Dr. John Robinson: A Map of Mexico, Louisiana, and the Missouri Territory

1818

1: Dr. Robinson departs from Pike's stockade

1807

The enigmatic Dr. John H. Robinson’s role in the Pike expedition may never be totally explained; he was known to be affiliated with filibusterers like James Wilkinson and Aaron Burr, and explained his presence in New Mexico with a story about recovering lost goods. The New Mexicans suspected he was a spy, but doctors were a rarity on the frontier, and Robinson found himself grudgingly welcome wherever he went.

In Chihuahua, he made enemies with Captain General Nemesio Salcedo, commander of the internal provinces, in part by a bizarre attempt to defect, in the cause of exploring the northwest and founding a Spanish colony in Oregon.

By the time he left Chihuahua, he was a firm believer in the cause of Mexican independence, and met with the revolutionary leader José Toledo on his way back to the U.S. Upon his return, Robinson managed to get himself appointed as special envoy to Mexico. He returned to Chihuahua through Natchitoches in 1812, meeting the Republican Army of the North, led by Colonel Augustus Magee and Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara. Upon reaching Chihuahua, Captain-General Salcedo met Robinson with angry suspicion and sent him away.

Robinson wrote a long report to Secretary of State James Monroe, with an impassioned plea for the U.S. to support the cause of Mexican Independence, but the state department was more inclined to side with Spain, and after publishing a broadside calling for Americans to support the Mexican Revolution, he lost his job. Robinson returned to Mexico to serve as Brigadier-General with the Republican Army, and finally returned to the United States, his health broken, to complete this map, illustrating the enormity of Spanish claims, as well as the heroic struggles of the Republican Army.

Robert Ames Bennet was one writer who dared to speculate about the motives for Dr. Robinson's quixotic life struggle to gain support for Mexican independence. In his highly romantic novel (see links), he speculates that
Robinson was motivated primarily out of love for a señorita, whose father enlisted the doctor in his cause.

Quote: (07 February 1807) Saturday, 7th February.

The Doctor marched alone for Santa Fe. In the evening I despatched Corporal Jackson with four men to recross the mountains, in order to bring in the baggage left with the frozen men, and to see if they were yet able to proceed. This detachment left me with four men only, two of whom had their feet frozen: they were employed in finishing the stockade, and myself in supporting them by the chase.**

**The demands which Dr. Robinson had on persons in New Mexico, although originally legitimate, were in some degree spurious in his hands: the circumstances were as follows: In the year 1804, William Morrison, Esq., an enterprising merchant of Kaskaskias, sent a man by the name of Babtiste Lalande, a Creole of the country of Missouri and of La Plate, directing him if possible to push into Santa Fé. He sent in Indians, and the Spaniards came out with horses and carried him and his goods into the province. Finding that he sold the goods high, had land offered him, and that the women were kind, he concluded to expatriate himself, and convert the property of Morrison to his own benefit.

When I was about to sail, Morrison conceiving that it was possible I might meet some Spanish factors on the Red river, intrusted me with the claim, in order if they were acquainted with Lalande, I might negotiate the affair with some of them. When on the frontiers, the idea suggested itself to us of making this claim a pretext for Robinson to visit Santa Fé. We therefore gave it the proper appearance, and he marched for that place. Our views were to gain a knowledge of the country, the prospect of trade, force, &c., whilst at the same time our treaties with Spain guaranteed to him, as a citizen of the United States, the right of seeking the recovery of all just debts, dues, or demands, before the legal and authorized tribunals of the country, as a franchised inhabitant of the same, as specified in the 22d article of the treaty.

As it was uncertain whether this gentleman would ever join me again, I at that time committed the following testimonial of respect for his good qualities to paper, which I do not at this time feel any disposition to efface.

He has had the benefit of a liberal education, without having spent his time as too many of our gentlemen do in colleges, in skimming over the surfaces of science, without ever endeavouring to make themselves masters of the solid foundations; but he had studied and reasoned. With these qualifications he possessed a liberality of mind too great ever to reject an hypothesis, because it was not agreeable to the dogmas of the schools; or adopt it, because it had all the eclat of novelty. His soul could conceive great actions, and his hand was ready to achieve them: in short, it may truly be said, that nothing was above, his genius, nor anything so minute that he conceived it entirely unworthy of consideration. As a gentleman and companion in dangers, difficulties and hardships, I, in particular, and the expedition in general, owe much to his exertions. [Pike, Zebulon M.]

Links:

2: Silver Mine

1818

James Pursley, a fur trader, came to Colorado in 1804, and became a New Mexico resident in 1805.

Robinson may have heard stories of Pursley’s wondrous discoveries when Pursley (or Purcell) visited their camp in 1807. Like most geographical placements on this map, Robinson got the location close, but still too inaccurate to be of use to someone needing to use the map on the ground.

