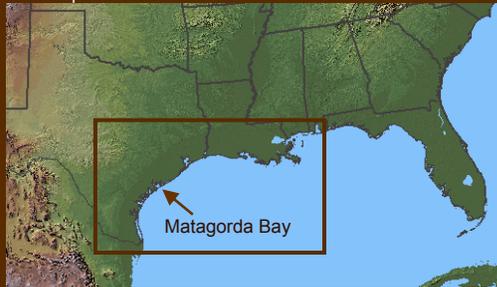




Nicolas de Fer, 1701 map of La Salle's 1684-1688 expedition to the Gulf of Mexico, detail. *Embouchures de Misisipi*: "outlets of the Mississippi River." Dotted line at lower left: *Chemin que les Espagnols tiennent pour venir a la Baye de S. Louïs*: "Route which the Spanish take to come to the Bay of St. Louis." Arrow indicates French fort at "Baye de S. Louïs" (Matagorda Bay). River at lower left is the Rio Grande.



## French-Spanish Rivalry in Tejas (Texas), 1685-1690

### FRENCH

In 1685 the French explorer René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, attempted to establish a settlement on the lower Mississippi River. Sailing from France in 1684 with nearly three hundred settlers and soldiers, he failed to find the Mississippi and built a small fort on the gulf coast of Tejas (Texas). As the French journeyed into the interior, they learned from the Indians of the Spanish presence in the region, although they encountered no Spaniards directly.

**Henri Joutel**, lieutenant on La Salle's expedition, *Journal of the Last Voyage Perform'd by Monsr. de la Sale . . .*, publ. 1714, excerpts.

**Pierre and Jean-Baptiste Talon**, brothers who lived with Indians after the attack on La Salle's fort, *Memorial on the questions asked of the two Canadians . . .*, 1698, excerpts.

### SPANISH

Having long been aware of French plans to settle in the lower Mississippi region, the Spanish responded immediately to the news of La Salle's arrival on the Tejas coast in 1685. Between 1686 and 1691 a total of nine expeditions were sent from New Spain (Mexico) to Tejas, four by sea and five by land, to search for the French. The Spaniards pursued leads provided by the Indians but encountered only a few French survivors of La Salle's settlement, several of whom returned with them to New Spain.

**Alonso de León**, Itineraries of the De León expeditions of 1689 and 1690 from New Spain (Mexico) to Tejas, excerpts.

**Fr. Miguel Font Cuberta**, Franciscan missionary at San Francisco de los Tejas mission in Tejas, letter to his *custodio* (superior) in New Spain, 4 September 1690, excerpts.

Excerpted, images added, and some paragraphing added by the National Humanities Center, 2006, [www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm](http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/pds.htm). (1) Joutel journal in William C. Foster, ed., & Johanna S. Warren, trans., *The La Salle Expedition to Texas: The Journal of Henri Joutel, 1684-1687* (Austin: Texas State Historical Assn., 1998), pp. 99, 164, 173-174, 178-180, 204-207. Permission pending. (2) Talon Brothers interview in Robert S. Weddle, ed., & Ann Linda Bell, trans., et al., *La Salle, The Mississippi, and the Gulf: Three Primary Documents* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1987), pp. 239-242, 244. Permission pending. (3) Itineraries of De León 1689 and 1690 expeditions in Herbert E. Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), pp. 395-399, 419-421. (4) Cuberta letter in Charles Wilson Hackett, ed., *Historical Documents relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Approaches Thereto, to 1773* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington), Vol. II (1926), pp. 283-285. Full text online of Joutel, Talon Brothers, and De León documents in *American Journeys* (Wisconsin Historical Society) at [www.americanjourneys.org/](http://www.americanjourneys.org/). Complete image credits at [www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/amerbegin/imagecredits.htm](http://www.nhc.rtp.nc.us/pds/amerbegin/imagecredits.htm).

NASA



Matagorda Bay, space shuttle photograph, November 1985. Dot marks site of the wreck of La Salle's flagship, the *Belle*. The site of Fort St. Louis lies just beyond the edge of the photo (arrow).

Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept.



Garcitas Creek, along which Fort St. Louis was built

## 1685: Spring

JOURNAL OF HENRI JOUTEL

[From the newly built Fort St. Louis]

[One day] we saw a small Spanish vessel pass which was coming from the direction of Pánuco or the Magdelaine River and going toward Holy Spirit [Espiritu Santo] Bay. The Spaniards had perhaps been advised of our arrival and wanted to see where we had landed. We shut ourselves up inside the fort which was hidden by sand dunes. This forced us to be on guard. We all resorted to the fort and kept our arms ready. After that, we saw two men appear onboard the ship that went toward the other headland instead of coming toward us. They passed thus without noticing us.<sup>1</sup> . . .

## 1687: January-March

JOURNAL OF HENRI JOUTEL

[La Salle and his exploring party encounter fifteen men of the Ebahamo tribe.]

Some of the Indians indicated that they had seen men like us and pointed to the west making us understand that they were only a ten days' journey away. This is about two hundred leagues. They added that in the time it took to reach these men, there were almost always bison on the way except for a day or so. The natives also indicated to us that there were only four large rivers to cross. We determined that this must be New Spain, judging from the direction they showed us.<sup>2</sup>

[Another group of Indians, whom Joutel does not identify, visits La Salle's men as they explore the southern coastal region of Tejas.]

I have said that I did not notice any religion among them; however, they sometimes indicated to us that there was something great above, pointing to the sky. Some natives, seeing us read in our prayer book in which there were some pictures, told us that they had seen similar things, pointing out the area west of us. This convinced us that they must mean the Spaniards.

There is not, however, much likelihood that the natives traded much with the Spaniards, not having even a hatchet or a knife or anything else.<sup>3</sup> True, their horses must have come from the Spaniards, but by what means? Theft or otherwise? Do they steal them directly from the Spaniards or from others who are able to procure them from the Spaniards? I do not know. . . .

[Later La Salle's men meet a group of Teao Indians.]

They confirmed what those before had said regarding Europeans to the southwest of us, or rather to the west. They said that several of their people had gone there and a band of them had even entered into

<sup>1</sup> Robert Weddle suggests in *The French Thorn* (1991) that the ship may have been that of Spanish pirate Juan Corso. [Warren & Foster, p. 99]

<sup>2</sup> The statement . . . supports the thesis that there was a well-used trade route between northern Mexico and Central Texas. [Warren & Foster, p. 164]

<sup>3</sup> The Spanish policy was to restrict trade with the Indians; consequently, the few Spanish metal objects that the local Indians possessed likely were acquired through some means other than normal commerce with the Spaniards. [Foster & Warren, pp. 173-174]

