gregoire de Santa Cruz, May 18, 1758, *ibid.*, 94.

²⁶ Burton, *Family and Economy*, 61-2.

²⁷ John Sibley, "Historical Sketches of the Several Indian Tribes in Louisiana."

²⁸ Talon interrogation, in Weddle, *La Salle*, 231, 235-36, 238-39, 251; Parsons, *Notes on the Caddo*, 54.

²⁹ La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms*, 46-7.

³⁰ Interrogation of François Morvant by Athanase de Mèzières, Natchitoches, May 11, 1770, Document 164, Legajo 110, *PPC*, De Mèzières to Unzaga y Amezaga, May 15, 1770, in Bolton, ed. and trans., *Athanase de Mèzières*, I, 160-63; Report of Athanase de Mèzières, May 11, 1770, Document 642, Book 3, *NPR*.

³¹ De Mèzières's marriage in 1746 to Marie Petronille Feliciane Juchereau de St. Denis was brief because she died in 1748. However, the union produced a daughter, Elizabeth Felicite Nepomuceno de Mèzières. Though de Mèzières remarried, his first marriage and the child of that marriage kept him tied to the St. Denis family, and he remained part of this large, influential old Canadian family in northwest Louisiana. Bolton, ed., *Athanase de Mèzières*, I, 83-84.

³² John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 343-46;

Aubra Lane Lee, "Furs, Paint, and Pelts: An Examination of Natchitoches-Based Indian Trade in the Spanish Period, 1766-1791" (M.A. thesis, Northwestern State University, 1990), 11-12.

³³ Journal of François Grappe, Natchitoches, September 24, 1783, Document 586, Legajo 196, *PPC*. A complete translation of this journal has been published. See David La Vere and Katia Campbell, eds. and trans., "An Expedition to the Kichai: The Journal of François Grappe, September 24, 1783," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* XCVI (July 1994), 59-78. See also Louis DeBlanc to Estevan Miró, December 9, 1783, Document 667, Legajo 196, *PPC*.

³⁴ Statement of Vaugine, February 23, 1781, Document 643, Legajo 194, *PPC*; Vaugine to Piernas, September 20, 1781, Document 732, Legajo 194, *PPC*; De Blanc to the Governor, September 22, 1781, Document 780, Legajo 194, *PPC*; Teodoro De Croix to Vaugine, March 15, 1783, Document 251, Legajo 2360, *PPC*; Statement of Vaugine, April 1785, Document 796, Legajo 198A, *PPC*; Domingo Cabello to Miró, October 24, 1785, Document 91, Legajo 2360, *PPC*; Miro to

Pedro Rousseau, May 6, 1786, Document 411, Legajo 4, *PPC*; and Lee, "Fusils, Paint, and Pelts," 12, 74-5.

³⁵ Vaugine to Piernas, September 20, 1781, Document 732, Legajo 194, *PPC*; De Blanc to Etienne Miró, October 2, 1783, Document 607, Legajo 196, *PPC*; Lee, "Francois Grappe and the Caddo Land Cession," 53-9; La Vere and Campbell, eds. and trans, "Expedition to the Kichai," 63-8.

³⁶ La Vere and Campbell, eds. and trans., "Expedition to the Kichai," 72, n34 and 73; Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729-1803*, Documents 1001 and 1251; Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials*, 27, 42, 61.

³⁷ La Vere and Campbell, eds. and trans., "Expedition to the Kichai," 74-75. 41.

³⁸ Ibid, 75.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Domingo Cabello to Jose Antonio Rengel, September 20, 1735, Béxar Archives; Jackson, *Los Mesteños*, 389-99; Documents Relating to the negotiation of the Treaty of July 1, 1835, with the Caddo Indians, Ratified Treaty No 197, Ratified Treaties, 1833-1837, Documents Relating to the Negotiation of Ratified and Unratified Treaties with Various Tribes of Indians, 1801-1869, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75 (National Archives, Washington), Microfilm, Reel 3.

Chapter 4

"It must be a buffer territory:" Changing Flags

José Joaquín Ugarte, Commandant of the District of Nacogdoches, stared incredulously at the order from Commandant General Nemesio Salcedo that placed him under arrest. Only two months earlier, Ugarte had reported with satisfaction that he had attended the transfer of Natchitoches from Spanish to American control, and that he had later met with the American Commander, Captain Edward Turner, who had reassured him that the United States wanted peaceful relations with Spain. Now, Ugarte received an angry letter from the Commandant General relieving him of his command.

On April 24, 1804, Captain Edward Turner of the United States Army accepted the transfer of Natchitoches to American control. As commander of the closest Spanish post to Louisiana, Ugarte felt an obligation to maintain good relations with the Americans. To that end he traveled to Natchitoches for the transfer ceremony. Later he met privately with Captain Turner, who also expressed his wishes for peaceful coexistence. Upon returning to Nacogdoches Ugarte reported his trip to Governor Elguezabal

and the governor forwarded the information to Commandant General Salcedo. Contrary to what both Ugarte and the Governor expected, Salcedo became furious that a Spanish official from Texas had attended the ceremony acknowledging United States' control of Louisiana. He ordered the Nacogdoches Commandant removed from command and placed under arrest. In his letter to the Governor, Salcedo directed Texas' Governor Elguezabal to instruct Spanish officials in Texas to maintain good relations with the Americans, but to refrain from conducting any official communication with them. With an obvious concern for the weakness of Spain's military force in Texas, the Commandant General ordered Ugarte, as part of his last official report, to give an account of the number of American troops he had seen at Natchitoches, including the number of cavalry and infantry, whether the force consisted of regulars or militia, and above all to identify the caliber of the twelve American artillery pieces he had seen at Natchitoches.¹

For the people of the borderlands, this drama began several months earlier. In January 1804, Ugarte learned of Louisiana's change in ownership. He reported to his superior, Provincial Governor Juan Bautista Elguezabal,

that an American deserter interviewed in Nacogdoches declared that the Spanish turned New Orleans over to the French on the 30th of November, 1803. The French, the deserter then claimed, transferred the city to the Americans on December 15. This testimony appears to be the first information to reach officials in Texas that Spain no longer controlled Louisiana.²

In February, Ugarte received more news from Natchez. A group of Americans, the source declared, had entered Texas with the intention of inciting the Indians of that province to revolt against the Spanish. Confused and concerned about the political change that rendered Texas a border province no longer buffered by Louisiana and lacking adequate defenses, Ugarte wondered how he could effectively defend the entire District of Nacogdoches from an Indian uprising with only thirty-two men. On February 9, he contacted the governor for instructions. While awaiting a response two soldiers returned from patrol with another American deserter in custody, who reported that American troops had taken possession of Louisiana as far west as Rapides (present-day Alexandria), thus placing a force of unknown size within a few days' march of Texas.³

Almost a month after his initial report, Commandant

Ugarte received instructions from the governor to construct a stockade around Nacogdoches in order to defend it from possible attacks by either the Indians or the Americans. From this order, it seems obvious that the governor had never visited the frontier village. Nacogdoches, unlike the settlements at San Antonio de Béxar and La Bahía, began as an unauthorized civil settlement. As such, it had no presidio, and, indeed, no city plan. Ugarte attempted as tactfully as possible to explain the impossibility of the governor's order. He advised Elguezabal that the residents of Nacogdoches had their homes scattered about the area, and some had ranches miles distant from the town. His final comment expressed his deep concern over his inability to protect either the border or Nacogdoches. "The people [of the district] are very poor and the greater part of them have no weapons. Consequently, they can render but little help in the defense of their homes." In mid-March Ugarte received intelligence from his counterpart, Don Felix Trudeauaux, Spanish Commandant at Natchitoches, Louisiana, informing him that Trudeauaux had orders to turn his post over to U.S. Army Captain Edward Turner and a garrison of fifty soldiers already in route to take possession of the town.⁴

Four months after he reported the rumors of the transfer of Louisiana to the Americans, Ugarte finally received confirmation from Governor Elguezabal of the retrocession of Louisiana from Spain to France. Despite the Governor's failure to mention the Americans, an omission that perplexed Ugarte, the commandant had indisputable proof of the U.S. presence on the border. More deserters from the American army had drifted into Nacogdoches, and their numbers continued to increase. Ugarte asked the governor for instructions in dealing with them. Elguezabal directed him to allow the fugitives to remain in Texas as long as they caused no trouble, but to keep them under close surveillance in case they might be spies bent on overthrowing His Catholic Majesty's government.⁵

Within a few weeks, Commandant General of the Internal Provinces Nemesio Salcedo y Salcedo provided Governor Elguezabal with confirmation of Ugarte's information and made Spain's position regarding the borders of Louisiana and Texas quite clear. Salcedo instructed Elguezabal "not to permit any person whatever to come near our frontiers for the purpose of marking the limits of Louisiana" and to stop any attempt by Americans to cross the accepted border.

Elguezabal responded by issuing instructions to the commandant of Nacogdoches to observe closely the American presence across the Sabine. Confirming the confusion and concern of Spanish officials in Texas, the governor added a final note requiring Ugarte to send any information he received from Spanish officials in Louisiana on to San Antonio "without delay."⁶

Flags had changed over Louisiana before, but United States' control of the vast Louisiana territory destabilized the borderlands as nothing else had. Although the French from time to time dreamed of wresting Northern Mexico from the Spanish, they never possessed the manpower to affect such a coup. Spain had reacted with paranoia about every rumored French plot and incursion without serious justification. The United States, by comparison, posed a more formidable threat, and the Spanish understood the danger. American President Thomas Jefferson insisted that Texas fell within the Louisiana Purchase, and American citizens quickly took up the call for Spain to surrender the land east of the Rio Grande.

The difficulty for Spanish Texas lay in its status during the Spanish occupation of Louisiana. The Treaty of Paris of 1763 altered the rivalry for North America from a

struggle between France, Spain, and England to a two-way contest eliminating France from continental North America, and moving the Spanish borderlands eastward from Los Adaes, which had guarded the Louisiana-Texas frontier for half a century, to the Mississippi River where the Spaniards encountered British interests pushing their own frontier westward. A small annoyance from the French on the Red River became a mortal danger from the English on the Mississippi, hurling receding Spanish power in North America against the growing threat of British dominance.

After defeat in the Seven Years' War, Spain reorganized her empire in the Americas to defend Spanish possessions against British encroachments and strengthen the viceroyalty of New Spain against a potential conflict. Spain occupied Louisiana, erected forts, and imposing a new policy toward the native tribes aimed at better control of the contraband trade in firearms; all with the avowed purpose of protecting both His Catholic Majesty's territory and the wealth of Mexico. Spain quickly learned that England posed a far greater threat than France. More importantly England's successor, the United States, proved still worse. With the waning of Spanish power the United States took advantage of the long period of warfare

involving European nations and their American colonies, ultimately becoming a stronger power.⁷

For the people of the borderlands, U.S. control of Louisiana set in motion a series of changes that restricted the independence that had become a way of life. With tensions along the border, both the Spanish and American governments began to play a more active role in the region, expanding their military presence and attempting to impose stricter controls on the land and its people. As an internal province buffered by Spanish control of Louisiana, and lacking the resources of territories further west and south, Texas held a low priority in Mexico City. Despite the presence of presidios at La Bahía and Béxar, troop strength remained limited to only the few soldiers required to respond to Indian attacks, act as a constabulary, and curtail smuggling. With such limited defensive capabilities, the Spanish clearly distrusted any American presence in or near the border of Texas. More importantly, the unexpected U.S. occupation of Louisiana, coupled with the absence of communication from government sources in Spain, left officials in Texas unprepared to respond to the new and potentially dangerous situation along the border. Governor Elguezabal's directive that the commandant at

Nacogdoches forward any communication he might receive from Spanish officials in Louisiana clearly indicates that neither he nor the Commandant General felt comfortable acting on the limited information they possessed.

Spanish officials perceived a clear threat to the sparsely populated and lightly defended province of Texas—a perception exacerbated by lack of information. They had reason to be concerned. With American troops on the western border of Louisiana, Texas stood open to invasion. In an attempt to create a defensive buffer, the Spanish developed and implemented a reorganization plan for Texas, separating the Internal Provinces into Eastern and Western Provinces, (with Texas and Coahuila forming the Eastern jurisdiction), and incorporating a plan to increase the population of the Province of Texas "by means of military colonists and militia, as it must be a buffer territory." In May 1804, Governor Elguezabal reported only five serviceable cannon in the province of Texas. To complicate matters, Elguezabal found that his armed forces had only one veteran artilleryman; a one-armed, nearly deaf gunner. In an effort to place Texas' defenses in order, he requested additional artillery and trained artillerymen.⁸

Fears and misconceptions about the border did not rest

exclusively with the Spanish. The acquisition of Louisiana offered a quandary that the fledgling United States government had never before dealt with—a massive territory with a substantial non-Anglo European population. Statesmen such as Jefferson, Adams and Monroe understood the lesson of the American Revolution; that a population might or might not accede to political decisions made in the distant capitals. As a result, threats from both domestic and foreign intrigues became interconnected to a federal system still struggling to establish itself, and control of Louisiana became, for the United States, a volatile test of its ability to build a nation.

As the commander at Natchitoches, Captain Edward Turner certainly understood the potential for insurrection among the local population, the Indians, and slaves. He received frequent rumors of Spanish plans to incite the local Indian tribes to war against the Americans. In September 1804, he forwarded to Territorial Governor William C. C. Claiborne the deposition of William Graham, a Coushatta Indian, who testified under oath that Spaniards had encouraged the tribes in East Texas to make war on the United States. Equally concerned, the Governor contacted the Marquis de Casa Calvo, Madrid's representative in New

Orleans, accusing Spanish subjects of plotting "to alienate the affections of certain Indian Tribes" from the United States. Claiborne warned Casa Calvo that, while he felt Spanish officials had not authorized these actions, "his Catholic Majesty would hear with regret, that any of his Subjects Should be instrumental in involving a neighboring and friendly power in the horrors of Savage Warfare."

Claiborne suggested strongly that the Marquis impress upon Spanish officials of Texas "the propriety of restraining the People . . . from all acts of aggression or injury towards the Citizens of the U.S." While Claiborne knew that the Marquis held no authority over affairs in Texas, he felt sure that his lightly veiled threat would reach the proper officials.⁹

During October 1804, Claiborne communicated with both Secretary of State James Madison and Captain Turner. He advised Madison that maintaining peaceful relations with the Spanish and Indians on the Texas frontier would require patience and caution. The governor promised to do his best, but added, "If the Spanish authorities are unfriendly disposed, I feel some troubles may ensue." He instructed Captain Turner not to provoke the Spanish by acts of aggression against their citizens. Addressing his concern

about the Indians, Claiborne asked Turner to do everything in his power to keep the peace.¹⁰

Clearly both the United States and Spanish Texas feared an Indian uprising. Tensions grew as each accused the other of instigating a crisis. Yet accusations from both sides' seem groundless. While each endeavored to maintain the good will of the tribes, sending emissaries to treat with them, their visits focused on ensuring continued friendship rather than on inciting hostility.

While peace between the native tribes and Europeans remained, Captain Turner faced an already existing potential for unrest between the Caddo and eastern tribes forced west by the expansion of British and American settlement. During 1792, the Adaes had skirmished with the Choctaw, who encroached on the lands of several local tribes. Luis de Blanc reported to Louisiana's Governor Carondelet that the Choctaw, temporarily at peace with the Caddo, had spent the winter in the district. But when the Choctaw entered the territory of the Adaes and their allies, the Ais, fighting occurred. In July and August, de Blanc reported that war had broken out between "the Ayches and Adayes Indians of the Province of Texas" and the Choctaw. Another confirmation of hostilities reached the

Governor in a letter from Manuel Gayoso de Lemos, who wrote from Natchez that he had "just learned, through unofficial sources, that the Adaes Indians and all their neighbors are assembling, and getting ready to make war on the Choctaws." With more displaced tribes moving west, the possibility of unrest remained strong.¹¹

Another point of friction along the border involved runaway slaves. By Euro-American standards, birth and ancestry created national communities largely contingent on racial supremacy. For Anglo-Americans, non-Europeans represented quasi-aliens who could be excluded from the national community on the basis of race. In Louisiana, Americans found a more complicated scenario. A variety of factors created a different racial order within which individuals of mixed heritage, slaves and free people of color functioned according to their own models of social organization.

Spanish slavery in Louisiana proved no less cruel than it had under the French. Yet unlike the United States, where political, social, and even religious fundamentals focused on creating a clear line of demarcation between white citizens and non-whites, the traditional caste system of the borderlands, supported by legal and cultural

traditions, allowed people of European, African, and Native American ancestry different forms equality beneath imperial leadership.¹²

Nonwhites and people of mixed-race ancestry secured opportunities in Louisiana unparalleled in the United States. Society recognized them as people, each with a soul, and as such they could sue for and purchase their own freedom, even without their masters' consent. These liberal manumission laws created the largest and most prosperous free black population in slave-holding North America. Free people of color owned property (including slaves), established contacts with white businessmen, and participated in social activities open to all free people.¹³

Conditions in Louisiana's borderlands had emerged from a particular set of frontier conditions, fuelling a fluid social context in which people of European, African, and Native American ancestry interacted in ways impossible elsewhere. Differences separating French and Spanish racial policies from Anglo-American codes only exacerbated Louisiana's differences as race responded to differing visions of nationhood. The demand for equality that proved so advantageous to American citizens also created new

systems of oppression that had no parallel in the borderlands.

