

CABEZA DE VACA

In Texas 1528-1536

FOLLOWING THE DISCOVERY of the New World, Spanish explorers actively investigated the unknown lands and sought to establish settlements. From the islands of the Caribbean and the West Indies the conquistadors sailed along the coastline of the Gulf of Mexico, stopping occasionally to take on supplies and to search for riches. Often a reception that ranged from unfriendly to hostile caused the Spanish to move on.

The name so well associated with those early explorers is Cabeza de Vaca. Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca served as treasurer of the Pánfilo de Narváez expedition that sailed in 1528 from Cuba, intending to settle at the mouth of the Rio Grande after two other attempted expeditions, by Alonso Alvarez de Piñeda and Nuño de Guzmán, had failed. While en route, Narváez, Cabeza de Vaca, and a party of three hundred men landed in Florida to search for gold, then missed connections with their ships and wandered around the interior from Tampa Bay to present-day northern Florida. There they constructed five crude boats and attempted to make their way along the Gulf Coast to Mexico.

The boats separated in a storm and became shipwrecked on the Texas coast at various locations now thought to be Galveston Island, the mouth of the San Bernard River, Cavallo Pass at Matagorda Bay, and St. Joseph Island at the Aransas Pass inlet into Aransas Bay. The survivors of the shipwreck faced great misery and deprivation. Many died of hunger, exposure, and illness, or at the hands of Indians. Enslaved by Indians, the strangers became the gatherers of wood and the performers of other menial camp tasks. They also helped their Indian hosts as traders and as healers.

Of the approximately three hundred who set off afoot at Tampa Bay, only four rejoined their Spanish comrades in Mexico eight years later. These four, Cabeza de Vaca, Andrés Dorantes, Alonso del Castillo, and Dorantes's slave Esteban the Moor, who was from Azamor on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, often went with their Indian captors in search of tunas, the fruit of the prickly pear. While on such a food-hunting trip in 1535, these four survivors of the Narváez expedition escaped.

Historians differ on the route to freedom these men

took. After wandering around in present south central Texas perhaps as far south as San Patricio on the Nueces River and into central Texas as far north as San Marcos, they made their way to what is now San Antonio and then headed west by northwest. They noted the abundance of water, wood, and game in the Balcones Escarpment area. The Spaniards visited with Indian tribes along the way perhaps as far northwest as Big Spring before altering their course to the southwest to the Presidio region, then up the Rio Grande to where El Paso stands today. Southwestern Borderlands historian Herbert Eugene Bolton wrote that the Indians who greeted the Coronado expedition a few years later spoke of the Cabeza de Vaca group passing not far to the south on the Great Plains. Another account holds that the survivors crossed the Rio Grande to Reynosa, traipsed around in northern Mexico by way of Monclova, and then crossed the Rio Grande again above Del Rio before skirting the northern edge of the Big Bend region. From the El Paso region they journeyed through Chihuahua, crossed the Mexican deserts south of Arizona, and went to the Pacific Coast. This foursome strongly desired to find fellow Christians and to put their captive days behind them.

The four survivors arrived at Culiacán in the spring of 1536 after their eight-month hike. Along the way they encountered many Indian tribes, served as healers to the native inhabitants, and observed carefully their surroundings as they pressed on towards the setting sun.

The legacy of Cabeza de Vaca and his companions is the first observation by Europeans of the land, people, plants, and animals from Galveston through Texas and Mexico. They also heard references to great cities of wealth in the north country, although they did not actually see them. Their stories impressed the viceroy, Antonio de Mendoza, and influenced a major expedition led by Coronado, into the interior in search of a mythical city of wealth. Cabeza de Vaca returned to Spain and later led an expedition of his own in South America. Dorantes and Castillo remained in Mexico and married rich widows. Esteban, still a slave, accompanied a Franciscan priest on an expedition into northern Mexico and the present American Southwest.