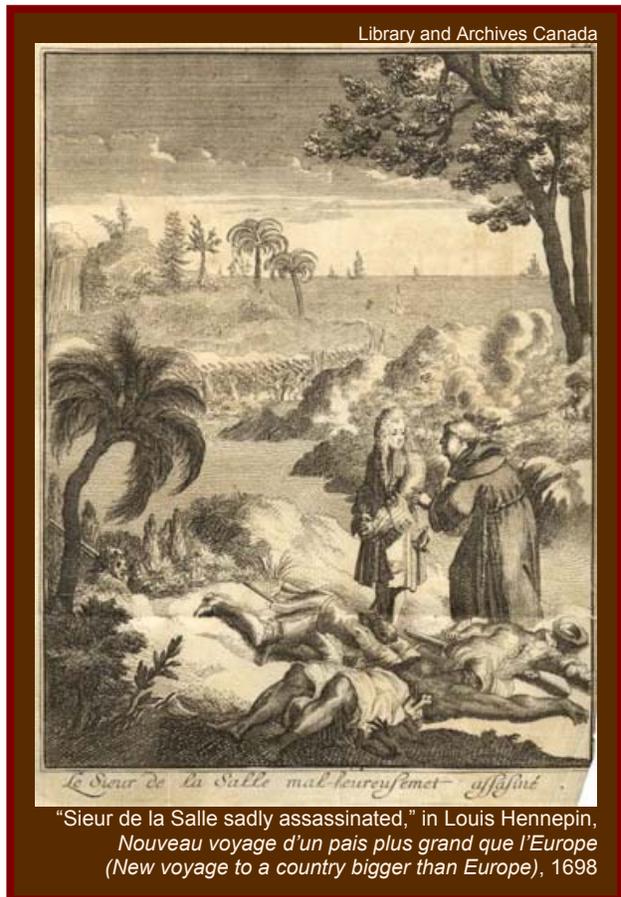
relations with the Chouman<sup>4</sup> who, they indicated, were friends of these Europeans (who must be Spaniards). They also told us the Choumans wanted to join with them and the Cenis<sup>5</sup> to make war against a great nation called the Ayano and Cannohatunno who were at war with the Spaniards and stole their horses whenever they could surprise a band of them. All this, however, is from the interpretation that I could make from their signs. It is very hard to determine the correct meaning from their language and often one thing is mistaken for another. They also made us understand that one hundred Spaniards were to have come to the Cenis for this war but, having learned of our march, they had gone back. This made us believe that the Spaniards were not informed of our weakness, for they would hardly have to be very intrepid as their risk was little, having much more knowledge of the country than we did.

La Salle let them know, in turn, that we were at war against these people but that we did not fear them. Finally, he tried to make them understand he had been sent by the greatest *capitaine* in the world who had directed him to treat them well and go to war with them against their enemies. This cajolery, if he made himself clear to them, was in answer to their greatest wish. The gentleman told them that for this reason he wanted to leave some people with the Cenis to learn their language so that when we returned they would serve us as interpreters. But apparently these people conceived from this some jealousy [suspicion], for they indicated that the Cenis would not allow that. La Salle, who knew the Indian ways, guessed what caused them to speak in this way. They were never happy that things should be given their neighbor which they greatly desired for themselves. La Salle told them he did not believe he would be badly received in the Cenis' country; he had already been there and had promised them he would return.

An old man told us that we should find three of our men among the Cenis, indicating that they looked like us.<sup>6</sup> La Salle was confounded by whom they might be: they could be the men who had deserted on his last expedition, or perhaps they were three of the five he had permitted to return to the settlement, among whom had been Hurié and [Dominique] Duhaut. In their talk, the Indians often mentioned the Ebahamo [Ebahama?], and it seemed they were saying that this tribe had taken the three men in question which made it doubtful that these could be the three men of whom I spoke. . . .

[In March 1687 Joutel learns that La Salle has been murdered by several of his men. Soon after he and his men arrive at a Ceni village in eastern Tejas.]

At two o'clock in the afternoon, we saw three men, one of whom was on horseback. They were coming from the direction of the Cenis' village and consequently straight to us. When they came closer, I noticed that one was dressed in the Spanish manner, wearing a short jacket or doublet, the body of which was blue with white sleeves as if embroidered on a kind of fustian; he was wearing