As Louisiana's economy increasingly gave way to plantation agriculture, news of the French Revolution and of the racial revolt in the Caribbean provided many slaves common cause to consider acting against increasingly restrictive practices. In 1795, slaves in Pointe Coupee Parish, a plantation region on the west bank of the Mississippi not far from Baton Rouge, planned a revolt, the details of which remain elusive. White citizens and Spanish officials effectively crushed the conspiracy, but the incident served notice that slaves would employ the limited means at their disposal to realize their political goals. Combined with the French revolution, with its philosophical commitment of equality, and the revolt of slaves and free people of color that it inspired in the Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue, the Pointe Coupee incident motivated whites and many free people of color in Louisiana to remain steadfast in their support of slavery, whether because they did not want to lose their own human property, or because they feared a violent revolt, or because they recognized that condemning insurrectionary slaves provided an ideal means to reinforce linkages with white Louisianians.¹⁴

The viceroy in Mexico City further exacerbated the anxiety of slaveholders by issuing a proclamation offering sanctuary to slaves who escaped from American territory. As Americans moved into Louisiana, slaves learned about this protection, and the incidents of slave escapes took on international relevance. In October 1804, Governor Claiborne informed the Marquis de Casa Calvo that nine slaves escaped from Natchitoches to Nacogdoches, and that local officials discovered a plot by others "to desert and repair to that Post in full expectation of receiving protection from the Spanish Government." American officials arrested the conspirators who remained in Natchitoches, but news of the nine who escaped quickly spread throughout the slave community. The ever-present specter of slave rebellion lurked in the shadows of southern slaveholders' nightmares, and nothing else ignited such passion. In an incensed tone Claiborne issued another warning directly to the commandant at Nacogdoches. If he or any other Spanish official there offered protection "to a single slave," Claiborne cautioned, the Spanish could anticipate dire consequences.¹⁵

By November, the slave unrest that began at Natchitoches spread to Pointe Coupee. Having experienced a

slave uprising less than a decade earlier, concerned slaveholders petitioned Claiborne for protection. Claiborne responded by sending Lt. John Cleves Symmes and thirty regular army troops to the district, along with one hundred additional muskets for the militia.¹⁶

Increasing fears of a massive slave revolt during the fall of 1804 prompted Claiborne to write to Casa Calvo again, blaming the Spanish for encouraging insurrection and insisting that officials in Texas discontinue the practice of offering sanctuary to runaways. Concerned that the Americans might use the issue of runaway slaves as a pretext for invading the poorly defended province, the Marquis wrote to officials in Texas. Although he had no authority over them, Casa Calvo hoped that his argument would be persuasive. "I wish to remove every possible motive for complaint that may with any shadow of justice be presented by the United States," he advised Commandant General Salcedo. Both men no doubt clearly understood the implication. In closing, the Marquis suggested that officials in Texas suspend the practice of harboring runaway slaves until Madrid reviewed the tense local situation.¹⁷

By a separate letter, the Marquis took steps to bypass

Salcedo. He instructed the Commandant at Nacogdoches to discontinue the practice of sheltering slaves and return those who escaped to Louisiana "so as to avoid the complaints from the United States. . . ." Although the Marquis clearly overstepped his authority, he believed that the Americans would use any excuse to invade Spanish territory. Following Casa Calvo's instructions, the Commandant of Nacogdoches returned the nine slaves who escaped from Natchitoches, but only with the proviso that they would not receive punishment for their attempted flight to freedom.¹⁸

Near the end of 1804, tensions over the question of runaway slaves decreased, but the following spring Claiborne received a letter from Captain Turner at Natchitoches reporting, to Claiborne's dismay, that Commandant General Salcedo had ordered the arrest of Commandant Ugarte at Nacogdoches. According to Turner, Ugarte's arrest stemmed from his returning the runaway slaves to Natchitoches. Turner further advised Claiborne that Ugarte's successor had orders to continue granting sanctuary to escaping slaves and to refuse any American attempts to recover them.¹⁹

On the first point Turner erred. Ugarte's removal

resulted from his attendance at the ceremony that transferred Natchitoches to the Americans and had nothing to do with the slave issue. Yet regardless of the actual reason for Ugarte's removal, Commandant General Salcedo had no intention of bowing to American dictates that superseded Spanish policy. Claiborne's promise of dire consequences if slaves received sanctuary offended Spanish honor. While the Marquis de Casa Calvo might continue his polite diplomatic dialog with the American governor, the Commandant General would accept no further insults. On the international front, the normal channels of diplomacy also began to break down. Negotiations for the settlement of the border controversy between the United States and Spain faltered. James Monroe, bargaining for the United States, left Madrid with virtually nothing to show for his efforts. Spain refused to accept American terms for a settlement that placed the border of Louisiana at the Rio Grande. In response, officials in Washington City accused the Spanish of "obstinate and unfriendly" actions. Basing their conclusions on reports from Claiborne, Turner, and Dr. John Sibley, the U.S. Indian Agent in Natchitoches, they began to accuse Spain of hostile intentions, expressing concerns about a Spanish troop buildup along the Sabine River.²⁰

Spanish officials in Texas received news of the mounting international tensions though, once again, not through official channels. In November, Samuel Davenport, the licensed Indian Trader for the Spanish District of Nacogdoches, received an extract from a Madrid newspaper dated July 6, 1805, which he immediately forwarded to the governor in San Antonio. The article confirmed deteriorating relations between the governments of the United States and Spain and predicted war as the result. Spain refused to accept American insistence that Texas constituted part of the Louisiana Purchase. Land hungry Americans, the newspaper accused, "are begging for war."²¹

By spring 1805, Governor Claiborne had become more convinced than ever that the Spanish planned to invade Louisiana from Texas. He wrote to Madison that, while he did not know how many troops the Spanish had in the Province of Texas, he felt certain they numbered at least two thousand along the Sabine. In reality, the entire complement of troops in Texas numbered slightly more than two hundred, but Claiborne and other local officials consistently overestimated Spanish numbers. Claiborne again discussed his concerns with Casa Calvo, who responded that he had no knowledge of increased Spanish forces in Texas.

Claiborne remained apprehensive. "I cannot believe that the frequent statements [of Spanish troop increases] to the contrary made to me . . . are without foundation."²²

To calm Claiborne's fears, Captain Turner reiterated that the small Spanish force in east Texas posed no threat. Unlike the Governor, Turner did not believe that the Spanish could field a sizeable force anywhere in Texas. He based his views on his observation that east Texas lacked food and forage sufficient to provide for troops and livestock, arguing instead that "the inhabitants between here and there [San Antonio] do not raise Sufficient Provisions to carry them through half the year. If it were not for the Supplies they get from this District [Natchitoches] they would absolutely starve"

Governor Claiborne did not share Turner's confidence. Although he informed Madison in late November that Spanish actions to return runaway slaves seemed to satisfy the local population, Claiborne persisted in his belief that the Spanish attempts to persuade the Indians to go to war with the Americans continued despite assurances from Turner and Sibley to the contrary.²³

In response to the alleged Spanish threat, the United States strengthened its force at Natchitoches. The Spanish

saw no alternative but to accept the threat of war as imminent. Commandant General Salcedo ordered troops to establish posts east of the Sabine at Bayou Pierre, northwest of Natchitoches, and near the abandoned presidio of Los Adaes. By the winter of 1805, Spanish reinforcements arriving at Nacogdoches brought garrison strength to one hundred and forty men. To counter the perceived threat of Spanish invasion Secretary of War Dearborn ordered Major Moses Porter, who had assumed command at Natchitoches, to send patrols through the country between Natchitoches and the Sabine, which the American government considered U.S. territory, to repel any armed force and "pursue and arrest the invaders." If Porter's force captured Spanish subjects, his orders required him to deliver them to the commandant at Nacogdoches as long as he received assurances that Spanish officials would properly punish such offenders. Otherwise, he must deliver them as prisoners to American civil authorities.²⁴

In response, Major Porter contacted Lieutenant Sebastian Rodríguez, Ugarte's replacement at Nacogdoches. Porter asked for Rodríguez's assurance that "there will be no more incursions or acts of violence committed by subjects of Spain on this side of the Sabine River, which

is considered included in the territory of the United States." Porter then ordered Rodriguez to withdraw all Spanish troops to the west bank of the Sabine, and to send no more patrols into "American" territory. Rodriguez responded, advising Major Porter that his troops occupied Spanish territory, and that Spanish patrols would continue to the Arroyo Hondo until the Commandant General ordered him to take other action.²⁵

By 1806, the situation escalated sharply. In February, Porter sent Captain Turner, with sixty troops and two pieces of artillery, to remove a Spanish patrol at Los Adaes. Ensign Joseph Maria Gonzalez, commanding the patrol, confronted the Americans before making the practical decision that his fifteen-man unit stood little chance against such odds. He withdrew.²⁶

The confrontation at Los Adaes also brought the standoff to the brink of war. Claiborne reported to the Secretary of State on March 29 that Spanish troops and their Indian allies had assembled on the Sabine and threatened an advance to reestablish the Spanish presence at Los Adaes. No such force existed, but the governor felt certain that Louisiana faced imminent Spanish invasion and Indian uprising. "I much doubt," Claiborne continued,

"whether it will be in the power of Major Porter to oppose [the Spanish and their Indian allies] with success in as much as his present force does not exceed two hundred effective men." Claiborne advised that, if necessary, he planned to call out the territorial militia and to go to Natchitoches himself. Still, he thought it best to wait until he had more intelligence before making a final decision.²⁷

Unaware of the inaccuracy of Claiborne's accusations, the War Department took action. General James Wilkinson ordered Colonel Thomas Cushing to take the 2nd U.S. Infantry to Natchitoches and to assume command. Wilkinson advised Cushing of Porter's orders to remove the Spanish from the east side of the Sabine, but urged him not to "strain the instruction to favor the effusion of blood and involve our country in the certain calamities and uncertainties of war." In his closing remarks to Cushing, Wilkinson indicated his doubts about Governor Claiborne's estimate of the Spanish troop strength. He ordered Cushing to determine as precisely as possible the size of the Spanish force, its composition and deployment.²⁸

While General Wilkinson moved cautiously, Governor Claiborne added fuel to the already smoldering border

situation. He accused the Spanish of crossing the Sabine River in force to establish a garrison. Claiborne insisted that the time had come to commit the American force at Natchitoches to repel invasion. In order to assure sufficient troop strength at Natchitoches to withstand the immense Spanish force Claiborne envisioned, the governor called up the territorial militia. Commandant General Salcedo responded to Claiborne's claim of Spanish invasion, reasserting Spain's right to the area between the Sabine and the Arroyo Hondo as indisputable. As proof, Salcedo referred Claiborne to the "location of the ancient Presidio of the Adaes," less than twenty miles west of Natchitoches. Since his troops did no more than carry out their duty to preserve the lands of His Catholic Majesty, Claiborne's accusation of invasion appeared groundless. On the question of invasion or provocation, Salcedo reminded Claiborne that Spanish troops at Los Adaes had suffered insult at the hands of the Americans. "A small party of eighteen men, commanded by an ensign . . . had directed against them a body from the American garrison at Natchitoches, comprised of 150 men with two cannon." Salcedo then made a most unusual request of Claiborne—one that gives a realistic picture of the Spanish dilemma. "I ask your Excellency," he

wrote, " that . . . he communicate to me the news that he may have . . . on the treaties in regard to the Demarcation of Boundaries which will be made between the Court of Spain and the Government of the United States." The Commandant General then confessed the reason for his request. "Because of the . . . interruption that correspondence suffers because of the existing war with the English, I am deprived of the receipt of the decisions of my Sovereign." Salcedo explained that lacking any new orders from Spain and being unaware of the status of negotiations, he had no alternative but to act as he did. Since such a course of action might lead to a needless war, Salcedo assured Claiborne that his orders required all commanders to maintain peaceful relations with the United States. Spanish forces, he assured the American governor, would not initiate hostilities. Since Claiborne assumed hostility on the part of Spain that did not exist, Salcedo closed with the admonition that the Americans had no "cause for unsheathing the sword." ²⁹

General Wilkinson arrived at Natchitoches in October to take charge of the American force and immediately began to defuse the tense situation that Governor Claiborne had initiated. Under an agreement already enacted between Major

Porter and Lieutenant Colonel Simon de Herrera y Leyva, Governor of Nuevo León, who had reinforced the Texas garrisons and taken command of Spanish forces on the border, Spanish troops had withdrawn to the west bank of the Sabine and the Americans remained east of the Arroyo Hondo. The confrontation that seemed inevitable just days earlier now seemed unnecessary. Accordingly, on October 3, Wilkinson mustered the territorial militia called up by Claiborne out of service, keeping only forty mounted riflemen to augment his infantry. Yet tensions on the border remained high as officials at the national and territorial levels communicated without success. Despite continued negotiations between Spain and the United States, the Jefferson administration seemed incapable of resolving the boundary dispute. Claiborne, acting from misinformation and apparent anxiety, failed to open diplomatic channels with Spanish officials in Texas. Commandant General Salcedo, hampered by Spanish bureaucracy, proved unwilling to take any proactive measures to facilitate a settlement.³⁰

Throughout this tug-of-war between the United States and Spain, the Caddo leader Dehahuit, described by Claiborne as "a man of great merit. . .brave, sensible and prudent," kept abreast of the situation. After all, the

contested territory formed the heart of the Caddo confederation. Since before the white men came, the Caddo thrived as middle-men, controlling the trade between tribes on the western plains and those in the eastern woodlands. They survived and prospered through their ability to maintain their own independence and the respect of the nations that surrounded them. Since 1714, when the French came to the Red River, followed by the Spanish in 1721, European powers had claimed their lands. Yet the Caddo managed to maintain their neutrality and their independence by skillfully managing trade and deftly using the balance of power to their advantage. Despite this change in control of Louisiana, Dehahuit remained committed to preserving the independence of the Caddo. He expressed his vision of Caddo-Spanish-American relations during a meeting with Governor Claiborne in September 1806. "My words," he explained, "resemble the words my forefathers have told me they used to receive from the French in ancient times. If your nation has purchased what the French formerly possessed, you have purchased the country that we occupy, and we regard you in the same light as we did them." Conscious of the role that the Caddo filled at this nexus of empires, Dehahuit understood the conflict over the

international boundary and intended to use the situation to his nation's advantage. His reference to the French rather than the Spanish exemplifies his grasp of the diplomatic circumstances. While France and Spain disputed ownership of the same territory, the Caddo enjoyed an autonomy they hoped to continue with the Americans. Acknowledging the territorial pretensions of power but remaining carefully neutral, the Caddo leader envisioned an agreement in which the United States and Spain would refrain from any direct involvement in Caddo country.³¹

Although Wilkinson and Herrera traditionally emerge as the negotiators of the peace agreement that led to the formation of the Neutral Ground, Dehahuit played a pivotal role. In order to secure his own aims, he appears to have suggested that Spain and the United States maintain the neutrality of Caddo lands in order to avoid war. In the end, Wilkinson accepted the agreement reached between Porter and Herrera to withdraw their troops from the disputed territory and await a final diplomatic settlement between Washington and Madrid. This agreement created the Neutral Ground, the buffer zone between Texas and Louisiana, and specified that neither government would attempt to assert sovereignty over the area, send troops

into the neutral territory, or allow anyone not already resident in the area to enter. In effect, the "Neutral Ground" existed outside the governance of either the United States or Spain. The agreement served the immediate objectives of Americans and Spaniards and prevented war. For the Caddo, it meant that their land remained free from foreign armies, and their independence remained intact.³²

The military confrontation on the Sabine marked the climax of mounting local tensions between rival powers at a new nexus of empire. Yet a more careful consideration of events preceding October 1806 reveals that the final settlement holds less importance as a military event than as a diplomatic one. Negotiations between the United States and the Spanish government in Madrid failed. On the territorial level miscommunication, distrust and fear pushed leaders on both sides to the brink of war. Residents of the borderland, both Spanish and American, feared the horrors of an Indian war, while each accused the other side of fomenting one. Slaveholders panicked at every rumor of a slave uprising. Spanish officials in Texas, indoctrinated in a strict bureaucracy that allowed no local initiative, hesitated to act without instructions. Receiving none, they became reactive—awaiting the onslaught they felt certain

lay just across the Sabine. As official diplomatic channels at the international and territorial levels broke down and war seemed imminent, individuals at the local level took it upon themselves to disarm the situation and establish an agreement that remains unique in borderlands history.

Ironically, military leaders on both sides worked diligently to avoid war while civil leaders seemed bent on initiating one. Ugarte and Turner diffused the immediate threat through cooperation, Porter and Herrera separated the troops to avoid further hostility, and Wilkinson and Herrera found a workable solution.

The Neutral Ground agreement gave neither the U.S. nor Spain a solution to the boundary issue. At best it ameliorated the situation. Yet in the absence of an international treaty it served all parties concerned. The complex problems that almost led to war found solution in an atmosphere of peaceful, if sometimes strained, coexistence. Both sides courted the Indian trade but both realized the disastrous results of Indian warfare on the frontier, and neither attempted to incite an uprising against the other. Spanish officials in Texas reached an agreement with the Americans that allowed slave owners to recover runaways with the sole provision that returned

slaves would not be punished. For the Caddo, the agreement gained a few more years of independence and self-determination.

