

‘For the Hills of Santa Fe’:  
The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 and the Southwest Market Economy

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in History

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May 3, 2011  
Blacksburg, VA

Keywords: Texas, Market, Expedition, Southwest, Santa Fe

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ill-fated Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 to analyze the state of a lucrative market network in the Southwest. Cut off from Santa Fe, the hub of the network, Texas struggled economically as an independent nation. Commercially isolated and dealing with near-worthless paper money, Texans hoped that trade with the people of Santa Fe would divert wealth into their nation. To justify the expedition, Anglo-Texans used the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny and turned the trek into a liberation mission. Moreover, Texans desired an overland route to Santa Fe to attract merchants to their otherwise inactive ports. Texans invested much into the expedition both economically and culturally; however, the Texan Santa Fe Expedition ended in utter failure and convinced many Texans that annexation to the United States was the wiser path to take.

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## Introduction

In 1840 and 1841, clamor about an adventurous journey to Santa Fe was inescapable in Texas. In April 1840, one columnist considered the possibilities of a trade route between Santa Fe and Texas:

The trade of Santa Fe consists principally in valuable peltries, and gold and silver in bars, and to this country horses and mules, and even cattle might be driven with profit. Santa Fe is the place where all the traders from the north of Mexico meet the traders from Missouri to make an exchange of their commodities—some idea of its value may be drawn from the great prosperity of St. Louis, which derives its principal wealth from this trade. Goods may be landed at Galveston or Linnville, if imported direct from Europe, at a cheaper rate than they can be landed at Philadelphia, as our impost duty is much less than it is in the United States. From Galveston to Santa Fe it is not more than 500 miles—From Philadelphia to Santa Fe it is more than 4000 miles. We have every advantage over the St. Louis trader, and only want a little energy to carry the plan into successful operation.<sup>1</sup>

The prospect of acquiring access to this wealth was captivating. The residents of the Republic of Texas saw this as a lucrative economic opportunity, looking to the boom economy of St. Louis as their model for success. Likewise, they saw St. Louis as their competition. Texans rationalized why it would be better to transport manufactured goods from Texan ports to the northern frontier of Mexico. Texans wanted to organize an expedition to Santa Fe for the purpose of directly participating in a frontier market economy that had flourished since Mexican independence in 1821. Hinging on this plan was the improvement of the delicate, unstable economy of the Republic of Texas.

Under Spanish rule, residents of the Mexico's northern frontier were required to conduct trade only within the empire, thus forcing them to accept the high, fixed prices of the monopolies of central Mexico. To add to that frustration, individuals in northern Mexico had to pay absurd transportation costs and they could only sell goods overseas through one Mexican port, Veracruz, which was inconveniently far from the North. Thus, by law, the merchants of central and southern Mexico took advantage of the isolated northern frontier. David Weber has stated

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<sup>1</sup> "Santa Fe Trade," *Texas and Telegraph Register*, April 8, 1840.

that the elevated prices “on necessities must have made them seem like luxury goods on the frontier.”<sup>2</sup>

Trade between Santa Fe and St. Louis formally began in 1821, when Mexico abandoned its colonial trade regulations and opened its northern border to American merchants.<sup>3</sup> William Becknell became the first American to successfully reach mineral-rich Santa Fe in the fall of 1821 and the profits were immense. For the next 25 years, caravans would make the journey each fall and return the following spring with wagons full of silver bars. Some years were better than others, as one historian has noted that certain trips yielded \$200,000 in profits but the average yearly return was about \$145,000.<sup>4</sup> The exchanges that took place were seemingly lopsided, but frontier residents needed, in many cases, the simplest of goods. American merchants loaded their wagons primarily with manufactured goods produced in eastern factories, such as basic clothing, tools, furniture, and various household items. In return, American traders acquired mules, horses, furs, and, most importantly, coins and bars of silver. The Texan entrepreneur in 1841 salivated at the idea of tapping into this lucrative silver market, as their abundance of inexpensive manufactured products and a national shortage of hard cash placed them in position not unlike that of the St. Louis merchant 20 years earlier.

Apparently unaware of the state of the Santa Fe trade circa 1840, Texans did not realize that the annual trek from St. Louis to Santa Fe had seen an increase in danger and a drastic decrease in profit. Indian attacks on the caravans, even with military escorts from Mexico and the United States, resulted in the loss of more and more merchants and goods. Further, the Mexican government had become more involved with the process of taxing incoming American merchants. The tax was high from the beginning, but the officials in charge of collecting the payment were frequently bribed into reducing the duty payment. After the independence of

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<sup>2</sup> David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 123.

<sup>3</sup> For works on the Santa Fe Trail and trade, see T. Lindsay Baker, “The Santa Fe Trade as Viewed by Contemporary Texans and the Texan Press,” *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 73 (January 2000): 1-24; Larry Beachum, *William Becknell: Father of the Santa Fe Trade* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982); Billington, *The Far Western Frontier*; Susan Calafate Boyle, *Los Capitalistas: Hispano Merchants and the Santa Fe Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); Carroll, *The Texan Santa Fe Trail* (Canyon, Texas: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1951); Stephen G. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe: The Road to New Mexico and the American Conquest, 1806-1848* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Max L. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road: Trade and Travel on the Chihuahua Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958); Angela Moyano Pahissa, *El Comercio de Santa Fe y la Guerra del 47* (Mexico City: Secretaria de Educacion Publica, 1976); David J. Sandoval, “Gnats, Goods, and Greasers: Mexican Merchants on the Santa Fe Trail,” *Journal of the West* 28, no. 2 (April 1989): 22-31.

<sup>4</sup> Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 129.

Texas, the tax soared even higher and the tensions between Mexicans and Anglos made bribing much more difficult.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, by the 1830s, American goods had reached their capacity in Santa Fe and Mexican merchants began to take control of the trade. American merchants who still made the annual trip to Santa Fe were thus often forced to continue deeper into Chihuahua and other Mexican provinces.<sup>6</sup> Even though the economic climate was not necessarily favorable for Texan trade in 1841, Texans sought to expand their market possibilities and enrich their lives with bars of silver.

As market capitalism became standard in the United States, independence from Spain in 1821 marked the end of the constraints of mercantilism on the northern frontier. Whereas the wealth of Mexico was before channeled into the coffers of the Spanish Crown (and its many European lenders) under a strict policy of mercantilism, the lifting of restrictions left much of Mexico to fend for itself. For individuals in the northern provinces, their marginalized and dependent status remained, but now they could legally conduct business with foreign merchants. The Santa Fe Trail eventually became one of the greatest sources of income for Mexico and by the 1830s a burgeoning merchant class on Mexico's northern frontier, now participants in a frontier market economy, began to compete with central Mexico. Colonized in this same period, Texas experienced the development of an economy that resembled that of the United States, as land grants offered by the Mexican government attracted overwhelming numbers of immigrants. The economies of both northern Mexico and Texas thus became inextricably connected to the attractive economy of the United States.

In a market economy, the individual is completely focused on profits and seeking the best ways to gain those profits. Doing business successfully on the frontier after 1821 meant that the target market would yield more money than it would cost for the purchase of transportation and the manufactured goods that were to be sold: profit was what made these trips worth the time and risk. While northern Mexicans and Texans participated in this economy, the American merchant dominated the trade and profited the most early on. Mexican merchants would eventually accumulate the resources to compete, but Texans were largely removed from this because of their unfavorable geographic position; the absence of an overland trade route to Santa Fe and the northern markets of Mexico was a detriment to the growth of the Republic of Texas. To compete

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<sup>5</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 35, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 128-130.

in this frontier market economy, Texans planned a low-risk (it was actually incredibly risky), high-reward mission to Santa Fe, which they claimed fell within their western boundary anyway.

Talk of a journey to Santa Fe had been ongoing since 1839 in Texas, but in June 1841, rumor finally became reality. Around June 20, depending on the account, a group of roughly 320 individuals departed from their encampment at Brushy Creek, just outside of Austin. Their objective was, first and foremost, to gain access to the famed Santa Fe trade and, secondarily, to potentially acquire the territory for the Republic of Texas. With little more than hearsay to guide them, the Santa Fe “pioneers” had to improvise and explore a route to their destination. Led by General Hugh McLeod, they made it to the Little River by June 24 and then forded the Brazos on July 11. Entering difficult terrain, the party worked its way through the Cross Timbers between for much of July. By August 6, the expedition had encountered a group of Native Americans and reached Beaver Creek. Becoming rather disoriented and frustrated, the group arrived at Smelter Creek on August 17 and, having ignited their camp and the surrounding prairie a few nights before, hoped that the settlements of New Mexico were not far. They were certainly lost by August 30, when they desperately sent couriers ahead to New Mexican settlements (in the general direction, at least) and remained in a dismal state at “Camp Resolution” on Los Lingos Creek.

Advance parties were quickly swallowed up by military forces from Mexico and eventually, after having acquired the services of a few Mexican guides, the diminished force continued on its ill-fated journey. During September, while they wandered westward through ravines and inhospitable lands, Mexican forces captured more of their scouting parties. On October 4, the expedition, now a very small party, reached Laguna Colorada. The remaining members of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition surrendered to a sizeable Mexican unit the next morning without resisting. From there, the captors took them deep into the heart of Mexico, where they were ultimately held in unpleasant prisons. Those who survived the entire debacle were returned to the United States in 1842 as a result of diplomatic negotiations. The doomed adventure had finally come to a close.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the unbelievable risks that were ahead of them, the members of the expedition were convinced that the journey would be successful and, most importantly, profitable. The only people who really knew the land in eastern New Mexico and western Texas were the various

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<sup>7</sup> The account described above draws from Carroll, *The Texan Santa Fe Trail*.

Comanche tribes in the area, yet the party still attempted to traverse the territory. Why exactly did the Texans organize this expedition? What drove them to undertake a journey that had little chance of success from the outset? In the broader sense, what fueled the expansionist mentality of Texans and Anglos on the Southwest borderlands during the first part of the nineteenth-century? How was this expedition connected to the shifting economic landscape on the frontier? And, finally, what can the journey explain about the growing borderland market economy and its effects?

The primary sources speak to these questions. A friend of Mirabeau B. Lamar, President of Texas, wrote in February of 1839 that direct contact with Santa Fe would benefit Texas politically, militarily, and economically. He claimed that Santa Fe fell within the established boundary of Texas and, further, that Mexican frontier residents were eager to shed “the weight of taxation imposed by the central head.” This friend of President Lamar ultimately envisioned an Indian-free frontier that would facilitate prosperous trade between the ports of Texas and the silver mines of New Mexico.<sup>8</sup> Here, in this political correspondence, the frontier economy makes its influence known. The desires to expand westward and suppress Indian raids were the intended means to allow Texan merchants to profit from the trade of northern Mexico.

Another example of the dominance of the frontier economy is Cayton Erhard, originally born in Munich, Germany, who joined the expedition as a young man. Like most of his colleagues, Erhard enlisted as a volunteer to receive the modest monthly pay; however, a trading firm equipped him with a large number of shoes to be sold in Santa Fe.<sup>9</sup> Thus, besides being paid as a volunteer, he was *expected* to supplement this income by selling cheap manufactured goods once he arrived at the destination. It is not outrageous to think that many of the volunteers—separate from the party of merchants on the expedition—were furnished in similar fashion. Even among the ranks of the men who joined simply for the commission and something to do, the concept of making a profit stood as a real possibility in their minds.

Historians have tried to address my set of interrelated questions to an extent. However, much of the attention given to the Texan Santa Fe Expedition has been of the antiquarian variety. Concentrating on the narrative and the “what happened” type of history, these early scholars,

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<sup>8</sup> W. Jefferson Jones to Mirabeau B. Lamar, Bastrop, Feb. 8, 1839, in Charles Adams Gulick, Jr., ed., *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 1798-1859* (Austin: A. C. Baldwin, 1922), 2:438-440.

<sup>9</sup> Cayton Erhard, “Cayton Erhard’s Reminiscences of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, 1841,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (January 1963): 428.



most notably the very detail-oriented H. Bailey Carroll, laid out the groundwork and traced the development of the expedition. Carroll's dissertation—ultimately transformed into a very meticulous book—attempted to pinpoint the route of the expedition.<sup>10</sup> He drew from first-hand accounts of the travelers, special orders, and topographical sources to outline quite impressively the path of the expedition. Noel Loomis retold the narrative of the expedition, but he was primarily concerned with the fates of the travelers themselves.<sup>11</sup> Using the same diaries and accounts as Carroll, Loomis illuminated the stories of several of the participants, such as George Kendall, a newspaper editor from New Orleans, and Hugh McLeod, the military leader of the expedition.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in his master's thesis, Watt Goodwin Hill began to consider the meaning of the expedition and acknowledged the political and economic motives of the Santa Fe party.<sup>13</sup> The Santa Fe Trail, he observed, carried the business of silver and other valuable ores from Santa Fe to St. Louis. The Texans wanted to tap into this commerce. Politically, Texans claimed that their western boundary included Santa Fe and they sought to expand their territorial holdings in hopes of attracting both domestic and foreign capital. Ultimately, Hill failed to consider the motives of the members of the expedition who were not intimately interested in Texas. Further, these works as a whole neglected to consider the contextual significance of the expedition and the transforming economic landscape of the borderlands in the early nineteenth-century.

The Texan Santa Fe Expedition then basically went unnoticed until the 1990s and 2000s, when historians employed a more analytical approach. Several biographies of members of the expedition appeared that continued the tradition of earlier writings. Paul N. Spellman attempted to bring Hugh McLeod, the commander of the expedition, into the forefront.<sup>14</sup> Tracing his service in the military, Spellman rejected the idea of blaming McLeod for the Texan Santa Fe Expedition and instead highlighted his successful military and political career after his return to Texas. Andres Resendez considered the role of ethnicity in his biography Jose Antonio Navarro,

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<sup>10</sup> H. Bailey Carroll, "The Route of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition" (PhD dissertation, University of Texas, 1935); Carroll, *The Texan Santa Fe Trail*.

<sup>11</sup> Noel M. Loomis, *The Texan-Santa Fe Pioneers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958).

<sup>12</sup> For other early examples of work on McLeod and Kendall, see Gertrude Burleson Blake, "The Public Career of General Hugh McLeod" (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1932); Fayette Copeland, *Kendall of the Picayune* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943).

<sup>13</sup> Watt Goodwin Hill, Jr., "The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841: A Visionary Dream?" (Master's thesis, St. Mary's University, 1965).

<sup>14</sup> Paul N. Spellman, *Forgotten Texas Leader: Hugh McLeod and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

one of the commissioners of the expedition.<sup>15</sup> He described Navarro's struggles as a *tejano*, in his roles as a leader in Texas and as a captive in Mexico. Biographies of members of the expedition, like the ones that Spellman and Resendez produced, depicted their subjects as participants in larger historical issues and contexts.

Resendez' biography of Navarro, however, has not been his most useful contribution to the literature on the Texan Santa Fe Expedition. His book *Changing National Identities at the Frontier* was built around the idea that, caught between the Mexican state and the American markets, national identities on the borderland were (and continue to be) fluid and flexible in the first half of the nineteenth-century. Recognizing the agency of the main factions on the frontier, he argued that Indians, Anglos, *tejanos*, *nuevomexicanos*, and Mexicans all acted at various times and locations to improve their particular situations. He used Stephen Austin, perhaps the most influential Anglo settler of Texas, as a prime example of this fluidity. Austin, who (allegedly) converted to Catholicism, became a Mexican citizen to acquire land in his father's name, but then encouraged the migration of Anglos to Texas. In his chapter on the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, Resendez identified the frenzy that surrounded this journey, as he was astonished by how much attention newspapers in both Mexico and the United States gave the expedition. Ultimately, he applied the main arguments of his book and asserted that the event exemplified the contest between market and state, with the Mexican state actually prevailing in this instance.<sup>16</sup> His work is invaluable, as it considered the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, for the first time, as a part of a chaotic, transforming Southwest frontier.

While Resendez inspired and directly influences this thesis, my interpretation will differ from his to some degree. Resendez dealt very closely with the powerful frontier economy and he tied it effectively into his nuanced arguments. At the same time, his center of his analysis was not the shift from a contained, aristocratically driven mercantilism to a far-reaching market capitalism. Similarly, Resendez focused on neither the relationship between the American market revolution and the development of a comparable system on the Southwest borderlands nor the basic mechanics of the frontier economy. The connection between the centers of these nations to the periphery, particularly in the case of the United States, is sometimes lost in

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<sup>15</sup> Andres Resendez, ed., *A Texas Patriot on Trial in Mexico: Jose Antonio Navarro and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (Dallas: Degolyer Library & William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Resendez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2-4, 234-236.

Resendez's concentration on the autonomy of the borderlands; just as it is important to see the borderlands on their own terms, it is equally important to constantly contextualize frontier communities as cultural extensions of their parent countries. To be sure, these absences are not shortcomings. My aim is to pick up where Resendez's seminal work left off and begin to fill in the gaps that delay a more complete understanding of the U.S.-Mexico border.

If the Texan Santa Fe Expedition is to be analyzed for a broader historical significance, then it is appropriate to address other relevant bodies of literature. For instance, studies on the Spanish colonial borderlands, which chronologically cover the period from sixteenth century through 1810, explore how institutions, identity, and politics shifted, transformed, or remained the same on the Southwest frontier during Spanish colonial rule. Jesus F. de la Teja, a historian of colonial and early nineteenth-century Texas, offered an original history of San Antonio as a communal entity that shaped identity.<sup>17</sup> Concerned with the colonial period until 1800, de la Teja potently asserted that the community of Bexar was incredibly fluid from the beginning, as it originally contained both poor and stable Mexican settlers who were quick to marry into other families for economic opportunity and thus developed an ever-changing hierarchy. John Francis Bannon emphasized the importance of Spanish missions in territorial expansion and colonial policies. Bannon, responding primarily to Herbert Bolton, placed the mission and the Catholic clergy at the center of the frontier community, citing its vital role in maintaining tenuous stability.<sup>18</sup> De la Teja and Bannon exemplify the type of projects that Spanish colonial borderlands historians undertake: they and others have sought to understand the attempts of the Spanish Crown to exert its dominance and the effects of the decentralization of the region.<sup>19</sup> This literature thus helps to contextualize the destabilizing situation in the early nineteenth-century and the arrival of a fast-spreading market economy.