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TALES OF THE SEVEN CITIES of Cibola in northern New Spain had already excited the Spanish even before Cabeza de Vaca told his story. Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza at first offered the expedition's leadership to De Vaca, who declined the honor, then appointed Fray Marcos de Niza, a Franciscan priest, to head an advance party. Fray Marcos took with him Esteban the slave, survivor of the Cabeza de Vaca group, whom Mendoza had purchased from Andrés Dorantes, as a guide.

The band left Culiacán in early 1539 and moved northward. Fray Marcos sent Esteban on ahead with some Indians to observe and to report his findings. Messengers were to be sent back with a cross of sufficient size that would signify the richness of a discovery. When a messenger returned to Fray Marcos bearing a cross the size of a man, the Franciscan monk moved with haste to Cibola.

In the meantime, Esteban had cowed local Indians along the route with his style of healing, womanizing, and boasting. He met his death at the hands of the Zuñi at the present Arizona-New Mexico state line. Apparently he came across some people who presumed by the trinkets in his possession that he was a spy for a neighboring enemy tribe.

Fray Marcos came to the death site of the bearded Moor of Azamor, stealthily peeked from a summit at Cibola, saw the green valleys and many houses in the village, erected crosses to claim the land for Spain, and fled back to Mexico. His news encouraged Viceroy Mendoza to send forth a mighty expedition led by Francisco Vázquez de Coronado to claim the land for Spain.

In the spring of 1540, the Coronado expedition of soldiers, Indian workers, and livestock left Culiacán, journeyed through present northwestern Mexico, and arrived at a Zuñi settlement in Arizona that Fray Marcos called Cibola. The Spanish subdued the Zuñis, explored to the north and east, and wintered at Tiguex on the Rio Grande near present-day Albuquerque. They moved to the Llano Estacado, or Staked Plains, in the spring of 1541. The Spanish acquired a guide whom they called "the Turk", who was probably a Pawnee Indian. The Turk had been captured and enslaved by Indians in New Mexico, and he looked secretly upon the Spanish as his ticket home. He offered to guide the Europeans to a fabulous place a distance away, known as Quivira, where riches abounded.

The greedy Spanish trudged along in amazement at

this vast country of the Great Plains. They watched endless herds of buffalo, greeted various Indian tribes, and ate the wild fruit that grew there. Their journey seemingly became aimless because of the absence of distinctive land features to guide them in their flat High Plains country. It soon became apparent that the Turk had lied about knowing the way to Quivira, so the Spanish shackled him to the rear guard and listened to a new Indian guide.

After wandering around until they came across some sharp topographical breaks on the Cap Rock Escarpment, Coronado divided his force. He sent the army back to Tiguex while he led a contingent of thirty horsemen on to Quivira.

Historians differ on the conquistador's route from this point. He may have gone northward through the Tule and Palo Duro canyons on his way to the Arkansas River. Then again, in order to pass through the country where the types of vegetation his chronicler mentioned are abundant, he may have continued to the southeast for a distance, then cut back north. The more likely course, since Coronado's group traveled "by the needle" as they moved northward, probably beginning this phase of their trip from present-day Coleman County, was to cross the Red River near the mouth of the Salt Fork north of present-day Vernon and then proceed through western Oklahoma and Kansas to the Arkansas River.

Coronado reached his destination in the summer of 1541. The villages of Quivira were in south central Kansas near the great bend of the Arkansas River. The Spanish, extremely disappointed at their discovery of villages with grass-thatched roofs instead of cities of gold, explored a little beyond before deciding to return to Tiguex. Before they left Quivira, they repaid the Turk for his lies and misleading directions and for fomenting attacks on the Spanish by garroting him with a rope.

Coronado's quest for riches now vanished, the expedition turned southwestward to Tiguex for the winter of 1541-42. His force returned to Mexico in 1542 by retracing their earlier route. After two years on the trail and at considerable expenditure of the Crown's treasury and manpower, the Coronado expedition limped home. They left an excellent account of the land and its people, but also left the notion that the Great Plains and the Texas area were not worth the further attention of Spain. This notion prevailed for the next one and one-half centuries.