Quote: Silver Mine discovered by Jas Pursley in 1803

[in smaller letters] Pike’s Breastwork

3: Santa Fee

1807

Quote: (12 February 1807) On our arrival at Santa Fe, the Governor received me with great austerity at first, entered into an examination of my business, and took possession of all my papers. After all this was explained, he ordered me to a room where the officers were confined when under arrest, and commanded a non-commissioned officer to attend me when I walked into the city, which I had free permission to do. I was supplied with provision from the Governor’s table, who had promised he would write to Baptiste Lalande, whose circumstances I had apprised myself of, to come down and answer to the claim I had against him. The second day the Governor sent for me, and informed me that he had made enquiry as to the abilities of Lalande to discharge the debt, and found that he possessed no property, but that at some future period he would secure the money for me. To this I made a spirited remonstrance, as an infringement of our treaties, and a
protection of a refugee citizen of the United States against his creditors; which had no other effect than to obtain me an invitation to dinner, and rather more respectful treatment than I had hitherto received from his excellency.

Being slightly afflicted with the dropsy, he requested my advice as to his case. On which I prescribed a regimen and mode of treatment, which happening to differ from the one adopted by a monk and practising physician of the place, brought on me his enmity and ill-offices.

The ensuing day I was ordered by the Governor to hold myself in readiness to proceed to the internal parts of the country: to which I agreed, determining not to attempt to leave the country in a clandestine manner, unless they offered to treat me with indignity or hardship, and conceiving it in my power to join you, on your retreat, or find Red river and descend it, should you not be brought in, but in that case to share your destiny: added to this, I felt a desire to see more of the country, for which purpose I was willing to run the risk of future consequences.

---Dr. Robinson's account of his solitary adventures, as related by Zebulon Pike [Pike, Zebulon M.]

Overview: Santa Fé

Santa Fe was for centuries the end of the Camino Real, and has almost always been the seat of government in New Mexico. Most of the original town was built between 1610-1612, and centered around the plaza. The barrio of Analco, across the Río de Santa Fé from the plaza, was one of the main genízaro settlements of New Mexico from its founding at least until the late eighteenth century.

The Casas Reales, or the Palace of the Governors, was built in 1610 when Santa Fé was established. People took refuge in it during the Indian siege of August 1680. Subsequently, this seat of government was occupied by the Pueblo rebels, again by the Spanish, by the Mexican Provincial governors, by U.S. General Kearny, the Confederate Army, and a string of American Territorial governors. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]

Quote: Every calculation based on experience elsewhere fails in New Mexico...

---Lew Wallace, Governor of Territorial New Mexico, 1878-1881

Images:

House in Santa Fe

San Miguel church, the oldest in America

Links:
Santa Fe- Official Visitor Site -- http://santafe.org/
Palace of the Governors: Museum of New Mexico -- http://www.palaceofthegovernors.org/

4: Albuquerque

1807

Quote: (07 March 1807) Both above and below Albuquerque the citizens were beginning to open the canals, to let in the water of the river to fertilize the plains and fields which border its banks on both sides: we saw men, women, and children of all ages and both sexes, at the joyful labour, which was to crown with rich abundance their future harvest, and ensure them plenty for the ensuing year. These scenes brought to my recollection the bright descriptions given by Savary, of the opening of the canals of Egypt. The cultivation of the fields was now commencing, and everything appeared to give life and gaiety to the surrounding scenery. We crossed the Rio del Norte, a little below the village of Albuquerque, where it was four hundred yards wide, but not more than three feet deep, and excellent fording.

On our arrival at the next village, a dependency of Father Ambrosio's, we were invited into the house of the commandant. When I entered, I saw a man sitting by the fire, reading a book, with blooming cheeks, fine
complexion, and a genius speaking eye. He arose from his seat; it was Robinson!

Not that Robinson who had left my camp on the head waters of the Rio del Norte, pale, emaciated, with uncombed locks and beard of eight months' growth, but with fire, unsubdued enterprise and fortitude; the change was indeed surprising.

I started back, and exclaimed, Robinson! yes, but I do not know you, I replied;

but I know you, he exclaimed, and I would not be unknown to you here, in this land of tyranny and oppression, to avoid all the pains they dare to inflict.

Yet, my friend, I grieve to see you here, and thus, for I presume you are a prisoner?

I replied, No! I wear my sword you see, and all my men have their arms, and the moment they dare to ill-treat us, we will surprise their guards in the night, carry off some horses, and make our way to Apaches, and then set them at defiance.

At this moment, Captain D'Almansa [Pike's escort] entered, and I introduced Robinson to him, as my companion de voyage and friend. Having before seen him at Santa Fe, he did not appear much surprised, and received him with a significant smile, as much as to say I knew this. [Pike, Zebulon M.]

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**Overview: Albuquerque**

Albuquerque was founded as a villa in 1706 in a rich agricultural region of New Mexico. Its Old Town plaza was the original town center. Evidently, the decision to settle the "Bosque Grande de Doña Luisa" was made in 1698. A manuscript from February 1706 showed that Governor Cuervo y Valdéz authorized the actual settlement, which took place shortly thereafter. A church, dedicated to Saint Francis Xavier, was later rededicated to San Felipe, in honor of His Majesty the King.