In the broader context of relations between nation-states, the "Neutral Ground Agreement" provides an extraordinary and valuable insight into the unique role that borderlands played in reshaping political and diplomatic roles. Far removed from the seats of power, leaders on both sides of the Sabine broke with convention to find a peaceful conclusion to a number of critical issues in a situation where normal diplomatic channels failed. Spanish officials in the Internal Provinces stepped outside the hierarchical structure of Spanish government to resolve tensions caused by runaway slaves even though it meant countermanding a Royal Edict, a crime punishable by removal from office, imprisonment and a possible death sentence. On both sides men worked diligently to avoid a military conflict. Herrera withdrew his forces west of the Sabine. Wilkinson diffused the situation by dismissing the poorly disciplined and potentially volatile militia force around Natchitoches in favor of more trained and seasoned regulars. The commanders at Nacogdoches and Natchitoches took great pains to control tensions at the local level. By

concluding the agreement as they did, Wilkinson and Herrera also removed, for practical purposes, any United States effort to include Texas as part of the Louisiana Purchase by shifting the focus of negotiations from the Rio Grande to the Sabine.

The "Neutral Ground Agreement" diffused tensions that almost resulted in war between Spain and the United States, and opened channels of communication between Governor Claiborne and Spanish Officials in Texas and the Internal Provinces. Most importantly, both the United States and Spain accepted the agreement, which served to reopen diplomatic talks between the two. The Spanish hoped that the area would serve as a buffer against American expansion. For the American government, the agreement diverted antagonisms that could have precipitated a war with Spain and her allies at a time when Jefferson worked earnestly to maintain American neutrality. For the Caddo, the "Neutral Ground Agreement" meant that their land remained free from foreign armies and their independence intact.

Though it took fifteen years to implement a treaty, hostilities along the border never again reached the level that brought the United States and Spain to the brink of

war in 1806. In a very real sense, local diplomacy triumphed where international diplomacy failed, providing unique solutions to a complex set of problems at the border of empires as Spain, the United States and the Caddo nation dealt with a changing paradigm where no power reigned supreme.

Notes

¹ Salcedo to Elguezabal, 18 June 1804, Béxar Archives. Elguezabal to Salcedo, 23 July 1804, Béxar Archives. For a broad overview of the boundary question and Spanish attempts to maintain a buffer between the Spanish provinces and Anglo-American expansion see J. Villasana Haggard, "The Neutral Ground Between Texas and Louisiana, 1806-1821" in *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 28, No. 4 (October 1945): 1001-1128. Also see Isaac Joslin Cox, "The Louisiana/Texas Frontier: The American Occupation of the Louisiana-Texas Frontier" in *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* XVII, No. 1 (July 1913): 1-42; Odie B. Faulk, *A Successful Failure: The Saga of Texas, 1519-1810* (Austin: Stock-Vaughn Company), 1965; Carlos E. Castaneda, *The Mission Era: The End of the Spanish Regime, 1780-1810*, Vol. 5, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1942; Richard Sternberg, "The Western Boundary of Louisiana" in *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* XXXV (October, 1931): 95-108.

² Journal of Operations, Nacogdoches, January 1804. R. B. Blake Collection, Vol. 20, 212, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas. The R. B. Blake Collection consists of typed transcripts prepared by Blake during his tenure as Nacogdoches County Clerk. It includes official papers found in the Office of the County Clerk in Nacogdoches, in the Nacogdoches Archives and in the Texas General Land Office. The records transcribed include land grants, legal papers, census records, letters, journals and correspondence relating to the history of Texas from the late seventeenth to the mid eighteenth centuries.

³ Jose Joaquin Ugarte to Juan Bautista Elguezabal, February 9, 1804, Béxar Archives.

⁴ Journal of Operations, Blake, 20, 212-3.

⁵ Ugarte to Elguezabal, April 3, 1804. BA.

⁶ Nemisio Slacedo to Elguezabal, May 3, 1804, BA.

⁷ Abraham P. Nasatir, "The Shifting Borderlands" in *The Pacific Historical Review*, 34:1 (Feb., 1965), 1-20; Lawrence Kinnaird, Francisco Blache, Navarro Blache,

"Spanish Treaties with Indian Tribes" in *The Western Historical Quarterly*, 10:1 (Jan., 1979), 39-48.

⁸ Aranjuez to the Viceroy of New Spain, 1804, Béxar Archives.

⁹ Edward D. Turner to William C. C. Claiborne in Clarence Edwin Carter, compiler and editor, *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. IX, *The Territory of Orleans, 1803-1812* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 292-3. Claiborne to Marquis de Casa Calvo, 31 October 1804 in Jared William Bradley, ed., *Interim Appointment: W. C. C. Claiborne Letter Book, 1804-1805* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 58.

¹⁰ Claiborne to James Madison, 3 November 1804 in Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 66. Claiborne to Captain Edward Turner, 3 November 1804 in Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 67.

¹¹ Luis de Blanc to Carondelet, April 16 and December 1, 1792, in Lawrence Kinnaird, ed., *Spain in the Mississippi Valley, 1765 - 1794, Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1945* (4 vols; Washington, D.C.: 1946-1949), IV, (pt. 3), 99-100; a copy of the letter from Manuel Gayoso de Lemos to Carondelet is included in Carondelet to de Blanc, October 18, 1792, *Ibid.*, 92-3.

¹² Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and Saint Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies" in *Journal of Social History* 3 (1970): 404-30; Thomas N. Ingersoll, "Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812" in *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Ser., 48 (1991):173-200.

¹³ Hans W. Baade, "The Law of Slavery in Spanish Louisiana" in *Louisiana's Legal Heritage*, Edward F. Haas, Jr., ed. (Pensacola: Perdido Bay Press, 1983), 51-70; Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

¹⁴ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 373-4; Jack D. L. Holmes, "The Abortive Slave Revolt at Pointe Coupee, Louisiana, 1795," in *Louisiana History* II (1970): 341-62; Kimberly S. Hanger, "Conflicting Loyalties: The French Revolution and Free People of Color in Spanish Louisiana," in *Louisiana History* 34, (1993): 5-34; Lester Langley, *The Americas in the Age*

of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 107-10.

¹⁵ Claiborne to Casa Calvo, 30 October 1804, in Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 57.

¹⁶ Claiborne to the Commandant at Pointe Coupee, 8 November [1804] in Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 70. Thirty enlisted men under the command of Lieutenant John Cleves Symmes were detached to the post at Pointe Coupee until it closed in December 1806.

¹⁷ Claiborne to Casa Calvo, 8 November 1804 in Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 71. Casa Calvo to Manuel Salcedo, 10 Nov 1804, Béxar Archives.

¹⁸ Casa Calvo to Ugarte, 10 Nov. 1804, BA.

¹⁹ Claiborne to the Secretary of State, no date, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. IX, 432-3.

²⁰ Secretary of State to Claiborne, Nov. 18, 1805, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. IX, 533. Extracts of John Sibley's letters, May 1 and May 31, July 2, and Aug. 8, 1805 are printed in *American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, II, 690-93; *Annals*, 9th Congress, 1 session, 1204-09.

²¹ R. B. Blake Collection, Supplemental Vol. IV, 354.

²² Claiborne to the Secretary of State, 26 March 1805, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. IX, 425-6. Claiborne to James Madison, 21 April 1805 in Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 234-5.

²³ Turner to Claiborne, 21 Nov 1804, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. IX, 335-7. Turner's description of Bayou Pierre as 70 miles from Natchitoches is deceptive. Though the distance by river might have been 70 miles, the actual land distance is approximately 30 miles. Claiborne to Madison, Nov. 24, 1804 in Bradley, *Interim Appointment*, 98-9.

²⁴ Salcedo to Elguezabal, May 3, 1804, Chihuahua, Béxar Archives; Cordero, "Provincia de los Texas." Fuerza de las Tropas que la guarnición y su Distribución actual, con arreglo al contenido de las Notas que van a continuación," Dec. 31, 1805, Béxar Archives; R. B. Blake Collection, XX, 292. Answered by Major James Porter, Feb. 8, 1806, stating that he had requested the Nacogdoches commandant for the assurance mentioned above but this had been refused. See *American State Papers, Foreign Relations*, II, 798.

²⁵ Porter to Rodriguez translated and quoted in Rodriguez to Salcedo, Jan. 30, 1806, Béxar Archives.

²⁶ Jose Maria Gonzalez to Rodriguez, Feb. 5, 1806, Béxar Archives; Salcedo to Cordero, Feb. 24, 1806, Béxar Archives; R. B. Blake Collection, XX, 292. The Journal of Operations records 150 American soldiers.

²⁷ Claiborne to the Secretary of State, Mar. 29, 1806, *Territorial Papers*, Vol. IX, 618.

²⁸ Wilkinson to Cushing, May 6, 1806. *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, Vol. II, 561.

²⁹ Béxar Archives, Transcript Volume 10, 243-54.

³⁰ National Archives, Miscellaneous Military Records, M-654, General James Wilkinson's Order Book, Dec. 31, 1796 - March 8, 1808.

³¹ Claiborne to Andrew Jackson, Oct. 28, 1814, *Claiborne Letters*, Vol. 6: 293-94; Claiborne to Monroe, Dec. 20, 1814, *Ibid*, 327-28. Dehahuit, speech to Claiborne, Sept. 5, 1806, *Claiborne Letterbooks*, 3: 4.

³² Wilkinson to Dearborn, Oct. 17, 1806, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, W-195; Wilkinson to General Smith, Oct. 23, 1806, *Jefferson Papers*, reel 59. See also Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: the Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) and David La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms: Caddo Economics and Politics, 700-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 127-32.

Chapter 5

"To avoid these oppressions:" Instability

Don Apolinar Masmela arrived in Nacogdoches en route to Natchitoches, Louisiana, to purchase supplies for the Royalist army. To his amazement, the commandant advised him not to cross the Neutral Ground. Because of his urgent mission, Masmela insisted on continuing to Natchitoches. Since his business was official, the commanding officer in Nacogdoches furnished him with an armed escort consisting of eleven soldiers and fifteen settlers. The caravan took the Camino Real east on February 12, 1812. Eight days later they reached the flooding Sabine, crossing with great difficulty. The following day they set out across the Neutral Ground. About ten in the morning, bandits attacked the party at La Nana Creek. The initial volley wounded Sergeant José Corona in the arm and leg, and killed civilian Francisco Solis. Despite the ambush, the Spaniards charged the bandits, killing three and wounding two. The rest fled. "The fight lasted until 12 o'clock," Sergeant Corona recalled, "at which time I continued on my way."¹

The poorly defined boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase strained diplomatic relations between Spain and

the United States. Yet in the midst of impending conflict along the disputed Louisiana-Texas borderlands, local leadership took the initiative when international diplomacy failed, acting on behalf of their respective governments to maintain regional stability. In 1806, local Spanish and American officials and leaders of the Caddo confederacy took the first step by creating the "Neutral Ground," a buffer zone along the Louisiana-Texas frontier in order to avoid war between Spain and the United States. This agreement specified that neither government would attempt to assert sovereignty over the area, send troops into the neutral territory, or allow anyone not already resident in the area to enter until international diplomacy provided a final resolution to the boundary question. In effect, the "Neutral Ground" existed outside the governance of either the United States or Spain.²

Regrettably the Neutral Ground Agreement proved more idealistic than practical. American squatters began moving into the area almost immediately after the zone became demilitarized. Runaway slaves, deserters from both armies, thieves preying on the trade along the *Camino Real*, and criminals found this region outside of the control of governments or law an ideal refuge. By 1808, the presence

of these interlopers began to threaten seriously the regional stability that the Agreement sought to achieve. As the number of bandits grew, trade along the *Camino Real* between Louisiana and Texas suffered, and the Caddo felt the sting of these depredations. While merchants in Natchitoches and Nacogdoches complained to their local officials, the Caddo made clear to American and Spanish officials that if they wanted to preserve peace, they must satisfy their part of the agreement to keep interlopers out of the region.³

As trade suffered and news of Indian discontent spread, civil and military personnel in Louisiana and Texas sought a solution to the inherent problems of the Neutral Ground. During the spring of 1810 Colonel Thomas Cushing at Fort Claiborne in Natchitoches, lamented that intruders in the zone had full confidence that neither government could remove them without breaking the agreement crafted by General Wilkinson and Lieutenant Colonel Herrera in 1806. At the same time, the newly appointed governor of Texas, Manuel Salcedo, personally witnessed the situation during an inspection trip to Nacogdoches. Realizing the gravity of the circumstances, yet understanding that the solution required diplomatic finesse, Salcedo wrote to Judge John

Carr, justice of the peace in Natchitoches, suggesting a joint effort between the two nations to clear the Neutral Ground of all unauthorized persons. Judge Carr, a civil judge, found the idea appealing but deferred the decision to William Claiborne, Governor of Orleans Territory.⁴

Military leaders on both sides of the Sabine understood the necessity for cooperative, decisive action to rid the Neutral Ground of intruders. Yet their collaboration evolved not from friendship or trust, but rather from practical considerations. Lacking a timely response from the civil authority in Natchitoches, Bernardo Bonavia, Deputy Commandant General of Texas, appealed to the American commander at Natchitoches. Noting that military officers, not civil authorities, had negotiated the Neutral Ground Agreement, and that their respective governments confirmed it, Bonavia asserted that it represented a question of honor among officers on the border to enforce it. Concerned that continuing delays by the civil authorities might negate this opportunity to put an end to this infiltration into the Neutral Ground, and perhaps provoke the Spanish to unilateral action, Colonel Cushing entreated the Secretary of War for permission to proceed. "Should you approve of the plan," Cushing wrote,

"and authorize a Co-operation on our part, an early check may be put to an evil which, if permitted to progress, may produce very injurious Consequences at a future day."

During June, Eustis sent Cushing vague instructions, which the Colonel interpreted to suit his intention to cooperate with the Spanish. He dispatched fifteen men under Lieutenant William Augustus Magee into the Neutral Ground to join the Commandant of Nacogdoches, José María de Guadiana, and an identical number of Spanish troops, to drive out the squatters, bandits, and deserters. During a two-week foray extending as far north as Bayou Pierre, a settlement of thirty families about sixty miles northwest of Natchitoches, the combined force destroyed a dozen buildings and compelled thirty-four people to remove themselves from the Neutral Ground.⁵

In the short term, the joint foray served its purpose. The Neutral Ground remained quiet. Yet by the spring of 1811, rogue elements had filtered back into the zone and attacks along the section of the *Camino Real* that ran from the Sabine to the Arroyo Hondo began again, becoming so severe that they threatened to stop all commercial intercourse between Louisiana and Texas. Judge Carr reported to Governor Claiborne that a party of seventeen

Spaniards arrived in Natchitoches with fifteen to twenty thousand dollars in specie to purchase merchandise. On their return trip, a party of Anglo-American bandits attacked them and captured all their merchandise and mules. The Spaniards fled across the Sabine into Texas, but returned with a party of soldiers from Nacogdoches and recovered their belongings from the unprepared bandits.⁶

Dr. John Sibley, the U.S. Indian Agent at Natchitoches, complained that robbery and murder had increased alarmingly. In a letter to William Eustis, he contended that the brigands had even begun to recruit kindred souls from Rapides, Natchitoches, and Opelousas for raids into American and Spanish territory, and that a plot existed to invade Spanish Texas and capture Nacogdoches. Further, Sibley proclaimed that their depredations extended to the Caddo, who once again threatened to take matters into their own hands. In closing, he warned the Secretary that the bandits in the Neutral Ground also enticed slaves to escape and join them.⁷

As reports reached Governor Claiborne, he responded first with concern, then alarm. Locally, Natchitoches merchants complained of the interruption in commerce between Nacogdoches and Louisiana, and Sibley reported

continuing restiveness among the Caddo. Added to the potential dangers of rebellion in West Florida, revolutionary instability in Mexico, and the continuing friction between the United States and Great Britain, the threat of instability on his territory's western border prompted the governor to immediate action.⁸

Accordingly, Claiborne called on General Wade Hampton, commanding the U.S. troops in the Orleans Territory, and recommended a plan for the destruction of the Neutral Ground bandits based on the cooperation of 1810. Hampton ordered Lieutenant Colonel Zebulon Pike and a detachment to travel from Baton Rouge to Natchitoches with all possible speed. Hampton directed Pike to contact the Spanish commandant at Nacogdoches, proposing a joint punitive expedition. Within two weeks time he had reached Natchitoches. On February 26, 1812, he addressed a letter to Captain Don Bernardino Montero at Nacogdoches, presenting General Hampton's proposal. Yet Pike also informed the commandant that if the Spanish could not accommodate his request to participate, he still intended to send a detachment of U.S. troops into the Neutral Ground.⁹

Revolutionary fever had spread to Texas in late 1810, and in January 1811, Juan Bautista de las Casas overthrew the provincial government in San Antonio. The revolt spread to Nacogdoches, where Royalist officials found themselves arrested and confined. Although the legitimate government staged a counter-coup some three months later, Texas officials remained in a state of high anxiety, and took every precaution not to seem "rebellious" by overstepping their authority. Captain Montero replied to Pike promptly and cautiously, advising the American officer that he could not undertake the proposed joint expedition on his own recognizance. He added that he had forwarded Pike's letter by special messenger to the governor of the province.¹⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Pike did not wait. On March 5, he ordered William Augustus Magee, who had led the American contingent in 1810, into the Neutral Ground. The expedition destroyed eleven houses along with various tent camps they encountered. In the process, they captured sixteen men, thirty-five horses and mules, and recovered stolen merchandise, arms, and ammunition.¹¹

About three weeks later, Captain Montero again wrote to Pike informing him that the governor had just given his approval for a joint expedition. Realizing that the results

of this expedition, like the one in 1810, offered only a temporary solution to the problem, Captain W. H. Overton, commanding the garrison at Natchitoches, offered to cooperate with the Spanish authorities in future periodic raids into the Neutral Ground. At the same time he suggested that, since U.S. troops had ejected the malefactors, the Spanish had no reason to send an armed detachment into the disputed territory. The Spanish commandant ignored Captain Overton's suggestion on the orders of the Governor of Texas, who instructed, "If Lieutenant Colonel Pike has gone ahead alone to clean up the Neutral Ground, Captain Don Ysidro de la Garza, shall not fail to carry out his expedition."¹²

In compliance with this order, Captain de la Garza departed from Nacogdoches on April 5, 1812, with a detachment consisting of one sergeant, two corporals, and seventeen privates, and Samuel Davenport, a Spanish citizen and trader in Nacogdoches. At Miguel Crow's ranch on the east bank of the Sabine, Crow's wife informed de la Garza that the Americans had taken her husband prisoner but that he had subsequently been released once authorities confirmed his identity. She also stated that no one had come near her house since the American troops had been

there. As the expedition continued along the Camino Real toward Natchitoches, Davenport went ahead to Natchitoches to attend to personal business. Along the road he saw only the remains of buildings burned by the American troops. While in Natchitoches Don Samuel learned that three outlaws captured in the American raid had escaped back into the Neutral Ground. When de la Garza received this intelligence he turned his troops north toward Bayou Pierre in pursuit of the escapees, yet he never found them. Heavy rains hampered the expedition, and by April 21 the Spanish detachment returned to Nacogdoches, where the Captain turned in his detailed but barren report in the form of a diary. This Spanish expedition became the last major effort by the Spanish and American authorities to clear the Neutral Ground of outlaws. Once the revolution against Spain spilled into Texas Spanish officials had little time to concern themselves with the Neutral Ground. U.S. forces also demurred as the ungoverned zone became a staging ground for filibusters.