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THE DE SOTO-MOSCOSO EXPEDITION

Activity 2.4

In Texas 1542-1543

WHILE SPANISH SOLDIERS MARCHED to the Great Plains from the southwest, other agents of Spain approached Texas from the east. Spanish authorities sought precious metals in the interior as they made a long trek through the wilderness of present-day Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. Hernando de Soto, who had developed wealth and a reputation in Peru with Pizarro, led the explorers as they recorded their impressions of this vast land new to Europeans.

De Soto had received a commission from Emperor Charles V as governor of Cuba and *adelantado* of Florida. After attempting unsuccessfully to persuade Cabeza de Vaca to accompany his expedition, De Soto set out in April, 1538, with six hundred men on nine ships. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean, stopped briefly in Cuba, then went on to Tampa Bay. For the next three years this group experienced occasional military victories, misfortunes, hunger, and discoveries. They left a record of courage, improvisation, and frequent cruelty towards the native inhabitants, in addition to lengthy descriptions of the country they traversed. But they found no treasure in the form they sought.

From mid-1539 to early 1542 the expedition explored the present southeastern United States. The trek took its toll on the Europeans. Lost, reduced in force in men and animals by more than half, and short of supplies, the Spaniards' hardships increased in 1542 when their commander became terminally ill with fever. As he lay dying, De Soto named Luis de Moscoso as his successor.

Upon assuming command, Moscoso conferred with officers about the best course to leave from this spot where the Arkansas River flowed into the Mississippi River. The leadership collectively agreed to head west in order to reach Mexico and salvation by land. The De Soto-Moscoso expedition moved across southern Arkansas to Hot Springs and then across the Red River probably near present Texarkana. Where the Spaniards entered Texas and their route within Texas are in dispute. The written account mentions rivers, villages, the abundance or scarcity of food, disposition of Indians, and terrain.

In general the group of Spaniards with their Indian retinue traveled in a westwardly direction for 150 leagues (approximately 425 miles) from the

Mississippi River. Presuming they did not stray too far from such a course, and supported by a modern understanding of the terrain as well as animal and plant life, we may reasonably assume the Moscoso party moved along the higher ground that divides the natural drainage between the Red and Sulphur rivers to the Bonham-Sherman area and on to Gainesville. Dipping to the southwest slightly, the Spanish went through the Eastern Cross Timbers, crossed the Grand Prairie, and entered the Western Cross Timbers. They probably made camp on the Brazos in the general region of Young County at a place they called Guasco.

The Spanish learned from Indian captives that other white men had been seen farther to the west. Moscoso did not know about the Coronado expedition and must have been most curious about this information. Perhaps Mexico was closer than he knew. If these travelers the Indians mentioned could be found, then he and his men could soon get back to civilization and leave this deprived area and their hardships behind. The Spanish experienced a scarcity of game and corn the farther west they went. They gave up on finding precious metal and now worried about survival in a hostile environment.

Scouting parties going out from Guasco in various directions found nothing of interest to the Spanish. Moscoso then led his men on a journey of ten days to the sunset on the advice of Guasco natives. The local inhabitants oftentimes went to the suggested location in pursuit of deer. The trip was through an area covered by trees. When they reached the river they named Daycao, which may be the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River in northwestern Fisher County, the Spanish turned back to their headquarters in Guasco. They discovered that the farther west they went, the more inhospitable the country became. Already the summer was getting away. To spend a winter in such an area was not even considered.

Hastily, the Spaniards retraced their steps to the Mississippi River, built boats, and floated to the sea. They traveled along the Texas coast to Pánuco, where they arrived on July 2, 1543. This ill-fated expedition journeyed thousands of miles through the humid woodlands to the semiarid Great Plains but found no great riches in the forms expected. Their contribution to our heritage is our first recorded glimpse of the interior from Florida to Texas.