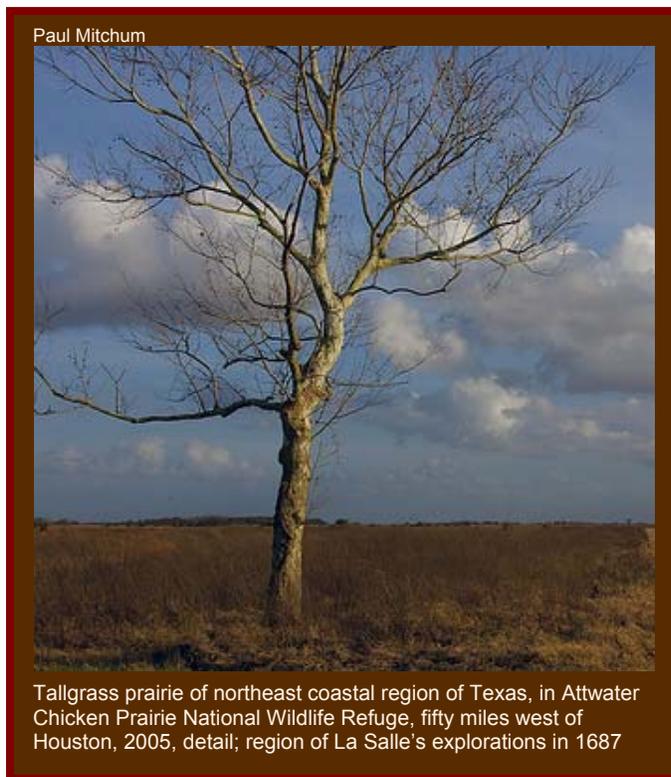


<sup>4</sup> The Chouman or Jumano from West Texas was a widely ranging tribe that Spanish diarists repeatedly encountered in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in several areas. . . . [Foster & Warren, p. 178]

<sup>5</sup> Ceni (Caddo): Native American group of east Texas.

<sup>6</sup> It was not unusual for La Salle or for Spanish explorers to be informed by the local Indians about some activity that was transpiring up to a hundred miles away. The notifications were usually accurate, as when the Indian tribes in western Frio County accurately told De León in 1690 that he would find two young Frenchmen near the Colorado, which was over 150 miles to the east. [Foster & Warren, footnote, p. 180]

small, tight breeches, white stockings, woolen garters, and a Spanish hat that was broad and flat in shape. His hair was long, straight, and black, and he had a swarthy face. I therefore did not have much difficulty persuading myself that he was a Spaniard after all that had been told us by the tribes we had passed who had said that the Spaniards would come.<sup>7</sup> I will not lie; I was quite troubled, fearing there was a party of



them in the village. Assuredly, I did not want to fall into their hands, persuaded as I was that there was no quarter to hope for from that nation and that the best bargain to expect was slavery in their mines.

I was, however, not disposed to let myself be captured, and I was ready to club this man if I noticed something suspicious or saw another one coming. When they reached us, I spoke to this man in a broken Spanish and Italian to which he responded nothing, except he said several times: "Coussiqua," which is to say in the Cenis language: "I have none of it" or "I don't understand it." The two other men were naked. One had a very pretty gray mare, very strong, although she fed only on grass for in this region they have no oats or barley. Each one had a small basket full of very finely ground, parched [corn] meal, and after we had posed several questions to them, we lit a flame with a pistol in order to give them some tobacco to smoke.

They offered us both of their baskets of cornmeal and indicated to us that their chiefs were waiting for us in their village. They let us know that they had plenty of corn for us if we needed it. We gave them a knife and a few strands of beads. We asked them if there were men like us in their village. They told us there was one and that two others were in another place called Saponny [Nasoni?]. The man dressed like a Spaniard showed me a printed paper which contained indulgences granted by the Pope to missionaries of old and new Mexico, all of it in Spanish. This confirmed for me what the previous tribes had told us and that there was no doubt that there were Spaniards around. The Indian even indicated to us that he had been with them; and he described the Spaniards to us as having black beards. At length, after they had smoked, they made it understood that they were going to the place where our people were; and I took the opportunity to write a short note to be taken to them which I gave to the Indians as proof that we had seen them. . . .

[The Ceni Indians bring to Joutel a Frenchman who had earlier deserted La Salle.]

He was a Provençal [from the French province of Provence], he was naked, as they were, and what surprised me further was that he had almost forgotten his own language and could not put two words together but could only talk gibberish. Finally, having recognized me, he came to embrace me; he did not at first dare to present himself, fearing that La Salle was with us. Although he told me that he had been sick when he left the gentleman, he told us that the Indians had been very solicitous and taken very good care of him during his illness and had shown him friendship. I asked him if there were any Spaniards in the village and if he had seen any. He told me no, but that the Indians often spoke of them, saying they would come in number. . . .