The joint operations that began in 1810, like the "Neutral Ground" agreement itself, resulted from the efforts of international diplomats, nor because of the national governments of Spain or the United States.

Instead, they occurred because of the collaboration of civil and military officials who, though often distrustful of each other, saw a potentially volatile situation that threatened regional stability. In effect, they made common cause to diffuse it. Their efforts remain a rare example of cooperation that crossed national lines, providing unique solutions to a complex set of problems.

Despite U.S. and Spanish efforts to make the Neutral Ground safe, the region continued to destabilize. Between 1810 and 1820, a series of political and social revolts caused many of the original borderlands families living in Texas to return to their former homes east of the Sabine. Spain's European wars after 1789 drained the economic wealth of the colonies. Heavy taxation and forced contributions produced severe financial strains. Tejanos decried bad government, but still maintained loyalty to the King. Yet when Napoleon conquered Spain in 1808, the drive for autonomy mounted. Spanish subjects in Mexico's provinces resisted the puppet government imposed by France. Following the example of Spain, they first organized a *Cortes*, or parliament, to hold the land while the deposed King Ferdinand remained in exile. In Mexico, open hostilities began in 1810, when *mestizo* priest Miguel

Hidalgo y Costilla led a revolt against government oppression. War broke out in Hidalgo's parish in Queretaro province on September 16, and soon developed into the unexpected—a revolution between the exploited masses and the privileged few. Revolutionary fervor spread quickly into the northern province of Texas. Peasants in Texas, like their counterparts in Querétaro, resented the aristocrats who held power and wealth. When Las Casas led his insurrection in Béxar, he quickly won the support of the poorer soldiers and civilians of the town. From Béxar the revolt spread northward throughout the province. But in March 1811, some clergy and veteran military officer led a counter coup that successfully, though briefly, squelched the revolt.¹³

The sympathy that the people of Nacogdoches showed for this popular revolution brought destruction to the District, for civil war did not end with the defeat of Las Casas. Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara took up the revolutionary banner. Encouraged by U.S. officials who saw in the independence of Mexico an opportunity for economic expansion, Gutiérrez de Lara set out to conquer Texas for the Revolution. With the aid of William Augustus Magee, the bright and promising U.S. Army officer who suddenly

resigned his commission at Natchitoches, Gutiérrez de Lara formed an army of residents of the borderland and American volunteers within the Neutral Ground.¹⁴

The Neutral Ground served as the perfect venue for organizing an invasion. Without interference from either government, the revolutionaries recruited, organized and trained. While American officials looked the other way, the filibusters advertised in Natchitoches, Natchez and New Orleans for recruits. Throughout the summer of 1812, following the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and the United States, they enjoyed virtual immunity while preparing for the invasion of Texas.¹⁵

Fighting under a green banner and calling themselves the Republican Army of the North, they crossed the Sabine River in August 1812. Capturing Nacogdoches without opposition, they found the frontier population sympathetic to the revolutionary cause. In fact, almost the entire garrison of Nacogdoches, including Lieutenant Bernard D'Ortolan, joined the republicans.¹⁶

From Nacogdoches the army moved south, captured La Bahía and Béxar, and proclaimed Texas an independent state in the spring of 1813. But in Béxar the revolution began to collapse. Magee, for practical purposes the military leader

of the expedition, died of an illness at La Bahía. The American contingent, who found Gutiérrez pompous and lacking in military skill, refused his command, and the force began to factionalize. Gutiérrez further enraged the American volunteers by naming himself generalissimo and governor, and declaring that Texas would remain a part of Mexico. Fighting for the idea of an independent republic, Americans in the Republican Army of the North felt betrayed. Gutiérrez then established a *junta* to judge and sentence royalist prisoners, including Governor Manuel Salcedo and Colonel Simon de Herrera, one of the authors of the Neutral Ground Agreement. Packing the court with members of the Menchaca family of Béxar, who had personal as well as political animosity toward the governor, the verdict proved a forgone conclusion. Several of the American officers, impressed with Salcedo and Herrera, suggested clemency, and Gutiérrez agreed to banish the prisoners, perhaps to New Orleans. But the charitable act proved a ruse on the *generalissimo's* part. On the night of April 3, 1813, the prisoners and an escort of sixty Mexican revolutionaries left San Antonio with the prisoners. The next day the escort returned, boasting in the plaza that they had taken the royalists a short distance from town and

executed them. While this action angered the Americans, a later revelation that the assassins had mutilated the prisoners with knives while their hands remained tied and left the bodies unburied shocked the filibusters, who repudiated the murders. Disillusioned with what they perceived as a revolution gone wrong, many simply left the army.¹⁷

In August, a royalist force led by José Joaquín Arredondo routed the republican army and restored Spanish authority through confiscation, detention and execution. In San Antonio, the loyalists executed 327 persons, and Nacogdoches became the scene of a bloody purge by one of Arredondo's Lieutenants. Dr. John Sibley reported that Mexican troops "shot at the Trinity about one hundred Spaniards who [t]he[y] Overtook Leaving the Country."¹⁸

Panic stricken, the people of Nacogdoches fled east across the Sabine to friends and relatives, where safety awaited. Dr. Sibley also reported that "about two Thousand Spaniards have come Over on this side the Sabine Including men, women & children & several Tribes of Indians." Ignacio Pérez, reporting in 1819 on conditions in East Texas, noted that "To avoid these oppressions [the residents of the District of Nacogdoches] were forced to return to the new

Spanish settlements, the Adais, and the Tres Llanos, and to Bayou Pierre." With the numbers killed or fleeing reprisal, Texas had lost perhaps two-thirds of its population by 1821. Nacogdoches, with more than six hundred residents in 1810, reported a population of only ten in the 1812 census.¹⁹

Examples of the flight of borderlands families from East Texas to Louisiana exist in depositions given by Mariáno Sánchez and José María Acosta in 1842 in the case of *James Smith v Jesse Watkins, John Watkins & Richard Watkins*, regarding the ownership of Pedro Silvério Padilla's ranch, Santo Domingo, north of Nacogdoches. Sánchez stated that he had known Pedro Silvério Padilla since their boyhood in Nacogdoches. When asked where and when Padilla had died, Sánchez responded that he died about 1816 at a place known as Adaes, near Natchitoches. According to Sánchez, Padilla left his home and crossed the Sabine in August, 1813, clearly fleeing the aftermath of the revolt.²⁰

In 1819, Spain and the United States signed the Onís-Adams Treaty, in which Spain relinquished Florida to the U.S. in exchange for cessation of U.S. claims to Texas. Many Americans considered the treaty as surrender to a

despised foreign power. A shadowy organization known as the New Orleans Association met in the Crescent City in May, 1819, to plan a filibustering expedition to take Texas from the Spanish by force. The conspirators initially offered command to General John Adair, who demurred. Born in South Carolina, Adair had served in the Revolutionary War and as a member of the South Carolina convention that ratified the Constitution of the United States. After moving to Kentucky in 1788, he served as a major of volunteers in an expedition against the Indians under General James Wilkinson in 1791 and 1792. After his election to the Kentucky House of Representatives, where he served as speaker, Adair filled the unexpired term caused by the resignation of John Breckinridge from the U.S. Senate. Unsuccessful in his bid for reelection, he continued his military career, serving as aide to Governor Isaac Shelby during the Battle of the Thames in 1813, and as commander of the Kentucky rifle brigade which served under General Andrew Jackson during the New Orleans campaign of 1814 and 1815. Despite his involvement in the shadowy Burr Conspiracy, Adair's political career waxed. Appointed adjutant general of Kentucky with the brevet rank of

brigadier general, he went on to serve as governor from 1820 to 1824.²¹

While the reason for Adair's refusal remains unclear, the New Orleans Association turned next to James Long, a doctor and merchant. Descended from an old Virginia family and raised in Tennessee and Kentucky, Long traveled to New Orleans in 1812, and may have taken part in the battle in 1815, after which he moved to Natchez. Accepting an appointment as political officer for the filibuster, Long helped raised about three hundred men who paid subscriptions to be part of the expedition in exchange for the promise of land in the planned "Republic of Texas." This promise of land, the first of its kind among filibusters, added a new dimension to the expedition.²²

The volunteers crossed the former Neutral Ground and occupied Nacogdoches. Interestingly, Eli Harris led this initial invasion. Doctor Long remained in Natchez until June 17, leaving just before the arrival of federal orders for his arrest for violation of the Neutrality Act.²³

When Long arrived in Nacogdoches he immediately organized a provisional government, which on June 23 declared independence for the "Republic of Texas." In the declaration, Long condemned the Onís-Adams Treaty, claiming

that the citizens of Texas had anticipated a treaty that would place their homes within the territory of the United States. Since the Treaty dashed their hopes for inclusion in the American republic, he continued, they found themselves obliged to proclaim their independence from Spain. Appointing a supreme council of twenty-one members to act as advisers in the exercise of full authority over the new republic, Long included an interesting group of men: Dr. John Sibley, the merchant Samuel Davenport, John G. Burnett, the Adesaño Pedro Procela, and Gutiérrez de Lara.²⁴

Assuming Nacogdoches secure, Long traveled to Galveston in an unsuccessful attempt to convince the pirate Jean Lafitte to join his cause. In Long's absence, Spanish troops drove his followers out of Nacogdoches and back across the Sabine River into Louisiana. Undeterred, the Doctor-turned-commander established his headquarters at Bolivar Point, near Galveston, and during the fall of 1821 led an expedition of fifty-two men to La Bahía (Goliad). But Long's attempt at conquest came too late. Mexico had won its independence from Spain and had strengthened its defenses of Texas. The Mexicans captured Long and took him

to Mexico City, where a prison guard shot him, supposedly accidentally.²⁵

Regardless of their intentions, U.S. filibusters engaged in criminal behavior, and their private military expeditions in peacetime naturally risked retaliatory attacks by invaded countries. Responding to the danger that such adventures might draw nations into unnecessary wars, theorists of international law established the principle that sovereign states must stop persons from using their jurisdictions to mount expeditions against the territory of countries with which their own nations remained at peace. America's founding fathers had versed themselves in the Swiss author Emmerich de Vattel's *The Law of Nations* as well as the tracts of Hugo Grotius and other codifiers of international law, and had followed its precepts about private military invasions. Although no supranational organization then existed to rule on or enforce international law, it made sense for early American leaders to outlaw filibustering, not only because of their intentions to found a country based on law, but also because they remained sensitive to their new nation's relatively limited military power. Article 1, Section 8, of the Constitution empowered Congress to penalize "Offenses

against the Law of Nations." Under this mandate, the nation's lawmakers responded with "neutrality" enactments in 1794, 1797, 1800, 1807, 1817, 1818, and 1838 to repress filibustering expeditions and other infringements of international law.²⁶

The Neutrality Law of 1818, which superseded all previous legislation, became the bane of American filibusters. Its Article 6 provided for the imprisonment to a maximum of three years and fines of as much as three thousand dollars for persons who, within U.S. jurisdiction, began or aided "any military expedition or enterprise against the territory or dominions of any foreign prince or state, or of any colony, district, or people, with whom the United States are at peace."²⁷

Despite this legislation, American leaders, many of them avid territorial expansionists, never shared an unwavering commitment to eradicate private expeditions. To be sure, one can cite instances when federal officials intervened against filibusters. Most early U.S. presidents issued proclamations against filibustering activities. Cabinet members summoned governors, district attorneys, marshals, and military officers to interdict pending expeditions, and even tipped off Spanish officials about

filibuster movements so that defensive military preparations might be made in targeted colonies. From time to time, federal authorities prosecuted filibusters for violating the neutrality laws. Yet on other occasions, federal authorities found it convenient to overlook or even assist filibuster plots in the expectation that they might eventuate in U.S. territorial growth. For example, in April 1812 the Madison administration disavowed the invasion of East Florida on the rationale that George Mathews had violated his instructions; U.S. troops persisted in East Florida as late as the spring of 1813. For some time, a U.S. Marine captain governed Fernandina, imposing taxes, establishing closing times for grog shops, and making other administrative decisions, all under the fiction that Mathews had the authority to accept the cession by the Patriots of East Florida to the United States. Further, between November 1812 and February 1813, the Madison administration mobilized regular, volunteer, and militia troops on the Georgia-Florida frontier, in the expectation of following up on Mathews's initiative with a full-scale campaign to conquer all of Spanish Florida. The cancellation of this plan because of congressional opposition, and the final disintegration of Mathews'

movement in 1814, should not obscure the considerable aid previously rendered the filibusters by the U.S. government.²⁸

Besides, just a few years later the U.S. government capitalized on Luis-Michel Aury's filibuster to get permanent possession of Amelia Island. On the pretext that Aury's privateering risked dragging the United States into disputes with foreign countries, the Monroe administration in 1817 directed U.S. army and naval officers to seize the island. Federal forces held possession from their late December takeover (which the filibusters only resisted verbally) until 1821, when the island became part of the American domain by virtue of ratification of the Onís-Adams Treaty. Ironically, Spanish leaders might have approved Florida's transfer earlier, had they not been irritated by apparently unfounded reports that the Monroe administration had sponsored James Long's filibuster into Texas two years earlier.²⁹

During the early 1820s, the District of Nacogdoches returned to normal. The Mexican Governor of Texas pardoned those involved in the republican revolutions. Even the leaders gained amnesty on the condition that they leave the country. Slowly, some of the people who had fled the

District of Nacogdoches after 1812 returned to their homes, farms, and ranches. Others had come full circle. Having left their ancestral home near Los Adaes in 1773, they had returned to live among relatives and friends in 1813-1814, and decided to remain in the land between the Sabine and the Red River, now securely in American hands. In 1825, Badio Flores claimed land in the former Neutral Strip that documents describe as "situated in the town of Adaes." Trinidad Canado claimed a tract of land in the former Neutral Strip "situated within the village of the Adaise." Domingo Santa Cruz likewise filed claim to land "situated in the Adaise" and bounded on the north by that of Trinidad Canado. Jose Maria Soto, as the assignee of Baptiste Chirino, applied for a deed to a parcel situated "in the settlement of the Adaise." Joseph Valentine held a Spanish grant dated August 5, 1791 to "San Joseph De Los Adais, so designated because it was entirely within the area occupied by the ranches of the Adais Indians." Claim number 191, also belonging to Andre Valentine and "situated on the Bayou Adaise in the settlement of Bayou Pierre," lay south of the Pierre Dolet claim. Andre Chammard's file refers to "a Spanish settlement known as the Adaise," and Manuel Flores claimed a tract of land "situated on the right bank

of Bayou Terre Blanche in ascending, bounded below by Madame Louis Chamárd." ³⁰

With Mexican independence from Spain, the borderlands suddenly found themselves part of a new nation just as their counterparts had when the Neutral Ground reverted to U.S. control. Under the Mexican government, the District of Nacogdoches, and indeed the whole of Texas began to experience a rebirth. To defend the frontier from both hostile Indians and other governments Mexico embarked on a colonization plan for Texas that allowed foreign settlers, including Americans, into the region under strict regulation as to character, allegiance and religion, in order to increase the population of Texas. Concerned with the threat of an unregulated immigration from the United States, Mexico sought to guarantee its hold on Texas by contracting with *empresarios* who accepted responsibility for ensuring that the settlers respected the Mexican government's interests. Each *empresario* received a large grant of land and a contract to bring in a specified number of settlers who would agree to become Catholic and citizens of Mexico, and to support the lawful government. Each settler, in exchange, received land within the *empresario's* colony. ³¹