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Estevanico

Estevanico (also known as Estevan and Estebanico) was born sometime around the beginning of the 16th century in the town of Azemmour on the west coast of Morocco. During that time the Arabs of Morocco were in constant warfare with their Spanish and Portuguese neighbors to the north. At some point, Estevanico was captured and sold as a slave in Spain. He was often called Estevanico the Black, and it may well be that he was African or part-African in descent, since there were many years of contact between the Arabs and Berbers of North Africa and the Blacks who lived south of the Sahara.

Estevanico (which is a Spanish diminutive for "Stephen") came into the possession of Andres Dorantes de Carranca, a nobleman of the Extremadura region of Spain. Dorantes joined the expedition to North America led by Panfilo de Narvaez that included Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. They landed in Florida in April 1528. Disregarding the advice of his captains, Narvaez abandoned his ships and marched into the interior on May 1 in search of gold. The history of the succeeding trek comes from the report that Cabeza de Vaca made after his return to Spain. At first, there is no mention of Estevanico.

Narvaez's expedition was attacked by Native Americans near the modern city of Tallahassee. The Spaniards went to a bay on the Gulf of Mexico and constructed five boats with which to sail along the coastline to a Spanish base in Mexico. They set sail on September 22, 1528; Estevanico was in the third boat, commanded by Dorantes. In November they were hit by storms and Dorantes' boat and the one captained by Cabeza de Vaca were wrecked on Galveston Island off the coast of Texas. In the spring of 1529 only 15 men were still alive. Thirteen of them, including Estevanico, left Galveston to try to get to Mexico overland. Cabeza de Vaca was too sick to travel and was left behind.

The party commanded by Dorantes headed west and south. Several died along the way, and the rest were captured by Native Americans at San Antonio Bay. By the autumn of 1530 only Dorantes, Estevanico, and Alonzo del Castillo Maldonado were still alive. They were harshly treated by their captors. Dorantes escaped and went inland to a village of the Mariame tribe, where his life was easier. In the spring of 1532 Estevanico and Castillo also got free and made it to Dorantes' village. In the spring of 1533 they were surprised to see Cabeza de Vaca, who was working as a trader among the various tribes, turn up. The four men were forced to separate but agreed to meet the following autumn at the annual festival to celebrate the harvest of prickly pears.

They did meet in the fall of 1533 but were unable to escape. They returned with their different captors and met again in the fall of 1534 at which time they were able to escape. They came to a camp of the Avavares tribe where they were warmly welcomed as medicine men. Estevanico joined the others in healing the Indians, and was especially noted for his ability to learn to speak other languages and to use sign language. They stayed with the Avavares until the spring of 1535. Their reputation as healers preceded them, and they were welcomed wherever they went.

As the four men went farther west, they saw evidence of different cultures. They saw a metal bell and medicine gourds made by the Pueblo tribes of New Mexico. Estevanico took one of these gourds and used it in his healing act. The four Westerners reached the Rio Grande River at the end of 1535, and Castillo and Estevanico headed upstream. There they came upon the permanent towns or "pueblos" of the Jumano tribe. When the others caught up with them, they found Estevanico surrounded by Indians, who treated him like a god. Along the way, the men heard tales of a group of rich cities in the interior, which they called the Seven Cities of Cibola.

From the Rio Grande, Estevanico and the three Spaniards traveled into what is now the Mexican state of Chihuahua. As they traveled, they saw more and more evidence of contact with Europeans. They met up with a party of Spaniards in March 1536 and entered Mexico City on July 24, 1536. The four men, including Estevanico, were well received by Viceroy Antonio Mendoza, who was intrigued by their tales of wealthy cities to the north.