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<sup>17</sup> Jesus F. de la Teja, *San Antonio de Bexar: A Community on New Spain's Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821*, 2nd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); Herbert E. Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

<sup>19</sup> Other pertinent and influential works include Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); De la Teja and Ross Frank, eds., *Choice, Persuasion, and Coercion: Social Control on Spain's North American Frontiers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); J. C. A. Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands: James Madison and the Spanish-American Frontier, 1776-1821* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); H. Henrietta Stockel, *Salvation through Slavery: Chiricahua Apaches and Priests on the Spanish Colonial Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008); David Hurst Thomas, ed., *The Spanish Borderlands in Pan-American Perspective* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

Not surprisingly, there exists literature that deals in some way with identity politics and formation on the Southwest borderlands, whether race, ethnicity, legal systems, gender, religion, or something else. For example, James Brooks offered important perspective on the complicated state of borderlands identity in his monograph.<sup>20</sup> Brooks argued that indigenous peoples and Anglos came to somewhat cordial terms generally through a constant sequence of violence, exchange, and expressions of masculinity. Bloody conflicts, the desecration of Christian symbols, and the thievery of prominent Indian daughters all eventually allowed for trade because these acts bonded communities through gains of masculine honor. Specifically concerned with the history of race relations in the Southwest, Martha Menchaca sought to understand the historical trajectory of Mexican Americans, a group that she asserted included blacks.<sup>21</sup> In a bold move, she openly suggested that the Texas Revolution was really nothing more than a racially-charged conflict over slavery and that Mexico, since its independence, had been supportive of all of its citizens, including blacks.<sup>22</sup> Brooks and Menchaca, as just two examples, show how the market economy and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, just like racial and gender conceptions, could inextricably shape and influence identity formation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>21</sup> Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Menchaca, *Recovering History*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> See also Ana Maria Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995); Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Jimmy L. Bryan, Jr., "The Enduring People: Tejano Exclusion and Perseverance in the Republic of Texas, 1836-1845." *Journal of the West* 47, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 40-47; Randolph B. Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Robert Francis Castro, "After the Slavers: Law, Liberation and Captive-Taking in the New Mexican Borderlands," *Slavery and Abolition* 28, no. 3 (December 2007): 369-386; James E. Crisp, "Anglo-Texan Attitudes toward the Mexican, 1821-1845" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1976); Graham Davis, *Land!: Irish Pioneers in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); De la Teja, "Discovering the Tejano Community in 'Early' Texas," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 73-98; De la Teja, ed., *Tejano Leadership in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010); Arnoldo de Leon, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1997); De Leon, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Dianna Everett, *The Texas Cherokees: A People Between Two Fires, 1819-1840* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); Ramon A. Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Lisbeth Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Sean Kelley, "'Mexico in His Head': Slavery and the Texas-Mexico Border, 1810-1860," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 709-723; David J. Langum, *Law and Community on the Mexican California Frontier: Anglo-American Expatriates and the Clash of Legal Traditions, 1821-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Timothy M. Matovina, *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821-1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Jill Mocho, *Murder and Justice in Frontier New Mexico*,

Finally, very few scholars have attempted to make sense of the broader transformations and historical processes between 1810 and 1850 on the frontier, a chronology that includes the beginning of Mexican independence through roughly the closing of the Mexican-American War.<sup>24</sup> However, besides Andres Resendez, one historian in particular has confronted the vast changes that swept across the Southwest. David Weber began to identify the various aspects in this important transitional period in *The Mexican Frontier*.<sup>25</sup> He observed, for instance, the struggle of the Mexican state to control the huge influx in Anglo capital and immigration. As other examples, he also identified the widespread effect of the failure of Catholic missions and the frontier predicament of the center-periphery situation. Weber, simply put, attempted to make sense of the single events, such as the War for Texan Independence and the rapid Anglo settlement of California, and placed them into broader historical trends.

This project will in part take its cue from Weber and his understanding of the Southwest frontier as a borderland that is constantly undergoing a number of simultaneous transformations and shifts. With the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 as a microcosm through which we can view the larger picture, this project will contribute to the ongoing scholarly understanding of the situation on the early nineteenth-century borderlands. More specifically, I propose that the Texan Santa Fe Expedition was symptomatic of the widespread change toward a frontier market economy. The “political” and economic objectives of the expedition were really the same: to dominate the Santa Fe trade and to gain access to lucrative markets. Further, the party was not homogeneously composed of merchants or Texans. Anglo-Texans advertised the expedition by evoking ideas of making money, anti-Catholicism, and the glory of the Texan War for Independence. Thus, the entrepreneurial mindset, which Weber and Resendez have identified in some capacity, entirely permeated the frontier in the 1830s and 1840s, often fusing with other pervasive cultural forces and discourses. The expedition was certainly a result of such a fusion.

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*1821-1846* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Gerald E. Poyo, ed., *Tejano Journey, 1770-1850* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Raul Alberto Ramos, “From Norteno to Tejano: The Roots of Borderlands Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Political Identity in Bexar, 1811-1861” (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1999); Andres Tijerina, *Tejanos and Texas Under the Mexican Flag, 1821-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994); Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> See Thomas J. Hall, *Social Change in the Southwest, 1350-1880* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988); Robert H. Jackson, ed., *New Views of Borderlands History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, eds., *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*.

This study will examine how the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 was a reaction to a dominant market economy that largely excluded Texan residents. Texans desired to tap into markets, sell cheap manufactured products, and rapidly accumulate capital and wealth in the form of silver bars or coinage. By 1841, individuals across the Southwest composed a vast market network with Santa Fe as its hub, but certain circumstances prevented Texans from attaching itself to the regional economy.

Moreover, this thesis will, like the work of Brooks and Menchaca, contribute to the ongoing conversation of identity formation on the borderlands in the early nineteenth-century. Looking at the motivations of the various individuals on the expedition, the project will explore how identities were shaped by the market craze; however, it is important to discuss the economic undertones of the expedition in conjunction with other factors that composed and influenced identity on the borderlands, such as race, ethnicity, and religion. This synthesis of analysis will appear in my second chapter, where I consider how the members of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition embraced, rejected, or ambivalently acknowledged the market economy and whether other parts of their identity took precedence. The rhetoric of Manifest Destiny played a key role in justifying the Anglo expedition to Santa Fe.

Beginning with historians such as Carroll and Loomis, the scholarship really failed to give the expedition any meaningful place in the history of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. More recent historians have begun to consider what actually motivated and contributed to the organization of the expedition, but still, the ill-fated journey has not been properly contextualized within the broader economic occurrences in borderland history. In this particular conversation, I am asking new questions: how did changing frontier economy manifest itself in the Texan Santa Fe Expedition? And, secondly, what does the expedition reveal about the state of the market economy in 1841? It is not enough to outline the narrative, sketch biographies of the members, or view it strictly through the scope of Texan history. It deserves more than a chapter in Resendez's book, however informative, and requires more analysis. I argue that the expedition offered a potential solution to the economic struggles of the Republic of Texas. In relation to both the Southwest market network and international trade, Texans failed to generate commercial partnerships outside of their nation. Texans hoped that a stable trade route to Santa Fe would not only give Texas the benefits of the Santa Fe trade, but also increase the importance

of their seaports. In another sense, the expedition emerged as an opportunity for Anglo-Texans to construct an empire and develop into an Anglo stronghold.

With terms such as “market economy” and “entrepreneurship” in frequent use, some general definitions are justifiably required. The market revolution in the antebellum United States has inspired fascinating scholarship.<sup>26</sup> In the most basic sense and for our purposes, the market revolution in the United States was a shift from a collection of localized economies to a singular nationalized economy that involved the consolidation of capital, a focus on profits, and few regulations. In Mexico’s northern provinces, however, the same type of market economy developed out of a highly regulated colonial mercantilism. This early nineteenth-century market network of the Southwest thus emerged in a perfect climate, as the economies of the United States and Mexico began to operate under a more modern form of capitalism. Finally, I use entrepreneurship to describe a general attitude of those who subscribed to the market economy. More specifically, a model frontier entrepreneur was concerned with accumulating capital by purchasing cheap goods, selling them for a profit, and repeating the process. As it often took some time to save up enough money to do business full-time, aspiring frontier entrepreneurs often worked various seasonal jobs throughout the year.

The three chapters are designed to present the argument in distinct layers. More specifically, each chapter outlines a particular problem in Texas and how the Texan Santa Fe Expedition offered a solution. The first chapter will explore the failing Texan economy and the commercial aims of the expedition. The second chapter will focus on the Manifest Destiny rhetoric that justified the primary motive of market access. The final chapter will add yet another layer to the story of the expedition with a discussion of the intense international contest for economic dominance of the borderlands. Finally, the conclusion will emphasize the ultimate

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<sup>26</sup> On the market revolution of Jacksonian America, see Martin Bruegel, *Farm Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Paul A. Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic* (Madison: Madison House, 1997); John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Scott C. Martin, ed., *Cultural Change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789-1860* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); Joshua D. Rothman, “The Hazards of Flush Times: Gambling, Mob Violence, and the Anxiety’s of America’s Market Revolution,” *Journal of American History* 95, no. 3 (December 2008): 651-677; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996). For a brief but excellent introduction to the concept of the market revolution and its historiography, see Larson, “The Market Revolution in Early America: An Introduction,” *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 3 (May 2005): 4-7.

failure of the expedition and the many implications this had for the Texan economy and its historical trajectory toward statehood.



Chapter One  
The Allure of New Mexican Markets:  
The Expedition as a Commercial Venture

*Introduction*

When Mirabeau Lamar, President of the Republic of Texas, issued in 1840 the proclamation that an expedition would be assembled, the responses of most Texans and Americans were overwhelmingly supportive. The printing presses of Texas and parts of the United States devoted columns of their newspapers to speculation and general commentary on the upcoming journey. Interest in the political and economic ramifications of such an excursion captivated a continent that was quickly undergoing a drastic market revolution. Coinciding with the economic transformations of the early nineteenth-century was the blazing of new overland trade routes, one of which was the Santa Fe Trail that connected mineral-rich Santa Fe with St. Louis. Texans watched the frontier partnership between Americans and Mexicans flourish well into the 1840s. As citizens of a new nation that had yet to establish stable and profitable connections abroad, Texans felt that they needed to become part of an emergent transnational market economy to compete globally with the United States, Mexico, and the European powers. Texan politicians, merchants, and entrepreneurs hoped that a road to Santa Fe and its potential incorporation into the nation would provide the capital necessary to transform the Republic of Texas into a commercial giant.

The trade that followed in the wake of Mexico's independence in 1821 intimately connected Mexicans, Americans, and indigenous peoples through commerce. Isolated from the centers of their respective states, frontier residents entered into a market capitalism that allowed them to acquire basic commodities and become economically significant to Mexico and the United States. Juan Mora-Torres argued that, prior to the establishment of the U.S.-Mexico boundary in 1848, the Southwest frontier was separated from "larger economies." According to Mora-Torres, that changed with the definition of the border, when the frontier was integrated into a "capitalist economy, a process that foreign investors accelerated with massive infusions capital into northern Mexico."<sup>27</sup> While 1848 might have marked a shift to a much more modern version of capitalism, a larger market economy webbed the Southwest together well before the

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<sup>27</sup> Juan Mora-Torres, *The Making of the Mexican Border: The State, Capitalism, and Society in Nuevo Leon, 1848-1910* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 2.

establishment of the U.S.-Mexico border. Goods manufactured in Europe or the industrial centers of the United States departed from frontier boomtowns, such as St. Louis and Independence, beginning in the 1820s. Anglo and, eventually, Mexican merchants competed fiercely to dominate the markets in New Mexico and the outer reaches of Mexico's territory. Transportation costs often determined whether or not a trip to Santa Fe or Chihuahua made fiscal sense, but a chance at accumulating incredible profits attracted steady interest from merchants and entrepreneurs. Market capitalism, then, had gripped the Southwest for nearly three decades by the time the United States and Mexico ended their war. The pull of the frontier market economy began to gel communities, nations, and capital to transnationalize the U.S-Mexico borderlands without a U.S.-Mexico border.

Historians David Weber and Andres Resendez have offered the most complete studies on the commercial transformations of the early nineteenth-century borderlands.<sup>28</sup> In particular, Weber illuminated the mechanics of the early trade in the 1820s between the residents of Santa Fe and American merchants. He argued that foreign capital poured into Mexico's frontier economy after independence (much to the dismay of many Mexicans) and captured the attention of both the worried Mexican state and isolated frontier residents.<sup>29</sup> Resendez built on Weber's thesis of a tension between foreign markets and the Mexican State. "Two tsunami-like structural forces swept through this frontier area during the first half of the nineteenth century: state and market."<sup>30</sup> Weber and Resendez have furthered our understanding of the market capitalism of the Southwest. Their seminal works remain informative, but some questions remain unanswered. How did Americans, Texans, indigenous peoples, and Mexicans operate within the borderland market economy? Moreover, how did they attempt to manipulate the markets to their advantage? How did the independence of Texas affect the dynamics of the market economy? How did Texans try to gain an economic foothold in the borderland commercial networks?

While capital and goods rapidly circulated around the Southwest frontier, the economy of the Republic of Texas struggled at the onset of the 1840s. Port cities, such as Galveston, experienced little business. Commodities produced internally found few international outlets and foreign manufacturers typically sent their goods to American ports. Foreign investors felt unsure

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<sup>28</sup> Andres Resendez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).

<sup>29</sup> Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 148.

<sup>30</sup> Resendez, *Changing National Identities*, 3.

about the prospects of business in Texas and the national debt continued to grow. Simultaneously, the government increased the production of paper currency, which, in turn, resulted in a drastic decrease in the value of the same money. By one account, the country's currency fell to 14 cents to the United States dollar at the close of 1841.<sup>31</sup> In the following years the currency would regain some of its value, but the paper money remained comparatively worthless. According to one Texan, the national currency was valued at 50 cents to the United States dollar in 1843.<sup>32</sup> The commercial future of Texas looked bleak.

There was thus a lot at stake in the Texan Santa Fe Expedition. At its core, the expedition was an economic mission organized to solve the commercial problems of the Republic of Texas. However, the historiography dealing with the expedition has not given much attention to how economically-focused its goals were. Historians, many of whom wrote in the middle of twentieth-century, have generally composed either meticulous micro-histories of the expedition or biographies of its military leaders and political organizers.<sup>33</sup> That is not to say that historians have entirely missed the significant economic implications, but the studies tend to consider the expedition within the context of the geo-political narrative of Texas.<sup>34</sup> More attention needs to be given to the market forces that affected political, social, and economic life in the Southwest during the first part of the nineteenth-century. The situation surrounding the Republic of Texas and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 reveals an economic transformation that swept across the borderlands. A lucrative system of market capitalism had developed in the Southwest and trade networks that included Mexicans, Americans, and Indians bound people together. However, Texans, except for the few who successfully traded and smuggled on the border, were largely excluded from the profitable web of borderland commerce.

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<sup>31</sup> Henderson Yoakum, *History of Texas: From Its First Settlement in 1685 to Its Annexation to the United States in 1846* (New York: Redfield, 1855), 2: 285-287.

<sup>32</sup> Reminiscences, Cayton Erhard Papers, 2N270, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>33</sup> For examples of these early histories, see H. Bailey Carroll, *The Texan Santa Fe Trail* (Canyon, Texas: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1951); Watt Goodwin Hill, Jr., "The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841: A Visionary Dream?" (Master's thesis, St. Mary's University, 1965); Noel M. Loomis, *The Texan-Santa Fe Pioneers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958). For biographical examples, see Gertrude Burleson Blake, "The Public Career of General Hugh McLeod" (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1932); Fayette Copeland, *Kendall of the Picayune* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943).

<sup>34</sup> For an excellent interpretation of the expedition with economics and commerce in mind, see Resendez, *Changing National Identities*, Chapter 7; For a superb discussion on the geo-political implications of the expedition, see Joseph Milton Nance, *After San Jacinto: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1836-1841* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 396-397, 423, 505.

I argue that the expedition was devised to integrate Texas into the frontier market network and thereby improve a struggling Texan economy.

Once Mirabeau Lamar was elected president in 1838, he began to enact policies that he believed could help Texas grow and compete in a continent that was experiencing its “market revolution.”<sup>35</sup> In an effort to succinctly summarize that term, John Larson provided the most effective explanation:

Before the market revolution, there were markets, to be sure: Profits were taken, greed exhibited, goods produced and exchanged. But greed was not normative, and an individual’s behavior might as often contradict as conform to the dictates of economic interest. After the market revolution, “hard-headed” economic logic sought to dominate the process of evaluating all things. Individual identity dissolved into anonymity, commitment into contract, vocation into work, a living into a wage.<sup>36</sup>

Before 1800, reputation, community, and service to the nation-state determined the nature of economic connections, but in the early nineteenth-century profits drove commercial ventures and business partnerships. This transformation struck the Southwest with the opening of the Santa Fe Trail and the independence of Mexico (thus ending mercantilist obligations). Lamar, known for his aggressive expansionist policies and his stance against annexation to the United States, sought to integrate the Republic of Texas into this capitalist market economy. To accomplish this, he received approval from Congress in 1839 to formally open up trade along the Rio Grande. Moreover, he encouraged the peopling of frontier counties with trade incentives and plots of land. To the West, where the threat of Indian raids always loomed, Lamar opened trade as well to the residents of northern Mexico. To make commerce secure on the nation’s western

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<sup>35</sup> For an introduction to the market revolution of Jacksonian America, see Martin Bruegel, *Farm Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Paul A. Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic* (Madison: Madison House, 1997); John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Scott C. Martin, ed., *Cultural Change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789-1860* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); Joshua D. Rothman, “The Hazards of Flush Times: Gambling, Mob Violence, and the Anxiety’s of America’s Market Revolution,” *Journal of American History* 95, no. 3 (December 2008): 651-677; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996). For a brief but excellent introduction to the concept of the market revolution and its historiography, see Larson, “The Market Revolution in Early America: An Introduction,” *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 3 (May 2005): 4-7.

<sup>36</sup> Larson, *The Market Revolution*, 9.

frontier, he convinced Congress to fund small military escorts and the construction of forts.<sup>37</sup> While these efforts yielded some positive results, Comanche and Kiowa raids made commerce difficult. With much of the nation's wealth funneled into the maintenance of these frontier trade networks, Texas crept further into debt. Lamar's last hope would be to assemble an expedition to Santa Fe with the objectives of establishing trade connections and convincing the residents of the city to join the Republic of Texas.

### *The Significance of Santa Fe*

Indeed, Texans believed that Santa Fe rightfully fell within the boundaries of their nation, but the real value of the isolated New Mexican town was that it had grown into a center of commerce. Conveniently positioned between the frontier towns of the United States and the center provinces of Mexico, Santa Fe developed into the trading hub of the Southwest market economy. Prior to Mexican independence in 1821, the residents of northern Mexico were victimized by the restrictions of Spanish mercantilist policies. Eager for access to the most basic goods, New Mexicans took advantage of the lax restrictions of the new Mexican government and welcomed merchants from the United States. In 1821, William Becknell blazed the trail to Santa Fe from Missouri and brought with him manufactured goods—clothes, tools, furniture, etc.—to be sold to the people of Santa Fe at affordable prices.<sup>38</sup> What followed was two decades during which American merchants gained immense profits and Santa Fe experienced, for the first time, economic growth.