In the District of Nacogdoches, problems developed quickly. The *empresario* Haden Edwards received a grant of land and authorization to settle 800 families around Nacogdoches, but when he attempted to do so, he ran afoul of the local authorities and landowners who had claims to the land dating back to 1779, many of which had been reconfirmed in 1810. Edwards demanded that anyone claiming lands within his colony must produce the deeds to him, or forfeit their claims. The authorities in Nacogdoches, on the other hand, refused to validate any petitions by the new settlers to lands already claimed. In 1826, angry Anglos from Edwards' colony revolted against the government in Texas, capturing Nacogdoches and proclaiming the District of Nacogdoches the Fredonian Republic. Manuel de los Santos Coy, captain of the local militia, with a combined force of local residents and Indians, cornered the Fredonians in Gil Ibarvo's former warehouse building, called the "Stone Fort," while the governor of Texas sent Colonel Matio Ahumada and a large force from Béxar to quell the revolutionaries. Haden Edwards and many of his followers retreated to American territory across the Sabine. The government of Texas nullified Edwards' contract and arrested the revolutionaries still in the area. Only

the intervention of Stephen Austin, who had warned Edwards and his co-conspirators against their plan, saved them from execution.³²

This upheaval, though small in comparison to the earlier revolts, caused many again to cross the Sabine. One reason for this new rush to safety centered on the Fredonians' attempt to enlist the aid of Indian tribes recently arrived from the United States. The Americans promised the Shawnee, Delaware, Cherokee and others land within the Fredonian Republic in exchange for their assistance. Stephen Austin advised the Political Chief of Texas on December 31, 1826 that "The people of this place desired, if possible, to put down the [Fredonian] revolution, until they heard that the Indians had taken a part in it; then they withdrew to their homes, and are now busy moving their families and property to the other side of the Sabine."³³

The Neutral Ground Agreement, though well-intentioned, set the stage for destabilization of the Louisiana-Texas borderland. Creating an area outside the control of any government or law, it became a haven for brigands who interrupted trade, threatened the peace with the Caddo, and endangered the lives of American and Spanish travelers

alike. As Americans unhappy with the exclusion of Texas from the Louisiana Purchase saw the possibilities of empire across the Sabine in sparsely populated Texas, the area became a staging-ground and safe-haven for filibusters and revolutionaries. Conditions became especially ripe for the invasion of Texas after revolution broke out throughout Spain's colonial empire in the Americas. Between 1810 and 1824, rebellions overthrew Spanish authority everywhere in the Western Hemisphere except for Cuba and Puerto Rico. The revolts occurred after Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808—an invasion that brought years of turmoil to Spain and distracted Spanish authorities from colonial affairs across the Atlantic. Capitalizing on this opportunity, U.S. filibusters converged on Spanish domains, frequently as affiliates of Latin American revolutionaries. Yet, for the people of the borderlands, these international intrigues brought death, destruction, and economic hardship.

Though these visible signs of change stand out, more subtle yet significant social and economic transformations altered the character of the borderland. As the Panic of 1819 led thousands of Americans to seek their fortunes in the Southwest, the mixed-blood people of the borderland found themselves suddenly relegated to minority status as

immigrants from the southern United States brought their families and their slaves into Louisiana and Texas. In Louisiana, the creation of effective administrative and political structures to establish and preserve white authority became a *fait accompli* by 1820, while the *empresario* system adopted by the Mexican government after 1820 virtually ensured Anglo-American population dominance there as well.³⁴

The Onís-Adams Treaty replaced the troublesome Neutral Ground Agreement with a rigid national boundary. Yet while American control strengthened, Iturbide's revolution in Mexico only exacerbated the situation in Texas as continuing coups left the province virtually uncontrolled and trying to recover from the calamities of the previous decade. The imposition of the *empresario* system furthered the threat from the United States. Americans moving into Texas after 1821, some legally under the *empresario* system, and others simply crossing an uncontrolled border, asserted exclusivist ideas within the notion of citizenship. These notions harden the lines separating citizen and non-citizen. For citizens, these ideas unleashed new eras of freedom and autonomy. For those excluded, life meant precisely the opposite—the loss of

political, social, and personal status. With increasing American hegemony, borderland peoples began the long political sojourn of survival within unrivaled polities. They became minorities distinguished by phenotype or language from the "national" majority.

As Americans became the majority population on both sides of the Sabine, the borderland link between Texas and Louisiana began to disappear. Conditions that, for a century, had allowed an intercultural, interdependent society disappeared within U.S. Expansion. Kinship networks, ties to the land, and a strong sense of independence remained, though it never again overshadowed the geopolitics of nation-building. The attributes of borderland shifted to the south and west, settling along the Rio Grand, and across Arizona, New Mexico and California. The lands north of the Rio Grand fell quickly into U.S. hands as a weakened and divided Mexico lost its grip on the northern provinces. Yet ironically, the repercussions of the borderlands continue into the 21st century as the United States government attempts to raise a physical barrier to separate a people whose lives have been joined in community for three hundred years.

Notes

¹ Bernardo Montero to Nemisio Salcedo, Nacogdoches, Letters 42 and 44, February 18, 1812, BA; Apolinar Masmela

to Salcedo, Natchitoches, February 26, 1812; Montero to Salcedo, Nacogdoches, April 2, 1812.

² Wilkinson to Dearborn, 17 October 1806, Letter Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, W-195; Wilkinson to General Smith, 23 October 1806, Jefferson Papers, reel 59. See also Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: the Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 120-23; F. Todd Smith, *The Caddo Indians: Tribes at the Convergence of Empires, 1542-1854* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1995), 84-100; and David La Vere, *The Caddo Chiefdoms: Caddo Economics and Politics, 700-1835*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 127-32.

For a broad overview of the boundary question and Spanish attempts to maintain a buffer between the Spanish provinces and Anglo-American expansion see J. Villasana Haggard, "The Neutral Ground Between Texas and Louisiana, 1806-1821" in *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 28, No. 4 (October 1945): 1001-1128. Also see Isaac Joslin Cox, "The Louisiana/Texas Frontier: The American Occupation of the Louisiana-Texas Frontier" in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* XVII, No. 1 (July 1913): 1-42; Odie B. Faulk, *A Successful Failure: The Saga of Texas, 1519-1810* (Austin: Stock-Vaughn Company), 1965; Carlos E. Castaneda, *The Mission Era: The End of the Spanish Regime, 1780-1810*, Vol. 5, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1942; Richard Sternberg, "The Western Boundary of Louisiana" in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* XXXV (October, 1931): 95-108.

Jefferson asserted, "The western Boundary of Louisiana is, rightfully, the Rio Bravo, from its mouth to its source, and thence along the highlands and mountains dividing the waters of the Mississippi from those of the Pacific." Thomas Jefferson, "The Limits and Bounds of Louisiana", in *Documents Relating to the Purchase and Exploration of Louisiana*, 31-2. Interestingly, before he prepared his essay on the boundaries of Louisiana, Jefferson stated, "The unquestioned bounds of Louisiana are the Iberville and Mississippi, on the east, the Mexicana [Sabine] on the west." Paul L. Ford, ed. *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, VII, 261-3.

³ Eustis to Hampton, 15 June 1810, *Territorial Papers*, 6: 71; Hampton to Eustis, 22 August 1810, Letters Received, Registered Series, 5: H-181; Hampton to Eustis, 24 September 1810, *ibid.*, 37: H-196; Hampton to Eustis, 3

November 1810, *ibid.*, H-222; Hampton to Claiborne, 23 January and 14 February 1812, *ibid.*, 44: H-170; Hampton to Zebulon Pike, 6 February 1812, and Pike to Hampton, 26 March 1812, both in *ibid.*, 45: H-212; Claiborne to John Carr, 16 February 1812, Claiborne Letter- books, 6: 56-57; William Henry Harrison to Eustis, 22 April 1812, Letters Received, Registered Series, 45: H-212.

⁴ Cushing to Secretary of War William Eustis, April 24, 1810, Letters Received, Registered Series, 35: C-126; Manuel Salcedo to Juan C. Carr, Nacogdoches, April 13, 1810, BA; Carr to Salcedo, Natchitoches, April 16, 1810, BA.

There were people authorized to remain in the Neutral Ground. The Neutral Ground Agreement stipulated that those persons resident in the zone prior to 1806 could remain. This included the Caddo and several Spanish families.

⁵ Jose Maria de Guadiana to Salcedo, Neutral Ground, July 29-August 15, 1810, BA; Bonavia to Salcedo, Béxar, August 24, 1810, BA; Cushing to Secretary of War William Eustis, April 24, 1810, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series: C-126; Captain Charles Wollstonecraft to Wade Hampton, April 15, 1810, *ibid.*; Wollstonecraft to Cushing, June 12 and July 12, 1810, *ibid.*, C-191; Eustis to Cushing, June 15, 1810, *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Volume IX, Territory of Orleans, 70-71; Wollstonecraft to Cushing, August 15, 1810; Salcedo to Wollstonecraft, August 17, 1810; Wollstonecraft to Augustus Magee, August 29, 1810, Magee to Wollstonecraft, September 4, 1810, all in Letters Received, Registered Series, 35: C-217; Wollstonecraft to Wade Hampton, April 15, 1810, Letters Received, Registered Series, 35: C-126.

⁶ Carr to Claiborne, July 4, 1811 in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed. *Territorial Papers of the United States*: Volume IX, Territory of Orleans, 1803-1812, 943-44.

⁷ John Sibley to William Eustis, February 9, July 17, December 31, 1811, quoted in "Dr John Sibley and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XLVIII, 547-49 and XLIX, 116-17.

⁸ Claiborne to Secretary of State James Monroe, New Orleans, August 4, 1811; Claiborne to Carr, July 30, 1811; Claiborne to [Militia] Colonel Schaumburg, July 30, 1811; Claiborne to Officer Commanding at Fort Claiborne, July 30, 1811; Claiborne to Secretary of State James Monroe, August 4, 1811 and November 19, 1811. *Official Letter Books of W.*

C. C. Claiborne, 1801-1816, Vol. V, 328-9; 319-20; 321; 321-22; 328-29 and 383-84. Dunbar Rowland, ed. (New York: AMS Press, 1917).

The plot to attack Nacogdoches offers another insight into the future stability of the region. Spanish troops had already entered the Neutral Ground to attack an armed camp the previous summer, pursuing Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara and José Menchaca (who Claiborne mistakenly calls Captain Marshall), a Spanish army officer who had joined the revolt against Spain in 1810, in August, 1811. Civilians from Natchitoches rescued Gutiérrez and Menchaca from Spanish pursuit. Menchaca returned in the Neutral Ground, and took part in the advance against Nacogdoches in October 1811. During the march Menchaca deserted to the Royalists in Nacogdoches and the expedition turned back, having been exposed by Menchaca. Gutiérrez returned to the Neutral Ground in 1812 and along with William Augustus Magee, who resigned his commission in the United States Army, led the so-called Republican Army of the North in what has come to be known as the Magee-Gutiérrez filibuster.

⁹ Zebulon M. Pike to Bernardino Montero, Natchitoches, February 26, 1812; Montero to Manuel Salcedo, Nacogdoches, March 1, 1812, *Historia, Operaciones de Guerra*, Salcedo, 1812, I, 1, *Archivo General Nacional* (AGN).

¹⁰ For a discussion of the Las Casas revolt and its aftermath, see Felix D. Almaraz, Jr. *Tragic Cavalier: Governor Manuel Salcedo of Texas, 1808-1813* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1991): 118-24.

¹¹ Magee to Pike, March 18, 1812, Letters Received by the Secretary of War: Registered Series, H-213.

¹² Salcedo to Montero and Pike, and Salcedo to Viceroy, March 12, 1812, *Historia, Operaciones de Guerra*, Salcedo, 1812, Vol. I, pt. 1, AGN; Overton to Montero, March 27, 1812, and undated response enclosed in Hampton to Secretary of War, April 14, 1812, Letters Received by the Secretary of War: Registered Series, H-238.

¹³ Michael C. Meyer, William L. Sherman, Susan M. Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History*, 7th Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 270-5; John L. Kessell, *Spain in the Southwest: A Narrative History of Colonial New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and California*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 355-8.

¹⁴ Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. and Gene A. Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists: Jeffersonian Manifest*

Destiny, 1800-1821 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 42-59.

¹⁵ Lillian E. Fisher, "American Influence Upon the Movement for Mexican Independence" in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 18, 4 (March 1932), 470; Harry McCorry Henderson, "The Magee-Gutiérrez Expedition" in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 55, 1 (July 1951), 43; Harris Gaylord Warren, *The Sword Was Their Passport: A History of American Filibustering in the Mexican Revolution*, 22; Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 148-52.

¹⁶ Nacogdoches Archives, R. B. Blake Collection, Vol. XXX, p. 169, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

¹⁷ Owsley and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 42-59; Almaráz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 148-52.

¹⁸ Julia Kathryn Garrett, "Dr. John Sibley and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1803-1814" in *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 49: 601.

¹⁹ Garret, "Dr. John Sibley and the Louisiana - Texas Frontier, 1803 - 1814," 599-614; Ignacio Perez to Governor Martinez, Dec 3, 1819, in *Lamar Papers*, I, 34-42; Nacogdoches Archives, R. B. Blake Collection, Vol. XXX, p. 169, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

²⁰ James Smith v Jesse Watkins, John Watkins & Richard Watkins, Republic of Texas, Nacogdoches County District Court, May Term, 1842.

²¹ John S. Gillig, "In the Pursuit of Truth and Honor: The Controversy Between Andrew Jackson and John Adair in 1817." *Filson Club History Quarterly* 58 (April 1984): 177-201; William G. Leger, "The Public Life Of John Adair." Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1960.

²² Eli Harris to M. B. Lamar, January 18, 1841, *Lamar Papers*, III, 483; Felix Trudeauaux to Fatio, Natchitoches, June 19, 1819, *Historia*, vol. 162, A.G.M.

²³ Casteñeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, VI: 161.

²⁴ Declaración por el supremo consejo de la Republica de Tejas, *Papeles de Estado*, 72-3, AGI.

²⁵ Owsley and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 178-80; Warren, *The Sword Was Their Passport*, 239-41; Chipman, *Spanish Texas*, 240.

²⁶ This 1758 work by Swiss legal philosopher Emmerich de Vattel, originally published in London, is of special importance to scholars of constitutional history and law, for it was read by many of the Founders of the United

States of America, and informed their understanding of the principles of law which became established in the Constitution of 1787. See also Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace*, Archibald Colin Campbell, trans., (Washington: M. W. Dunne, 1901).

²⁷ *American State Papers*, 14th Congress, 1st Session, *Foreign Relations*: vol. 4, 277; "The Neutrality Law," *New York Times*, June 8, 1866.

²⁸ James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of East Florida*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003), 56-92.

²⁹ Robert E. May, *Manifest Destiny's Underworld: Filibustering in Antebellum America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 19.

³⁰ *American State Papers, Documents of the Congress of the United States in Relation to Public Lands*, Vol. VI, December 1, 1823 - March 3, 1825 (Washington, D.C.: Gales & Seaton, 1859), 98, 121, 122-3, 126, 129, 131, 509; Document X, United States Land Claim Office, Natchtoches, Louisiana; Louis Nardini, Sr., *My Historic Natchitoches and Its Environment* (Natchitoches: Nardini Publishing Co.), 151.

³¹ Stephen F. Austin is certainly the best known of the Texas *empresarios*. For a detailed understanding of his life and times see Gregg Cantrell, *Stephen F. Austin: Empresario of Texas*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. For more on Haden Edwards, consult Mattie Austin Hatcher, *The Opening of Texas to Foreign Settlement*, (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1976), 234-86.

³² James T. DeShields, *Border Wars of Texas*, Matt Bradley, ed. (Austin: State House Press, 1993), [reprint of 1912 edition], 21-32.

³³ Stephen F. Austin to Political Chief of Texas, 31 Dec. 1826, R. B. Blake Collection, Vol. 30, 152-5 (East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

³⁴ Kastor, *Nation's Crucible*, 225-6.

Chapter 6

"Americans send their colonists:" Death of a Borderland

The fledgling Mexican government adopted the philosophy that to govern their northern territories, they must find a way to induce settlement. While their theory seemed obvious, the character of the colonists who populated the borderland of Texas ultimately determined who would rule. By 1830, legitimate colonists recruited by *empresarios* and illegal immigrants from the United States had rushed in overwhelming numbers across the Sabine, quickly outnumbering the *Tejano* population. Austin's colony, for example, reported a population of eighteen hundred by 1825. A decade later, the estimated number of legal and illegal Anglo-American immigrants in Texas exceeded twenty thousand.¹

Viewing Texas as free land rather than as a foreign country, most of the *norteños* proved disinclined to adopt a "Mexican" point of view. They kept their religious and political beliefs and insisted upon the right to own slaves. The visiting Frenchman Frédéric Gaillardet reflected in 1837 that the American colonization of Texas

constituted "the first step of an irresistible and, one might say, providential outburst which is to result in the occupation of the entire North American continent by one people."²

Gaillardet's prediction of the American occupation of North America, while only partly realized, reflects the general understanding of the United States' territorial ambitions in Europe by the early nineteenth century, and emphasizes the trans-Atlantic significance of the series of revolutions that occurred in Texas between 1820 and 1838. Since the Louisiana Purchase the U.S. had made no secret of its ambitions to acquire Texas. As Mexico struggled for independence from Spain, Thomas Jefferson noted in a letter to James Monroe that "the province of Techas [sic] will be the richest State of our Union, without any exception. Its southern part will make more sugar than we can consume, and the Red River, on its north, is the most luxuriant country on earth."³

When John Quincy Adams succeeded James Monroe and Henry Clay became Secretary of State, Mexico suspected that the U.S. would make every effort to secure Texas. Since the Louisiana Purchase, Adams had staunchly held that the French territory of Louisiana extended to the Rio Grande.