Cabeza de Vaca returned to Spain while Castillo and Dorantes married and settled down in Mexico. Dorantes sold or gave Estevanico to Viceroy Mendoza. Mendoza wanted to send an expedition north and eventually accepted the offer of a Spanish friar, Fray Marcos de Niza, to lead it. He appointed Estevanico to be his guide. They went north to the town of Culiacan in the autumn of 1538, where Francisco Vázquez de Coronado had recently been appointed governor. Estevanico and Fray Marcos left Culiacan on March 7, 1539. On March 21 Fray Marcos sent Estevanico

ahead to scout the trail. Four days later, Native American messengers returned to Fray Marcos to report that Estevanico had heard news that he was 30 days' march from Cibola and asked Fray Marcos to join him.

Fray Marcos headed northward, but Estevanico did not wait for him. As the friar entered each new village, he found a message from Estevanico saying that he had continued on. Fray Marcos chased after him for weeks but was unable to catch up. Estevanico headed through the large desert region of the Mexican state of Sonora and southern Arizona; he was the first Westerner to enter what are now Arizona and New Mexico. Wherever he traveled, Estevanico sent his medicine gourd ahead of him to announce his arrival. In May he reached the Zuni pueblo of Hawikuh, the first of the "Seven Cities of Cibola." There he showed his magic gourd, but the chief threw it down in anger and told Estevanico to leave the town. The chief took away all his possessions and put him in a house on the edge of the town without food or water. The next morning he was attacked by a band of warriors and killed.

Several of the Native American escorts escaped and returned to tell Fray Marcos the news of Estevanico's death. In his report to Mendoza, Fray Marcos said that he continued to travel north until he could see Hawikuh, or Cibola, but did not enter the pueblo. In his report he said that it was a rich place that was even bigger than Mexico City. Since it is in fact only a small pueblo, it seems as though Fray Marcos did not make the trip he claimed. However, his report inspired Mendoza to send out the ill-fated Coronado expedition. When they reached the small village of Hawikuh they learned that Fray Marcos had been lying. They also found that the chief had appropriated Estevanico's green dinner plates, his greyhound dogs, and his metal bells.

When asked why they had killed Estevanico, the Zuni said that he had claimed that there was a huge army coming behind him with many weapons. The chiefs met in council and decided that he was a spy and that it was safer to kill him. Once dead, they cut up his body into little pieces and distributed the parts among the chiefs.

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Fray Marcos de Niza

The birthplace of Marcos de Niza is unknown, but he was either French or Italian, probably the former. In his youth he lived at Nice in the duchy of Savoy. He became a Franciscan and went to Santo Domingo as a missionary in 1531, later going to Guatemala, Peru, and Mexico City.

The reports of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and three companions, who walked from the Texas coast to Culiacán in 1536, raised hopes in Mexico of fabulous riches to the north. Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza prepared the expedition of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado to investigate. However, in 1539 he dispatched Marcos de Niza with Estabanico (who had been with Cabeza de Vaca) to explore in advance. The friar sent his companion ahead. Estabanico reached the Zuni pueblo of Hawikuh in western New Mexico and was killed by Indians. Marcos learned of his companion's death but pressed on, escorted by friendly Mexican Indians, until he saw Hawikuh from a neighboring hillside. He gained an "incredibly distorted impression of Hawikuh," and it has been suggested that the sun shining on the dwellings made them look like gold and silver.

Marcos believed he had seen one of the "Seven Cities," originally located by legend on an Atlantic island but now thought to be westward. Returning to Mexico, he described the place as larger than Mexico City, with houses 10 stories high whose doors and fronts were made of turquoise.

Mendoza needed no more convincing. The Coronado expedition, with the friar as guide, departed early in 1540. They reached Hawikuh on July 7 and captured it. But the soldiers were enraged on finding nothing but a poor Indian village. They cursed the friar so vehemently that Coronado, not wishing to have the blood of a churchman on his hands, sent him back to Mexico City. The accompanying message stated, "Friar Marcos has not told the truth in a single thing that he said."