Originally, Santa Fe served as the terminus of the Santa Fe Trail, but during the 1820s it morphed into the epicenter of a growing transnational commercial network. Under Spanish rule, the frontier and the northern provinces of Mexico, such as Chihuahua, operated at a dysfunctional level due to the exploits of merchants from the heart of Mexico and a failing Spanish economy. As David Weber has noted, smuggling goods “became commonplace,” as it

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<sup>37</sup> Nance, *After San Jacinto*, 84-85, 100-103.

<sup>38</sup> For works on the Santa Fe Trail and trade, see T. Lindsay Baker, “The Santa Fe Trade as Viewed by Contemporary Texans and the Texan Press,” *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 73 (January 2000): 1-24; Larry Beachum, *William Becknell: Father of the Santa Fe Trade* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982); Ray Allen Billington, *The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956); Susan Calafate Boyle, *Los Capitalistas: Hispano Merchants and the Santa Fe Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); H Bailey Carroll, *The Texan Santa Fe Trail* (Canyon, Texas: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1951); Stephen G. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe: The Road to New Mexico and the American Conquest, 1806-1848* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Max L. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road: Trade and Travel on the Chihuahua Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958); Angela Moyano Pahissa, *El Comercio de Santa Fe y la Guerra del 47* (Mexico City: Secretaria de Educacion Publica, 1976); David J. Sandoval, “Gnats, Goods, and Greasers: Mexican Merchants on the Santa Fe Trail,” *Journal of the West* 28, no. 2 (April 1989): 22-31.

made more fiscal sense to deal with Americans, Europeans, and indigenous peoples.<sup>39</sup> Mexican independence and the opening of the Santa Fe trade changed everything. Necessities and manufactured goods poured into Santa Fe, while mules and silver bars went back East with the American caravans. By the end of the 1820s, the trade had stimulated the emergence of a class of Mexican entrepreneurs and merchants. Even the commercial juggernauts of the central provinces concentrated heavily on frontier business ventures. As a result of domestic competition in New Mexico, American merchants traveled the extra distance to the Mexican provinces of Chihuahua, Durango, Zacatecas, and Sonora in order to accrue the same kind of profits. Conversely, in an effort to strike American markets more directly, Mexican traders began to make the trek to Missouri and further cut Americans out of the network.<sup>40</sup> In a matter of a decade, then, Santa Fe had gone from an isolated, exploited frontier town to the commercial center of the borderland market economy.

Understanding the important position of Santa Fe within the trading networks, New Mexican officials made sure that American merchants conducted their business fairly. The easiest and most effective way of doing this was by imposing duties on incoming goods. Josiah Gregg, a frontiersman who frequented the Santa Fe Trail, recorded even the smallest details concerning the nature of the exchanges between Mexicans and Americans. He recalled that Governor Manuel Armijo enacted a tax of “five hundred dollars for each wagon-load, whether large or small.”<sup>41</sup> Gregg further estimated that these tariffs accounted for somewhere between \$50,000 and \$80,000 each year, although customs officials illegally kept a sizeable portion for themselves.<sup>42</sup> The duties increased greatly in the 1830s and 1840s, which unsurprisingly caused many American merchants either to seek business in other provinces or to halt their ventures altogether. The increasing duties in the 1830s and 1840s signify two important shifts within the borderland market economy: the improving strength of the domestic Mexican economy and, in a similar vein, the establishment of Santa Fe as the central hub in the Southwest trading network.

Simultaneously, as American merchants began their early exploits In the 1820s, American fur trappers discovered an abundance of beaver in the New Mexican hills. Although

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<sup>39</sup> Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 125.

<sup>40</sup> Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 128-130. For more specifically on Mexican merchants and the Santa Fe trade, see Boyle, *Los Capitalistas*; Pahissa, *El Comercio de Santa Fe y la Guerra del 47*; Sandoval, “Gnats, Goods, and Greasers.”

<sup>41</sup> Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. Max L. Moorhead (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 79.

<sup>42</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 336.

New Mexico would serve as their primary hunting grounds, trappers conducted their work all over the Southwest. Early on, “trapping seems to have been more profitable than selling merchandise” in Santa Fe.<sup>43</sup> During the early 1820s, most trappers hunted still in the river valleys of Texas and the southern plains before the near-depletion of beavers encouraged them to continue westward. The latter part of the 1820s was busy for Taos and Santa Fe, which became vital headquarters to the trappers of that region. The period between 1828 and 1833 were undeniably “the golden era of beaver trapping” in New Mexico.<sup>44</sup> Competition was immense and fur traders found markets in Taos and Santa Fe, thus supplementing the commerce of the Santa Fe trade. However, by the end of the 1830s, the most trappers focused elsewhere and bison hides became the more fashionable commodity. Even with the steady decline of the fur trade in New Mexico, the craze had helped to transform Santa Fe and Taos into powerful commercial stations and fur pelts continued to circulate in New Mexican markets. Further, items made of fur remained a luxury item of great appeal, even in the Republic of Texas on the eve of the 1840s. In the midst of the many advertisements in a newspaper, James Wallace—evidently a small-time merchant—listed several items that he wished to sell at his shop in Austin. Headlining his list were “superfine beaver hats.”<sup>45</sup>

New Mexico originally became a locus of international importance because it contained silver mines. Silver, although not quite as valuable as gold, had enormous value in the United States (and Texas), where the hard currency verged on worthlessness. Thus, businessmen and merchants in the United States believed that they could make a fortune by acquiring silver bars at Santa Fe. While some of the silver deposits were known, Indians, not quick to forget the injustices of the Spanish conquistadors, frequently hid the locations of the largest mines to Mexican entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, *nuevomexicanos* found a number of these mines and smelted the ore into bars to be sold at market. As if the prospect of hauling thousands of dollars worth of silver back to the United States was not enough, certain American entrepreneurs even attempted to reopen some of mines that had closed due to a lack of capital or inefficiency.<sup>46</sup> Americans thus sought to dominate entirely the silver market in New Mexico, from its place of extraction to the market. Facing similar problems with deficient currency, Texans, too, sought to

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<sup>43</sup> Weber, *Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), 56.

<sup>44</sup> Weber, *Taos Trappers*, 192.

<sup>45</sup> *Austin City Gazette*, November 27, 1839.

<sup>46</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 115-118.

reap the benefits of the silver industry in New Mexico. In early 1840, one individual, in a discussion on the importance of a trading partnership between the Republic of Texas and Santa Fe, emphasized that the province of New Mexico was “rich in mineral productions” and that the mines could be “wrought with profit.”<sup>47</sup> The very trade that would result from incorporating Santa Fe into Texas would be beneficial, but, like American merchants, Texans also hoped to directly control the production and distribution of silver in New Mexico.

The Santa Fe of 1841 looked a lot different than the Santa Fe of 1821. American wagon trains now appeared less frequently and with fewer merchants. Mexican caravans made yearly trips eastward to St. Louis and Independence. Basic necessities, such as tools and clothes, were more readily available and Mexican merchants now manned many of the stores. Santa Fe did not have the industry of Mexico City or Baltimore, but its position at the heart of a vast commercial network had made it a popular destination for Americans, Mexicans, indigenous peoples, and even Europeans. One thing remained the same, though: There were no Anglo-Texan merchants or entrepreneurs to be found in the city, nor were there any wagons filled with silver departing for Austin.

#### *Lamar and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*

Mirabeau Lamar was never shy about his plans to make the Republic of Texas a powerful nation politically and economically. He and other Texans had heard about the wealth involved in Santa Fe and its trade with the United States for quite some time. However, no overland path existed for such a partnership to exist between *nuevomexicanos* and Texans. Upon his election to the presidency in 1838, Lamar immediately spoke of his desire to fulfill the nation’s “destiny” by expanding its borders westward to include territory that was then controlled by Mexico. In his inaugural address, he explained that he considered the Republic of Texas to be a “vast extent of territory, stretching from the Sabine to the Pacific and away to the South West as far as the obstinacy of the enemy may render it necessary for the sword to make the boundary.”<sup>48</sup> Lamar not only envisioned an empire that touched two oceans, but his words indicated that he would employ force against anyone standing in his way. During his term, he took several measures to realize this aim, including campaigns against various Indian nations, resistance to annexation, and promotion of the domestic economy. He also attempted to link Texas to international

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<sup>47</sup> “Santa Fe Trade,” *Telegraph and Texas Registrar*, April 8, 1840.

<sup>48</sup> Mirabeau B. Lamar’s Inaugural Address, Houston, Dec. 10, 1838, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 1798-1859*, ed. Charles Adams Gulick, Jr. (Austin: A. C. Baldwin, 1922), 2: 320-321.



commerce, most notably with the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841, which was ultimately designed to reorient the balance of trade in the Southwest in favor of the Republic of Texas.

To be sure, Lamar was not the only Anglo-Texan or Anglo-American who believed that the success of Texas could only be achieved through violence and expansion. In fact, once Lamar became president, the letters he received from his many correspondents almost all addressed expansion, the “Indian problem,” or violence in some regard. For instance, Albert Sidney Johnston, then the Secretary of War of Texas, expressed his concern over attacks by groups of Comanche: “I have no doubt, from the character of the tribes of Comanches, that their recent attacks upon the inhabitants will be followed up with renewed attempts and increased misery to the settlers. I respectfully recommend that a sufficient force be immediately raised to anticipate and chastise them.”<sup>49</sup> That year, Lamar authorized Johnston to launch a vicious campaign against the Cherokee in northern Texas, which resulted in their expulsion from the nation.<sup>50</sup> It seems that Texans identified that Lamar was a radical visionary completely unlike his predecessor, Sam Houston, who preferred to negotiate with Mexicans and the local indigenous peoples.

Lamar and the Texan Congress also received requests for permission to undertake certain commercial ventures. For example, a group of three American entrepreneurs wrote to Lamar asking for permission to clear the driftwood from the Colorado River in exchange for navigational privileges. They then centered their selling point on how such a venture would economically benefit Texas:

It will at the same time afford commercial facilities to your citizens, by opening to them a direct intercourse with all the commercial Nations of the World, by the means of which; they can transport their Sugar and Cotton (the staple products of their country) with great, and cheap facility, to any port where the market will justify; and at the same time afford them an easy and direct import trade.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Albert Sidney Johnston to Lamar, Houston, Dec. 23, 1838, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 371.

<sup>50</sup> Nance, *After San Jacinto*, 139. For more on the Cherokee in Texas, see Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005); Anderson, *The Indian Southwest, 1580-1830: Ethnogenesis and Reinvention* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Dianna Everett, *The Texas Cherokees: A People Between Two Fires, 1819-1840* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); F. Todd Smith, *From Dominance to Disappearance: The Indians of Texas and the Near Southwest, 1786-1859* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> Wilson Kirk Shinn and Others to Lamar, Clarksburg, Virginia, Nov. 27, 1838, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 304-305. It would also be useful to note that Shinn’s other two associates, Hugh

To be sure, it is likely that the waterway referenced here is the Colorado River that runs through the state of Texas and not the major river that passes through much of the Southwest.

Nevertheless, this Colorado River served as a major commercial route and allowed for the transport of goods to various parts of the nation. American merchants and entrepreneurs evidently realized that Lamar was eager to develop the domestic economy of Texas and begin to integrate the nation's commerce into transnational trading networks.

In essence, Texans and Americans alike believed that Lamar's views on expansion, Indians, and commerce would usher in an era of aggression and change on many levels. Lamar had been open about his vision of a self-reliant, expansive Texas and his willingness to accomplish that goal. In fact, he considered his goals to be the "destiny" of Texas in a very literal sense. Shortly after he took office, he told Congress that the destiny of Texas would "elevate our young Republic into that proud rank which her unrivaled beauty and unbounded wealth entitle her to take among the nations of the earth."<sup>52</sup> Dealing with a volatile frontier, a nearly worthless paper currency, and international matters, Lamar felt that the best way to commercially stabilize his nation was to access a network of markets that could spark some sort of growth domestically. The most obvious entry point for such an endeavor was Santa Fe, which many Anglo-Texans argued fell within their boundaries anyway.

While plans for an expedition to Santa Fe did not materialize until 1841, Lamar and his colleagues talked of the need for commerce with *nuevomexicanos* during the previous two years. One correspondent and close friend of Lamar, William Jefferson Jones, wrote a letter to Lamar in early 1839 to illuminate the benefits of a commercial partnership with the people of Santa Fe. His note was filled with data (not necessarily accurate) and contained a logical progression that ultimately concluded with the Republic of Texas as the missing piece in the puzzle that was the Southwest market economy. Jones recognized that St. Louis and the Mexican city of Matamoros, among others, had typically benefited the most from the trade with Santa Fe. He also noticed that the dynamics of the market economy had changed during the 1830s. According to Jones, these changes "served...to damp the energies of the miners and trappers."<sup>53</sup> Jones

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Crolley and North Evans, were from Baltimore and Washington, D.C., respectively. Shinn hailed from Clarksburg, Virginia. Without a doubt, American entrepreneurs saw business opportunities in the Southwest that might be appealing to Texas, which was economically struggling.

<sup>52</sup> Lamar to Congress, Houston, Dec. 21, 1838, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 368.

<sup>53</sup> William Jefferson Jones to Lamar, Bastrop, Texas, Feb. 8, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 437.

believed that control of the Santa Fe markets would reorient the commercial power in the region and transform Texas into the central hub of the network. As such, the fur trade would be reinvigorated, goods would pass through Texan ports, and foreign entrepreneurs would invest in projects between Santa Fe and East Texas because of the favorable transportation costs. Moreover, Jones predicted that Indians, especially the Comanche, would come to rely upon the trade and seek the business of Texan merchants. When he was finished outlining his ideas, Jones finally suggested that Lamar organize an expedition of merchants with a military escort to bring Santa Fe under the political control of Texas.<sup>54</sup> With convincing arguments and passionate prose, Jones in early 1839 seemingly provided the first blueprints for the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841.

During the following months, talk about a possible expedition to Santa Fe prompted friends, politicians, and military officials to contact Lamar and express their opinions and support. For example, James Jones, evidently an officer in the Texan volunteer army, wrote to Lamar in April to inform him that the frontier was safe enough to attempt a journey to Santa Fe. Jones, whose unit was deployed to protect frontier settlements from possible attacks from Indians and Mexican forces, reported that he waited to “form a junction with the residue of the men designed for the Santa Fe expedition.”<sup>55</sup> Clearly, Lamar had made his desire to open a trade route to Santa Fe known in some regard and had issued orders to begin preparations for the trek. Lamar received yet another letter from William Jones dated the day after James Jones wrote his. This time, William Jones confirmed what James Jones had said. He declared that the “frontier is now quiet and perfectly safe.” He ended with a lofty statement: “That expedition is universally approved and it will be the most glorious event in the history of your political life.”<sup>56</sup> Not only did William Jones hint at the alleged popularity of the idea of an expedition, but he also revealed that he had a knack for prediction. However, the mission, far from “glorious,” was significant in that it single-handedly ruined Lamar’s presidency. Regardless of the future outcome, initial plans for an expedition in 1839 were well underway and excitement began to mount.

In his second annual address to Congress in November 1839, Lamar expressed great frustration about matters on the western frontier of Texas. He had received numerous letters and

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<sup>54</sup> William Jones to Lamar, Bastrop, Texas, Feb. 8, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 438-440.

<sup>55</sup> James S. Jones to Lamar, Apr. 14, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 529.

<sup>56</sup> William Jones to Lamar, Waterloo (Austin), Texas, Apr. 15, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 530-531.

complaints about land speculation, Indian troubles, and commercial corruption. Nevertheless, he reaffirmed his interest in an expedition to Santa Fe and remained optimistic about its preparation. He explained that he desired to make the “condition and prospects of our country both politically and commercially known to those people,” despite the problems of “finances, and the more important considerations of giving protection to our exposed frontier....” More specifically, he sought to exploit New Mexico’s “mines of immense value,” which he predicted would be responsible for most of the trade between Texas and Santa Fe.<sup>57</sup> Securing the frontier from Indians and Mexican forces would serve two key purposes: First, farmers and traders would be more inclined to settle and develop the western territory of Texas. Second, merchants would be able to send their wagon trains safely through the barrens between Santa Fe and Texas. Of course, money and Indian raids remained issues even into 1841, but the couple of years before the expedition were spent in an attempt to lay the groundwork for a future Texas that was highly commercialized and integrated into the Southwest market networks.

In 1840, Lamar’s plans for an expedition began to materialize. At a public dinner, he was pleased to announce that the expedition would be launched to Santa Fe before his term was over in 1841. He reiterated his desire to begin a “friendly, political, and commercial intercourse with the people of Santa Fe,” but he pleaded with those present to remain patient on the matter.<sup>58</sup> On April 14, 1840, Lamar composed a letter for the citizens of Santa Fe in which he outlined his reasons for undertaking an expedition. Addressing the people of Santa Fe as “Friends and Compatriots,” he explained that he hoped to see the people of Santa Fe and Texas “united in friendships and consolidated under a common government.” He added that the planned expedition, which he predicted would arrive in September 1841 (and it likely would have, had it found its way), would include a military contingent for protection through Comanche territory.<sup>59</sup> Despite the obvious desire for a commercial connection, the inclusion of a rather sizeable military escort still sent the wrong message to the people of Santa Fe and, more importantly, the Mexican government. Facing the pressures of the coming election, Lamar aggressively pursued an expedition to Santa Fe that would finally incorporate Texas into the larger market network of the Southwest.

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<sup>57</sup> Lamar to Congress, Austin, Nov. 12, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 182.

<sup>58</sup> Lamar to the Public, Houston, 1840, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 480. The exact date of the dinner is unknown, but it probably took place in the first months of 1840.

<sup>59</sup> Lamar to the Citizens of Santa Fe, Austin, Apr. 14, 1840, Santa Fe Papers, 2-22/589:1, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State and Library Archives Commission, Austin.

By 1841, preparations for the expedition were well underway and officials planned for a June departure. Again, Lamar wrote a message to the residents of Santa Fe to be sent along with the commissioners of the expedition. Referring to *nuevomexicanos* as “Fellow Citizens” this time, he used a much more aggressive tone and pushed openly the concept of a political unity between the two places. Lamar explained that he “felt it to be his obligation to assert the jurisdiction of the Government over the inhabited portion of the Republic,” including Santa Fe, which many Texans considered to fall within the established boundaries of Texas. Much of his note to the people of Santa Fe consisted of attempts to persuade them that the Mexican government had wronged them politically and economically. Despite the politically spun rhetoric, the final sentence reassured Lamar’s hope that they could establish “commercial relations,” even if the people of Santa Fe were not willing to formally unite into one nation at that time.<sup>60</sup> Just days before the departure of the expedition, Samuel Roberts, the acting Secretary of State of Texas, dispatched instructions to the commissioners of the expedition on behalf of Lamar. He explained that the Texan commissioners were to gain control of the public property of Santa Fe, select officials for public offices, and help the people of Santa Fe understand what it meant to be citizens of the Republic of Texas; however, Roberts made it very clear that the purpose of the venture was to “conciliate the people of Santa Fe, to incorporate them with us, and to secure to our citizens all of the benefits arising from the valuable trade with them.” In other words, taking control of the city would be good, but the priority was to tap into the Santa Fe markets. Indeed, within the instructions were plans for a substantial tariff that would be imposed on Mexican goods going back to Texas, with which *nuevomexicanos* would be “glad” to comply.<sup>61</sup> Expecting a warm reception and huge profits, Lamar hoped that the expedition would jumpstart the stagnant Texan economy.