The name was changed to Albuquerque after the United States militarily occupied New Mexico. [Long Distance Trails Group--Santa Fe, National Park Service, New Mexico State Office, Bureau of Land Management]

**Images:**

[Image of Albuquerque in 1857, with a view of San Felipe de Neri Church, the plaza, and the Sandia Mountains in the background]

**Links:**

City of Albuquerque website -- http://cabq.gov
Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau -- http://itsatrip.org
Office of the State Historian: 1706 - Founding of San Francisco de Alburquerque --
http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails_docs.php?fileID=1466

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**5: Liberty Showering her Blessings**

1819

The illustration shows the allegorical figure of Liberty showering her blessings on the Mexican and American republics, while a humble soldier bows in salute.

The scene reinforces the political nature of this map; particularly as the Adams-Onís Treaty was signed the year the map was published.

*Quote:* (26 November 1813) **Europe enslaved millions! America liberated them!**

...Fellow citizen, whether a Bourbon, Braganza, or a Bonaparte reigns in the peninsula of Spain, is of very little importance to us, but on crossing the Atlantic this revolution changes its characters, as it relates to the United
States, and involves in its course their future peace, prosperity, and even Independence. The Spanish government feeling their incapacity to suppress that revolution, have applied to their ally, who has by treaty, agreed to mediate between the insurgent provinces and their metropolis, and eventually for a valuable consideration, to guarantee the integrity of the Spanish monarchy on this continent: it is not necessary here to calculate the ability of Great Britain to fulfill the conditions of this treaty, it is sufficient for our purpose to know that a government who has subjugated India and openly aspires to the exclusive commerce of the world, has made such a contract; but the revolution in Mexico has gone too far for mediation, consequently British bayonets would have to be employed to reduce and disarm the insurgents, and when that revolution is thus quelled, who will be the real masters of that country? will any man presume to say, that the imbecile government of Spain will have any authority there? No, a British General will dictate laws to, and control the destinies of Mexico, and to suppose that then, the resources of New Spain would not be turned against the United States, would be extravagant indeed: it is well known that even at this moment a great portion of the wealth of that country passes into the coffers of Great Britain and is consequently turned against this government.

The Mexican, in character, is mild, affable, polite, hospitable and gay, they possess great fortitude, no privation, however great, will cause a murmur; in fine they are as good materials for an army, as have ever come within my view; they require nothing but discipline, to render them as good troops as any in the world.

The character of the citizens of the United States, stands pre-eminently high in that country, and they will receive them with the most fraternal affection, they very justly perceive that we have a common interest, and therefore ought to be friends.

Fellow Citizen, there is no country in the world which presents so noble and glorious field for men of might [one or two words missing] or such immense prospects of wealth to the enterprising merchant, nor is there a country on earth in [which] there is so great a certainty of independent fortunes for the gentlemen of professions and trades.

I write to you my fellow citizen, to accompany me in that glorious and brilliant course, which heaven has marked out for you and your countrymen. There, six millions of souls, who for these three hundred years have been borne down by the yoke of a cruel oppression, rise and demand the restoration of their long lost rights and offer their daily orisons to heaven and you for assistance. Arise my fellow citizen! can you longer remain an unfeeling spectator of this grand and interesting spectacle, Arise! lead on a few of your countrymen, such as are distinguished by talents and virtues, the eyes of your country and all Europe are on you, and ere long you shall hear the plaudits of an admiring and grateful world, hailing that immortal Band, and the entrance of the Mexican Republic, into the sublime rank of civilized nations.

Health and Fraternity

John H. Robinson

Confidential from Nacodoches [Robinson, John H]

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**6: Philip Nolan & Party Killed Here**

1801

While working for the influential Louisiana businessman James Wilkinson, Philip Nolan secured a Spanish trade passport, and used it to illegally enter Texas and try to trade there. Although the Spanish government confiscated his trade goods the first time, he returned to Texas twice more, each time bringing back significant quantities of horses. The Mexican government complained about his activities, accusing him of stirring up trouble, and so he was denied any further passports. His final, illegal trip into Texas resulted in his getting killed by a force of Spanish soldiers.

He may have produced one of the first maps of Texas, and although that map has not been found, his notes and observations contributed to Wilkerson’s map of the Texas-Louisiana borderlands, and to Dr. Robinson’s knowledge of the area.

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**7: San Fernando de Bexar**

1812

Quote: (20 October 1812) On the 20th, I arrived at the first Spanish post, which was garrisoned with 2 companies of the Royal Mexican Dragoons, I approached within a few paces of the Fort before even the sentinel discovered me, the guard was immediately called and I was seized at the point of his bayonet, near which I remained until I was safely lodged inside the walls; my papers examined by the commanding officer, and the next morning I was conveyed under guard, to St. Fernandes [the presidio of San Fernando de Bexar], where, on my arrival, I was conducted into the audience chamber of late Don Manuel de Salsedo, governor of the Province of Texas, he received me with suavity of manner, uncommon in the character of a Spanish officer;
we had passed but a few minutes together, when the late Governor Herrera entered the room, he immediately recognised me and taking me into his arms, gave me a most affectionate embrace, then turning to Governor Salsedo, he observed, "This then is the prisoner of whom we have heard so much since last night, let me tell you, I rejoice to see him once more, he is my particular friend, and I beg leave to introduce him to you as such," and were all there immediately placed at our ease, I then delivered to them the letters which I had borne them from the late General Pike. They were very much pleased when I informed them that the President of the United States was friendly disposed towards them and that he desired to establish friendly relations with that country.