The rest of the friar's career proved uneventful. He apparently became stricken with paralysis and lived first at Jalapa and then in a monastery at Xochimilco. Bishop Juan de Zumárraga gave him aid until his own death in 1548. Nothing more is known other than that the friar died on March 25, 1558.

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Hernan Cortes

Like many of those who would eventually become conquistadores in the Americas, Cortés was born in the Castilian province of Extremadura, in the small city of Medellín. He came from a respected military family but was a rather sickly child. He went to the distinguished University of Salamanca to study law but dropped out before long. By this time, tales of the wonders of the New World were being told all over Spain, appealing to teens like Cortés. He decided to head to Hispaniola to seek his fortune.

Cortés was fairly well educated and had family connections, so when he arrived in Hispaniola in 1503 he soon found work as a notary and was given a plot of land and a number of natives to work it for him. His health improved and he trained as a soldier, and took part in the subjugation of those parts of Hispaniola that had held out against the Spanish. He became known as a good leader, an intelligent administrator, and a ruthless fighter. It was these traits that made Diego Velázquez select him for his expedition to Cuba.

Velázquez was tasked with the subjugation of the island of Cuba. He set out with three ships and 300 men, including young Cortés, who was a clerk assigned to the treasurer of the expedition. Ironically, also along on the expedition was Bartolomé de Las Casas, who would eventually describe the horrors of the conquest and denounce the conquistadores. The conquest of Cuba was marked by a number of unspeakable abuses, including massacres and the burning alive of native chief Hatuey. Cortés distinguished himself as a soldier and administrator and was made mayor of the new city of Santiago. His influence grew, and he watched in 1517-1518 as two expeditions to conquer the mainland met with failure.

In 1518 it was Cortés' turn. With 600 men, he began one of the most audacious feats in history: the conquest of the Aztec Empire, which at that time had tens if not hundreds of thousands of warriors. After landing with his men, he made his way to Tenochtitlán, capital of the Empire. Along the way, he defeated Aztec vassal states, adding their strength to his. He reached Tenochtitlán in 1519 and was able to occupy it without a fight. When Governor Velázquez of Cuba sent an expedition under Pánfilo de Narváez to rein in Cortés, he had to leave the city to fight. He defeated Narváez and added his men to his own.

Cortés returned to Tenochtitlán with his reinforcements, but found it in a state of uproar, as one of his lieutenants, Pedro de Alvarado, had ordered a massacre of Aztec nobility in his absence. Aztec Emperor Moctezuma was killed by his own people while trying to placate the crowd and an angry mob chased the Spanish from the city in what became known as the Noche Triste, or "sad night." Cortés was able to regroup, re-take the city and by 1521 he was in charge of Tenochtitlán for good.

Cortés never could have pulled off the defeat of the Aztec Empire without a great deal of good luck. First of all, he had found Gerónimo de Aguilar, a Spanish priest who had been shipwrecked on the mainland several years before and who could speak the Maya language. Between Aguilar and a woman slave named Malinche who could speak Maya and Nahuatl, Cortés was able to communicate effectively during his conquest.

Cortés also had amazing luck in terms of the Aztec vassal states. They nominally owed allegiance to the Aztec, but in reality hated them and Cortés was able to exploit this hatred. With thousands of native warriors as allies, he was able to meet the Aztecs on strong terms and bring about their downfall.

He also benefited from the fact that Moctezuma was a weak leader, who looked for divine signs before making any decisions. Cortés believed that Moctezuma thought that the Spanish were emissaries from the God Quetzalcoatl, which may have caused him to wait before crushing them.

Cortés' final stroke of luck was the timely arrival of reinforcements under the inept Pánfilo de Narváez. Governor Velázquez intended to weaken Cortés and bring him back to Cuba, but after Narváez was defeated he wound up providing Cortés with men and supplies that he desperately needed.