<sup>7</sup> Joutel's repeated references to the close relationship between the Cenis or Tejas Indians and tribes in northern Mexico support other reports that the Tejas traded extensively with and visited friendly tribes in Coahuila and Nuevo León in the 1670s and perhaps long before. . . . [Foster & Warren, footnote, p. 204]

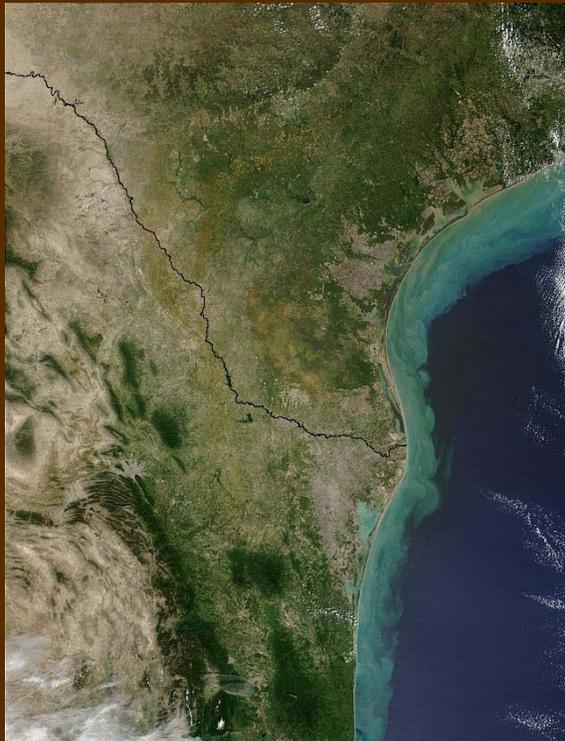
NASA / TERRA Modis



2003

Northern Mexico, Texas,  
Rio Grande River, Gulf of Mexico

2002



[In the winter of 1688-1689 the few remaining French settlers at Fort St. Louis, approximately forty people, are attacked by the Karankawa Indians. The adults are killed, the children taken captive, and the fort destroyed.]

**1689.**

INTERVIEW WITH THE TALON BROTHERS

The Spaniards from Mexico, having been informed of the incursion and of M<sup>r</sup>. de la Salle's plan for the French settlement in La Louisiane, resolved to thwart him; and to that end made three expeditions, even though they had to pass through an unknown and faraway land, according to what the said Talons reported having heard them say, where they had never been before. On the first expedition [1689], they were about 500 men on horseback, armed with muskets or small harquebuses,<sup>8</sup> pistols, and swords and all wearing coats of [chain]mail or iron wire made like nets of very small links, which protected them from the consequences of the savages' arrows. But, as it was already a long time after the massacre of the French when they arrived in the country [three to four months], they found only two of those who had scattered after the death of the said Sr. de la Salle and who were with the savage nations closer to the borders of Mexico than the ones who have been mentioned previously. One of these Frenchmen was a young man from Bayonne named Larchevesque [L'Archevêque], who appeared to be of noble birth and well educated, and the other a sailor named Groulé [Grollet]. The Spaniards seized them and took them with them to Mexico, where the said Talons saw them, as they will say later on.

**1689. APRIL**

DE LEÓN EXPEDITION FROM  
NEW SPAIN (MEXICO) TO TEJAS

[April 16] The whole force set out at the same time. After traveling about three leagues with the sixty men [reconnaissance group of soldiers], the rear-guard caught sight of an Indian in the timber. When he was taken to the governor [de León] and examined – through a poor interpreter – he declared that his ranchería was near by, and that four Frenchmen were there. We quickened our pace, under the guidance of our Indian, after we had sent word to the main body to stay in the place whence they had sent the Indian. Before we came to the ranchería all the people left. We

<sup>8</sup> Harquebus, arquebus: long-barreled handgun used by European soldiers in the 1500s and 1600s.

sighted them, however, as they were entering some motts<sup>9</sup>; and after them came eight or ten dogs loaded with buffalo hides. We sent the same Indian who had guided us to call them, with the result that most of them came.

