

Diary of Aguayo Expedition

The Marqués de San Miguel de Aguayo was born in Spain and owned huge amounts of land in Coahuila in New Spain. In 1719 he became governor and captain-general of the provinces of Coahuila and Texas. Earlier that year, the French had invaded eastern Texas, causing most Spaniards to abandon the area. Two years later, Aguayo was determined to re-establish Spanish control in Texas. His expedition included about 500 men and 4000 horses and other livestock. His expedition stayed in Texas for nearly two years. When he left there were 10 missions, 4 presidios and about 300 Spanish residents.

The following source is taken from the diary of a Franciscan friar who was on the expedition. His name was Brother Juan Antonio de la Pena. This is just part of the diary. It is also edited slightly so that it is easier to read and understand. The person the diary writer calls "His Lordship" is the expedition leader, Aguayo.

His Lordship was informed that sixteen huts belonging to the soldiers at San Antonio had burned. The granary with 700 bushels of corn and the flour supplies had also burned, not even leaving an ear of corn. He then ordered the mule packs which he had left at Saltillo be brought with all haste lest something happen to their ship as well. The mule packs had been left at the Rio Grande with 200 loads of flour and 1,000 bushels of corn. His Lordship also dispatched expresses asking for a herd of 800 horses as soon as possible.

[After traveling through east Texas,] His Lordship arrived at San Antonio on January 23, with the happy consolation that the multitude of misfortunes had stricken only the horses and mules. Their mortality rate had been so high that out of 5,000 horses no more than 50 returned. Out of 800 mules which had set out, only 100 returned. However, not a single soldier was lost. Even two soldiers who had left Los Adaes in poor health arrived well and sound at San Antonio.

His Lordship realized that the Presidio of San Antonio was defenseless and also exposed to fire, such as the soldiers had recently experienced as a result of living in thatched roof huts. Therefore, His Lordship attempted to construct an accident-proof fortress made of adobe. After ordering the cutting of the necessary lumber for the church, stores and quarters, His Lordship selected a better site than that on which the presidio used to be located. It was first necessary to clear the land by cutting down many trees. A great number of people were then put to work making adobe bricks.

His Lordship encouraged the abundant planting of corn for the maintenance of the soldiers and friendly Indians who were constantly coming to see the Spaniards. The irrigation ditch which His Lordship had ordered constructed at his own expense could very well irrigate the two leagues of fertile land below the presidio.

His Lordship gave Indian Juan Rodriguez a responsible position at the mission and clothed him in a complete suit of English cloth as used by the Spaniards.

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The march on Friday the twentieth did not begin until the afternoon, because many horses had been lost during the rain storm which had occurred in the morning with much thunder and lightning. The horses were not recovered until midday. We then marched two leagues towards the east over the same type of terrain as the day before to a creek which His Lordship named San Joachin, because it did not have a name. There are many turkeys in this area.

Nothing was accomplished during the first eight days because the Governor was confined to his bed due to his poor health, aggravated by the hardships of the expedition which he had begun to suffer in San Antonio. Moreover, those days were devoted to the Church because it was Holy Week. This afforded great consolation to all because it was the first time they could observe the holy days decently inside of a church. On the second day of Easter, April 6, His Lordship began to outline the foundations of the Presidio in accordance with the orders of Our Lord the King, may God protect him, at the site where the French had theirs under LaSalle from 1684 to 1690.

All this time a number of Indian families had come telling the Governor that many more Indians would settle here if they saw them congregated in a mission. There was no doubt that they would do so because they had shown much pleasure and happiness with the gifts and other items distributed among them by the Governor. It was also known that these Indians were more docile than the ones who had killed the French, and they would be happier cultivating crops and their own souls. They lived in more misery than the other Indians. Their diet consisted solely of fish, and they had no clothes. On their own, they asked the Governor to baptize three of their children. He did so, and then much to everyone's pleasure, he gave more presents to the children's parents.

The new Presidio de San Antonio could have been finished earlier had it not been for the continuous rains. Not only was it impossible to work for three weeks, but the 30,000 adobe bricks, which His Lordship had ordered made while he went to La Bahia, were all destroyed in the rains. Nonetheless, most of the task and 25,000 bricks were completed. A large amount of material was successfully gathered for the construction by the 40 Indians whom His Lordship hired at his personal expense. All continued working.

This last part is a summary, by Br. Don Juan Antonio de la Peña, at the end of the expedition telling all of the things that the Marqués de Aguayo had accomplished.

The Arms of Our Lord the King, may God protect him, have been covered with glory in this expedition because this extensive Province and all which the French had claimed has been re-established in the name of the king of Spain. Moreover, many and numerous Indian nations which exist in the 200 leagues from the town and Presidio of San Antonio to Our Lady of Pilar de los Adaes, have been brought under the obedience of His Majesty. The Presidio of Los Adaes was established and the 80 leagues from San Antonio to La Bahia del Espiritu Santo have been opened. The soldiers have done their duty. The spirit of devotion they have displayed is second in a soldier only to valor. They have endured all types of setbacks in the long and exhausting marches. They bore up against the severe river floods and indifferently shrugged off all types of

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weather, sometimes extremely hot and at others freezing cold in winter. They walked through the most vehement changes of coldness as well as sweltering heat. At times it seemed as if Hell had conjured all its power in furious, never-before-seen storms of that country where we had gone to gather many souls within the fold of the Church and re-establish our Holy Catholic Faith. All of our hard work has at least been compensated in part by all the souls from so many different languages and Nations who have now been saved in their old age. Seeing themselves on their death bed, the Indians have asked for baptism for themselves and for their children, whom their parents realize were in danger. They continue to do so in the nine missions which the Governor has re-established as well as at Mission San Antonio de Valero.

All the kingdoms of New Spain are now protected by this buffer which has been added in this vast Province. The kingdoms are also protected by the presidios which had been established at Los Adaes and La Bahia, and by fortifying the Presidio de San Antonio. This latter presidio, is at the entrance to Texas and had never had any fortifications. In this military engagement expanded over 26 months the Governor has shown his innate love and zeal for the Royal Service by executing all the decisions and orders of the Viceroy promptly and correctly.

Of no less importance has been the care and measures he took to maintain the troops at his own expense in those distant deserts. The supplies and provisions had to be transported over 400 leagues. With the greatest complacency he has shown his love for sowing the Gospel Truth among so many souls who live in the sad shadows of mankind. It is known that Our Lord the King, may God protect him, has a Catholic, Christian zeal to extend his dominion over the entire world and thus bring Christ, the Sun of Justice, for all to see. In an act of thanksgiving, His Lordship concluded the expedition yesterday with a beautiful and solemn fiesta in honor of Our Lady. We asked God for, not only the maintenance of that Province, but also for the addition of all other Provinces where the sun might shine to the Crown and dominion of our Catholic King Phillip, for in this manner they will come into the Kingdom of God which is praised by all creatures for all eternity.

Signed at Santiago de la Monclova, capital of the Province of Coahuila, New Estremadura, on June 21, 1722. Br. Don Juan Antonio de la Peña

If you want to read more of this diary, go to:

<http://www.tamu.edu/faculty/ccbn/dewitt/alarconex2.htm>

To find out more about the Aguayo expedition go to:

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/upa01>

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fag02>