From 1521 to 1528 Cortés served as governor of New Spain, as Mexico came to be known. The crown sent administrators, and Cortés himself oversaw the rebuilding of the city and exploration expeditions into other parts of Mexico. Cortés still had many enemies, however, and his repeated insubordination caused him to have very little support from the crown. In 1528 he returned to Spain to plead his case for more power. What he got was a mixed bag: he was elevated to noble status and given the title of Marquis of the Oaxaca Valley, one of the richest territories in the New World. He was also, however, removed from the governorship and would never again wield much power in the New World.

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Alonso Álvarez de Pineda commanded a Spanish expedition that sailed along the Gulf of Mexico coastline from Florida to Cabo Rojo, Mexico, in 1519. He and his men were the first Europeans to explore and map the Gulf. Álvarez de Pineda's voyage of "more than 300 leagues" ended when he encountered Hernán Cortés, who perceived him as a rival and arrested the messengers he sent ashore near Cortés's base Vera Cruz on the Bay of Campeche. Álvarez de Pineda then withdrew back up the Mexican coast to the Río Pánuco, where he established a settlement of his own near the site of the future city of Tampico. Despite his pioneering exploration, however, Álvarez remains a shadowy figure. The only original source connecting his name with the reconnaissance ordered in 1519 by Francisco de Garay, Spanish governor of Jamaica, is Bernal Díaz del Castillo, historian of the Mexican conquest. Díaz was present when Cortés confronted Garay's four ships in late July or early August 1519 and relates that Álvarez de Pineda was in command of the vessels. Both Díaz and Cortés, who fails to mention the captain's name, reveal that Álvarez de Pineda already had been in contact with the natives on the Pánuco, and Díaz says that he was settling there.

No account of the voyage itself, by either Álvarez or Garay, has come to light. Garay's report to the Spanish crown, however, is summarized in a 1521 royal *cédula* granting him the territory, called Amichel, that Álvarez de Pineda had explored in his name. Although the document identifies neither Álvarez nor other participants in the voyage, it comprises the only extant description of the exploration. The four ships, carrying 270 men, sailed from Jamaica by late March 1519—about six weeks after Cortés had sailed from Cuba on the expedition that led to the conquest of Mexico. The stated purpose of Álvarez de Pineda's voyage was to explore the coast between Florida peninsula and the southern Gulf, in hope of finding a strait to the Pacific Ocean. After clearing the Yucatán Channel, which separates Cuba and the mainland, the ships continued north until the Florida panhandle was sighted, then turned east, expecting to find the passage that was supposed to separate the "island of Florida" from the mainland. The ships probably neared the end of the Florida peninsula before contrary wind and strong current forced them to turn about, then sailed west and south along the coast until they found Cortés's settlement of Villa Rica, the first European settlement on the North American mainland.

Álvarez de Pineda thus proved that Florida was not an island, as reported in 1513. On or about the feast day of Espíritu Santo (Pentecost), which fell on June 2 in 1519 by the Julian calendar, Álvarez registered the discharge of a mighty river and named it, for the religious occasion, Río del Espíritu Santo. This was the Mississippi, although various writers have attempted to show that it was some other. Garay's royal *cédula* describes the coast viewed by Álvarez de Pineda only in the most general terms. Although he undoubtedly examined the Texas coast and was, as is so often proclaimed, the first European to do so, there is no precise description that can be definitely linked to his trip.

After their encounter with Cortés, the *cédula* relates, the voyagers sailed six leagues up a "very large and fluent river," the banks of which were populated with forty native villages, and there spent forty days cleaning and repairing the ships. This river has been variously taken for the Rio Grande or the Mississippi. When the ships departed for Jamaica—to reach the home port in the late fall of 1519—it seems likely that Álvarez de Pineda and a sizable company remained as settlers. In early January 1520 a ship set sail from Jamaica with supplies for the Pánuco colony. Upon arrival, Camargo found the settlement besieged by Huastec Indians. Except for sixty colonists evacuated to Villa Rica by Camargo, Álvarez de Pineda and "all the horses and soldiers" were slain.