It was ascertained that the four Frenchmen were not there, but that they had gone on to the Tejas four days before. In this ranchería we found two Indians who told us that we should find them in a ranchería two days' journey further. We gave these Indians some tobacco, knives, and other things, to get them to guide us, which they did. We turned and moved northward till sunset. Then we found in a thicket a village of more than two hundred and fifty persons, where we tried to find the Frenchmen, our French guide always serving as interpreter. They replied that the Frenchmen had gone to the Texas Indians four days before, and that the rest who had settled on the little sea (which is the bay) had all died at the hands of the coast Indians; that the Frenchmen had six houses; and that the event had occurred three moons, that is, three months, before; that previous to this there had been an epidemic of smallpox, of which most of them had died. . . .

[April 22] Friday, the 22<sup>d</sup>, as we were near the settlement, our party set out though the day dawned rainy. Three leagues down the creek we found it. Having halted with the forces about an arquebus-shot away, we went to see it, and found all the houses sacked, all the chests, bottle-cases, and all the rest of the settlers' furniture broken; apparently more than two hundred books, torn apart and with the rotten leaves scattered through the patios – all in French.

We noted that the perpetrators of this massacre had pulled everything [the colonists] had out of their chests, and divided the booty among themselves; and that what they had not cared for they had torn to pieces, making a frightful sack of all the French possessed; for besides the evidence involved in our finding everything in this condition, further proof was found in the fact that in the rancherías through which we had passed before our arrival at the settlement, we had found in the possession of the Indians some French books in very good condition, with other articles of very little value. These books were recovered and their titles committed to memory.

The Indians had done this damage not only to the furnishings, but also to the arms, for we found more than a hundred stocks of flintlock arque-buses, without locks or barrels. They must have carried these off, as was proved by an [arquebus] barrel found at some distance from the houses.

We found three dead bodies scattered over the plain. One of these, from the dress that still clung to the bones, appeared to be that of a woman. We took the bodies up, chanted mass with the bodies present, and buried them. We looked for the other dead bodies but could not find them; whence we supposed that they had been thrown into the creek and had been eaten by alligators, of which there were many.

The settlement was on a beautiful, level site, so as to be capable of defense in any event. On the frame of the principal door of the fort was inscribed the date of the settlement, which was 1684. . . .



Skull and other bones of French settlers unearthed during excavation of Fort St. Louis, 2000

<sup>9</sup> Mott: term used in the southwest for a small grove of trees in prairie land; in Texas, especially, of live oaks.

Texas Historical Commission



French cannons buried by the Spanish at Fort. St. Louis in 1689

## 1690. JUNE DE LEÓN EXPEDITION FROM NEW SPAIN (MEXICO) TO TEJAS

[June] Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> the company continued their journey and I, Genera Alonso de León, with sixteen soldiers, set out towards the northeast in search of two French boys and a French girl, of whom some Indians, who were camped in the said place, gave me information. We traveled over some plains for about four leagues, until we reached a small wood, through which we went, and afterward marched towards the east about three leagues over another plain, . . .

Tuesday, the 20<sup>th</sup>, we continued our journey towards the east where we found a ranchería of Indians, to whom I gave presents and who gave us four Indians to guide us to where the French children were. From there we set out in the same direction over some plains which were covered with buffalo, to cross the arroyo<sup>10</sup> of the French, and having crossed it, we continued to the old settlement . . .

Wednesday, the 21<sup>st</sup>, we set out toward the south and after about one league we met two Indians who were coming, on horseback, from the nation which had the French children. They took us to their ranchería which was on the headland of a small bay. Here were Roberto and Magdalena Talon. I discussed their ransom which they asked, they came with us with a thousand impertinencies, begging of us all the horses, and even the clothing which we wore upon our backs. Meanwhile they went to get the other French boy, who was two leagues from there in the same nation. Having brought him, they proceeded further with their impertinence, carrying bows and arrows, a large number of the Indians coming with shields, begging exorbitant things, and saying that if we did not give them to them they would have to shoot and kill us all. Their saying this and beginning to shoot were simultaneous, whereupon we attacked them, and, having killed four and wounded others, they retreated, having wounded two of our horses. We departed in an orderly manner to camp for the night at a distance of about four leagues, . . .