The next day I took my departure from St. Fernandez, the two governors and about twenty officers accompanied me two leagues out of town from whence they returned, and I continued on my Route and in a few days arrived at the city of Monclova, where I met the worthy [General Antonio] Cordero, who received me as a brother and paid me all the public honors which he could bestow; he informed me it would be necessary to remain in that place, until the will of the Captain General could be known, which in fifteen days he received, directing him to send me to Chihuahua by the Northern Route, which in extent is about five hundred miles and lies through a desert mountainous country, and is seldom ever traveled, except by large bodies of troops, and even those have often suffered from the implacable enmity which the savages of that quarter bear towards the Spaniards.

The Governor, when he communicated the contents of the order to me, appeared to be very much mortified, and observed "I will give you a guard sufficient for your protection. It is true," continued he, "this is the least dangerous season of the year. The indians are generally on their hunting grounds to the north, but I regret to see that the General is not disposed at anytime to make arrangements which would benefit this country, I perceive already that he is displeased. I therefore doubt...." [Robinson, John H]

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8: Fort La Bahia or Laberde

1811-1812

The Republicans Beseiged here 4 Months 1811 & 12

The presidio La Bahia, a Spanish fort built in 1721 which forms the heart of the city of Goliad, fell to the Republican Army of the North in the winter of 1812-1813. Colonel Augustus William Magee, who had resigned his commission from the U.S. Army to lead the Republican Army of the North, died here.

9: Passo del Norte

1812

Quote: (06 November 1812) The day following I took my leave of the Governor, and set out on my journey with a guard of twenty-five dragoons and in fourteen days arrived safely at the Precidio del Norte, a garrison situate on the confluence of the Rio del Norte and the Rio Conchez and is about one hundred and ten miles N.N.E from the City of Chihuahua. From that place I addressed the following letter to the Captain General.

Presidio del Norte 20 Dec 1812

His Excellency Don Nemecio de Salcedo, Capt. General etc etc etc

Sir,

I have the honor to inform you, that on my arrival at this place, I heard the report of the approach of a great number of men in the direction of Red River, supposed to be Cummanche Indians. I beg leave to suggest the possibility of its being the same armed body of men, of whose probable intentions I had the honor to advise you by letter from Louisiana, bearing date the 28th August last; and the same of whom I notified his Excellency Don Manuel de Salsedo, on the 26th October last. It was reported they intended entering this country via St. Fee[?] yet they may either by finess or mistake, make their proposed entry by this route; I have conceived it my duty, to call your attention particularly to this subject.

I have the honor to be, with the highest consideration,

Your most Obedient Humble Servant,

Signed

John H. Robinson

After three days detention, I again marched, and on the 11th December reached the city of Chihuahua.

Overview: El Paso
Although the Spanish did not settle the area until the Pueblo Revolt, Oñate noted it as he crossed the Rio Grande, and it gained significance on maps as an important landmark, where the river continues to be crossed to this day.

After fleeing the warring Puebloans, the Spanish built a settlement on the banks of the Rio Grande and waited eleven years for reinforcements. About two years in, Governor Otermín tried to retake the Rio Arriba to no avail.

During this period, the priests planted vineyards, which bore fruit that made eventually made El Paso del Norte famed in the region for its fine wines and brandies.

The Piro of the Rio Abajo retreated with the Spanish and together they established three mission churches, active to this day: Mission Ysleta del Sud, Mission Soccoro, and San Elizario Mission.

*Quote:* In the name of the most Christian king, Don Philip.... I take and seize tenancy and possession, real and actual, civil and natural, one two, three times... and all the times that by right I can and should....without limitations

---Juan de Oñate at El Paso, April 1598

**Images:**

The Plaza and Church of El Paso

Mexican adobe house, Mt. Franklin in distance, El Paso, Texas. 1907

**Links:**

Office of State Historian: Wine Production in El Paso and the Grapevine Inventory of 1755 --
http://www.newmexicohistory.org/filedetails_docs.php?fileID=525

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10: Chihuahua

1812-1813

On Pike's recommendation, Secretary of State James Monroe sent Robinson to Mexico to convince Salcedo to consider opening friendly negotiations with an eye towards opening commerce with the U.S. Not only were Robinson's negotiations disastrous, possibly thanks to his unhappy history with Salcedo, but the day after walking out on Salcedo, he began meeting with agents of the revolution.

*Quote:* (12 December 1812) On my arrival, I presented myself to the General, who received me with a reserved politeness, then observed "I have waited with some impatience your arrival Sir. I presume you have a letter-- from the President of the United States to me." I answered in the negative. "What" said he, you have no letters for me, have you come to this place on Public business?"