At the end of June 1841, a party of roughly 320 individuals departed the Austin area for Santa Fe on a politico-military mission designed, at the very least, to establish a secure trading partnership with *nuevomexicanos*. From its inception as a lofty idea a couple years earlier, Lamar had hoped that an expedition would commercially connect Santa Fe to the domestic markets of Texas and thereby make Texan ports more appealing to foreign entrepreneurs and

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<sup>60</sup> Lamar to the Citizens of Santa Fe, Austin, June 5, 1841, in *A Texas Patriot on Trail in Mexico: Jose Antonio Navarro and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*, ed. Resendez (Dallas: Degolyer Library & William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, 2005), 7, 14.

<sup>61</sup> Instructions to Commissioners Bound for Santa Fe, Austin, June 15, 1841, in *A Texas Patriot on Trail in Mexico*, ed. Resendez, 25-28.

merchants. Through Santa Fe, Texan merchants could acquire furs, mules, and silver bars in exchange for clothes, tools, and other basic manufactured goods. The hope was that access to the silver mines in particular would not only turn around the national economy but also increase the value of the failing currency. In June 1841, Lamar, with his term as president ending, decided he needed to launch the expedition. With its ultimate failure later that year, any hope for Lamar's reelection dwindled and the Texan economy remained internationally insignificant.

*An Economic Opportunity for Many*

Just as Lamar and his colleagues had high hopes for the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, others understood the venture to be a possible boost for the national economy or a chance to improve their own material situation. Of course, the Texan press had a tendency to focus on the prospective effects such an expedition might have on Texan commerce in a broader sense. Conversely, individual members of the expedition itself pondered how the expedition might yield personal profit. Nevertheless, the public in general, whether accompanying the expedition or simply commenting on it, believed that the expedition was an economic matter before anything else. Amid the hard economic conditions in the Republic of Texas during Lamar's term, it is no wonder that many Texans focused on improving their national commerce. Encouraged by an aggressive president in Lamar and armed with a belief that they were destined to be a great international power, Texans (specifically, Anglo-Texans) sought, first, to establish overland trade with *nuevomexicanos* and, second, to dominate a lucrative market economy that spanned from St. Louis to Mexico City.

In April 1840, Texans began to consider how trade with Santa Fe might logically out-compete American merchants and yield enormous profits for people in Texas. The distance alone between Texan ports and Santa Fe was much shorter than the distance between the eastern seaboard of the United States and New Mexico. One individual argued that if products can land in Philadelphia, travel by steamboat to St. Louis or Independence, finally cross "through almost a desert country" of "warlike tribes of Indians," and *still* yield a sizeable profit, then how could it not be more beneficial for everyone involved to send goods through Texas, "where none of these obstacles exist" (except for the same "warlike tribes of Indians," of course)?<sup>62</sup> With similar logic, a different individual figured that transportation costs would amount to much less by transporting products through the Texan wilderness: "As goods are, for the present, supplied for the Santa Fe

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<sup>62</sup> "Santa Fe Trade," *Texas and Telegraph Register*, April 8, 1840.

trade two high duties have to be paid, one at the seaport of the United States, and the other at Santa Fe, in addition to the cost of inland transportation...” Through the Texan route, he argued, “only one duty will have to be paid” at a seaport. Ultimately, he believed that the money made off of the Texan tariff would “patch up our dilapidated finances.”<sup>63</sup> Whether an overland route across Texas and New Mexico might have been more logical or profitable, both individuals failed to consider the harshness of the terrain, which, at that time, remained largely unmapped by Mexicans and Texans. Moreover, the Comanche, Apache, and Kiowa were arguably more aggressive and “warlike” than the indigenous groups that harassed caravans along the Santa Fe Trail to the North. In 1840, the idea of diverting trade to Texas thus sounded delightful to Texans, as they looked for ways to penetrate international markets and reinforce a failing national economy.

A year later, all signs indicated that the Texan government would launch the expedition within the next couple of months. As Lamar’s plans finally began to materialize, more and more information became available for the public. For example, the press began to gain information on prominent politicians, such as Jose Antonio Navarro, who, according to the *Austin City Gazette*, “add weight and character to the enterprise.” Commentary that pondered the possible effects of trading with Santa Fe circulated and a sense of excitement seemed to swirl in Texas:

Shall our government and citizens look tamely on and see other countries deprive us of a trade which by rights belongs to Texas? All who study the true interests of Texas cannot but answer, No. Regarding as we do the benefits which must ultimately accrue to Texas from the security of the Chihuahua and Santa Fe trade, we shall give our cordial support to the Expedition.<sup>64</sup>

Both desperate and hopeful, Texans believed that the Texan Santa Fe Expedition could lead to the economic boom for which they had been waiting. Knowing that American merchants departing from St. Louis and Independence remained the primary trading partners of *nuevomexicanos*, Texans expected to receive the bulk of business once they opened trade with Santa Fe. By April 1841, then, the expedition looked to be more of a reality than a dream as official details were released. Texans could not help but express excitement over “benefits

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<sup>63</sup> *Austin City Gazette*, April 15, 1840.

<sup>64</sup> *Austin City Gazette*, April 28, 1841.

which must ultimately accrue” from commerce with New Mexico and the prospect of finally competing with American merchants.

While Lamar, his political correspondents, and the Texan press developed grand plans, the situation appeared slightly different for those who went on the expedition to Santa Fe in 1841. Cayton Erhard, a German-born member of the expedition who joined as a typical volunteer, apparently enlisted for practical material reasons. In his recollections of the journey, he noted that Lamar assigned merchants to travel with the expedition, but the volunteers, like himself, were only equipped with the most basic items. In fact, volunteers expected only to receive a modest payment for their services. He further explained that the Texan government went to lengths to aid the merchants, their most promising investment, by supplying “ox teams and wagons free of expense.” However, he also mentioned that he potentially had two ways he could profit on the expedition: “The firm of Crocheron and Cunningham, of Bastrop, furnished me with a lot of shoes to be sold on commission, but being poor, I also enlisted as a volunteer in the army to draw my monthly pay, besides the profits of goods I might sell.”<sup>65</sup> Erhard (and others, like George Grover, who enlisted as part of the artillery company) thus enlisted in order to simply make a living.<sup>66</sup> He appears to have been fortunate to be commissioned by an entrepreneurial firm, but it is possible that others had similar deals in place. In all, Erhard understood the lofty aims of the expedition to Santa Fe, but he volunteered to earn a paycheck and survive the tough economic times that had fallen on Texas.

Unlike Erhard, others accompanied the party as honorary guests of Lamar and the Republic of Texas. George Wilkins Kendall, the editor of the *Times Picayune* of New Orleans, was one such guest. One of the military officers of the expedition told Kendall in New Orleans about Lamar’s desire to initiate trade with the people of Santa Fe and his “ulterior intention” of formally acquiring much of the territory of New Mexico for Texas. However, Kendall joined essentially for fun: “In the early part of April, 1841, I determined upon making a tour of some kind upon the great Western Prairies, induced by...a strong desire to visit regions inhabited only by the roaming Indian, to find new subjects upon which to write, as well as to participate in the wild excitement of buffalo-hunting, and other sports of the border and prairie life.” In other

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<sup>65</sup> Cayton Erhard, “Cayton Erhard’s Reminiscences of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, 1841,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (January 1963): 428.

<sup>66</sup> George W. Grover, “Minutes of an Adventure from June, 1841,” “Minutes of Adventure from June, 1841,” *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 9 (1936): 30.



words, he simply wanted to cure his boredom and see the western frontier. His personal motives aside, Kendall nevertheless understood the expedition as a commercial project for the Republic of Texas. Despite the military escort, Kendall asserted, the “pioneers” were “encumbered with wagons, merchandise, and the implements of their different trades and callings.”<sup>67</sup> With a view more akin to Lamar’s than Erhard’s, Kendall accompanied the Texan Santa Fe Expedition thinking that it was an economic venture with significance for the Texan economy.

More alarming to Texans than the risk of falling short of the destination was the chance of an encounter with a Comanche or Kiowa raiding party. As inhabitants of the Southwest far longer than any other group, various groups of Indians dominated the majority of the Southwest. Juliana Barr has shown that the eighteenth-century Spanish and French colonization projects in the Southwest were always conducted entirely within the cultural frameworks of Indians. Indeed, according to Barr, “Indian observers never saw Spaniards as a ruling power. Indians were the rulers in these lands.”<sup>68</sup> During much of the nineteenth-century, even with a more substantial presence of non-indigenous peoples, Comanche, Apache, Kiowa, and other indigenous groups still largely dictated what foreigners could or could not do. Anglo-Texans knew that traveling to Santa Fe would require them to move through the “Comanche wilderness,” in which Anglos would be subject to constant raids.<sup>69</sup> These raids, however, served an important purpose for Indians. While, on the one hand, raids directed toward Mexicans and Texans reasserted their power over the region, they also, on the other hand, secured an important position in the Southwest market economy. Indians regularly visited frontier outposts to trade with Texans or Mexicans. It was not strange for Comanche or Kiowa to raid goods from a Texan caravan and travel to the nearest Texan outpost to sell the same goods. With great mobility and control of huge portions of territory, Indians carved out a significant role for themselves in a profitable market network. The Texan Santa Fe Expedition, with wagons full of valuable merchandise, thus provided a tangible economic opportunity not only for Anglo-Texans but Indians as well.

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<sup>67</sup> George Wilkins Kendall, *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (Austin: Steck Company, 1935), 1:13-16. For more on Kendall, see Copeland, *Kendall of the Picayune*.

<sup>68</sup> Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>69</sup> *Austin City Gazette*, April 28, 1841. For more on Comanche dominance in the Texas-New Mexico region, see Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

Circumstances drove the Anglo-Texan obsession with the Texan Santa Fe Expedition and its possible economic outcomes. With the national currency virtually worthless and commerce at a standstill, the idea, however unrealistic, of establishing regular trade with *nuevomexicanos* appealed to Anglos, although in different ways. Politicians, such as Lamar, and foreign guests, such as Kendall, viewed the expedition as an essential mission for repairing the economy of Texas. Meanwhile, Erhard and other “average” volunteers did not necessarily enlist to accomplish Lamar’s lofty goals; rather, they joined merely to earn a decent paycheck. However, Erhard (and possibly others) were given shoes by a Texan company to be sold at Santa Fe markets on commission, perhaps momentarily uniting the goals of volunteers with those of Lamar, officials, and the Texan press.

### *Conclusion*

The existence of an enduring capitalistic market economy in the Southwest prior to 1848 is evident in the desperate attempts of Texans to become part of it. Lamar and his various correspondents during his presidency schemed of ways to somehow penetrate the lucrative market network that was centered in Santa Fe. In 1841, Lamar, in the final months of his presidency, officially organized the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, which he designed, first and foremost, to access the Santa Fe markets and regional silver mines that had been so kind to American merchants for two decades. The expedition appears to have been generally popular, as Texans searched for any sort of business or commerce to ignite their national economy. In the end, however, Mexican soldiers stopped the expedition well short of Santa Fe and took the remaining “pioneers” into Mexico as prisoners in the final months of 1841. Disoriented in the barrens of western Texas and hindered by continuous Indian attacks, the expedition ultimately failed to establish commercial connections with *nuevomexicanos* and thus failed to integrate the Republic of Texas into the frontier market economy.

As much as race, ethnicity, and nationalism, market forces affected identity in the Southwest borderlands to a considerable extent.<sup>70</sup> In fact, it could be argued that the pull of the

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<sup>70</sup> For an introduction to large body of scholarship on borderland identity, see Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Jimmy L. Bryan, Jr., “The Enduring People: Tejano Exclusion and Perseverance in the Republic of Texas, 1836-1845.” *Journal of the West* 47, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 40-47; Robert Francis Castro, “After the Slavers: Law, Liberation and Captive-Taking in the New Mexican Borderlands,” *Slavery and Abolition* 28, no. 3 (December 2007): 369-386; James E. Crisp, “Anglo-Texan Attitudes toward the Mexican, 1821-1845” (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1976); Graham Davis, *Land!: Irish Pioneers in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); Jesus F. de la Teja, “Discovering the Tejano Community in ‘Early’ Texas,” *Journal of the*

market economy was able to span both racial and national boundaries. While Anglo-Texans likely lumped the people of New Mexico into the same racial category of Mexicans, Lamar still extended an offer of commercial and political alliance to *nuevomexicanos*. At that particular historical moment during Lamar's presidency, the horrible state of the Texan economy temporarily allowed Anglo-Texans to overlook their racial prejudices toward *nuevomexicanos* and their nominal allegiance to the Mexican government—the ultimate enemy of Anglo-Texans. Moreover, Lamar's 1839 policy to encourage trade with Mexicans along the Rio Grande and ongoing smuggling with both Indians and Mexicans reflected the dire economic situation in Texas. More than anything else, Texans greatly desired to become a hub in the Southwest frontier economy and become an international commercial power.

Historians have generally only described the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 as an “exciting” episode in Texan history, which really understates the importance of the expedition for the history of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. During Lamar's presidency (and, really, during the entirety of the Republic era), economic hardships severely limited Texan attempts at expansion and commercial domination. As American ports to the East remained appealing to European manufacturers and entrepreneurs, Texans were forced to look elsewhere for business. Santa Fe, as the central hub of the Southwest market network, was the door to gaining access to trade in New Mexico, the northern provinces, and even central Mexico. The utter failure of the expedition left Texas deprived of the commerce that its economy sorely required. As the

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*Early Republic* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 73-98; De la Teja, ed., *Tejano Leadership in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010); Arnoldo de Leon, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1997); De Leon, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Dianna Everett, *The Texas Cherokees*; Ramon A. Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Lisbeth Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire*; Sean Kelley, “‘Mexico in His Head’: Slavery and the Texas-Mexico Border, 1810-1860,” *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 709-723; David J. Langum, *Law and Community on the Mexican California Frontier: Anglo-American Expatriates and the Clash of Legal Traditions, 1821-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987); Timothy M. Matovina, *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821-1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Jill Mocho, *Murder and Justice in Frontier New Mexico, 1821-1846* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Gerald E. Poyo, ed., *Tejano Journey, 1770-1850* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Raul A. Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Andres Tijerina, *Tejanos and Texas Under the Mexican Flag, 1821-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994); Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

question of annexation to the United States loomed in the background, statehood potentially offered the economic security that Texas could not attain as an independent nation.

Chapter Two  
Visions of an Anglo Empire:  
Anglo-Texan Justifications for the Texan Santa Fe Expedition

*Introduction*

The Texans who enlisted for the expedition were inextricably connected to a frontier market economy—a capitalistic network of markets that each dealt with particular commodities—that developed in the Southwest after 1821. For two decades, the trade between St. Louis and Santa Fe flourished yielded enormous economic benefits for both Mexicans and Americans. Texans, seeking to jumpstart their economy, aimed to compete with American merchants and divert profits to Texas in order to gain leverage in the frontier market network. Thus, the hope of swinging the frontier economy in favor of Texas underpinned the high-minded objectives of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841. Furthermore, the individuals who undertook the journey joined with the hope, however small and unlikely, of making a personal profit. However, as critical as the lure of the lucrative Santa Fe markets was, the Anglo-Texans departed from Austin with a host of other motives and as participants in influential discourses. They carried with them many of the cultural markers of the Anglo-American tradition that entered Texas in 1821 with the first *empresarios*.<sup>71</sup> Powerful notions of racism, anti-Catholicism, and a lingering nostalgia for the exploits of the War for Texan Independence accompanied the party into the wilderness of the Southwest borderlands.

I intend to contribute to the literature in two specific areas. The first historiographical body deals exclusively with the expedition itself. Of the historians in this camp, H. Bailey Carroll deserves the most credit for his contributions to the study of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition. Carroll gathered and published all of the accounts and memoirs of the members who left them, analyzed each source and its writer methodically, and, most impressive of all, managed to map the route of the expedition.<sup>72</sup> Aside from these achievements, however, Carroll never really engaged these sources and considered the expedition outside the scope of Texan history. Remarkably, other historians have also, more or less, employed the expedition as part of a local

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<sup>71</sup> *Empresarios*, or “entrepreneurs,” were a group of wealthy Anglo-Americans who, in the early 1820s, agreed to settle and develop Texas as Mexican citizens. For an introduction to *empresarios*, see Greg Cantrell, *Stephen F. Austin: Empresario of Texas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Graham Davis, *Land!: Irish Pioneers in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

<sup>72</sup> Carroll, “The Route of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition,” (PhD dissertation, University of Texas, 1935); Carroll, *The Texan Santa Fe Trail*.

history of Texas.<sup>73</sup> These scholars, while their works have certainly opened the door for further discussion, cast the expedition simply as a failed, non-militaristic venture to open direct trade between Texas and Santa Fe. For the expedition's sake, however, we need to consider the motivations, the shifting landscape of Texas and the entirety of the borderlands, and the broader economic transformations of the Southwest in the early nineteenth-century. Without such consideration, the Texan Santa Fe Expedition shall remain viewed through the limited lens of Texan history. I propose that the Anglo-American ideas that invaded Texas in the early 1820s, coupled with the economic necessity of tapping into a lucrative and extensive frontier economy, gave the expedition a very particular purpose. In this view, the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 was a matter of commercial necessity that took the form of Anglo expansionism, laden with many of the ideas typical to the Anglo-American tradition.