### 1690.

#### INTERVIEW WITH THE TALON BROTHERS

On the second trip [1690] the Spaniards were no more than 200,<sup>11</sup> having diminished their number because they had learned from the aforementioned L'archevesque and Groulé of the French disaster, and that there remained only a few who had escaped the various perils they had encountered and who were scattered among the savages. Finally, wanting absolutely to have in their power these wretched few



Hull of La Salle's flagship, the *Belle*, which ran aground and later sank in Matagorda Bay in early 1686; excavated in the mid 1990s

<sup>10</sup> Arroyo: dry creek bed or gulch that intermittently fills with water, especially after a heavy rain; found in semi-arid regions such as the southwest U.S.

<sup>11</sup> The second León *entrada* [expedition, 1690], to found a Franciscan mission among the Cenís, or Tejas, actually was larger than the first [1689]. It had 110 soldiers and four priests. [Bell & Weddle, footnote, p. 240]

who survived, they penetrated farther than they had on the first journey. Pierre Talon and Meunier, having learned from some savages that the Spaniards were looking for them and were drawing closer to them, wanted to evade them, fearing their cruelty. They believed they were fleeing from them, going farther into the territory from [Indian] nation to nation. But they [the Spaniards] met them on their way and captured

them. They made the two Frenchmen take them to the Ceniz village, to see if there were any others.<sup>12</sup> Not finding any, they stayed there several days and, finding this nation more docile and, in some ways, more civil than the others, they left with them three Spanish Religious of the Order of St. Francis, with several soldiers as their guard, who built them a house in the village. They left them some clothes, some flour, and



other provisions, which they did not lack [need], having more than 400 horses of which those not used by the horsemen were loaded with baggage and provisions.

These Religious, while the said Talon and Meunier stayed with them, worked at making a compilation of words for learning the Cenis language. Talon and Meunier served them as interpreters by means of the captain and lieutenant of this Spanish troop, who spoke good French. They heard them say many times that they wanted to live in this country, that it belonged to them and not to the French. They also heard them say this later to the viceroy of Mexico.

As the aforementioned Pierre Talon saw that the Spaniards treated him very humanely, he made known to them that there were still in the country his three brothers and one sister and other Frenchmen, who were with the Clamcoeh nation, that he might have the consolation of seeing them brought with him and among Christians. It came to pass, for the Spaniards went there and brought his sister but only two of his brothers, namely Robert and Lucien. His other brother, Jean-Baptiste, and Eustache Bréman again remained with this savage nation — how this happened he could not say — until about a year later, when a third troop of about 250 Spaniards returned to fetch them and take them to Mexico. Reluctantly, the savages allowed them to go, because they saw very well that the Spaniards were ready to carry them away by force if they refused. On the other hand, the Spaniards did not want to bring on themselves a war with [the natives] because they intended to establish themselves in the country. They agreed to give in exchange one horse for each French head. But when it came to the Talons' sister, who was taller and older, being their eldest, the savages wanted two horses for her. Beyond that, there arose a dispute that made them take recourse to arms, so that there were two or three savages killed with musket shots, which made the others flee because they greatly feared firearms. Finally, they gave up the girl for one horse as they had done for each of the boys. To appease them the Spaniards gave them some smoking tobacco, which they love so much that there is nothing they will not do to get it. On the Spaniards' side, only one horse was wounded by the savages' arrows, which they shot in great numbers. However, these had no effect against the Spaniards because of their coats of mail. . . .

<sup>12</sup> By that time all the others were dead, with the possible exception of the man from Provence . . . , who had become thoroughly Indianized. His ultimate fate is not known. [Bell & Weddle, footnote, p. 240]

The Talons<sup>13</sup> and their comrades, having been captured by the Spaniards as has been said, crossed with them — before arriving in New Spain — a big country very much like the one they had just left, and which they have previously described, also populated with savages separated into small nations, each one having its own particular name and language. . . .