Clay had likewise vehemently denounced the ultimate compromise that sacrificed Texas for Florida. Indeed, the instructions given to the first American minister to Mexico, J. R. Poinsett fully confirmed Mexico's fears. Clay instructed Poinsett to suggest negotiating a new boundary "more suitable to the United States," such as the Brazos, the Colorado, or the Rio Grande. The American minister's instructions authorized him to offer half a million dollars for the Colorado River boundary, and to go as high as one million dollars for the Rio Grande boundary. Since, from the perspective of Washington, D.C., the American settlers admitted into Texas would inevitably "carry with them our principles of law, liberty, and religion," the Adams administration felt their offer quite generous. Regardless of the ardent hopes of Mexican authorities that American colonists would become loyal citizens without a clash, Clay asserted that "so far as political freedom is concerned, it would be almost too much to expect all collisions would be avoided." "In the progress of time," Clay continued what might easily be construed as a threatening tone, "it may be anticipated with confidence that these collisions may insensibly enlist the sympathies and feelings of two republics and lead to misunderstandings." Mexican official

reacted with shock and dismay to the suggestion that Texas might be for sale. Clearly instructed not to press the issue if the Mexicans resisted, Poinsett agreed to the survey of the line fixed by the treaty of 1819. Yet neither Adams nor Clay proved ready to abandon the prospect of gaining Texas. After the Fredonian Rebellion, both men concluded that Mexico might happily rid itself of the troublesome province.⁴

The Fredonian Revolt had indeed shocked the new and still self-absorbed Mexican government, causing many to question continuing the policy of opening Texas to immigration from the United States. From his quarters in San Antonio de Bexar, General Manuel De Mier y Terán expressed his concerns for Texas to Presidente Guadalupe Victoria. "Focusing on Tejas, the three towns are isolated from one another and from the rest of the Mexican population. They cannot resist the feared uprising of the colonies and of the foreigners who have entered clandestinely."⁵

Convinced of the need for strong measures to stop the United States from acquiring Texas, he made a series of recommendations that soon became law, including the strengthening of presidios and the creation of new military

units in Texas. He suggested the increase of coastal trade between Texas and Mexico, in order to weaken United States commercial dominance, and he argued the necessity of bringing both European and Mexican colonists into Texas to counterbalance the growing American influence: "Either the government occupies Texas now, or it is lost forever."⁶

Teran's recommendations became the basis for the Law of April 6, 1830, a controversial document that went beyond his suggestions in two particulars. Instead of merely establishing ways to counter-colonize Texas with Europeans and Mexicans, the law prohibited further immigration from the United States and rescinded *empresario* contracts not yet completed. Secondly, the law prohibited the introduction of slaves into Mexico. The previous year, September 15, 1829, President Vicente Guerrero emancipated all slaves in Mexico in a humanitarian gesture, but also indicates Mexico's interest in curtailing American immigration. Regrettably, under pressure of protests from Texas and Coahuila, the Mexican government exempted Texas from the ruling.⁷

Closing Texas to immigrants from the United States represented a major step in admitting that Mexico did not have adequate control of its borderlands. The Colonization

Law of 1824 allowed such action only under "imperative circumstances," but Lucas Alamán, who authored the Law of April 6, 1830, clearly believe such circumstances had arrived. "Texas," he insisted, "will be lost for this Republic if adequate measures to save it are not taken." Like Terán, Alamán argued that the American colonists represented a covert attempt by the United States to acquire Texas in the same manner that it had obtained West Florida. "Where others send invading armies," Alamán wrote, "Americans send their colonists."⁸

From Nacogdoches, in June, Terán again advised President Guadalupe Victoria that "As one travels from Béjar to this town, Mexican influence diminishes, so much that it becomes clear that in this town that influence is almost nonexistent." As a borderland community, Nacogdoches had always enjoyed commercial and social intercourse with Louisiana, and from its earliest days the population reflected fluidity unknown in other parts of Texas. Censuses of the village record "Spanish" citizens from Italy, England, Germany, and Scotland, and Indians from the Apache, Caddo, Cherokee and other tribes. As the gateway from American Louisiana to Texas, legal immigrants regularly applied for passports there. Assessing the

problems he considered dangerous to the new Mexican government, Terán urged Mexico to take immediate action to prevent a revolt in Texas that would endanger the Republic.⁹

While official efforts seem lacking, the Spanish Borderlands allowed Americans moving west to practice a type of unofficial state-making. In West Florida, a settlers' uprising occurred in 1810. Revolutionaries formed the original "lone star" republic, and waited for annexation to the United States. Although their bid for statehood failed, as did Texas's initial attempt a quarter century later, the Madison administration quickly added West Florida to Louisiana. In 1812, the "Patriot War" in East Florida followed the same pattern, with Americans from Georgia crossing the border and, with support from United States troops, formed the short-lived Republic of Florida. Closer to home, the Long filibuster and the Fredonian Revolt left little doubt that Americans had targeted Texas, even if their government refused to admit it.¹⁰

The nature of the borderland settlement of Nacogdoches made Mexico's hold on Texas even more unstable. Removed in physical distance from the Bexar-Goliad region, Nacogdoches remained distinct in character. Its racial and cultural structure reflected its French and Anglo neighbors in

Louisiana far more than Mexico. Straddling the traditional overland route from Louisiana to Texas, Nacogdoches had suffered the ravages of filibusters, revolution and counter-revolution, and the banditry of the Neutral Ground. In response to three decades of upheaval, population had developed a pattern of crossing the Sabine to sanctuary among friends and relatives in Louisiana when threatened, returning when conditions permitted. Even after 1819, when the Sabine became the border between the U.S. and Mexico, the character of a fluid borderland remained strong among the people of the region.

The approximately six hundred citizens in the District of Nacogdoches led a particularly uneasy existence during the independence movement after 1810. In 1811, roving bands of the Gutierrez-Magee expedition forced the settlers to withdraw from Nacogdoches. Two years later the Spanish counterattack reportedly left the area temporarily depopulated as the royalist forces swept eastward. The resurgence of revolutionary disturbances between 1819 and 1822 again sent the people of the Nacogdoches region fleeing for the safety of Louisiana. Yet throughout this constant state of upheaval, a few brave souls such as Luis Procena, Manuel Hernandez, James Dill, and Jose Antonio

Sepulveda remained in the area. In the 1822 census, Don Pedro Procela enumerated nineteen families in the area. By the following June more than one hundred persons returned as the harbingers of what one historian has called a "steady flow of the Mexican population back to Nacogdoches and the surrounding district."¹¹

In an attempt to solidify control of the Texas borderland, Mexico reinforced the military garrisons at San Antonio, Goliad, and Nacogdoches, and began constructing six more forts in 1830. By encircling the Anglo-American colonies, Mexico sought to prevent smuggling and keep out illegal aliens. Along the road between San Antonio and Nacogdoches, at the Brazos crossing, they founded Tenochtitlan, with hopes that its central location would make it the next capital of Texas. Two garrisons, Velasco at the mouth of the Brazos, and Anahuac on Galveston Bay, would protect the coast. Intended as self-sustaining military colonies where soldiers would double as farmers and artisans, the Mexican government recognized that without Mexican colonists, the new nation could not hold Texas. Yet Mexico soon discovered, as Spain had previously, that using soldiers as colonists became a short-range and expensive solution. The government could not afford to

support the forts adequately, and in 1832 it removed most of the troops from Texas to meet the political crisis in the capital as Santa Anna overthrew the Bustamante government, leaving the garrisons largely abandoned.¹²

On July 2, 1832, Terán wrote to his friend Lucas Alamán predicting the loss of Texas and expressing dismay over the turn of events that had put Santa Anna at the head of the liberal insurrection. With the country in civil war, Terán asked: "how could we expect to hold Texas when we do not even agree among ourselves?" The next morning, despondent over Texas and in poor health, he rose early, dressed in his finest uniform, and ran a sword through his heart.¹³

The same kinds of tensions and differences of opinion between representatives of the central government and regional officials that manifested themselves in political, military, and economic matters, intruded into the question of how to populate the frontier. Local interests in Texas, beginning with Antonio Martinez, the last Spanish governor, generally opposed any measures which would slow immigration from the United States. *Tejano* oligarchs saw the economic growth of Texas, its security from Indians, and their own fortunes, as inextricably linked to the well-being of the

Anglo-American newcomers and their slave-based, cotton and sugarcane growing economy. Hence, *Tejano* leaders joined *norteamericanos* in vigorously protesting Presidente Vicente Guerrero's September 15, 1829 decree emancipating all slaves in Mexico, an order designed to discourage further Anglo settlement in Texas. *Jefe politico* Ramon Musquiz refused to publish the decree in Texas and began negotiations to make Texas exempt. While he acknowledged that slavery was "unfortunate," he urged its continuance in Texas because the province faced ruin without more laborers. Similarly, the *ayuntamiento* of San Antonio, in a petition of December 19, 1832 supported by the *ayuntamientos* of Goliad and Nacogdoches, argued against the provision of the Law of April 6, 1830 that closed the border to further immigration from the United States. Signed by seven members of substantial San Antonio families, such as Jose Antonio de la Garza, Angel Navarro, and Juan Angel Seguín, the petition applauded the tremendous benefits that Anglo-Americans had already brought to their benighted province and argued that Anglo-Americans, unlike Europeans, had a form of government similar to Mexico's, knew how to deal with Indians, and could immigrate at little cost. Francisco Ruiz of San

Antonio put it bluntly: "I cannot help seeing advantages which, to my way of thinking, would result if we admitted honest, hard-working people, regardless of what country they come from. ...even hell itself."¹⁴

Ruiz got his wish with a vengeance. Despite the Law of April 6, Anglo-Americans flooded Texas. Most came as illegal aliens, but a few entered Texas legally because Terán had interpreted the law loosely and permitted Stephen Austin and Green de Witt to continue receiving colonists, even while he nullified grants held by other American *empresarios* on the grounds that they had not met their obligations. Between 1830 and 1834 immigration from the United States accelerated rather than slowed. Rough estimates suggest that the number of Anglo-Americans and their slaves residing in Texas in 1834 exceeded twenty thousand.¹⁵

By 1835 an estimated one thousand Americans a month entered Texas by way of the Brazos River alone. In mid-1836, shortly after Texas won its independence, an American observer placed the number of his countrymen and their slaves at thirty-five thousand, an estimate some historians consider conservative.¹⁶

Ironically, statesmen in Mexico City who sought to limit Anglo-American immigration to Texas in the 1830s faced problems similar to those of U.S. officials today. In each case, federal officials found their efforts thwarted by interest groups living near the border who perceived a need for foreign labor. In each case, too, efforts to close the border by mechanical means failed. Miguel Muldoon, a Mexican-Irish priest who knew the Texas situation firsthand, correctly argued in 1833 that Mexico could not stop American immigrants "even if our army formed a cordon from the Gulf of Mexico to the beaches of the Pacific."¹⁷

But Mexico's problems in the 1830s went beyond a lack of military strength to patrol the border against illegal American aliens. The Mexican nation did not emerge fully evolved in 1821. Successive governments in Mexico City lacked sufficient stability, funds, and national population to carry out a sustained, coherent counter-colonization program or to weave Texas into the Mexican economy and Texans into the national fabric. Anglo-American attitudes also presented a serious problem. When Colonel Jose de las Piedras, military commander of the heavily Anglo-American populated District of Nacogdoches, required local residents to swear allegiance to the national constitution of 1824,

he found it necessary to resort to the threat of expulsion from Texas to ensure their participation. Since few Anglos spoke Spanish, Piedras had each settler sign the oath in English. In his report, the colonel noted that the public spirit did not seem entirely appropriate; "their coolness and apathy indicates to me that this act was not to their liking."¹⁸

In the borderlands, where family connections and commercial interdependence formed the backbone of survival and prosperity, attempts at national construction failed whenever they conflicted with local interests. Free trade, free movement of peoples, and unencumbered exploitation of natural resources prevailed over the designs of nationalist officials. Mexico's leaders had initially supported the pursuit of capitalist development in the northern frontier, but during the 1830s, as they became more wary of real or imagined secessionist tendencies in the North, they attempted to regulate the region's integration with the economy of the United States and put obstacles in the way of increasing Anglo-American immigration. In doing so, national officials met with decided resistance from local and regional Hispanics as well as Anglo-American newcomers.¹⁹

Commercial and land transactions also hindered the consolidation of the Mexican nation in Texas. This occurred precisely because the prosperity of those provinces hinged on the continuation of economic ties with American Louisiana. The District of Nacogdoches, which included most of East Texas, had always relied on its trade connections with Natchitoches. Cross-border commercial interests between the two, begun during the French period in Louisiana, often kept the people of Nacogdoches and its predecessor, Los Adaes, alive. As survival gave way to success, *Tejanos* in the borderlands staked their future on the continued growth of unrestricted trade with their eastern neighbors. Responding to the economic woes following America's War of 1812, immigration to Texas, with its flexible land policies served to strengthen ties to the east rather than the Mexican states. Lucas Alamán, the Minister of the Interior, observed that instead of sending conquering armies, [North Americans] "begin by introducing themselves in a territory that they desire and establish colonies and trading routes. Then they demand rights that would be impossible to sustain in any serious discussion, and . . . little by little these extravagant ideas become sound proofs of ownership."²⁰

Most traditional histories of the Texas Revolution either trace the revolt of 1835-1836 to cultural or ethnic incompatibility between Mexicans and Americans, or adopt a sweeping Manifest Destinarian explanation, casting the revolution as merely a step in the westward drive of Anglo-Americans into the Spanish borderlands. Yet the roots of revolution lie as much within the reality of the Louisiana-Texas borderland as in either of these interpretations.

The initial momentum to organize state militias and resist the central government's authority, even if that entailed using force, originated in Coahuila and the San Antonio-Goliad region, not in the East Texas colonies. As David Weber has pointed out, the Texas Revolution did not pit "all Anglos against all Mexicans, all whites against all non-whites." Instead, it juxtaposed an unwieldy coalition of Anglo-American colonists, *Tejanos*, and Indian tribes against the national government and its local and regional allies.²¹

The Texas Revolution developed from a clash between regional and national interests. Those who advocated autonomy for the states and defended local interests against centralism—a heterogeneous group that came to be known as "radical liberals" or "federalists"—began to chafe

after the offensive launched by their "centralist" opponents in the early 1830s. The short-lived administration of Anastasio Bustamante in 1830-1832 moved precisely in that centralizing direction. He established a ring of military garrisons in Texas, opened customs houses to regulate and tax commerce with the United States, and sought to reduce the preponderance of Anglo-Americans in Texas by promoting Mexican and European colonization and forbidding any further immigration from the United States. The nationalist offensive abated for a few months when another federalist administration gained power in Mexico City, but the offensive resumed again in 1834-1836 as the national government instituted reforms that threatened to alter the fundamental economic and political relations prevalent in Coahuila and Texas.²²

For the first time since 1810, the village avoided the physical ravages of war. Yet friction between Anglos and *Tejanos* grew as the politics of revolution evolved. In the initial phase of the rebellion, many *Tejanos* supported the goals of the conflict—independent statehood for Texas under a federal government, the right to own slaves in order to support the growing cotton and sugar industries, and the right of commerce with the adjacent U.S. By 1836, those

aims had changed as more radical Anglo-Americans moved the revolution toward independence from Mexico. Distrustful of the Texians, several *Tejano* leaders who had supported the cause began to resist. In Nacogdoches, former *alcalde* Vicente Córdova, who served as captain of militia, became a pivotal figure.

