



Primary Source

Pupil's Edition,
p. 135

Rubí's Expedition

Diary of the Marqués de Rubí

From 1765 to 1767 the Marqués de Rubí inspected Spain's northern frontier. He recommended that missions and presidios in East Texas and West Texas be abandoned and that Spain's resources be focused on San Antonio and La Bahía.

October 16 [1767]. With the inspection of the presidio [at Orcoquiza] completed, we left for that of Bahía del Espíritu Santo, passing by the lagoon named El Muelle. It joins the Trinidad [Trinity] River, and they flow united to the sea. . . . We crossed this river by canoe, during which the baggage and mules caused us no small difficulties. . . . Because of the problem we had crossing the river, we traveled only 5 leagues [about 3–4 miles].

October 17. Heading: west-northwest. We began to move across the difficult plain or low land of Caramanchel, whose bogs make it impassable¹ most of the year. We encountered parts of the boggy land, with frequent lagoons. . . . Following another mucky-clay plain like the preceding one, . . . we entered the forest that runs down the entire bank to the San Jacinto River, an obstacle that required rafts to cross. We camped on its south bank, where there was an intolerable² plague of mosquitoes. . . .

October 28. We traveled 8 leagues across the same terrain and places as last August 28 to the ford named Gobernador. . . . As [the Guadalupe] was totally impassable at this place, we continued the march downriver. . . . About 2 leagues from the Paso del Gobernador, we camped and began to cross the river in a canoe and rafts made of hides, having traveled a total of 10 leagues.

October 31. Heading: south, a quarter west. We arrived at the San Antonio River. . . . It flows at the foot of the [Presidio] La Bahía del Espíritu Santo. There we stopped in order to conduct its inspection.

The location of this presidio—free, unhampered,³ and commanding—is on a hill in which they have found a vein of stone that offers great advantage for construction, inconsistent with the misery of its inhabitants. The San Antonio and Medina River runs nearly east-west at the foot of this hill, and very close

on the north side is the Mission Espíritu Santo, with some twenty-five families . . . possessing lands and livestock sufficient to supply all of Mexico City. Another [mission], Rosario, . . . is located on the south side of the river to the west about 2 leagues away. Its possessions and property are less extensive and the number of its Indians is less certain, for they frequently desert and flee to the coast. [The priests] go there to get them—or others, which is the same thing, for it is evident that the mission is composed mostly of pagans.⁴ The difficulty of drawing [irrigation] water from this river has [not] been to the increase of the population. Despite the advantages offered by this land for the raising of all kinds of livestock, people have been oppressed at the same time by the enormous extension [of lands] that the missionaries have taken, which reach to the boundaries of the pastures used for the King's horse herds. [The civil population] has not exceeded more than forty-six poor families, who are usually absent. . . . This presidio pertains⁵ to the coastal climate, which makes it unhealthy and exposed to scurvy.⁶

Review Questions

1. How did the expedition find its way with no roads or road signs?
2. Why did Rubí think Presidio La Bahía and the town were not thriving?

Critical Thinking

3. **Identifying Point of View** What is Rubí's attitude toward the missions?
4. **Summarizing** What kinds of difficulties did the expedition encounter?

1 **impassable** impossible to cross

2 **intolerable** unbearable

3 **unhampered** without obstacles

4 **pagans** people with little or no religion

5 **pertains** is related

6 **scurvy** disease caused by lack of vitamin C