I replied I had come to communicate with him on a subject of public interest, that I was myself the letter.....Had written instructions from my government and as a proof of the high confidence which I reposed in him I would with pleasure give him a view of these.

He refused to see them, and began, by this time, to be very much agitated, turning to me very abruptly, he asked, "Did your Government send you here to be made a prisoner." If Sir, you think proper to make me a prisoner, I have no doubt my government will know how to release me.

He then endeavored to conceal his feelings, and after a silence of a few minutes, he invited me to dine with him which I declined accepting, offering as an apology, the fatigue etc of the journey. You will, said he, allow yourself all the time you think proper for rest, before you open your written correspondence, but I will receive it with pleasure at any hour, and happy to see you as often as you may find it agreeable to call on me. My door shall be open to you at all hours etc etc. I thus retired to my quarters, and on the next day, wrote him the following letter.
Having arrived in this City with authority from the Department of State, of the United States of America, to represent the wishes of the President of said states to your Excellency, I shall therefore open the communication without further delay.

The President of the United States has viewed with much anxiety and regret, the many difficulties which have latterly given disquietude to these Provinces, and particularly those, which have arisen on the Territory lying between the two governments: with a view therefore to remedy the latter, and prevent similar aggressions in future, I am instructed to communicate with your Excellency on the best means by which so desirable an object may be effected.

This is a subject which every day renders more and more interesting, especially, when we consider the revolutionary spirit which exists in this country, and the growing disposition in the Citizens of the United States (particularly those living on that section of country which is watered by the Mississippi River and its tributary streams, to assist in that revolution, and the impossibility of applying a proper remedy, without the consent and concurrence of both governments.

Respecting the Territorial Boundaries between the Provinces of New Spain and those of the United States, I am authorised to state to your Excellency, that that is a subject, which it is proposed to make the object of amicable negotiation hereafter, and at a time which may be convenient to the Parties concerned.

It is Sir, the sincere desire of the United States to remain on the most friendly footing with Spain and particularly with all the Spanish possessions in America, that belonging to the same Hemisphere, and being neighbours, we have in many respects a common interest and ought to be friends, to effect which, I am instructed to inform you, that every facility will be given to it, on the part of the government of the United States.

It has become very desirable to establish a friendly commercial intercourse between the United States and the Provinces, and it is known that mutual advantages may be derived from it to both nations, nor is there anything which would more effectually tranquillise the minds, or will of this People of this country, or those of the United States.

I hope Sir, you will accept the most unequivocal assurances of the sincere desire of the President of the United States, to procure, and perpetuate, the most friendly relations toward your government.

You will please Sir, to accept the most sincere salutations of your most Obedient Humble Servant.

Signed,

John H. Robinson [Robinson, John H]

Quote: (06 January 1813) Sir, we live at a time to witness the most momentous crisis which the history of man has ever furnished, the contemplation of which fills my mind with awfully solemn reflections...turning our attention to the East we behold all Europe laid waste, for behold her plains reddened with the blood of her innocent inhabitants, by the hand of insatiate Tyrants, contending for universal dominion. Even the shores of Columbia are now whitened with the tents of armies; my Ears are assailed on all sides, by the din of camps, the sound of martial music, the cries of suffering humanity and the mournful sound of Peace retiring from this Globe. This then Sir, is the moment, when nations should unite to assist the weak and oppressed and stand with firmness as the alarm post to ward off the grand shock, the horrid calamity of war, to assist in restoring the equilibrium of Power, and Peace to all nations. With this impression I return to my country under painfull feelings, not having been able to establish those amiable relations between the two governments, which were the objects of my mission: I am however, in part consoled, when I reflect, that they are now placed in a way to be heard and that no creation on my part has been wanting thereto.

After a short silence, I begged to know at what time it would be convenient to him, to furnish me the necessary passport for my return, "Sir," said he," I am at a loss to know the object of your mission-- your government certainly knows the requisites, to enable an individual to know them. I have therefore, reason to believe, that your communication to me does not explain your real designs." I answered that, that was an insinuation which went to injure the national honor of my Government, as well as my public and private character, and begged him to explain himself. Enraged, to hear an American call on him to explain himself, he burst into the most violent paroxysm of anger. "You speak of national honor-- a government, formed by an unlawful act-- and came into existence only yesterday-- formed by people who can remain in no other governments-- a government that has not power to restrain her Subjects-- the the conduct of your government towards Spain-- and yet you speak of national honor-- and as it respects you Sir, I have documents I have as your own letters in my Bureau, which you wrote and circulated in this country, exciting the people to revolt against the constituted authorities."

I demanded that he would produce these Documents: he replied, "They shall be produced when time and circumstances rendered it necessary." I then retired without saluting him.

--Dr. John Robinson, in an account of his meeting with Captain General Nemesio Salcedo. [Robinson, John H]
Overview: Chihuahua

The state of Chihuahua, which was established under Mexican independence, was named for the city of Chihuahua, founded in the province of Nueva Viscaya in 1709. San Felipe el Real de Chihuahua was promoted to a villa in 1718.