Cautiously, local leaders agitated against active Tory conduct, but the Nacogdoches *Tejanos* had one source of potential power. Numerically superior, Anglos had swept political elections before 1835, but former *alcalde* Vicente Córdova remained captain of the District militia. From late August to November, 1835, Córdova continued to make reports to the town's Anglo *alcalde*. In general, the reports complained of a shortage of guns and other supplies, as well as the refusal of some citizens to fulfill their militia duty. Whether real or imaginary, these issues paled in Anglo minds when compared to a single question; would Captain Córdova attempt to involve the militia in the political contest—and if so, on which side? His opinions, as shown by his address to his company at the end of August, leaned toward defense of the government. He favored continuing the tradition of obedience to "the orders of our authorities" and "sustaining the laws" rather than heeding

the voices of discontent. His rhetorical appeals to God, law, tradition, tranquility, and preservation of property all reflected mainstream conservative ideals. Yet regardless of his political leanings, Cordova's isolation from centralist support deprived him of a prudent course of action. Further, his position of adhering to the established order became awkward as other officials lined up behind the rebellion. In October, the *alcalde*, on behalf of the political chief, ordered the militia company to attend a public rally. This meeting resolved that "we must sincerely solicit the aid of our Mexican fellow-citizens, who in this municipality have up to this time shown a disposition to remain silent" in the face of war against the centralists. Defensively, Cordova excused the poor attendance of and resignations from his company, but he did not make a clear political commitment.²³

A kind of informal *modus vivendi* emerged, with twenty-five Mexican militiamen becoming a permanent home guard to protect local families and their property and to preserve order. In essence, Cordova agreed not to resist the Revolution, whose leaders in turn did not insist on *Tejanos'* participation in the war against other Mexicans. By November rebel spokesmen expressed disappointment that

the Nacogdoches *Tejanos* remained, as John Dor explained to Houston, "unwilling to afford aid." Yet, fears of overt Tory behavior dwindled, even though the idea for the home guard did not fully materialize. Cordova, in fact, ordered his company to dissolve on November 10, in reaction to his perception of distrust on the part of the town *alcalde* and interference with his command.²⁴

Events in early 1836 threatened the uneasy accommodation of the previous autumn. Nacogdoches divided bitterly over the issue of independence. Citizens of Mexican descent entered into public affairs in opposition to revolutionary measures, failed, and passed into sullen discontent. The military crisis of March, generated by the fall of the Alamo and the eastward advance of Mexican forces, produced rumors of Nacogdoches *Tejanos* conspiring with Santa Anna and the Cherokees, and a full-blown panic erupted in mid-April. The seeds of this incident had been sown much earlier. In early December, 1835, the Nacogdoches vigilance committee investigated "anticipated Indian difficulties" based on its "opinion that some disaffected citizens of this Country are and have for some time past been in Communication with the Indian Tribes." This group, in fact, received very specific testimony that Eusebio

Conines had gone to Chief Bowles with a commission from General Cos to activate a previous alliance. The vigilance committee attempted without clear success to dissuade the chief through a personal emissary, a brother of Conines, and then took steps to insure security and control over suspicious or disorderly persons in Nacogdoches. The leaders of Texas took the threat of a Cherokee uprising seriously enough that Houston spent February of 1836 conducting diplomatic talks with them.²⁵

An authoritative conclusion about this conspiracy remains undocumented, and details of the alleged plot vary. In most versions, the uprising intended to involve Indians and the *Tejanos* of Nacogdoches, with a joint attack timed with the arrival of a Mexican force. Most accounts name Santa Anna's emissary as Manuel Flores, whose family had originally come from Los Adaes, and who reportedly passed through Texas and into Louisiana in late 1835 or early 1836. At least one version of the incident accuses Córdova of communicating with Flores and receiving a commission to raise Indians as an auxiliary force for the Mexican Army's campaign in Texas. Rumors of such a plot continued to circulate throughout the summer of 1836 and beyond—until Córdova actually did attempt an abortive revolt in 1838.²⁶

Tensions nearly erupted in armed conflict during April of 1836 when Nacogdoches' *Alcalde* David A. Hoffman issued a proclamation that disallowed the agreement for *Tejano* neutrality in the region. On the authority of the Texas convention, Hoffman ordered that "every Mexican Citizen liable to Militia duty" must "take up the line of March, to the headquarters of our army" or to move to Louisiana or west of the Brazos within ten days. "Any failing to comply with this order, or in any manner corresponding with the Indians to the prejudice of [the revolutionary] cause, shall be dealt with as enemies, and treated according to the custom in time of war."²⁷

The *Tejanos* did begin to form a new militia company under Córdova, but they made no effort to leave the vicinity and instead set up camp on the outskirts of Nacogdoches. Anglo-American volunteers also assembled from various places. Unfortunately, with the people of Texas gripped by panic and the Anglo volunteers answering to no overall authority, but wanting to kill Mexicans, Nacogdoches became a powder keg. On several occasions an explosion nearly did occur. Although the provisional government had ordered local *Tejanos* to arm themselves in preparation for war, the actual sight of them with guns

caused Anglos to react with hostility. Wild reports circulated that a large Mexican force had reached the vicinity and panic gripped the Texians. As the head of the vigilance committee later recalled, "the Mexicans of this Municipality were embodying themselves for the purpose of attacking the Americans." Consequently, Anglo militias set out to disarm *Tejanos*, while civilians fled toward the Sabine in panic. These events in turn created alarm among Córdova's men, who feared that the evacuating Anglos would attempt to burn the town, which they determined to prevent at all costs. Prudence on both sides averted a major confrontation. Córdova and his Texian counterparts managed to negotiate their way first to a truce and then to an understanding. Major John A. Quitman, commander of a company volunteers, corresponded with Córdova, each explaining his perspective. Córdova explained that, by acting as a home guard in defense of the property of all persons living in Nacogdoches, the militia gave ample proof that they were not traitors. But he added a warning. If the Texians continued to treat the *Tejanos* with disdain and distrust, "I beg it may be remembered that [we] have it in [our] power if [we] are so disposed to do much mischief."²⁸

On April 17, 1836, Irion reassured Houston that tensions had abated, and that some two-hundred Texian volunteers could return to Houston's army. "The Mexicans," he reported, "are organized and seen willing to do all they can in defense of the country against Indians." "Yet," Irion added, the Nacogdoches Mexicans "will not fight their countrymen in the present instance." As to what the future might bring, he could only speculate. Based on past history, Irion believed that "In case Santa Anna should ever reach this quarter" the Nacogdochians, he believed, would repeat their custom of seeking sanctuary across the Sabine in Louisiana.²⁹

The *Tejano* borderlands people of East Texas did not rise in armed rebellion against the Texas cause, Anglo fears and provocations notwithstanding. Yet they held little if any genuine sympathy for the Revolution. At the very least, Nacogdoches *Tejanos* occupied a position of armed neutrality. They showed willingness to protect local property, including, of course, their own, against whatever threatened it. Yet, beyond that and a promise not to attack rebel forces, Córdoba and his followers would not enlist on the side of rebellion. By the Anglo-American standards, the Mexican Texans of Nacogdoches exhibited the traits of

Tories. Yet the lessons of history had shown the borderland residents that choosing the wrong sides often meant fierce retribution. With safety in Louisiana close at hand, they could flee if the war came to their doorstep. If not, they saw no advantage in involving themselves.

But when the war ended, and Anglo-Americans firmly controlled the new Republic of Texas, things changed for the worst. The *Tejanos* found themselves second class citizens. A study of land claims in the Nacogdoches District, and head rights granted by the Republic of Texas, clearly show that control of the land transferred from the indigenous population to the new Texans. By 1840, land within the town of Nacogdoches had passed almost entirely from the hands of the original settlers to Anglo-American "Texians." Disenfranchised, Córdova led a group of *Tejanos* in a futile attempt to overthrow the new government of Texas. On August 4, 1838, a group of citizens from Nacogdoches, searching for stolen horses, found evidence that suggested the presence of a large assembly of people near the town. They returned to report their discovery. After being informed on August 7 that at least a hundred "Mexicans," led by Córdova, had encamped on the Angelina

River, Thomas J. Rusk called up the Nacogdoches militia and sent a call to nearby settlements for reinforcements.³⁰

On August 8, Houston issued a proclamation prohibiting unlawful assembly, and the carrying of arms, and ordered all assembled without authorization to return to their homes in peace. Two days later, the leaders of the rebellion replied with their own proclamation, signed by Córdova and eighteen others. It stated that they could no longer bear the injuries and usurpations of their rights under the new republic. They had taken up arms, ready to die in defense of those rights, and only asked that their families not be harmed.

On the same day Rusk learned that local Indians had joined the *insurrectos*, bringing their number to approximately four hundred. After ascertaining that the rebellious band was moving toward the Cherokee nation, Rusk sent Maj. Henry W. Augustine with one hundred and fifty men to follow them. Rusk, ignoring Houston's orders not to cross the Angelina River, took his remaining troops and marched directly toward the Cherokee village of Chief Bowles. En route Rusk learned that other Texan forces had overtaken the rebels near Seguin and defeated them. After communicating with local Indians, who disavowed any

knowledge of the uprising, Rusk and his volunteers returned to Nacogdoches.³¹

The leaders of the insurrection escaped arrest and went into hiding. Córdova eventually made his way to Mexico. The government of Texas brought thirty-three alleged members of the rebellion, all with Spanish surnames, to trial and indicted them for treason in Nacogdoches District Court. Because of the "distracted state of public feeling" all but one received a change of venue to neighboring San Augustine County. The court in San Augustine found Jose Antonio Menchaca guilty of treason and sentenced him to hang. The remaining defendants received acquittals or had their cases dismissed. After several former jurors claimed to have been pressured in their decisions, President Lamar pardoned Menchaca only four days before his scheduled execution. The capture of two Mexican agents after the rebellion produced new evidence pointing to an extensive counterrevolution against the Republic of Texas. About August 20, 1838, Julian Pedro Miracle died near the Red River while carrying a diary and papers that indicated the existence of an official project of the Mexican government to incite East Texas Indians against the Republic of Texas. The diary recorded that Miracle had

visited Chief Bowles and that they had agreed to make war against the Texans. On May 18, 1839, a group of Texas Rangers defeated a party of Mexicans and Indians, including some Cherokees from Bowles' village. On the body of Manuel Flores, the group's leader, they found documents encouraging Indians to follow a campaign of harassment against Texans along with letters from Mexican officials addressed to Córdoba and Bowles. Although the Cherokee leader denied all charges against his people and Houston maintained his belief in their innocence, President Lamar insisted that the Cherokees could not stay in Texas. The Cherokee War and subsequent removal of the Cherokees from Texas began shortly thereafter.³²

Borderlands were transient. They began in a confrontation between two competitors and ended when one became politically dominant enough to establish a border that it could enforce with at least some minimal control. With the end of the Texas Revolution, the Louisiana-Texas borderland ceased to exist, replaced instead by a border dominated on either side by Anglo-Americans. For years, Tejanos had defended their homes against threats from the French, Anglos, and Indians. Yet when Mexican independence finally arrived, they found the centralist government as

much of a threat to Tejano security as foreign enemies. In effect, the Louisiana-Texas borderland was not simply a frontier boundary or buffer zone, but a separate entity between two frontiers.

Notes

¹ The phrase "to govern is to populate," often associated with Mexico's policy actually appeared in the mid-nineteenth century in the work of the Argentine political theorist Juan Bautista Alberdi. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821 to 1846*," 158; Hatcher, *The Opening of Texas to Foreign Settlement*, 70, 90, 116; Faulk, *The Last Years of Spanish Texas*, 120-31; Almaraz, *Tragic Cavalier*, 31, 34-5, 135.

² A professional writer of note in Europe, Gaillardet traveled from France to New Orleans in 1837 as a correspondent for various French newspapers while working with his brothers to establish a wine importing business in Louisiana. Unfortunately, an economic downturn combined with a yellow fever epidemic in New Orleans thwarted his plan. Undeterred, he decided to utilize his literary skills to study "the political and social organization of the United States" following the success of Tocqueville. Between April and June, 1837, he visited Texas and, through various contacts, became acquainted with Houston, Lamar, Rusk and many other leaders of the Texas Republic. Later, in New York, he established *Courrier des Etats-Unis*, the leading French language newspaper in the western hemisphere. Frédéric Gaillardet, *Sketches of Early Texas and Louisiana*, trans., James L. Shepherd, III (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), ix-x, xiii.

³ Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb, (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association of the United States, 1904), XV: 251.

⁴ William R. Manning, "Texas and the Boudary Issue, 1822-1829," *The Quarterly* XVII, 217-61; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, VI: 231-3; Eugene C. Barker, *Mexico and Texas, 1821-1835*, University of Texas research lectures on the causes of the Texas Revolution, (Dallas, 1928), 41.

⁵ Terán to President Don Guadalupe Victoria, Bexar, March 28, 1828 in Jack Jackson, ed., John Wheat, Trans., *Texas by Terán: The Diary Kept by General Manuel De Mier Y Terán on His 1828 Inspection of Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 27-39.

⁶ The quote is from Constantino de Tarnava to the Minister of War and Navy, Mexico, January 6, 1830, and represents Terán's view. See Howren, "Causes and Origins of the Decree of April 6, 1830," 400-13.

⁷ Howren, "Causes and Origin of the Law of April 6, 1830," 415-7.

⁸ Alamán, "Iniciativa de ley," in Filisola, *Memorias*, II, 603; Quoted in Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 170.

⁹ Ibid, Terán to the President of Mexico, Nacodoches [sic], June 30, 1828, 96-101.

¹⁰ *Niles Register*, XVII (1819-20), 31; Owsley and Smith, *Filibusters and Expansionists*, 118-40. For a detailed treatment of the "Patriot War" see James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

¹¹ Lester C. Bugbee, "The Texas Frontier, 1820-1845," 111-2.

¹² Morton, *Terán and Texas*, 133-4, 173-6; Terán to Minister of War, November 14, 1829, quoted in Howren, "Causes and Origin of the Decree of April 6, 1830," 400-6; Barker, *Austin*, 282; Filisola, *Memorias*, 1, 275-76; Malcolm McLean, "Tenochtitlan, Dream Capital of Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXX (July 1966), 32-33.

¹³ Morton, *Terán and Texas*, pp. 182, 143.

¹⁴ Musquiz to Governor J. M. Viesca, San Antonio, October 25, 1829, quoted in Downs, "History of Mexicans in Texas," 215-22; *Representación dirigida por el ilustre ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Bexar al ...Congreso del Estado* (Brazoria, 1833), 7; Eugene C. Barker, "Native Latin American Contribution to the Colonization and Independence of Texas," *SWHQ*, XLVI (January 1943), 320-9; . To Stephen Austin, November 26, 1830, quoted in McLean, *Tenochtitlan*, 65; Barker, *Austin*, 267-77; Morton, *Terán and Texas*, 119-25.

¹⁵ Barker, *Austin*, 267-77; Morton, *Terán and Texas*, 119-25; Weber, ed., *Northern Mexico*, 14-5.

¹⁶ Samuel May Williams to Austin, Monclova, March 31, 1835, in Jenkins, ed., *Papers of the Texas Revolution*, I, 53; Henry M. Morfit to John Forsyth, near the Rio Brazos, August 27, 1836, in "Condition of Texas: Message from the President of the United States... December 22, 1836," House of Representatives, Exec. Doc. 35, 24th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 5. See also Lowrie, *Culture Conflict in Texas*, 64-7.

¹⁷ Austin to Mary Holley, New Orleans, August 21, 1835, in Barker, ed., *The Austin Papers*, III, 102.

¹⁸ Colonel Jose de las Piedras to General Anastasio Bustamante, December 10, 1827, item 2, folder 673, box 40,

Herbert E. Bolton Papers (Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

¹⁹ Daniel Tyler, "Anglo-American Penetration of the Southwest: The View from New Mexico," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 75 (Jan. 1972), 325-38. Notes to the San Antonio census, San Antonio, July 31, 1826, pp. 41-43, file 197 A, box 2q298, Nacogdoches Archives Transcripts; and Jose Marla Sanchez, *Viaje a Texas en 1828-1829* (A journey to Texas in 1828-1829) (Mexico City, 1939), 29.

²⁰ Lucas Alamán to Gen. Manuel Mier y Terán, Feb. 13, 1830, 4, folder 673, box 40, Bolton Papers. On centralism in Goliad, see Ana Caroline Castillo Crimm, "Finding Their Ways," in *Tejano Journey, 1770- 1860*, ed. Gerald E. Poyo {Austin, 1996}, 119-20; Andres Tijerina, "Under the Mexican Flag," *ibid.*, 44-46; Andres Tijerina, *Tejanos and Texas under the Mexican Flag, 1821-1836* {College Station, 1994}, 123-24; and Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience; A Political and Social History 1835-1836* {College Station, 1992}, 163. On the San Antonio volunteers, see *Ibíd.*, 165-66.

²¹ Eugene C. Barker, *Mexico and Texas, 1821-1835* (New York, 1965); Samuel H. Lowrie, *Culture Conflict in Texas, 1821 -1836* {New York, 1932}; and William C. Binkley, *The Texas Revolution* {Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952}; Lack, *Texas Revolutionary Experience*, 156-207; Jesus F. de la Teja, ed., *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N Seguin* {Austin, 1991}; and Tijerina, *Tejanos and Texas under the Mexican Flag*, 137-44. On Indians in the Texas Revolution, see Dianna Everett, *The Texas Cherokees: A People between Two Fires, 1819-1840* {Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990}; and Mary Whatley Clarke, *Chief Bowles and the Texas Cherokees* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971). Ethnicity did play a crucial part in the conflict, especially once the rebellion started. For ethnic and racial thinking, see James E. Crisp, "Anglo- Texan Attitudes toward the Mexican, 1821-1845" {Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1976}; and Arnoldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821 - 1900* {Austin, 1983}.

²² As a political system, "centralism" was not instituted until 1835, but the label had been in use since the late 1820s. On the rise of centralism, see Reynaldo Sordo, *El congreso en la primera republica centralista* {Congress during the first centralist republic} {Mexico

City, 1993); On the centralist regime, see Michael P. Costeloe, *The Central Republic in Mexico, 1835-1846*.

The case of Texas was hotly debated in Mexico City. See Nettie Lee Benson, "Texas As Viewed from Mexico, 1820-1834," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 90 (Jan. 1987), 219-91. See Law of April 6, 1830, translated in McLean, *Papers Concerning Robertson's Colony in Texas*. III, 494-99. See also *A Tejano Viewpoint from San Antonio*. ed. David J. Weber and Conchita Hassell (Austin, 1983), 58. On federalists' policies toward Coahuila and Texas, see Robles, *Coahuila y Texas*, 1, 483-97.