The second body of literature speaks to the broader changes of the Southwest borderlands in the first part of the nineteenth-century. While there have been a select few who have engaged the bigger picture, these historians have provided invaluable perspective. At the same time, certain nuances and modes of analysis remain largely absent from the literature, such as the center-periphery dynamic. David Weber has written extensively on the Spanish/Mexican borderlands and has eloquently narrated the complicated history of the region. Focusing mostly on the frontier itself, however, Weber took into account neither the roles of the parent countries (Mexico and the United States) nor the shaping and influence of ideas.<sup>74</sup> Andres Resendez brilliantly outlined the nuances of national identity in Texas and New Mexico in the early nineteenth-century. Although he did specifically employ the center-periphery dynamic, his intention to write for Mexican history hindered his analysis of the same connections between the United States and the Southwest.<sup>75</sup> His study, too, is complete and infinitely useful, but here I

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<sup>73</sup> See Gertrude Burslem Blake, "The Public Career of General Hugh McLeod" (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1932); Fayette Copeland, *Kendall of the Picayune* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943); Watt Goodwin Hill, Jr., "The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841: A Visionary Dream?" (Master's thesis, St. Mary's University, 1965); Noel M. Loomis, *The Texan-Santa Fe Pioneers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958); Charles R. McLure, "The Texan-Santa Fe Expedition of 1841," *New Mexico Historical Review* 48, no. 1 (January 1973): 45-56; Stanley Siegel, *The Poet President of Texas: The Life of Mirabeau B. Lamar, President of the Republic of Texas* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing, 1977); Paul N. Spellman, *Forgotten Texas Leader: Hugh McLeod and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

<sup>74</sup> David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>75</sup> Resendez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6-7.

will focus on the pervasiveness of Anglo ideas. Further, one of the main issues surrounding the expedition is the “blanket effect” of Anglo-American ideas and, as Gretchen Murphy has noted, an Anglo assumption that democracy constituted the “‘natural’ and destined mode of government in the Americas.”<sup>76</sup> This is testament, again, to the importance of the center-periphery interpretation. The flow of ideas between the United States, Texas, and Anglo frontier communities as well as the potency of these ideas suggests that this dynamic deserves closer attention.

Almost every member of the expedition initially hailed from either the United States or a European nation. The muster rolls clearly confirm their home countries. Next to the roughly 270 signatures are the names of various nations, most commonly the United States, Germany, France, Switzerland, Ireland, Scotland, and England.<sup>77</sup> Although some were born overseas, the majority of the members most likely visited or lived in the United States for a period of time before making their way to the Austin area. The individuals of the expedition, whether in Europe or the United States, had thus faced pressure to conform to a larger Anglo-Protestant tradition in some regard, with perhaps the lone exception of Irish immigrants. In fact, some of the most profitable *empresarios* were Irishmen who at least nominally embraced Catholicism to gain permission from the Mexican government to settle eastern Texas.<sup>78</sup> The Protestant majority in Texas in the 1830s, however, violently turned against Catholicism, making it very risky to openly practice as a Catholic. The Texan Santa Fe Expedition assembled under the banner of white Protestantism—the mainstay of the Anglo-American tradition.

The role of *tejanos* in the journey is comparatively unclear.<sup>79</sup> While *tejanos* might have participated in some capacity, their names are left off the official muster rolls. The notable

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<sup>76</sup> Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 99.

<sup>77</sup> Muster Roll, Grover Papers, 2D224, Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as CAH); Muster Roll, Smith (Sam S.) Collection, 2G267, CAH.

<sup>78</sup> Davis, *Land!*, 72-73.

<sup>79</sup> Scholarship on *tejanos* and their roles in the making of Texas is extensive. See Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Jesus F. de la Teja, “The Colonization and Independence of Texas: A Tejano Perspective,” in *Myths, Misdeeds, and Misunderstandings: The Roots of Conflict in U.S.-Mexican Relations*, ed. Jaime E. Rodriguez O. and Kathryn Vincent (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997), 79-95; De la Teja, “Discovering the Tejano Community in ‘Early’ Texas,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 73-98; De la Teja, *San Antonio de Bexar: A Community on New Spain’s Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); De la Teja, ed., *Tejano Leadership in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010); Arnaldo de Leon, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1997); Fane Downs, “The History of Mexicans in Texas, 1820-1845” (PhD dissertation, Texas Tech University, 1970); Timothy

exception is Jose Antonio Navarro, a respected administrator and signer of the Texan Declaration of Independence. President Mirabeau Lamar assigned Navarro to the expedition as one of its commissioners. His job was simple: convince Governor Manuel Armijo that joining the Republic of Texas would enhance the political and economic positions of New Mexico.<sup>80</sup> Despite the significant role of Navarro, it is difficult to discern the involvement of any other *tejanos*. Some members referred to various “Mexican servants,” but their exact identities remain ambiguous. On one occasion, Jose Jimenez was court-martialed for sleeping on his post and found not guilty.<sup>81</sup> His name is not on the muster rolls and he is not noted anywhere beyond this instance, leaving his official involvement with the expedition to speculation. During an Indian raid on the morning of September 4, a “Mexican named Ramon” was described as being killed in the confusion as the attacking party drove off with dozens of horses and mules.<sup>82</sup> On another occasion, the leaders of the expedition ordered a “Mexican” to join a small party of traders they encountered on their way back to Taos.<sup>83</sup> Here again the exact role and identity of the “Mexican,” like Ramon’s, is ambiguous, but these vague mentions of “Mexicans” at the very least inform us that Anglos were not the only members of the expedition. Because of the lingering tensions between Texas and Mexico, Anglo-Texans remained suspicious of *tejanos* in the early 1840s.<sup>84</sup> This sentiment might explain their visible absence from the expedition, although the political legacy of Navarro allowed him to be the exception.

When the expedition left Austin in June 1841, it did so as a predominantly white, Protestant cohort. The primary reason for organizing such an expedition was economic: to expand the Republic’s boundaries to the Pacific and thereby secure the precious ore deposits of

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M. Matovina, *The Alamo Remembered: Tejano Accounts and Perspectives* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Matovina, *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821-1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Gerald E. Poyo, ed., *Tejano Journey, 1770-1850* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Raul A. Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Andres Tijerina, *Tejanos and Texas Under the Mexican Flag, 1821-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1994).

<sup>80</sup> Andres Resendez, ed., *A Texas Patriot on Trial in Mexico: Jose Antonio Navarro and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (Dallas: Degolyer Library & William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, 2005), xiii.

<sup>81</sup> Order Book of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, General Order 14, 2R174, CAH.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Gallagher, “Journal of the Santa Fe Expedition,” In *The Texan Santa Fe Trail*, ed. H. Bailey Carroll (Canyon, Texas: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1951), 174-175.

<sup>83</sup> George W. Grover, “Minutes of Adventure from June, 1841.” *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 9 (1936): 40.

<sup>84</sup> Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo*, 181-182, 184.



the region in the name of the “correlative interests” of Texas and Santa Fe.<sup>85</sup> The trade that would result from a secure Texas-New Mexican connection would bring wealth into a struggling Texan economy. To initiate this commercial alliance, a select handful of merchants accompanied the expeditionary force in the hopes of dispersing their inexpensive manufactured commodities at New Mexican markets. Each individual who was not a part of the small merchant group enlisted as part of the Texan military escort, which yielded a modest paycheck for their services. Merchants and salesmen in the Austin area commissioned some members, such as Cayton Erhard, with items in bulk to sell in Santa Fe to supplement their pay from the Texan government.<sup>86</sup> Thus, in the most practical sense, individuals joined the expedition to better their material situation. The larger goals of the project and the basic motivations of the participants were economic; however, abstract Anglo-American ideas were necessary and, in fact, crucial to the launching of the expedition. Hate for the savage Indian, the despotic Mexican, and the Catholic religion mixed with a desire to relive the glory of the War for Texan Independence and liberate the people of Santa Fe. The opportunity for a paycheck might have been enough for someone to enlist, but the group traveled to Santa Fe with certain ideas and assumptions that were particular to the Anglo-American and, by extension, the Anglo-Texan.

#### *Recapturing the Glory of the Past*

A five-stanza song, entitled “For the Hills of Santa Fe,” anonymously published in the *Austin City Gazette* stylishly captures the cultural impetus that surrounded the expedition. The author wrote the second stanza specifically around the theme of the War for Texan Independence, which had concluded just five years earlier. In particular, he mentioned the donning of “blood-stained sabers,” the battles fought at San Antonio de Bexar and San Jacinto, and a claim that those men “will take the field again.”<sup>87</sup> A reader of this poetic piece might get the impression that the expedition was part of a larger scheme to initiate the second phase of the War for Texan Independence. In all, the language in this particular stanza is invigorating, harkening back to the glory of the battles fought in 1835 and 1836 and evoking exaggerated images of war that appealed to the average Anglo-Texan or Anglo-American.

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<sup>85</sup> Mirabeau B. Lamar to the Citizens of Santa Fe, Austin, April 14, 1840, Santa Fe Papers, 2-22/589:1, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State and Library Archives Commission, Austin.

<sup>86</sup> Cayton Erhard, “Cayton Erhard’s Reminiscences of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, 1841,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (January 1963): 428.

<sup>87</sup> “The Hills of Santa Fe,” *Austin City Gazette*, May 26, 1841.

To be sure, historians have spent considerable time on the “Texas Revolution,” from initial colonization in the early 1820s to separation from Mexico in 1836.<sup>88</sup> H. W. Brands, as one example, gracefully pondered that the “events culminating in the Texas Revolution transcended morality, in the ordinary sense. Tens of thousands of Americans came to Texas to seek a better life. Some came legally, many others illegally.” Once Anglos had outnumbered their Mexican counterparts in Texas, “they saw no reason not to make it theirs by revolution.”<sup>89</sup> Although I do doubt how “revolutionary” the War for Texan Independence really was, I do not intend to recast the narrative here; instead, I want to briefly consider the evocations of the War for Texan Independence in 1840 and 1841 and how Texans utilized the memory of the conflict to justify undertaking an aggressive expedition to Santa Fe. The various battles bore powerful meaning in the years following the war as beacons of “glory” and as proof that Texas was destined to be an empire of liberty and lucrative commerce.

The Alamo, San Jacinto, and their heroes found their way into the newspapers quite frequently as the launching of the expedition grew nearer. Defending Texan claims to western lands, one columnist of the *Austin City Gazette* wrote that Mexico “DARE not again face the Texan freemen” because San Jacinto is “too fresh in her memory.” The writer further fantasized that living heroes, like Houston and Lamar, and fallen heroes, like Crockett and Travis, would fight for the sake of liberty.<sup>90</sup> Justifying western expansion and aggressive commercial ventures required conjuring up images that would resonate with people. The potential for another war with “inferior” Mexicans caught the attention of the general public, but recapturing and rekindling the fire of the perceived heroics that helped to create the nation five years earlier

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<sup>88</sup> For a general introduction to the literature on the War for Texan Independence, see Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005); Eugene C. Barker, “President Jackson and the Texas Revolution,” *The American Historical Review* 12, no. 4 (July 1907): 788-809; H. W. Brands, *Lone Star Nation: How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence, and Changed America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); James E. Crisp, *Sleuthing the Alamo: Davy Crockett’s Last Stand and Other Mysteries of the Texas Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Richard R. Flores, “The Alamo: Myth, Public History, and the Politics of Inclusion,” *Radical History Review* 77 (2000): 91-103; Stephen L. Hardin, *Texian Iliad: A Military History of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992); Matovina, *The Alamo Remembered*; Edward L. Miller, *New Orleans and the Texas Revolution* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004); Joseph Milton Nance, *After San Jacinto: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1836-1841* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963); Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo*.

<sup>89</sup> H. W. Brands, *Lone Star Nation*, 525.

<sup>90</sup> “Our Relations with Mexico,” *Austin City Gazette*, November 25, 1840.

excited Texans. For both veterans of the War for Texan Independence and the next generation, an opportunity to echo the deeds of Houston and Crockett was welcomed.

On April 21, 1840, the four-year anniversary of the battle of San Jacinto, Richard F. Brenham, a future commissioner of the expedition to Santa Fe, recalled how Texans repelled the “despotic” Mexicans in a public address. Interestingly enough, Brenham transitioned from the independence attained in 1836 to the “political destiny” of Texas. In a free and liberated nation, Brenham explained, the “pinnacle of power” should never be attained by anyone, as proper citizens learn the law of the land and act accordingly to prevent any such tyranny. However, as a whole nation, Brenham believed that the power of the Republic of Texas had no tangible limits. The expansion of “Liberty” and an irreversible nature to carry the banner of freedom emerged as themes in his speech.<sup>91</sup> Looking back at San Jacinto prompted an urge to relive the fervor of victory and create a lasting tradition of “liberty-inducing” victories. The glory achieved during that battle and the ideals fulfilled became, as Brenham stated, part of the “political destiny” of Texas. Thus, as Lamar worked to materialize the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, the War for Texan Independence was being utilized to mobilize the Texan populous for future ventures. The political and commercial inclusion of Santa Fe would substantiate and legitimize the fate of Texas to become the imperial giant that Brenham and surely others envisioned.

In an address to be delivered to the people of Santa Fe, President Mirabeau Lamar spoke of battles in the War for Texan Independence to create an image of what could possibly be for *nuevomexicanos*. For Lamar, the battles of the war symbolically provided a model for both Texans and the people of Santa Fe. The act of warfare, while glorious, was not itself significant; on the contrary, the most important point that Lamar and other Texans associated with battles like San Jacinto and the Alamo were the events that followed. In his address, Lamar viewed the battles as a means to an end:

That struggle was brief, bloody and decisive; and terminated in the total discomfiture and expulsion of our foe, and in the establishment of a free, happy, and independent Republic, extending from the Sabine to the Rio del Norte, and from the gulf to the Pacific; embracing within its limits a vast and varied country, unrivaled in beauty, salubrity, and

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<sup>91</sup> “Dr. R. F. Brenham’s Address,” *Austin City Gazette*, May 13, 1840.

fertility; and capable of sustaining a population as dense, prosperous and powerful as any people on the earth.<sup>92</sup>

In other words, San Jacinto and other engagements paved the way for not only the independence of Texas, but also what Lamar (and Brenham) perceived as an empire grounded on democratic principles and material abundance. While Lamar sought to stir separatists in New Mexico to action with these words, his address also spoke to Texans themselves: In order to truly become the imperial power that they believed was created on the battlefield in 1835 and 1836, political and economic expansion was necessary. In the minds of Lamar and Brenham, the script had already been written on the battlefields, but the final product required both action from the Texans and the incorporation of Santa Fe.

Even though Santa Anna would attempt to reclaim Texas in 1842 and 1843, references to the War for Texan Independence were more nostalgic rather than indicative of a desire to resume war with Mexico. Evoking imagery of the war five years earlier remained mostly a strategy carried out by politicians, like Lamar, and the newspapers. Since political speeches and many newspapers were circulated in the United States as well, battle references might have been employed to attract support and even volunteers. However, Texans, both Anglos and *tejanos*, latched onto their independence movement and celebrated their roles even into the 1840s. Ideas and images of the War for Texan Independence thus were an obvious rallying point and easy way to garner support for an ambitious expedition. The higher levels of the media tapped into this Anglo-Texan tendency to look back at the changes recently made to legitimize a cultural aspiration to politically and economically branch out.

#### *An Empire Reserved for Anglos*

Older and much more culturally pervasive than nostalgia for the war, anti-Mexican racism helped to rationalize the expedition to Santa Fe, especially for those making the journey. Cayton Erhard, a German-Texan member of the expedition, wrote that his companions on the journey were eager to share their opinions of the Mexican people. As the ultimate surrender of the group drew near, for instance, a number of the individuals began to discuss the “treacherous character of the Mexicans.” Their capture led to a sense of humiliation among the Anglo-Texans

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<sup>92</sup> Lamar to the Citizens of Santa Fe, Austin, June 5, 1841, in *A Texas Patriot on Trail in Mexico: Jose Antonio Navarro and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*, ed. Resendez (Dallas: Degolyer Library & William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, 2005), 7-8.

because they had been bested by an allegedly inferior and despotic race of people.<sup>93</sup> This resentment, while it certainly flared up in the face of failure, helped to justify the Anglo-Texan expedition to Santa Fe a rescue mission.

Historians have been keen to take note of the racial notions that developed amongst Anglos toward Mexicans and *tejanos*.<sup>94</sup> Arnoldo de Leon has observed that Anglos began to conceive of Mexicans as a morally and racially “defective” people as Anglo-Americans and Mexicans came into direct contact in the early nineteenth-century.<sup>95</sup> Tensions between Anglos and the government of Mexico climaxed in 1835, as disdain for Mexico and ethnic Mexicans reached an entirely new level. Raul Ramos has argued that Anglo-Texans often referred to *tejanos* as “Mexicans” during the years between the War for Texan Independence and the Mexican-American War, which directly linked *tejanos* to the suspicion that Anglo-Texans felt toward Mexicans.<sup>96</sup> Thus, whether *tejano* or Mexican, the ethnic commonalty was enough to arouse Anglo-Texan prejudices. Historians, ultimately, have correctly identified the presence and evolution of racial ideas among Anglos in the first part of the nineteenth-century, but much work remains to be done. The genesis of anti-Mexican sentiments remains largely unconsidered, as well as any study that explores the link between Anglo anti-Catholicism and anti-Mexican racism.

Anglos in both Texas and the United States probably derived many of their notions of Mexico, its people, and the Mexican frontier from Josiah Gregg, an early frequenter of the Santa Fe Trail. The first copy of Gregg’s work was not published until 1844, but his ideas along with those of others circulated into the United States and Texas as the Santa Fe trade prospered. Gregg took note of virtually everything, from the culture of the various indigenous groups to the extravagance of Mexican fashion. It is not surprising, then, that he commented on the features and overall character of the Mexican people. The darkness of the Mexicans’ skin, he wrote,

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<sup>93</sup> Erhard, “Cayton Erhard’s Reminiscences,” 447-448.

<sup>94</sup> For work specifically on this issue, see Jimmy L. Bryan, Jr., “The Enduring People: Tejano Exclusion and Perseverance in the Republic of Texas, 1836-1845.” *Journal of the West* 47, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 40-47; Crisp, “Anglo-Texan Attitudes toward the Mexican, 1821-1845” (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1976); De Leon, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo*; David J. Sandoval “Gnats, Goods, and Greasers: Mexican Merchants on the Santa Fe Trail,” *Journal of the West* 28, no. 2 (April 1989): 22-31.

<sup>95</sup> De Leon, *They Called Them Greasers*, ix-x.

<sup>96</sup> Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo*, 167.

resulted from “Moorish blood,” which, in the world of European Christianity, denoted unfavorable traits.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, in a discussion about the disposition of *nuevomexicanos* in particular, Gregg asserted that they “inherited much of the cruelty and intolerance of their ancestors, and no small portion of their bigotry and fanaticism.”<sup>98</sup> He further observed laziness, citing the *siesta* as an example, and a general ignorance among the northern Mexican people.<sup>99</sup> Laziness, barbarism, and stupidity were some of the same adjectives that Anglos used to describe Mexicans at the time of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841. Anglo-American traders, like Gregg, reported their opinions of the Mexican people as they came back from their yearly commercial journey to Santa Fe. By the 1840s, even as the Santa Fe Trail was losing its significance in the United States, racial ideas about Mexicans had circulated within the Anglo population in the United States and Texas.