For the period from the Reconquest to the Mexican-American war, Chihuahua served as the administrative and trade center for New Mexicans. Travel between Santa Fe and Chihuahua, while fraught with danger and hardship, could be accomplished annually, and occasionally more frequently, as in the cases of Texan and American captives sent to Chihuahua for judgement and justice. New Mexicans shipped sheep and textiles south to Chihuahua, and received manufactured and imported goods, as well as government-controlled goods, in return.

Mexican independence brought open borders with America, and trade coming down the Santa Fe Trail. Impoverished New Mexicans could only support so much trade, and Americans soon learned to push south to Chihuahua. Some Americans, like the Magoffin family, resettled in El Paso in order to have more control over the Chihuahua trade.

Images:

![Cathedral in Chihuahua. William Henry Jackson, ca. 1891](image1)

![Facing east towards Chihuahua. William Henry Jackson, between 1880 and 1897.](image2)

Links:


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**11: Disputed Area**

1818

Robinson got some of the recognition for his cause that he had hoped, as evidenced by this article in Niles' Register, pointing out the vast acreage at stake in the negotiations of Louisiana's southern boundary. The visual presentation of otherwise dry negotiations fueled public objections to the Adams-Onís Treaty, and led to a popular sentiment that somehow Spain had "cheated" the U.S. out of its rightful territory, including Texas.

Quote: Small difference! Dr. John H. Robinson's new map of Louisiana and Mexico is noticed in a Natchez newspaper. The boundary lines of the territorial claims of the United States and Spain are marked on this map. The tract of countries lying between the extreme extent of country so claimed, is estimated to contain one thousand and twenty four millions, 982 thousand acres! [Niles, Hezekiah]

**1819 Mexico-U.S. Boundary**

1819

The Adams-Onís Treaty, designed to clarify the limits of Louisiana, was not actually ratified by Spain until 1821, but the conclusion of the treaty in 1819 was enough for Robinson to include it on this, the second version of the map. This treaty established the northern limits of Spanish territories, and firmly established Texas as Spanish property.

Many, including later presidents Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor, believed the terms of the treaty were too generous to Spain.
The boundary-line between the two countries, west of the Mississippi, shall begin on the Gulph of Mexico, at the mouth of the river Sabine, in the sea, continuing north, along the western bank of that river, to the 32d degree of latitude; thence, by a line due north, to the degree of latitude where it strikes the Rio Roxo of Nachitoches, or Red River; then following the course of the Rio Roxo westward, to the degree of longitude 100 west from London and 23 from Washington; then, crossing the said Red River, and running thence, by a line due north, to the river Arkansas; thence, following the course of the southern bank of the Arkansas, to its source, in latitude 42 north; and thence, by that parallel of latitude, to the South Sea. The whole being as laid down in Melish’s map of the United States, published at Philadelphia, improved to the first of January, 1818. But if the source of the Arkansas River shall be found to fall north or south of latitude 42, then the line shall run from the said source due south or north, as the case may be, till it meets the said parallel of latitude 42, and thence, along the said parallel, to the South Sea: All the islands in the Sabine, and the said Red and Arkansas Rivers, throughout the course thus described, to belong to the United States; but the use of the waters, and the navigation of the Sabine to the sea, and of the said rivers Roxo and Arkansas, throughout the extent of the said boundary, on their respective banks, shall be common to the respective inhabitants of both nations.

--Adams-Onís Treaty, February 22, 1819

Limit of the United States Claims

1818

This line shows the limits of United States claims before the Adams-Onís Treaty, based on instructions issued by Laussat, French governor during the twenty days that France held claim to Louisiana. The secret instructions laid claim from the mouth of the Rio de las Palmas (the Rio Grande) to the 30th parallel. "The line of demarcation stops after reaching this point... the farther we go northward, the more undecided is the boundary."

The basis of these claims was the outpost at the mouth of the Río de las Palmas established by Père La Salle in 1685–1687, when he claimed all lands north of the Río Grande. The United States asserted that because of the French claims, when southwestern limit of Louisiana was the Rio Grande.

Later, when the Texan revolutionaries negotiated the Treaty of Velasco after capturing Mexican General Santa Anna, they also referred to this boundary as the legitimate extent of Texas, although by that point, Coahuila and Texas had been combined as states by the Mexican government.

Quote: This envied region [Mexico] surpasses all others in natural advantages, the country gradually rises from both oceans, until it attains a temperature of climate that seems to be the most favorable to the nature of man; in the elevated plains, the soil is exuberantly fertile and peculiarly adapted to the production of all the fruits, grass and vegetables, necessary to his wants and luxuries. It is also peculiarly proper for rearing domestic animals, for they are found there better in their species and more abundant than in any other country; and there may be produced every article of raw material for manufacturing, that we are acquainted with from the Torrid to the Temperate Zone, in sufficient abundance to supply all the workshops of Europe. Mexico is the capital, and is one of the finest cities of the world, it is situated at about an equal distance from the two oceans, and enjoys the singular advantage of at the same time giving the hand to the United States and Europe on the one side, and from the other communicating with Asia. The wealth of Mexico in minerals is even proverbial. She furnishes a great proportion of the precious metals to the world, the revenue of the Crown, therefore, may be estimated at $16,800,000 per annum.