²³ Radford Berry to Vicente Córdova, Oct. 15, 1835, Nacogdoches Archives, 84:50; [Ayuntamiento minutes, 1835], NA 85:36; Vicente Córdova to the Alcalde of this village, Oct. 23, 1835, NA 84:59.

²⁴ John M. Dor to Sam Houston, Nov. 29, 1835, *Papers of the Texas Revolution*, 3: 22; Vicente Córdova to the citizen alcalde of this village, Oct. 20, Nov. 10, 1835, Nacogdoches Archives, 84:57, 69.

²⁵ Report of Committee..., Dec. 10, 1835, Raquet Family Papers in Lois Foster Blount Papers, East Texas Research Center, Stephen F. Austin University, Nacogdoches, Texas.

²⁶ Vicente Córdova to Manuel Flores, July 19, 1835, *Papers of the Texas Revolution*, I: 256; J. Bonnell to E. P. Gaines, June 4, 7, 1836, *PTR*, 7: 9-10; 47; Deposition of Juan Francisco Basques, Parish of Natchitoches, Sept. 7, 1836, *PTR*, 8:409.

²⁷ D. A. Hoffman, Notice given at my office in the Town of Nacogdoches, Apr. 9, 1836, *AJH*.

²⁸ Vicente Córdova to R. A. Irion, April 14, 1836, Irion to Sam Houston, Apr. 17, 1836, Henry Raguet to Houston, Apr. 17, 1836, *AJH*.

²⁹ R. A. Irion to Sam Houston, April 17, 1836, Andrew Jackson Houston Collection.

³⁰ Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1992), 169-73, 263.

³¹ Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836*, (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1992), 166-73; Richard Bruce Winders, *Crisis in the Southwest: The United States, Mexico, and the Struggle over Texas*, (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 23-8.

³² Mary Whatley Clarke, *Chief Bowles and the Texas Cherokees* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971);

James T. DeShields, *Border Wars of Texas*, ed. Matt Bradley (Tioga, Texas, 1912; rpt., Waco: Texian Press, 1976), 245-7, 270-81; Joseph Milton Nance, *After San Jacinto: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1836-1841* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963); Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1935; rpt., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); Dorman H. Winfrey and James M. Day, eds., *Texas Indian Papers* (4 vols., Austin: Texas State Library, 1959-61; rpt., 5 vols., Austin: Pemberton Press, 1966).

CHAPTER 7

Rethinking Borderlands History

Since the introduction of Turner's "Frontier Thesis" historians have grappled with "invisible lines" in our attempt to interpret the complex dynamic of North American history. Our customary narratives of colonization and conquest, whether written from the Spanish, French, British, or Native American perspective tend to isolate groups behind "frontiers," within "borderlands," and more recently within a "Middle Ground." We speak of "center" and "periphery," by which we mean the more populated metropolis as opposed to a *frontera*. Yet the Louisiana-Texas borderland represents a conjunction of Spanish, French, and Anglo-American movements from the southern, northern, and eastern edges of the continent. In reality, this region and others like it, despite our tendency to marginalize them, mark the "center" of colonial history.

Borderlands exhibit specific characteristics that help define their nature. First, they emerge from a confrontation between European claimants to territory. In the case of the Louisiana-Texas region, French and Spanish interests collided in the Red River region. Each located a settlement less than twenty miles apart, and within the

territorial confederation of Caddo bands. Situated between the Eastern Woodlands and the Great Plains, the Caddo held a virtual monopoly on trade moving between the two. Powerful, yet not warlike, the Caddo provided both settlements a safe haven. The Caddo, in turn, saw each European power as a potential trading partner. Yet the difference between Spanish and French trading policies gave France an economic advantage.

Secondly, the vicissitudes of life far removed from commercial centers made cooperation more expedient than confrontation. As these two communities grew, the French at Natchitoches prospered both in the Indian trade, and because their settlement—located on the Red River—enjoyed a water route to French settlements up and down the Mississippi River, and in particular to New Orleans. The Spanish suffered from both the lack of a water connection to Mexico and restrictive government policies that drove prices for goods coming from Spain to Mexico, thence overland to Texas, beyond the reach of the frontier population. In desperation, the post at Los Adaes turned to the French at Natchitoches for aid.

As borderland communities developed, they generally prospered by ignoring rather than adhering to restrictive

governmental authority. This proved true in the Louisiana-Texas borderland, where Spanish settlers ignored commercial prohibitions, developing instead a prosperous contraband trade. Louisiana needed livestock, which Texas had in abundance. In contrast, the Spanish needed food, clothing, and the essentials of survival. Within this isolated area, French, Spanish and Caddo negotiated ways to meet their needs and better their quality of life.

The people of the borderland intermarried, producing a mixed-blood population where typical metropolitan social classes faded or vanished entirely. They adapted themselves to their unique social environment, modifying traditional values to suit frontier conditions. The further one moved from metropolitan centers, the less hierarchical society became. Within the Louisiana-Texas borderlands, native peoples and Europeans cooperated, intermarried, and developed their own distinctive society.

Family provided the basis of success in the borderlands. Marriage among French, Spanish and Indians created kinship bonds that underlay physical, economic and social security. Within these communities, matrimony changed the status of relationships far beyond the couple, allying families in face-to-face networks that assisted

members with their everyday lives. The heterogeneous population intermarried and assimilated into a mixed-blood society much more easily than those subjected to the stricter racial and class hierarchies imposed in more metropolitan areas. Those who settled the borderlands constructed a new social environment, modifying traditional values and abandoning predetermined characteristics in order to suit face-to-face frontier conditions.

The Spanish government, in particular, tried to disrupt these intimate kinship networks and to eliminate the transnational construction of borderlands society. When Spain acquired Louisiana in 1763, it might have attached it to Mexico since Los Adaes, the capital of Texas for more than half a century, sat juxtaposed to Natchitoches. Instead, decisions to realign the northern frontier of New Spain for defensive purposes combined with the dislike held by several key officials for the non-conformity of the borderland people in a decision to remove all Spanish residents from East Texas and to place Louisiana under the administration of Cuba. Unwilling to bow to government intervention, the *Adaesaños* spent the next five years making their way back to the borderland, where they established themselves at Nacogdoches and restored economic

and social ties with Louisiana. Yet, despite their efforts, the changing geopolitical landscape brought new challenges. Amid the vicissitudes of war in Europe, Louisiana suddenly and unexpectedly changed hands again in 1803. The new claimant, the fledgling United States, had introduced North America to the concept of separation from Europe by means of armed revolution. Aggressive, capitalistic, and expansionistic American citizens flocked from the more settled areas toward the borderlands where, interestingly, they perceived greater opportunity.

Although absorbing a foreign population into their republic caused serious questions and concerns for the United States, Louisiana caused little problem except for the question of the border between the new territory and Spanish Texas. Many Americans, including Adams, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe attempted to force the issue of sovereignty over Texas by asserting that La Salle's abortive colony constituted a French claim that transferred to the United States. A great deal of popular opinion supported this view.

Though Spain had no intention of surrendering Texas to complete a dubious transaction on Napoleon's part, the United States insisted on a definable border. Before 1763,

when Louisiana came under Spanish control, Spain and France failed to settle officially the boundary between Louisiana and Texas, though a gentleman's agreement between the Spanish commander at the presidio of Los Adaes and the French at Natchitoches accepted a line running from the Arroyo Hondo to the Red River north of Natchitoches as the appropriate division. When France ceded Louisiana to Spain, the boundary question became an internal one and Spanish provincial governors of Cuba, responsible for Louisiana, and the Internal Provinces, with responsibility for Texas, accepted the Arroyo Hondo dividing line between Louisiana and Texas. Following the Louisiana Purchase, three nations claimed the area that would become the "Neutral Strip"—the United States, Spain, and the Caddo Indians. U.S. officials, including President Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State James Madison, and James Monroe, argued that the Rio Grande constituted the boundary of the Louisiana Purchase. Many Americans, eager for territorial expansion, echoed this claim to the Province of Texas. For the Spanish, the American boundary claims appeared preposterous. By 1806, inability by either side to enforce a border brought the two to the brink of war, diffused only

by an agreement between the Spanish and U.S. military commanders at the site.

For the next decade and a half, a region existed between the Arroyo Hondo and the Sabine River over which neither nation, by agreement, exerted authority. This "Neutral Ground" became a major wound in the heart of the Louisiana-Texas borderland that brought with it a reputation for violence that historians still attach to the region. Yet, until the arrival of the United States and the imposition of the "Neutral Ground", no military altercations had occurred since the "Chicken War" of 1719. Certainly, the filibusters who staged their armies in the "Neutral Ground" for their incursions into Texas during the next two decades, and the bandits from both nations who sought refuge in the "Neutral Ground," endangering commerce between Natchitoches and Nacogdoches left a stigma. But, prior to the Louisiana Purchase, the clash of imperial claims in the region had occurred without violence.

As U.S. control strengthened on the Louisiana side of the "Neutral Ground," a decade of revolution rocked the Texas side of the Sabine. Interestingly, none began in the borderland. Instead, they occurred first in the south where larger population centers, a more unequal distribution of

wealth, and a strict class system combined with the political aspirations of the *creoles* class in Mexico to bring civil war. The first, the Hidalgo Revolt, began as a clash between social and economic classes. As it spread north into Texas, American filibusters joined the fray, only to become disillusioned by what they saw as a glorious revolution gone wrong. For the people of the District of Nacogdoches, the resulting backlash of Royalist vengeance brought destruction. Without the ability to defend themselves borderland residents relied upon their kinship networks, crossing the Sabine into Louisiana where family and friends offered safety.

Historians have acknowledged this "pattern" of escape in discussing the tumultuous years between 1810 and 1838 without explaining that, for the original families of Nacogdoches, crossing the Sabine had been a way of life for generations. It seems doubtful that they perceived this as crossing an international border. They saw the region between Nacogdoches and Natchitoches as their community, their home, their world. Reminiscent of current issues on the border between Mexico and the United States, an agreement between governments to draw a line on a map hardly called for a change in their traditional lifestyle.¹

In response to filibustering incursions, and despite the Onís-Adams Treaty, Spain conceived an audacious plan to invite foreign settlers into Texas. But before they could implement the plan, a successful independence movement left a Mexican Republic to deal with the problem of holding Texas. The resulting colonization plan brought thousands of settlers to Texas, but with a fatal flaw. Empresarios such as Austin, DeWitt, and Edwards brought legal immigrants from the United States, while thousands more simply crossed the border illegally. In many cases, the very settlers Mexico counted on to protect its territory from the U.S. were *norteños*.

As a borderland area, the District of Nacogdoches had always had a multi-national population that easily assimilated into the society and culture of the region. Unfortunately, these new settlers from across the Sabine came with far different attitudes. The newcomers viewed the mixed-blood borderlanders as a mongrelized race, and held them in contempt. The empresario Haden Edwards, like many others, considered the Mexican population an impediment to Anglo-Saxon progress, and while the term "Manifest Destiny" had not yet become the mantra of United States expansion, the attitude remained fully fixed in the minds of many.

Ignorant of local land grants and dissatisfied with the response from Mexican authorities to his insistence that, in Anglo-American fashion, the people of Nacogdoches present deeds or forfeit their claims, the Edwards colonists began a brief and unsuccessful revolt. As political conditions in Mexico deteriorated, the whole of Texas found itself a borderland where Mexican law and Texas's political and commercial interests clashed. Ultimately, a war that began in the south again impacted the people of the Nacogdoches region. While the conflicts of the Texas Revolution remained to the south, tensions in Nacogdoches grew between Texians and *Tejanos* when the latter refused to take up arms against their nation. Interestingly reminiscent of militias during the American War for Independence, they remained perfectly willing to defend their region if attacked but they refused to go beyond its borders.

With the end of the Texas Revolution, Anglo-Texans dominated the new government, marginalizing the *Tejano* population by imposing American law, emphasizing Anglo culture, and establishing the white supremacist attitudes that pervaded the southern United States. In response, a group of old borderland families, along with bands of

Cherokees driven from the United States only to find themselves again faced with the same anti-Indian sentiment that had cost them their homes in the Carolinas, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama, rose in an abortive attempt to bring back Mexican government. The Córdova Rebellion, as historians have denoted it, proved too little, too late. It has become, for practical purposes, a sidelight that, if even mentioned, quickly disappears amid the triumph of the Texas Revolution. Usually described as malcontents, or even bandits, those involved in the revolt saw their world disappearing, and made one last desperate attempt to save it.

As Jeremy Adleman and Stephen Aron have suggested, borderlands have an identifiable beginning and end. The Louisiana-Texas borderland began in a confrontation between the French and Spanish in 1716, and ended when Anglo-Americans gained hegemony on both sides of the Sabine River. Although Texas would not enter the Union for another decade, when the U.S. then pushed its borders south to the Rio Grande and west to the Pacific, the Louisiana-Texas borderland died in 1838. Yet by exploring questions of evolving community and national identities in the Louisiana-Texas borderlands and the infamous "Neutral

Strip," historians have the opportunity to expand our understanding of the true nature of North American borderlands within a broader context.²

The Louisiana Purchase vastly expanded the United States, and Anglo-American historiography, following Turner's East-West model, rolled past the Old Southwest with Lewis and Clark. Except for the Texas Revolution and the Mexican-U.S. War, the Louisiana-Texas borderlands remain, like an old trunk in the attic, forgotten and collecting dust. To paraphrase historian Light Cummins, no "distinct society or geopolitical entity" views the entire history of the region as its own "special story."³

During the 18th and early 19th centuries the borderland of the lower Mississippi Valley represented an area where interdependent relationships between native peoples, Africans, and Europeans superseded imperial rivalry in a context where remoteness from the seats of government and commerce necessitated interdependence, producing a uniquely self-directed society. As these borderlands gave way to rigid national boundaries, the fluid and inclusive intercultural society that developed there yielded to more structured, exclusive hierarchies, destroying the unique interdependence of the borderlands. Studying such

societies, on the perimeters of European colonial empires, allow us the opportunity to expand our understanding of the cultural complexities of the borderlands while integrating them into the larger contexts of transnational and trans-Atlantic history.

In a 1933 article, Herbert Eugene Bolton called for an end to national histories in favor of a true North American perspective. While North American history remains far too complex for any one historian to master, there remains a need to end the division of U.S., Latin American and Canadian history into separate and self-contained fields. Instead, we should strive to consider the common continental history we share. Such an approach acknowledges that people, ideas, and institutions do not adhere to national boundaries. While Europeans expanded their colonial empires during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, only to lose them to revolutionary nation-building in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Native Americans and Euro-Americans adapted, assimilated, and acculturated, creating unique communities where the necessities of survival connected, rather than divided, combining economic and social constructions into distinctive historical processes. Through the study of

areas such as the Louisiana-Texas borderland, historians have the opportunity to consider local versions of larger processes, and to incorporate their findings into the larger scope of a truly continental historical experience.⁴

Notes

¹ Secondary sources on this practice include Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Military Experience: A political and Social History, 1835-1836*, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1992), 116-7; Winders, *Crisis in the Southwest*, 76; Andrés Tijerina, *Tejanos & Texas Under the Mexican Flag, 1821-1836*, College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1994, 141; John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 212; Julia Kathryn Garrett, *Green Flag Over Texas*, (New York: The Cordova Press, Inc., 1939), 231-3.

² Jeremy Adleman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 815-16.

³ Light T. Cummins, "Getting Beyond Bolton: Columbian Consequences and the Spanish Borderlands," Review Essay, *New Mexico Historical Review* 70 (April 1994): 203.

⁴ Herbert E. Bolton, "The Epic of Greater America" *American Historical Review*, 38: 3, (April 1933), 448-74.

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ABSTRACT

INVISIBLE LINES:

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A BORDERLAND

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Invisible lines define our world. Geopolitically, these artificial divisions mark the boundaries of nations, states, counties, cities, and even private property. In North America, they define us as Canadians, Americans, or Mexicans. They united those within and separate those outside. More subtle invisible lines exist within the structure of society that categorize us by race, social and economic class, education, politics and religious beliefs.

In the Americas, these divisions began during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. As the major European powers colonized the Americas, cartographers produced beautifully illustrated, brightly colored maps, demarcating the boundaries of each claimant's territory in bold outlines. With seemingly scientific precision, they divided the largely unexplored and unsettled areas as if they controlled them as completely as they did their

nation-states in the Old World. Yet these maps demarcated only an illusion of imperial control. Instead of borders that clearly separated North American empires from one another, the sparsely settled borderlands at the intersection of European claims became "melting pots" of social and economic cooperation among peoples of various races, nationalities and cultures. Within these pockets of settlement far removed from metropolitan centers of political and economic power, and social control, native peoples and Europeans often cooperated, intermarried, and developed their own unique and independent engines of self-determination to ensure their survival, safety and prosperity.

This dissertation explores the Louisiana-Texas borderlands and the infamous "Neutral Strip," integrating it into the larger diplomatic and political developments of the period between 1721 and 1838. It addresses questions of evolving national identities as Hispanic, French, Native American, African American, and mixed blood peoples cooperated in developing an economic and social system, only to see it destroyed as Anglo-American settlers became numerically dominant and imposed their rigid hierarchical social structure. In doing so, this study attempts to

illuminate the true nature of this borderland region within
a wider North American perspective.