George Wilkins Kendall, editor of the *Times Picayune* of New Orleans and chronicler of the expedition, had much to say on the character of Mexicans. As the expedition traveled further into the wilderness, the officers and commissioners of the force began to seek guides that might possess any knowledge of the way to Santa Fe. One of these guides was a “Mexican” named Carlos. Kendall praised Carlos as an “honest and trustworthy fellow.” Kendall was quick, however, to add that Carlos’ “probity” was not common among “his countrymen of the same class.”<sup>100</sup> Carlos, therefore, was the exception to the rule. Kendall, like his peers, viewed Mexicans as inherently deceptive and exceedingly uncivilized. Unlike the other members, many of whom were not born in Texas but had resided there, Kendall was a native and resident of Louisiana. His unfavorable characterization of the people of Mexico suggests that anti-Mexican sentiments were not phenomena found only among Anglo-Texans. Instead, Anglos both in the United States and Texas appear to have embraced the idea of Mexican inferiority.

In September, as the expedition continued to wander toward their destination, interactions with Mexicans became increasingly frequent. Now following the guide of a “Mexican servant” named Manuel, the party came across two “swarthy” muleteers who were “enjoying a quiet *siesta*.” Accompanying this description is a footnote in which Kendall asserted that two

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<sup>97</sup> Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. Max L. Moorhead (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 217.

<sup>98</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 219.

<sup>99</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 223-224.

<sup>100</sup> George Wilkins Kendall, *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (Austin: Steck Company, 1935), 1:131-132.

“common failings” of Mexicans were “extreme idleness” and a “proneness to telling the most outrageous falsehoods.”<sup>101</sup> Laziness and treachery typically found their way into Kendall’s characterizations, which matched the descriptions offered by Erhard and Gregg.

Thomas Falconer, an Englishman whom Lamar invited to make the journey to Santa Fe, wrote his accounts of the expedition with fewer overt racist references, but nevertheless included anecdotes on what he perceived as cruelty and deceit among the Mexicans. Like Kendall, Falconer constantly questioned the loyalties of the various “Mexican” guides employed along the way. On October 3 in particular, Falconer seemed to sympathize with General Hugh McLeod’s suspicion of a guide when the party encountered what appeared to be Indian tracks. “The Mexican was evidently disturbed, made no suggestion to explain what was seen, and, no doubt, had no idea that the country had been alarmed...”<sup>102</sup> When Falconer and McLeod observed this reaction, they automatically concluded that the guide had probably lied when he claimed to have vast knowledge of the terrain. To make matters worse, the guide apparently pretended as if everything was going as planned. This incident had thereby confirmed what the Anglos on the expedition had thought about Mexicans all along: they were all cunning, deceitful, and not to be trusted.

The failure of the expedition and captivity of the expedition’s members reinforced and further exacerbated the Anglo-Texan hate for the Mexican people. Already frustrated with the mission’s disastrous end, individuals on the expedition received what appears to have been rather harsh treatment both on the march to Mexico City and in prison. Franklin Combs, a guest of the expedition, referring to Governor Manuel Armijo, identified what he thought was an indication of the savagery of the Mexican race “when the governor arrived with about 1,500 men, a force sufficient to make him secure in his barbarity.”<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the rough handling of the prisoners prompted an immediate connection to the “uncivilized” tendencies of the Mexican race. Captain Demasio Salazar, the Mexican officer who brought the prisoners to Mexico City, stands out in the accounts as a Mexican who perfectly exhibited the supposed barbarism of his race. Peter Gallagher, a member of the expedition, labeled Salazar a “great Tyrant,” as he executed several

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<sup>101</sup> Kendall, *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*, 1:271.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Falconer, *Letters and Notes on the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, 1841-1842* (Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1963), 114.

<sup>103</sup> Franklin Combs, “Combs’ Narrative of the Santa Fe Expedition in 1841,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 5, no. 1 (January 1930): 309.

Anglo-Texans on the march who were suffering from fatigue and hunger.<sup>104</sup> Falconer corroborated Gallagher's story but provided a much more vivid description of what happened. He stated that Salazar had ordered "all who were behind that if they did not immediately overtake the other prisoners they would be shot." When one prisoner, McAlister, explained that his feet were too sore to go any faster, "he was almost instantly shot through the head."<sup>105</sup> Taken together, the stories of Gallagher and Falconer perpetuate and amplify what Erhard and others had said about the character of Mexicans.

Intimately related to anti-Mexican sentiments, the strong tradition of Anglo-American anti-Catholicism migrated to Texas with the first colonists in the early 1820s. Historian Ray Allen Billington convincingly argued that anti-Catholic ideas in the United States were confined largely to religious rhetoricians until the early nineteenth-century. During the 1830s, nativist movements, buttressed by a long tradition of anti-Catholicism, inspired widespread violence toward Catholics and their institutions.<sup>106</sup> Within this context of religious tension, Americans began to migrate to Texas in search of affordable land plots. An anti-Catholic idea specifically related to American interaction with Mexico was Manifest Destiny. Founded on racial and religious prejudices, Manifest Destiny formally appeared in Anglo rhetoric in the 1830s and 1840s, as Texas gained independence and Anglos embraced expansionism.<sup>107</sup> Although Spain lost control of the land in 1821, the Spanish left the legacy of Catholicism and its institutions in Mexico and the Southwest borderlands. Missions, for example, have held the attention of borderlands historians for nearly a century now. John Francis Bannon emphasized that the Spanish originally used the frontier mission strictly to control Indians.<sup>108</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton argued that, over time, missions became more secularized in their function, but remained a

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<sup>104</sup> Peter Gallagher, "Journal of the Santa Fe Expedition," in *The Texan Santa Fe Trail*, ed. Carroll, 178-179.

<sup>105</sup> Falconer, *Letters and Notes on the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*, 55.

<sup>106</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964), 1-25, 53-76.

<sup>107</sup> For more on the racial and religious aspects of Manifest Destiny, see Gene M. Brack, *Mexico Views Manifest Destiny, 1821-1846* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975); Ted C. Hinckley, "American Anti-Catholicism during the Mexican War," *Pacific Historical Review* 31, no. 2 (May 1962): 121-137; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*; Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1963); John C. Pinheiro, "'Religion without Restriction': Anti-Catholicism, All Mexico, and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo," *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 69-96; Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1963).

<sup>108</sup> John Francis Bannon, *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821*, 2nd ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 234-235.



symbol of the frontier community and Catholicism.<sup>109</sup> The anti-Catholic sentiments of Anglos in Texas thereby found an obvious target in their Mexican neighbors and their institutions. Continuing an old tradition of Anglo anti-Catholicism, the Anglo-Texans who stumbled toward Santa Fe in the fall of 1841 rationalized their journey with ideas of a Mexican who was not only racially inferior but also religiously ignorant.

While Anti-Catholic sentiments were not as overtly expressed as anti-Mexican racism, some Anglos still commented on what they considered to be an illegitimate religion. The same poem that directly associated the battles of the War for Texan Independence with the expedition also contains vague references to the pervasiveness of Catholicism in the Southwest. The author mentions the “thralldom of superstition,” which suggests that Catholicism held the land confined in the ignorance of a false religion. The “banner of freedom” and the “olive branch of friendship,” according to this author, will usher out the rule of Catholicism. Finally, to reconnect anti-Catholicism specifically with the Mexican people, the author declares that the “bigot and the despot” will be driven out of New Mexico.<sup>110</sup> In all, the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, if successful, would be as much a defeat of the Catholic Mexican as a triumph of Texan commercialism and expansion.

The anti-Catholic tendencies of the Anglo-Texans on the expedition are fairly easy to discern. For example, Falconer described a number of the items that the expedition had to abandon in September to ease the passage to Santa Fe. Among the items was a “cask of copper medals of the marvelous image of the Virgin of Oaxaca. These medals were well cast, and were made for the special benefit and use of the superstitious in Mexico...”<sup>111</sup> So, while they clearly jeered at Catholicism, they sought to take advantage of a market for Catholic trinkets. The “superstitious” in Santa Fe, though declared ignorant, had immense commercial value for Texans. Similarly, Kendall in his recollections of the expedition painted an extraordinarily detailed picture of a procession held in San Miguel. He found the event both humorous and offensive. On the one hand, referring to a statue of St. Michael, he commented that a “more comical figure than this same San Miguel it would be difficult to imagine or discover.” As a statue of the Virgin Mary joined the procession, he mentioned that it was “nothing more than a

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<sup>109</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton, “The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish American Colonies,” in *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West, 1540-1821*, ed. Weber (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1979), 58-59.

<sup>110</sup> “The Hills of Santa Fe,” *Austin City Gazette*, May 26, 1841.

<sup>111</sup> Falconer, *Letters and Notes on the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*, 109.

doll of the largest size.” On the other hand, he found the priest and the “rude wooden cross hanging from his neck” to be particularly vulgar.<sup>112</sup> At any rate, Kendall and Anglo-Texans evidently did not consider the Catholicism practiced by Mexicans to be a serious religion. In fact, “superstition,” a term they frequently used, seems to sum up Anglo attitudes toward Catholicism: it was untrue and even, at times, amusing. Ridding Santa Fe of Catholicism, however, was just an added to bonus to thwarting the “despotic” Mexican and liberating *nuevomexicanos*.

While “uncivilized” Mexicans and their Catholicism irked Anglo-Texans, nothing bothered them more than the ever-present Indians. Anglos worked constantly to combat indigenous peoples and distance them from internal trade routes. As some historians have noted about the interaction between Indians and whites in North America, violence defined the collision between Anglo-Texans and indigenous peoples.<sup>113</sup> The Indians of the southern plains abided by no national boundaries and traveled, more or less, where they wished. Indeed, historian Pekka Hamalainen argued that the Comanche, during the first part of the nineteenth-century, built and maintained the most dominant empire in the Southwest borderlands.<sup>114</sup> The “Indian problem” stood in the way of the Republic of Texas becoming a continental force. In order to safely exploit the Santa Fe markets, the road between eastern Texas and New Mexico would have to be cleared of Indians—what Anglo-Texans perceived as a savage, uncivilized people.

Lamar had been searching for ways to solve the “Indian problem” since he became involved with Texan politics. As early as 1838, the election year that would see Lamar become the successor of Sam Houston as the president of Texas, Lamar had agents in the military giving him information about the state of Indian affairs. One of his most reliable informants was Hugh

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<sup>112</sup> Kendall, *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*, 1: 337-338.

<sup>113</sup> For literature on this tradition of Anglo-Indian violence in Texas in particular, see Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land, 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005); Anderson, *The Indian Southwest, 1580-1830: Ethnogenesis and Reinvention* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Brian Delay, “The Wider World of the Handsome Man: Southern Plains Indians Invade Mexico, 1830-1848,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 83-113; Dianna Everett, *The Texas Cherokees: A People Between Two Fires, 1819-1840* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990); Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* (London: Penguin Books, 2008); F. Todd Smith, *From Dominance to Disappearance: The Indians of Texas and the Near Southwest, 1786-1859* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Smith, *The Wichita Indians: The Traders of Texas and the Southern Plains, 1540-1845* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000).

<sup>114</sup> Hamalainen, *Comanche Empire*, 1-17.

McLeod, the man who Lamar would select as the military leader of the expedition in 1841. In 1838, McLeod and much of the Texan military aimed at quelling a series of violent indigenous uprisings in eastern Texas. On October 25, McLeod wrote to Lamar urging the country to wage war against the Indians to ensure safe commerce and fewer distractions if Mexico decided to attack. More to the point, he recommended that the government of Texas immediately take the necessary steps to “exterminate the race” of Indians, except for a few select “friendly” tribes.<sup>115</sup> The subtleties behind the Anglo abhorrence for indigenous peoples were absent from McLeod’s letter; an “extermination” of Indians would remove them from the picture once and for all. Lamar embraced McLeod’s suggestions early on in his presidency. In an 1838 address to the Texan Congress, Lamar stated that the “importance of chastising these savage offenders, and extending protection to our exposed and suffering fellow-citizens, cannot fail to attract your early and most serious notice.” Lamar thus worked to make the proposed strategy of “extermination” of the “wild cannibals of the woods” government policy.<sup>116</sup>

Not surprisingly, this idea that Indians were inferior and subject to extermination shaped the rationalization behind the Texan Santa Fe Expedition and resonated with members of the venture. Those who chronicled the expedition never shied away from a chance to emphasize the “savagery” of the Indians they encountered. For instance, George W. Grover, a member and paid soldier of the expedition, recalled a skirmish with a large force of “bloodthirsty Cannibals, the Kiaway Indians.” The “Kiaway” were really the Kiowa, but Grover was really only concerned with the “devilish work” that the Indians conducted, reaffirming his and the others’ belief that Indians were an inferior, uncivilized race.<sup>117</sup> Erhard remembered minute details about the “cannibalism” and savagery of the Indians. He spoke of the “superstition” of Indians to remove the hearts of fallen enemies and consume them in order to exhibit that they were “brave warriors.”<sup>118</sup> These seemingly barbarous and brutish actions made Anglos believe that Indians “were always hovering around...to cut off our men to kill and scalp them whenever a small squad started out.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Hugh McLeod to Lamar, Nacogdoches, Oct. 25, 1838, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 1798-1859*, ed. Charles Adams Gulick, Jr. (Austin: A. C. Baldwin, 1922), 2: 270-271.

<sup>116</sup> Lamar to Congress, Houston, Dec. 21, 1838, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2:352.

<sup>117</sup> George W. Grover, “Minutes of an Adventure from June, 1841,” “Minutes of Adventure from June, 1841,” *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 9 (1936): 37.

<sup>118</sup> Erhard, “Cayton Erhard’s Reminiscences,” 435.

<sup>119</sup> Erhard, “Cayton Erhard’s Reminiscences,” 438.

En route to the center of Mexico as captives, the group stopped at an Indian village on the Rio Grande. Falconer noted that the people “were of short stature, as all the Indians we met within Mexico were, and their dwellings were laid out irregularly, with same neglect of comfort and cleanliness which is to be observed in the settlements of the red race among civilized nations.”<sup>120</sup> The unclean, uncivilized “red race” was the greatest and most persistent nuisance to Lamar and the Anglo-Texans. It is only understandable, then, that they believed that the people of Santa Fe also struggled with the “Indian problem.” Samuel A. Roberts, the acting secretary of state under Lamar, wrote in his directions to the commissioners of the expedition that they should inform, first and foremost, that the people of Santa Fe, as fellow Texan citizens, were entitled to “the protection of the Government in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and property.”<sup>121</sup> A successful expedition, designed primarily to join Santa Fe and Texas in a commercial empire, would have created an extensive buffer for eastern Texas against the indigenous threat by distracting raiding parties to the frontier trade routes. At the same time, Texans desired to protect their economic interests and thus found motivation to offer protection to the people of Santa Fe.

The various Anglo references to native peoples, interpreted in a certain manner, perpetuate the idea that Indians were frontier residents that lived on the fringes of civilization and controlled very little outside of the occasional raid. In the past two decades, a slew of historical literature has demolished this idea of the Indian as a marginal historical actor; instead, historians have begun to consider how North American Indians shaped the vast political, economic, and social landscape of the continent in multitudinous ways.<sup>122</sup> In Texas during the late 1830s and early 1840s, the “savage” plains Indians pursued their own interests and strove to establish themselves in this burgeoning frontier economy. The raids that the Anglo-Texans make

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<sup>120</sup> Falconer, *Letters and Notes on the Texan Santa Fe Expedition*, 93.

<sup>121</sup> Instructions to Commissioners Bound for Santa Fe, Austin, June 15, 1841, in *A Texas Patriot on Trail in Mexico*, ed. Resendez, 26.

<sup>122</sup> For some classic examples, see Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*; Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire*; Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 2006); Daniel H. Usner, *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley before 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

reference to in their accounts are testament to the agency of indigenous peoples in the Southwest. The raids would allow Indians to take what products they could and thereby give themselves some leverage at frontier markets. The mainstream notion that indigenous peoples aggressively raided Anglo wagon trains as a cultural habit of some sort is false: through raiding, Indians gained free commodities.

*Between "Freedom and Despotism": Liberating Santa Fe*

Together with ideas of racism, anti-Catholicism and nostalgia for the War for Texan Independence, Anglo-Texans justified the expedition with the belief that the people of Santa Fe needed to be liberated. The Texan press most clearly demonstrated this idea of a liberation mission that many Texans, as members of an "enlightened civilization," perceived as their duty. On April 15, 1840, a column appeared in the *Austin City Gazette* that preached the need for Texan intervention in Santa Fe. The author outlined not only the commercial benefits of an expedition to Santa Fe, but also the opportunity for *nuevomexicanos* to "fling off the yoke which has so long galled them" in order to "join their destinies" with Texas. The problem was that "the heavy hand of Mexican oppression," made worse by the deficiencies of Catholicism and the Mexican race, necessitated that Texas "receive them with open arms."<sup>123</sup> Texans, with their self-proclaimed fate to become a powerful empire spurred into motion by the battles of the War for Texan Independence, concluded that they were destined to liberate the people of Santa Fe.

In a more commercial vein, Anglo-Texans also believed that northern Mexico suffered from economic oppression that resulted from the mistreatment and mismanagement of despotic Mexican rule. One author pondered why the Mexican economy did not dominate the continent with such an abundance of silver ore in the land. He suggested that the "mines are very ineffectively worked, and the full extent of the Mexican mineral beds will probably never be developed, until American or Texan enterprise" directly intervenes. A trading company in northern Mexico, according to this author, would increase the circulation of commodities on the frontier and "secure an immense revenue to Texas."<sup>124</sup> Here the ideological rationalizations meet the primary economic motivation for the Texan Santa Fe Expedition. Liberating parts of northern Mexico, specifically Santa Fe, would have served a dual purpose: gaining control over the frontier economy and fulfilling Texas' destiny as an empire and beacon of "freedom."

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<sup>123</sup> *Austin City Gazette*, April 15, 1840.

<sup>124</sup> "Texan Trade to Chihuahua," *Austin City Gazette*, January 20, 1841.

When Lamar wrote his final address to the citizens of Santa Fe in early June 1841, he offered them a choice between “freedom and despotism.” In his offer, Lamar comes across as the embodiment of Anglo-Texan ideology in the early 1840s. With condescension beyond imagination, he attempted to mask the true economic objectives of the expedition with a mission of extending “liberty” to the people of Santa Fe:

And surely, when freedom and despotism are fairly laid before a brave and an intelligent people, they cannot long hesitate which to choose! And this we apprehend is your present situation. You are called upon, fellow-citizens, to make your election between two Governments, the very antithesis of each other; the one being based upon the affections of the *people*, and administered with a single eye to their *good*; while the other, as you know from experience, is founded in corruption, sustained by fraud and force, and is wielded for the cupidity of those in authority without the slightest reference whatever to the interest of the governed. Which of the two will you select?<sup>125</sup>

This idea of liberating Santa Fe from economic and political oppression fits well into the larger array of Anglo-Texan ideas involved in the expedition. The War for Texan Independence, of course, laid the foundation for the Anglo-Texan claims to the Southwest and set Texas on its self-proclaimed course to become an imperial power. This empire, though, was to be made by and reserved for Anglo-Texans. The “half-civilized” Catholic Mexican and the “savage” Indian were the “antitheses” of the imagined Anglo-Texan Empire and the Anglo-American ideas on which it would stand. The city of Santa Fe and its position as an economic crossroads caught the attention of Anglo-Texans, as it became a “liberation” project in what they hoped would become a coast-to-coast empire.