Such, Sir, is New Spain, she is our nearest neighbour, and may become a useful friend, or an inconvenient, even a dangerous enemy, according to the policy we pursue towards her, at this critical juncture. In this interesting country a revolution now rages with circumstances of violence and public misery, almost without a parallel in history, unless it be found in the wars of Cortes or Pizarro. [Pike, Zebulon M.]

About this Map

Dr. John Robinson: A Map of Mexico, Louisiana, and the Missouri Territory: 1818

Dr. John Robinson was a latecomer, but an important member of Pike's southwest expedition, serving as surgeon and naturalist. He left the stockade to enter Santa Fe alone, purportedly to resolve some business, but was met with the (possibly deserved) suspicion of being a spy. After the rest of the Pike expedition was detained and transported to Chihuahua, Robinson tried to defect, was refused, and returned to the U.S.

Back in the U.S., Pike's influence helped convince Secretary of State James Monroe to appoint Robinson as special envoy to Mexico. Robinson traveled back to Chihuahua to meet Captain General Nemesio Salcedo, the same man who had refused him asylum several years before. Salcedo again (and again, for good reason)
suspected Robinson's motives, and they traded hostile words. After failing in his official mission, Robinson met with several important Mexican revolutionary leaders, became committed to independence, and officially endorsed it, both in communications to Monroe, but also in a published broadside, which was imprudent enough to get him terminated from his position. He became more active in the cause of Mexican independence, serving as a Brigadier-General in the Mexican Republican Army for eighteen months, and then returning to Louisiana to create this monumental map.

In Natchez, he compiled this six-sheet wall map of western North America (relying heavily on the maps of Juan Pedro Walker) and was the first to label Pike's Peak as such. His map shows the competing Spanish and U.S. boundary claims across Louisiana Territory, and in this, the second edition, he marks the line of the Adams-Onis Treaty, signed the year of the map's publication. The map was not a commercial success, being too full of geographic inaccuracies to prove useful on the ground, but many journalists did take note of the 1.6 million acres the U.S. stood to lose to Spain, including the area of New Mexico east of the Rio Grande, including Taos, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque. Robinson died at the age of 37, and did not live to see Mexico achieve independence.

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TIMELINE: SHIFTING ALLEGIANCES

1800

In 1800, Napoleon signed the secret Treaty of Ildefonso with Spain, stipulating that France should provide Spain with a kingdom if Spain would return Louisiana to France. Napoleon's plan for dominating North America collapsed when the revolt in the French colony of Saint-Domingue succeeded, forcing French troops to return defeated to France. As Napoleon's New World empire disintegrated, the loss of Haiti made Louisiana unnecessary.

Nov 1801

Philip Nolan, a surveyor who worked for Louisiana Trader James Wilkinson, and (who had established trade into Texas and had a wife & child in San Antonio de Bexos) left Louisiana to invade Texas with 30 countrymen, was killed en route by Spanish forces under Pedro de Nava. Nolan is sometimes credited with being the first to map Texas for the American frontiersmen, but his map has never been found. Nonetheless, his observations were passed on to General James Wilkinson, who used them to produce his map of the Texas-Louisiana frontier in 1804.

1803

On November 30, 1803, Spain's representatives officially transferred Louisiana to France. Although the French representative was instructed to transfer Louisiana to the United States the next day, twenty days actually separated the transfers, during which time Laussat became governor of Louisiana and created a new town council. During this time he is issued secret instructions in which France lays claim to the Rio Grande from the mouth (Rio de las Palmas on the Gulf) to the 30th parallel. "The line of demarcation stops after reaching this point... the farther we go northward, the more undecided is the boundary."

This becomes the basis for the Texian claim to eastern New Mexico.

On December 20, 1803, the French officially gave lower Louisiana to the United States. The United States took formal possession of the full territory of Louisiana, although its boundaries were vaguely defined, in St. Louis three months later, when France handed over the rights to upper Louisiana.

1804

Jean Baptiste La Lande stole a wagon team and expatriated to New Mexico, becoming the first American to move there.

1805

Admiral Lord Nelson defeats the Spanish navy at Trafalgar, precipitating the end of Spanish military force.

James Pursley arrives in New Mexico trying to drum up trade with the Plains tribes, and stays in Santa Fe as a carpenter.

1806

Expedition headed by General Wilkinson and Lieutenant Zebulon Pike travels west with secret instructions to scout out the northern Spanish territories. Dr. John Robinson joins the expedition at the last minute, but becomes a valued member of the party.

1807

Robinson meets Don Nemesio Salcedo, Captain General of Internal Provinces.
Salcedo refuses his attempt to defect.

1812

Robinson meets with Secretary of State James Monroe, who is concerned that filibustering activity might provoke war with Spain; appoints Robinson to the post of envoy to Nemesio Salcedo.