From there they continued on their road until they came to the one leading to Mexico [City], capital of the country, archbishopric, and place where the Spanish viceroy makes his residence. It appeared to them very large and beautiful, and they heard someone tell the Spaniard that it was as large as Madrid. The houses there are well built, all on a very high level and all with terraced roofs, so that one can go over them without difficulty, from one end of the street to the other. There are many coaches.

. . . The town is heavily populated, but the majority are natives of the country; that is, descendants of the Indian peoples or savages, rather than of Spaniards. And it is not permitted to these natives to keep arms, which ensures that they do not know how to use them. Thus, [the Spaniards] take this precaution because of their great number and their inclination to revolt, for they endure the Spanish yoke only with difficulty.

[The Franciscan missionaries on the 1690 expedition stayed in east Texas and founded the San Francisco de los Tejas mission to convert the Indians.]

**1690: September. FATHER MIGUEL FONT CUBERTA, SAN FRANCISCO DE LOS TEJAS MISSION, TEJAS, LETTER TO HIS CUSTODIO IN NEW SPAIN**

May Jesus live. May the grace of the divine love be with your very reverend paternity. The Most High was pleased that this province of the Techas should ask for holy baptism, for which reason his Excellency, the viceroy of this New Spain, gave orders to send religious [priests], accompanied also by one hundred soldiers, through fear that something might happen to us among the Indians who were not acquainted with his firm determination, and also through fear of the Frenchmen (who, it was said) were in those parts, as indeed there were five at different rancherías of Indians, whom they took to his Excellency. Since we arrived at this province of the Techas so great has been the excitement caused among the neighboring Indians that nearly everyday (since we have been here) Indians have come to see us. Among them the bearer of this letter, one of the soldiers who was at El Paso in New Mexico, spoke to us, telling us that from this province of the Techas to El Paso it is no more than five days' journey, and that if we wished to write he would carry the letter. Seeing such good opportunity (that is, if the Indian speaks truly), I determined to write this so that you may know that we are your servants, and that if we can serve you in anything let us know and we will do it with all brotherly love. . . .

My dear father, an Indian just came to see us and told us that from some distance to the north some white men would come to see us, and, judging by the descriptions, we believe that they are Frenchmen. They should be here by the latter part of February [1691]. We do not know whether or not they are coming to take vengeance upon the Spaniards for having taken away the Frenchmen who were in these regions, but I say that if the road is so short, and if it be possible for some soldiers to come and see if these Frenchmen are approaching, it would be a great assistance to his Excellency until we



San Francisco de los Tejas, mission built in 1716 on the site of the first Spanish mission in east Texas (abandoned in 1693; 19th-century ink drawing by James Gilchrist Benton

<sup>13</sup> For a complete account of the Talon family — parents Lucien and Isabelle, and children Marie-Elizabeth, Marie-Madeleine, Pierre, Jean-Baptiste, and Robert — and the eventual return of Pierre and Jean-Baptiste to France, see The Handbook of Texas Online at [www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/TT/fta60.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/TT/fta60.html).

can give him information of what is happening, because if it were possible for us to send the information immediately we would do so, but it is not possible on account of the large rivers and the never ceasing rain. In the direction from which these Frenchmen are coming there is a river which they cannot cross on horseback. They cross it by swimming, as has been done on other occasions, as when we ourselves came here. It is not possible for us to know what is happening in this land, for we have only been here for three months and our time has been taken up in learning the languages of these Techas Indians. What we see is that all that they have said to us has been the truth.

May the Lord Most High guard your paternity and your happy company of my beloved brothers. May he keep them and fill them with His holy love. From this pueblo of my holy father, San Francisco de los Techas, today, September 4, 1690. I, the same unworthy one as ever, kiss the hand of your Paternity.

Fray Miguel Font Cuberta