When Mirabeau Lamar offered the citizens of Santa Fe the choice between “freedom and despotism,” he did so within a certain framework of Anglo-American ideas. The commercial aims of the project became intertwined with defeating the inferior and blasphemous Mexicans, suppressing Indian advances, recapturing the glory of the War for Texan Independence, and liberating the people of Santa Fe from the Mexican government. More so rationalizations than fundamental motivations, these ideas made an economic venture to New Mexico much more acceptable and they resonated with the Anglo-Texans who would stumble across the wilderness

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<sup>125</sup> Lamar to the Citizens of Santa Fe, Austin, June 5, 1841, in *A Texas Patriot on Trail in Mexico*, ed. Resendez, 9-10.

toward Santa Fe. Their Anglo-American assumptions are an indication that historians of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 missed the importance of the journey beyond the stated goal to initiate trade with Santa Fe. Instead of examining the expedition so narrowly, we need to broaden our vision to see the connections and motives, both economic and ideological, and how they might intertwine. An entire set of fairly typical Anglo-American ideas allowed for the justification of such an expansionist expedition. Equally important, as Andres Resendez identified, is the center-periphery dynamic in border regions. Tracing Anglo ideas from the United States to their migration to the Southwest greatly illuminates the picture of the borderlands as a contested, multi-national landscape.

The members of the Santa Fe Expedition were in many ways not unlike their conquistador predecessors. The prospect of wealth—minerals, in particular—drove the Spanish northward out of Mexico City. The *conquistador* experiment, while its effects were devastating to the indigenous populations, ultimately failed. Likewise, these new conquistadors, Anglo-Texans with their search for riches and lofty rhetoric, met their demise in the barrens of the Southwest. The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 is not a story of Anglo success and expansion, but rather one of the temporary failures of Anglo racism, militarism, ideas, and, perhaps most importantly, Texas' inability to penetrate the frontier economy. The economic struggles of the Republic of Texas, which stemmed from an inability to expand, undermined its short-lived independence.

## Chapter Three

### ‘The Commercial Intercourse of Nations’:

#### The Texan Santa Fe Expedition and the International Insignificance of Texas

##### *Introduction*

On April 23, 1839, James Pinckney Henderson, a lawyer and respected politician, wrote to Mirabeau Lamar to offer his thoughts on the European recognition of the Republic of Texas. Henderson told the president of Texas that the best diplomatic tactic would be to establish a blockade to stop the transport of goods in and out of Mexico, specifically at Veracruz. Henderson reasoned that a blockade would “contribute to the recognition of the Independence of Texas by England and even by Mexico herself...” He believed that if Lamar established a blockade, “Texas would prove to all the world that she is able to maintain her present position against the efforts of Mexico and would also force England the interests of whose capitalists are so much dependent their commerce with Mexico...”<sup>126</sup> To Henderson, successful diplomacy required commercial domination, even if it meant frustrating the very foreign merchants and entrepreneurs whose business Texas greatly desired.

The supposed “dependency” of English capitalists aside, Henderson’s letter to Lamar indicates that Texas found itself in a curious commercial relationship not only with Mexico but also with European powers. Since its establishment as an independent nation, Texas competed for the business of European investors, manufacturers, and merchants to no avail. Two key obstacles impeded Texans in their efforts. The first was Mexico and, more specifically, its port cities. Veracruz and other ports provided Europeans and their goods with quick and easy access to central Mexico—the locus of national commerce—as well as an outlet to Mexico’s northern frontier (including Santa Fe), where the region’s isolation often yielded enormous profits. The second impediment was the United States, whose merchants dominated both the European markets and the Santa Fe trade. Thus, Texan traders suffered without any real leverage that might allow participation in international commerce. Mexico, as a nation of “inferior” people and an established rival, became the target of Anglo-Texan commercial efforts and strategy. While also considering a blockade of Mexico, Texans looked westward toward Santa Fe and

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<sup>126</sup> James Pinckney Henderson to Mirabeau B. Lamar, Houston, April 23, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 1798-1859*, ed. Charles Adams Gulick, Jr. (Austin: A. C. Baldwin, 1922), 2: 540-541.



planned for the exploitation of New Mexican markets. However, in their way stood the Mexican state, competitive American merchants, and European entrepreneurs.

While the Santa Fe trade intrigued North Americans, Europeans were far more interested in the silver deposits and idle mining shafts in the hills of New Mexico. Texan correspondents reported that European investors were in negotiations with Mexican officials and possibly purchasing mines by the late 1830s. Meanwhile, Missouri wagon caravans continued to make their annual treks to Santa Fe, just as they had since 1821. Texans, well aware of the central importance of Santa Fe in the Southwest market network, viewed the Anglo-Americans who frequented the Santa Fe Trail as competition. Out of options and desperate for business, Texans devised plans to infiltrate New Mexico. Control of the Santa Fe markets would thwart European investors and allow Texan merchants to compete with their American counterparts. In this tense economic climate, Lamar and his colleagues pondered a formal expedition Santa Fe with the purpose of establishing permanent trade with *nuevomexicanos*. By 1841, the Texan economy continued its plunge and Lamar's presidency seemed it would end in failure. Lamar's decision to launch the expedition to Santa Fe in June was the culmination of much planning, but, in another sense, the expedition acted as a desperate attempt to salvage his presidency.

As Texans looked for ways to stimulate their economy, they also sought to gain international recognition of their independence, especially in Europe. Lamar sent several agents to France and Great Britain with the hope that the two nations would formally recognize the Republic of Texas as an independent nation. Lamar hoped that formal recognition would allow European nations and Texas to engage in a profitable trade. Although France recognized Texas' independence in the late 1830s, they still maintained commercial and financial ties to Mexico. Great Britain refrained from recognition because they, too, benefited from trade with Mexico and thus did not want to disturb that alliance. Powerful commercial links between European powers and Mexico stood in the way of the diplomatic efforts of Texans. Thus, commercial leverage in the Southwest remained with Mexico, which, of course, refused to acknowledge the separation of Texas.

Just as Lamar's presidency began, at the end of 1838, talks with the United States concerning annexation reached a dead-end. After the War for Texan Independence concluded in 1836, annexation to the United States was the preferred path for many Texans. However, by the late 1830s, the issue of the expansion of slavery, among other problems, brought the discussion

between the two countries to a stand-still. Seemingly on their own, Texans began to ponder ways by which they could transform their nation into a prosperous continental power. Lamar embraced this view and entered his presidency staunchly opposed to annexation. He put it upon himself to build the Republic of Texas into a nation with a monumental political structure and a self-sustaining economy. To resurrect Texas' quickly declining economy, Texans needed to establish a profitable trade with external polities. Overlooked by European traders and out-competed by American merchants, Texans, headed by Lamar, considered Santa Fe to be the most viable option for a stable trading partnership. Santa Fe, positioned in central New Mexico, stood at the center of an extensive frontier market network known for its silver, mules, and furs. In order to prove to the international community that the Republic of Texas could sustain itself economically, Lamar organized an expedition to Santa Fe in the summer of 1841. If successful (which it was not), the silver that would return to Texas would ideally strengthen Texan currency and bolster the national economy.

Historians of the expedition and the Southwest borderlands have missed the crucial international components of the 1841 saga. For example, H. Bailey Carroll mapped out the route of the expedition and gathered invaluable accounts of the trek, but he did little more.<sup>127</sup> Others have done more of the same, delving into the life-stories of the more prominent members and wondering what the expedition might have meant for the history of Texas.<sup>128</sup> More recently, Andres Resendez produced the most nuanced understanding of the expedition by placing it within a larger discussion of the ambiguity of national identity in the Southwest; still, although Resendez contextualizes the expedition within both Mexican and Texan history, the American interest in Santa Fe, let alone that of Europeans, is kept out of his story.<sup>129</sup> Failure to contextualize the expedition as a mission to save a crumbling Texan economy or to understand

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<sup>127</sup> H. Bailey Carroll, "The Route of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition" (PhD dissertation, University of Texas, 1935); Carroll, *The Texan Santa Fe Trail* (Canyon, Texas: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1951).

<sup>128</sup> See Burlison Blake, "The Public Career of General Hugh McLeod" (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1932); Fayette Copeland, *Kendall of the Picayune* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943); Watt Goodwin Hill, Jr., "The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841: A Visionary Dream?" (Master's thesis, St. Mary's University, 1965); Noel M. Loomis, *The Texan-Santa Fe Pioneers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958); Paul N. Spellman, *Forgotten Texas Leader: Hugh McLeod and the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

<sup>129</sup> Andres Resendez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-14, 197-236.

the broad international interest in Santa Fe creates an incomplete picture of the expedition and the motivations behind it.

In a broad sense, scholars of the colonization and decolonization of the Americas have managed to shed some light on Texas in terms of transnationalism and international problems. For instance, Gretchen Murphy argued that the age of American imperialism and global involvement began as early as Indian removal, the Anglo colonization of Texas, and the Mexican-American War, although scholars usually cite the Spanish-American War of 1898 as the “breaking point.”<sup>130</sup> Thus, the separation of Texas and Texan attempts to expand during the republic period occurred within the context of a growing Anglo interest in global affairs. Others have similarly employed the tensions between Mexico and Texas (and the United States) during the nineteenth-century as an example of the general animosity that persists in U.S.-Latin American interaction.<sup>131</sup> Despite the efforts of these scholars, however, the history of Texas remains in the periphery of our discussions. These histories with transnational views, while useful, ignore the specific connections that the Republic of Texas and the Southwest had with the western world. Even more, historians have failed to grasp how international commerce not only stymied the economy of the Republic of Texas but also affected the dynamics of the frontier market network in the Southwest during the early nineteenth-century.

I argue that the expedition was designed specifically to improve Texas’ standing in international trade. The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 fell squarely into an international contest for the business of Santa Fe and the silver mines of New Mexico. Nations and peoples of North America and Europe maneuvered through diplomatic channels with hopes of dominating the Santa Fe markets. However, the silver in the hills of New Mexico was of paramount importance for the economy of the Republic of Texas. Without acquiring silver bars to act as specie for a near-worthless currency, the Texan economy would continue to degenerate. Lamar therefore assembled an expedition in 1841 to open up trade with *nuevomexicanos* and, simultaneously, to make Texan ports internationally significant. For Texans, much rode on the expedition to Santa Fe. The ultimate failure of the mission signaled the death knell of Lamar’s

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<sup>130</sup> Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 22.

<sup>131</sup> Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S. - Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S. - Latin American Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

presidency and confirmed that the Republic of Texas could not economically sustain itself as an independent nation.

### *Battling for the Silver Mines of New Mexico*

The Southwest, specifically New Mexico, captivated the international community in the decade during which Texas was an independent republic. New Mexico caught the attention of many not necessarily because of the Santa Fe trade, but because of the silver mines in the New Mexican hills. Silver was so valuable because of the immediate boost it provided for currencies and economies, in general. Moreover, European entrepreneurs knew that silver was especially precious for countries with deteriorating currency, such as the Republic of Texas and the United States. Reports out of Texas in the late 1830s indicated that European entrepreneurs were negotiating with the Mexican government for access to the silver mines. Some even believed that Europeans already operated certain mines. As Lamar planned the expedition to Santa Fe, Texans became increasingly worried about the availability of the mines. Hoping that the silver would strengthen their currency, Texans believed that a stronger national economy would encourage foreign merchants to take their business to Texan ports.

Long before the 1830s, the Spanish became completely enamored with the legendary silver of New Mexico. Conquistadors scoured the New Mexican countryside for any trace of silver and gold. According to one historian, “Spaniards placed high value on gold and silver and were willing to suffer extraordinary hardships to obtain these materials.”<sup>132</sup> The various indigenous peoples the conquistadors encountered all had stories of large deposits of silver and gold in the hills of the Southwest, although many of these groups likely told the Spaniards these tales to simply get rid of them. While the conquistadors found little of the precious ores, the rumors persisted into the future. By the beginning of the nineteenth-century, entrepreneurs under the Spanish and Mexican governments had constructed sizeable silver mines in New Mexico and Arizona. When trade between Santa Fe and Missouri opened in 1821, American merchants returned to the United States with wagons full of silver. News of the silver traveled great distances, from Europe to Texas. By the 1830s, the silver mines of Mexico had gone from somewhat of a secret to a matter of international news.

American merchants who frequented the Santa Fe Trail in the 1820s and 1830s witnessed first-hand the silver bars and the mines at which workers extracted the valuable ore. For

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<sup>132</sup> David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 23.

example, the merchants who left New Mexico for Missouri on April 4, 1838 hauled an estimated \$150,000 worth of silver back with them.<sup>133</sup> During their travels, American traders took notice of the “foreigners” they encountered in the Santa Fe area. According to Josiah Gregg, there was “not a single native physician in the province” of New Mexico. As the northern provinces suffered from a lack of educational institutions and professional services, Europeans quickly arrived to fill the voids. Greg also recalled one instance where a French doctor had to force payment from one of his clients in Santa Fe.<sup>134</sup> Simply put, the general lack of capital in Santa Fe in the 1820s and 1830s opened the door for “foreigners,” namely Europeans, to dominate the labor pool on all levels. It is not surprising then that Europeans and Americans began to infiltrate the mining business in New Mexico as well. In fact, due to the influx in foreign interest in the mines, the provincial government of New Mexico passed a law that prohibited all except *nuevomexicanos* from laboring in the mines.<sup>135</sup> However, American and European entrepreneurs still pursued ownership of the mines. By the 1830s, the Santa Fe trade had stimulated economic growth in Santa Fe, but Europeans remained interested in dominating the silver industry of New Mexico.

Texans, Europeans, and Americans all aimed to control the silver mines of Mexico for one primary reason: their respective national currencies required specie for strength. On December 21, 1839, Lamar spoke to the Texan Congress about the grave condition of the Texan economy. He explained that the national paper money continued its depreciation, but he also argued that the “exchequer bills of England, the assignats of France, and the treasury bills of the United States...” experienced similar decline. “The precious metals are the only uniform standard of value; and no paper representative can acquire general confidence, and answer the legitimate purposes of trade, unless it be convertible at the pleasure of the holder into gold or silver.”<sup>136</sup> In other words, Lamar observed that much of the western world—not only the Republic of Texas—required silver specie to ensure the survival of paper currency. Samuel Plummer, a prominent individual from New Orleans, wrote Lamar in early 1839 to bring his attention to the silver mines of the Southwest. Plummer emphasized that “there is not Gold and

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<sup>133</sup> Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, ed. Max L. Moorhead (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 214.

<sup>134</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 143.

<sup>135</sup> Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*, 122.

<sup>136</sup> Lamar to Congress, Houston, Dec. 21, 1838, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 359.

Silver enough for the great commerce of the World.” He urged Lamar to initiate a mining project in New Mexico to not only remove the European competition in the region, but also to become a supplier of silver to the United States and European nations.<sup>137</sup> European entrepreneurs therefore flocked to New Mexico to gain direct access to a large supply of silver, which was *always* in demand where nations hoped to increase the value of their respective currencies.

When Lamar gave his second annual address to congress at the close of 1839, he confirmed his dedication to acquiring silver from New Mexico. He revealed that he desired to assemble an expedition to Santa Fe to form a political and commercial alliance with *nuevomexicanos*. First and foremost, Lamar, acknowledging the profits gained by American merchants and European entrepreneurs, wanted to take control of the silver mines that were “known to be rich in the precious metals.” Referring specifically to the European ownership of many of the silver mines, Lamar asserted that he would legally reserve the mines “for public use” to try to counteract the economic power of the European entrepreneurs.<sup>138</sup> Although he argued that a commercial connection between Santa Fe and the Republic of Texas would benefit both the people of both places, Lamar’s priority was to dominate the markets of Santa Fe and thereby put Texas in a profitable position within the broader Southwest market network. Because of the domestic and international demand for silver, Lamar considered the potential acquisition of silver bars and control of the silver industry in New Mexico important enough to risk a desperate journey across the barrens of western Texas to Santa Fe.

Meanwhile, Texans continued to take notice of the growing European presence in the Southwest. Evidence of European merchants and entrepreneurs appeared to Texans in a very tangible way. For instance, Memucan Hunt, a successful Texan politician and merchant, reported that he was attempting a large-scale commercial venture with an English trader who operated out of Mexico’s northern provinces across the Rio Grande. Hunt believed that the English merchant’s goods (and the goods of other foreign traders) would “enhance the revenue” of the Republic of Texas.<sup>139</sup> On another occasion, John Adamson, an English entrepreneur, wrote to Lamar with an interesting proposition. Adamson offered to commission a mining

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<sup>137</sup> Samuel A. Plummer to Lamar, New Orleans, Apr. 13, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 525.

<sup>138</sup> Lamar to Congress, Austin, Nov. 12, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 182.

<sup>139</sup> Memucan Hunt to Lamar, Galveston, Texas, Jan. 4, 1840, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 300.

company to “explore and discover veins of minerals” in the western hills if Lamar would provide English immigrants with plots of land.<sup>140</sup> Thus, Europeans sought to become integral components of the market economy of the Southwest. In Hunt’s case, an established English merchant had leverage because of the goods he could offer. Adamson’s case offers a glimpse into the European obsession with the silver industry of the Southwest. While Adamson and his party of immigrants aimed to become involved in the mining business, European merchants and entrepreneurs continued to infiltrate and dominate the more profitable industries in northern Mexico.

The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 was organized to ensure that Texan merchants could funnel the bulk of New Mexico’s silver back to eastern Texas. More broadly, Lamar and other supporters hoped that the expedition would result in permanent trading with *nuevomexicanos* in similar manner to the commerce that developed along the Santa Fe Trail. However, the silver bars that circulated through Santa Fe and the actual silver mines in the surrounding hills stood atop the list of what Anglo-Texans planned to acquire. Needing the specie for their currency, Texans sought silver to strengthen their national economy. With the expedition’s ultimate failure in late 1841, the Texan economy continued its decline. The mission to Santa Fe was a relief effort of sorts designed to access New Mexican silver production, gain a foothold in the Southwest market network, and give international merchants more incentive to use their ports to reach frontier markets. Without Santa Fe in its possession, the Republic of Texas remained economically isolated and insignificant.

On July 30, 1842, Waddy Thompson, an American diplomat in Mexico, anxiously wrote to Secretary of State Daniel Webster about the prospects of war between Texas and Mexico as well as European entrepreneurs in Mexico. With Lamar out of office and annexation again a possibility, Thompson thought that the United States might be dragged into a war between Texas and Mexico. Besides his concern about mounting tensions, Thompson also expressed his worries about Santa Anna’s alleged plans to sign over the rights to a number of silver mines in New Mexico and California to English investors. He estimated that the English would accumulate upwards of \$15 million annually in silver and other ores.<sup>141</sup> Thus, although the

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<sup>140</sup> John Adamson to Lamar, London, June 28, 1840, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 415-416.