Robinson goes from Natchitoches through Texas, meeting Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara and Augustus Magee. He also meets with Salcedo, who suspects him once again of spying, and refuses to enter negotiations.

1813

Robinson publishes inflammatory epistles in favor of Mexican revolution (see Liberty Showering Her Blessings), is dismissed by the State department.

Texas declares independence in April.

Royal forces reclaim it in September.

King Joseph Bonaparte (Napoleon's brother) flees Wellington, Ferdinand VII returns to the throne.

1814

Robinson disputes with Toledo about leadership of the revolutionary force.

Moves to New Orleans, offers support to Governor Claiborne, is refused, takes a post in the militia, in a hospital near New Orleans

1815

Robinson sails for Veracruz to help the revolution. He writes for support to President Madison, including a copy of the new Mexican constitution, and remains with the Republican Army for 18 months (through the end of 1816).

1816

Robinson retires from his commission as Brigadier General in the Mexican Revolutionary Army.

1817

Robinson condemned by Spanish envoy Onís, engages in verbal battle in papers, settles in Natchez.

1819

John Quincy Adams, President Monroe's Secretary of State, negotiates a treaty with Luis de Onís to define the boundary of Texas (the Adams-Onís Treaty Line). Under the Florida Treaty, Spain cedes Florida and Texas west to Sabine River.

1821

Texas becomes a province of Mexico following the revolution.

Mexico combines Texas & Coahuila, opens immigration to large numbers of Americans into Texas.

William Becknell takes wagons across what will become the Santa Fe Trail.

1822

Regular route established along Santa Fe Trail "led directly to the San Miguel by way of the Cimarron River instead of following the Arkansas to the mountains direct to San Miguel instead of by way of Taos."

(Chittenden)

Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri petitions the Senate, to make the Santa Fe Trail a permanent road "to draw from the bosom of the wilderness an immense wealth which now must be left to grow and perish where it grows or be gathered by the citizens of some other government to the great loss of Missouri."

Commissioners mark out a road from Missouri to the Mexican boundary. Sibley surveys a new, longer road.

1824

Mexican constitution establishes Texas and Coahuila as sister states, as with New Mexico and Chihuahua.

1835-1836

Texans revolt against Mexico, and fight for independence, claiming all land to the Rio Grande.

Texas rebels capture General Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto, and win a surrender with the Treaty of Velasco, which stipulates that the "limits of Texas would not extend past the Rio Grande." However, Mexico never ratifies this treaty.
1837
United States grants formal recognition to the Republic of Texas.
New Mexicans overthrow centralist governor Albino Perez, Manuel Armijo rises to power in 1838.
The government offers large land grants to both native citizens and to American merchants such as St. Vrain, Maxwell, and Mirabeau.

1841
Texas expedition led by Brigadier General Hugh McLeod, and accompanied by journalist George Wilkins Kendall, travels across the Llano Estacado to ask New Mexicans to join Texas in independence or to open trade. Governor Armijo has the Texans captured, brutally mistreated, and forced to march in chains to Mexico City, where they remained imprisoned for several years.

1843
Texas sends two raiding parties to New Mexico in retribution for the mistreatment of the Texas-Santa Fe Expedition.
Taos gets closed as a port of entry.

1844
Question of Texas central to United States presidential election, and popular support of annexation sweeps James K. Polk into office.

1845
Annexation of Texas; formally admitted as a state December 29, 1845.
State constitution supports Texas' claims to all lands extending to the Rio Grande.

1846
Polk declares war with Mexico, and General Zachary Taylor invades Mexico along the Rio Grande in Texas.
United States forces led by General Stephen Kearny seize New Mexico, and Governor Armijo is persuaded to surrender without a battle.
Colonel Alexander Doniphan writes the code for governing the Territory of New Mexico.
New Mexico is designated the Ninth Military Department of the United States.

1847
Rebels in Taos lead an uprising against the American government, and kill Governor Charles Bent.

1848
Mexico signs the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which cedes lands in California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico to the United States. The boundary of New Mexico is described in relation to Disturnell's map, which showed erroneous distances.

1848 Fort Bliss established.

1849
The Department of Interior established. Interior would manage most of the lands in New Mexico for some time to come.

1850
The Texas boundary compromise required Texas to release claims to lands in eastern New Mexico, in exchange for a settlement of debts. As part of the Compromise of 1850, New Mexico was finally admitted as a territory, with the issue of slavery to be decided by New Mexicans.

1851-1853
Fort Bliss abandoned for Fort Fillmore

1852-1860
Cantonment Burgwin established to control Taos rebels. The fort was decommissioned in 1860 and the soldiers moved to Fort Garland or Fort Union.

1852 Boundary Survey
1st international boundary commission established in accordance with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.
This survey runs into difficulties establishing the boundary line, and the Americans realize that the line as surveyed does not give them a transcontinental railway route.

1853

Gadsden Purchase from Mexico expands New Mexico territory.

1854

Fort Bliss moved to Magoffinsville.

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