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Juan De Oñate (ca. 1550–1626)

Juan de Oñate, explorer and founder of the first European settlements in the upper Rio Grande valley of New Mexico, son of Cristóbal de Oñate and Catalina de Salazar, was born around 1550, most likely in the frontier settlement of Zacatecas, Mexico. His father was a prominent Zacatecas mine owner and *encomendero*. In his early twenties Oñate was leading campaigns against the unsubdued Chichimec Indians along the turbulent northern frontier around Zacatecas and prospecting for silver. He aided the establishment of missions in the newly conquered territory. He married Isabel de Tolosa Cortés Moctezuma, a descendant of the famous conquistador Hernán Cortés and the Aztec emperor Moctezuma. They had a son and a daughter.

On September 21, 1595, Oñate was awarded a contract by King Philip II of Spain to settle New Mexico. Spreading Catholicism was a primary objective, but many colonists enlisted in hopes of finding a new silver strike. After many delays Oñate began the *entrada* in early 1598. He forded the Rio Grande at the famous crossing point of El Paso del Norte, which he discovered in May 1598, after making a formal declaration of possession of New Mexico on April 30 of that year. By late May he had made contact with the first of the many pueblos of the northern Rio Grande valley. In July 1598 he established the headquarters of the New Mexico colony at San Juan pueblo, thus effectively extending the Camino Real by more than 600 miles. It was the longest road in North America for several subsequent centuries. While awaiting the slow-moving main caravan of colonists, Oñate explored the surrounding area and solidified his position. Construction of the mission at San Francisco and a mission for the Indians of San Juan soon began. Mutiny, desertion, and dissent plagued the new colony when riches were not instantly found. Oñate dealt with these problems with a firm hand. Some of his men explored east beyond Pecos pueblo towards the Texas border in search of buffalo; they probably reached the headwaters of the Canadian River, twenty-five miles northwest of the site of present Amarillo. Oñate visited Acoma pueblos as well as the Hopi and Zuni pueblos far to the west; one party in his group went as far as the San Francisco mountains in Arizona, finding silver ore and staking claims. Upon Oñate's return to Acoma he put down a revolt that left eleven colonists dead. He severely punished the rebellious Indians.

Prospecting expeditions continued in an attempt to bring prosperity to the colony. The colony was reinforced in late 1600, but hardships, including cold weather and short food supplies, continued. On June 23, 1601, Oñate began an expedition to Quivira in search of wealth and an outlet to the sea. He followed the Canadian River across the Texas Panhandle and near the Oklahoma border headed northeast. Probably in the central part of what is now Kansas, Oñate's expedition arrived at the first of the Quivira villages. The great settlements of Quivira proved to be a disappointment to men who had come looking for easy wealth, however, and they soon turned back. While Oñate

was on this expedition, conditions deteriorated in the New Mexico colony because the land was poor, the Indians were troublesome, and there were no silver strikes. The colony was subsequently abandoned except for some of Oñate's most devoted followers. The deserters spread the news of conditions in the colony when they returned to New Spain, and the government soon initiated an inquiry into the situation in New Mexico and Oñate's treatment of the Indians. At the same time Oñate launched his last major expedition, from the Zuni pueblos to the Colorado River and down it to the Gulf of California.

In 1606 King Philip III ordered Oñate to Mexico City until allegations against him could be investigated. Unaware of the order, Oñate resigned his office in 1607 because of the condition of the colony and financial problems. He remained in New Mexico to see the town of Santa Fe established. King Philip III decided to continue supporting the colony. A new governor was appointed, and Oñate was summoned to Mexico City in 1608. In 1613 he finally faced charges of using excessive force during the Acoma rebellion, hanging two Indians, executing mutineers and deserters, and adultery. He was fined, banished from New Mexico permanently, and banished from Mexico City for four years. He spent much of the rest of his life trying to clear his name, with some evident success. Eventually he went to Spain, where the king gave him the position of mining inspector. He died in Spain on or around June 3, 1626.

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