<sup>141</sup> Justin H. Smith Collection, 1878-1929, G220-III, 214-215, Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin.

Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 failed, the silver mines of Mexico's northern provinces continued to dominate international discussions. Lamar had failed to achieve the economic prosperity that he had promised over his term, but Anglo interest in the mines never faltered. As it became more obvious that Texas would accept statehood, the silver mines began to directly affect the actions of the United States. The acquisition of the territory as a consequence of the Mexican-American War and the Gadsden Purchase resulted (not coincidentally) in American control of silver production in the Southwest.

### *Competing with the Merchants of Missouri*

Even with the end of Spanish control in Mexico and the deregulation of mercantilist policies in 1821, the people of New Mexico found themselves at the mercy of the capitalists of central Mexico. The isolation of Santa Fe in relation to the rest of Mexico put *nuevomexicanos* at a distinct disadvantage. Merchants and entrepreneurs in the heart of Mexico charged the residents of the northern frontier high prices for the most basic goods because of the transportation expenses amassed by taking the Camino Real. The journeys from Mexico City and port cities to Santa Fe were so long and difficult that caravans carrying supplies often came only once a year (sometimes once every two years). Under Spanish rule, *nuevomexicanos* were prohibited from trading with anyone outside of the Empire. Despite these strict regulations, residents of northern Mexico occasionally traded illegally with Indians and even European merchants. Once Mexico achieved its independence, however, everything changed. For the first time, the borders of New Mexico were open and Americans and *nuevomexicanos* took advantage of the situation.

From 1821, when William Becknell first made the long trek from St. Louis to Santa Fe, until 1845, an incredibly prosperous trade connected Missouri and Santa Fe.<sup>142</sup> The Santa Fe

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<sup>142</sup> For works on the Santa Fe Trail and trade, see T. Lindsay Baker, "The Santa Fe Trade as Viewed by Contemporary Texans and the Texan Press," *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review* 73 (January 2000): 1-24; Larry Beachum, *William Becknell: Father of the Santa Fe Trade* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982); Ray Allen Billington, *The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956); Susan Calafate Boyle, *Los Capitalistas: Hispano Merchants and the Santa Fe Trade* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); H Bailey Carroll, *The Texan Santa Fe Trail* (Canyon, Texas: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1951); Stephen G. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe: The Road to New Mexico and the American Conquest, 1806-1848* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Max L. Moorhead, *New Mexico's Royal Road: Trade and Travel on the Chihuahua Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958); Angela Moyano Pahissa, *El Comercio de Santa Fe y la Guerra del 47* (Mexico City: Secretaria de Educacion Publica, 1976); David J. Sandoval, "Gnats, Goods, and Greasers: Mexican Merchants on the Santa Fe Trail," *Journal of the West* 28, no. 2 (April 1989): 22-31.



trade resulted in the exchange of a variety of goods. To New Mexico went all sorts of manufactured goods, from furniture to clothing, which were sold at an affordable price. To the United States went mules, furs, and, most importantly, bars of silver. During good years, American merchants returned from northern Mexico with upwards of \$250,000 in silver. On average, the annual return valued at roughly \$150,000. Like the Republic of Texas, the United States required silver specie to strengthen the national paper currency. Indeed, the silver acquired from the Santa Fe trade fortified American currency and, further, transformed Missouri into the commercial center of the American frontier. According to David Weber, “the silver *peso*, which was roughly equivalent in silver content to the United States dollar, had become the chief medium of exchange in Missouri and helped to stabilize the monetary system of all of America’s western states and territories where scorned paper money had circulated in lieu of scarce hard cash.”<sup>143</sup> The trade also had significant consequences for *nuevomexicanos*. Through the Santa Fe trade, they had access to a higher quality and quantity of goods than ever before. By the close of the 1820s, the trade had stimulated economic development in New Mexico and facilitated the growth of an industrious merchant class. In fact, American merchants in the 1830s had to travel further South into Mexico in order to get the same profits.<sup>144</sup> During the late 1830s and early 1840s, the transcontinental trade steadily declined, although merchants still made annual trips and gained sizeable profits.

As Americans and *nuevomexicanos* together blazed a trail from northern Mexico to Missouri, another development simultaneously gripped the continent. The “market revolution,” as scholars deemed it, can essentially be defined as the transition to a type of capitalism under which profits drive the economic decisions of individuals.<sup>145</sup> During the first half of the

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<sup>143</sup> Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 129.

<sup>144</sup> Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 128-129.

<sup>145</sup> For an introduction to the American “market revolution,” see Martin Bruegel, *Farm Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Paul A. Gilje, ed., *Wages of Independence: Capitalism in the Early American Republic* (Madison: Madison House, 1997); John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Scott C. Martin, ed., *Cultural Change and the Market Revolution in America, 1789-1860* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005); Joshua D. Rothman, “The Hazards of Flush Times: Gambling, Mob Violence, and the Anxiety’s of America’s Market Revolution,” *Journal of American History* 95, no. 3 (December 2008): 651-677; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996). For a

nineteenth-century, the market revolution transformed American capitalism into an entirely new monster: transportation nationalized the economy, community connections and local artisanship dwindled away, and a merchant class willing to go to great lengths to become wealthy rose to the top. However, this shift in the economic landscape was not unique to the United States. After the independence of Mexico in 1821, Mexican officials did their best to promote industrialization in the heart of the country while opening up their northern borders to immigrants. As a result, merchants and entrepreneurs rushed to the region, contributing to a widespread economic growth and reaping the profits along the way. The Republic of Texas, formed in the midst these vast economic changes, experienced similar tendencies, but without the same results. With a host of merchants, entrepreneurs, and large-scale capitalists eager to participate on an international level, Texans oddly found themselves commercially unimportant. In short, the continental market revolution drove nations and people together in an unprecedented way: the *market*, whether local, regional, national, or global, determined the nature of nineteenth-century business interactions.

The continental market revolution and the opening of the Santa Fe trade completely changed the economic landscape of the U.S.-Mexico border region. Consisting of *nuevomexicanos*, indigenous groups, Texans, Europeans, and Americans, a market network quickly developed around Santa Fe. Various goods and people moved in all directions, but merchants concentrated their efforts around New Mexico. Providing their inexpensive manufactured goods in exchange for silver, mules, and furs, American merchants dominated this frontier market economy through the 1820s and 1830s. Reports of the enormous wealth accumulated in the United States through trade in the Southwest reached the newly independent Republic of Texas. As of 1841, Texans remained geographically isolated from Santa Fe and, therefore, the Southwest market network. Believing that they could offer quicker and cheaper access to goods than American merchants, roughly 320 Anglo-Texans departed for Santa Fe in June 1841 to steal the business of *nuevomexicanos* from Anglo-Americans.

Texans believed that if they could establish trade with the people of Santa Fe, then they could out-compete American merchants who used the Santa Fe Trail by offering a shorter and thus less expensive route. One author of the *Austin City Gazette* argued that if the Santa Fe trade

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brief but excellent introduction to the concept of the market revolution and its historiography, see Larson, "The Market Revolution in Early America: An Introduction," *OAH Magazine of History* 19, no. 3 (May 2005): 4-7.

moved through its “legitimate channel,” then the bargain price would be too much for merchants to neglect. The author claimed that instead of dealing with tariffs both in Santa Fe and the United States, merchants would only pay a flat tax at a Texan port, such as Galveston or Linn’s Landing.<sup>146</sup> By possessing a route with fewer tariffs and a shorter distance to Santa Fe, Texans planned to attract European and American merchants to their ports. *Nuevomexicanos* would have a ready market for their mules and silver in eastern Texas, while merchants could haul their products to Santa Fe without duties dissolving their overall profits. Thus, through the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, they aimed to drive American merchants who used the Santa Fe Trail out of business.

The members of the expedition understood the primary goal of the journey to Santa Fe as competing with American merchants who took the Santa Fe Trail. For instance, Cayton Erhard recalled that Lamar “invited merchants to Texas to open a trade with New Mexico, for at that time that trade, as well as that of Chihuahua, was under the control of merchants of St. Louis, MO. Texas being in nearer proximity ought by right have had that important trade.”<sup>147</sup> George Wilkins Kendall, a guest of the expedition, echoed Erhard’s thoughts. Kendall remembered that the expedition was “commercial in its intentions, the policy of the then President of Texas, General Mirabeau B. Lamar, being to open a direct trade with Santa Fe by a route known to be much nearer than the great Missouri trail. To divert this trade was certainly the primary and ostensible object.”<sup>148</sup> To ordinary members of the expedition, such as Erhard and Kendall, the purpose of the mission was narrow in scope: to establish a permanent trade route with *nuevomexicanos* and thwart the commercial efforts of merchants using the Santa Fe Trail.

A newspaper writer cleverly devised a scheme where a Texas-Chihuahua trade route resulted in lower prices and greater profits for merchants. He envisioned an overland route between the port city of Matagorda, Texas and Chihuahua, a distance he estimated to be no more than 500 miles. The Texas route would then be the best option for merchants before Pacific routes, which were “difficult and sometimes utterly impassable,” and the Santa Fe Trail. The author further believed (quite accurately) that by the time American merchants traveled southward into Chihuahua, most of their goods had been sold in Santa Fe. Finally, he argued

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<sup>146</sup> *Austin City Gazette*, April 15, 1840.

<sup>147</sup> Cayton Erhard, “Cayton Erhard’s Reminiscences of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, 1841,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (January 1963): 427.

<sup>148</sup> George Wilkins Kendall, *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition* (Austin: Steck Company, 1935), 1:14.

that the closest Mexican port, Matamoros, was disadvantageous to merchants because “all merchandise is subjected to enormous expense and vexations of delays.” As an added bonus, Chihuahua contained several silver mines, which, according to this author, would not operate properly “until American or Texan enterprise carries steam into the bowels of the earth to drag its untold treasures into light.”<sup>149</sup> Santa Fe, while certainly the main target of Texan ventures, was not the only hub of the Southwest market network that held the interest of Texans. Although deep within Mexican territory, its isolated location in the province just South of New Mexico and bountiful silver deposits made Chihuahua an ideal (but unrealistic) trading partner for Texans.

By 1841, Anglo-Americans had benefited the most from their commercial connections to the Southwest market network. When Lamar and his colleagues finally decided to dispatch a force to Santa Fe, Texans hoped to accomplish two interrelated goals: to penetrate this frontier market economy and control the flow of goods (and thereby oust the American merchants). Oddly enough, while a Texas-Santa Fe route might make the Santa Fe Trail obsolete, it would also bring the business of many of the same American merchants and manufacturers to Texan ports. Although Anglo-Texans generally admired Anglo-Americans and the United States as a sort of role model, in this particular instance they aimed to deal a serious blow to American commerce in the Southwest. Nevertheless, the attempt to establish an overland route to Santa Fe failed, the dynamics of the Southwest market network remained intact, and Lamar’s grand plans for the Republic of Texas were foiled.

#### *Europe’s Unwillingness to Recognize the Independence of Texas*

Under Lamar, Texans became very concerned about foreign recognition of the Republic of Texas. Texan diplomats frequently wrote Lamar about the state of their negotiations with the British, French, and others. These ambassadors proposed that “commercial alliances” should be made in addition to formal recognition. In fact, recognition of independence and commercial relations were two inseparable issues. European nations would not commit to large-scale trading agreements with an illegitimate nation. Why, then, would most nations refuse to formally acknowledge the Republic of Texas? The reason is simple: Mexico. France and Great Britain, as the two main examples, had too much commercially invested in Mexican ports to risk losing the business of Mexico. France did, in fact, recognize Texas as an independent republic in 1839, but still refrained from seriously using Texan ports. Moreover, Texas could not offer enough

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<sup>149</sup> “Texan Trade to Chihuahua,” *Austin City Gazette*, January 20, 1841.

commercially (especially without an overland route to Santa Fe) for European merchants to risk losing the lucrative trade they carried out at Mexican ports. In short, for many European nations, politically recognizing the independence of Texas had profound commercial consequences.

Mexico, of course, refused to acknowledge the end of the War for Texan Independence. According to many Mexicans, Texas remained in the nation as a rogue province. As a result, Lamar sent his most trusted politician and diplomat, Bernard Bee, to negotiate the recognition of Texas in Mexico in 1839. Not surprisingly, Bee made little progress. By May 1839, Bee had gone several months without even a meeting with Santa Anna, but he remained confident that “success will await us.”<sup>150</sup> However, at the close of 1840, Bee and other diplomatic agents had failed to accomplish anything. Clearly frustrated with the situation, Lamar stated that Bee was “sanguine of the ultimate success of his mission, although I can perceive no reason myself for his hopes beyond his base reception as our authorized agent.”<sup>151</sup> As it turned out, Lamar’s worries were well founded, as Santa Anna continued to ignore the requests of the Texan diplomats in Mexico. Without a political resolution between Texas and Mexico, European powers continued to commercially favor Mexico and the profitable inland access its ports provided

Texan diplomats sent letters to Lamar on a daily basis to report the status of ongoing negotiations with France and Great Britain. With the French, just prior to their commitment to recognize Texas in 1839, James Henderson managed to negotiate a somewhat favorable trading agreement. In exchange for a slight decrease in the duty imposed on Texan cotton entering France, Henderson agreed to lower the tax placed on the various “silks and wines” arriving at Texan ports. Nonetheless, Henderson himself admitted that the adjustments made by both sides were rather insignificant.<sup>152</sup> In Great Britain, discussions about commerce and recognition appeared to be stagnant. The lack of progress abroad inspired one individual, anonymously named “Myself,” to write Lamar in October 1839 to express his displeasure with matters. He interpreted the quiet harbors to be evidence of extraordinarily high tariffs imposed on imported British goods. “Myself” concluded that if Texas would allow a “free commercial intercourse, not trammled by restrictions, impositions, and prohibition, we may expect soon to see a happy

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<sup>150</sup> Bernard E. Bee to G. Victoria, Veracruz, May 26, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 594-595.

<sup>151</sup> Lamar to Congress, Austin, Nov. 1, 1840, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 465.

<sup>152</sup> Henderson to Lamar, Paris, Aug. 17, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 70.

and prosperous condition of Texas.”<sup>153</sup> By 1841, although France had recognized Texas, neither France nor Great Britain committed to Texas as a primary trading partner.

As matters looked bleak with France and Great Britain, Texans began to ponder commercial alliances with less powerful nations. For example, Texans took great interest in Spain or, more specifically, the colony of Cuba. In February 1841, Bernard Bee wrote to the Queen of Spain to discuss trading between Texas and Cuba. He argued that the “mules, horses, cattle, beef, cotton, etc. abounding in Texas would meet with a ready sale in Cuba, while the coffee, sugar, cigars, tobacco, fruit, etc. of Cuba could be furnished to Texas at reduced prices...” He attempted to strengthen his offer by adding that Cuban goods would be able to reach the markets of Santa Fe, as plans for the expedition were well underway.<sup>154</sup> However, the Spanish, still commercially connected to Mexico and unsure of the Texas, declined to agree to the terms. Further, some Texans urged Lamar to pursue a commercial partnership with Russia. One traveler wrote Lamar in May 1841 to inform him of a settlement of Russians in Alta California who sought a market for their goods in Texas and the United States.<sup>155</sup> Thus, Texans and their correspondents began to get creative in their efforts to make Texas commercially active on an international scale.

Ultimately, the failure of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 only amplified an already unfavorable situation for Texas. Many European nations refrained from recognizing the independence of Texas or engaging in significant commerce for fear of losing Mexico’s business, where manufactured goods were (slowly and expensively) transported to the isolated northern provinces. Here, again, the Texan Santa Fe Expedition had international significance. With the leverage of a Texas-Santa Fe route, Texan diplomats might have been more successful in their attempts to gain recognition and commercial partnerships. Mexico’s ports would have been less valuable because, while they had access to the northern frontier, the distance was immense. The inability of Texans to penetrate the Southwest frontier network directly influenced diplomacy abroad and commercial arrangements (or lack thereof) with European governments.

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<sup>153</sup> “Myself” to Lamar, La Grange, Texas, Oct. 2, 1839, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 122.

<sup>154</sup> Bee to Spanish Envoy, Washington, D.C., Feb. 27, 1841, in *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, ed. George Pierce Garrison (Washington: Govt. Print Off, 1908), 1: 482-483.

<sup>155</sup> A.S. Wright to Lamar, New Orleans, May 4, 1841, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 3: 517.

## *Conclusion*

While the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 was, at its core, a mission to tap into the Santa Fe trade and, more broadly, the Southwest market economy, the expedition also served as a plan to remedy an unfavorable international situation. As James Henderson indicated to Lamar in April 1839, the ports of Mexico catered to the needs of European merchants far better than any Texan port could do. To the North, American merchants dominated the markets of the Southwest by transporting affordable manufactured goods produced on the eastern seaboard or Europe to Santa Fe. Finally, European entrepreneurs and American merchants threatened to dominate the silver industry of New Mexico, leaving the paper currency of Texas to crumble without any convertible specie. The common element in all of these problems is Santa Fe: Lamar and his supporters believed that if Texans could infiltrate the Santa Fe markets, they could both bolster the domestic economy and become significant in international commerce. If the expedition was successful, Texans hoped that a commercial presence in Santa Fe would bring silver bars into circulation in Texas and make their port cities more appealing to European merchants. However, the expedition was not a success, and seaports, like Galveston, remained quiet.

Imperative to the establishment of Texas a legitimate hemispheric force was the development of international commerce. As president, Lamar dispatched ambassadors to Mexico, the Caribbean, and Europe to negotiate possible trading privileges. After he took office, Lamar spoke about his grand plans for Texas:

From the time the adventurous Columbus traversed the Atlantic, the commercial intercourse of nations has been evidently increasing, and it now constitutes one of the most important and complicated branches of national policy. The protection of that commerce by the nation whose geographical position enables it to enjoy the benefits of foreign trade, fully as requisite to the common welfare, as the protection of any other department of its concerns. Texas is happily situated in this respect, and can never reach the acme of her greatness until a well-cherished commerce shall aid her agricultural faculties by distributing the surplus products of her soil to other nations.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Lamar to Congress, Houston, Dec. 21, 1838, in *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar*, ed. Gulick, 2: 355-356.

At first glance, Texas appeared to have a geographical advantage with its ports on the Gulf of Mexico and a slew of Anglos, Mexicans, and Indians with whom to do business. Ironically, the geographical position of Texas worked against them. Although they had ideal port access, the profit-bearing markets for incoming goods lay across a desert in New Mexico. European and American manufacturers wanted their products to reach isolated Santa Fe, but the Camino Real and the Santa Fe Trail provided the only feasible routes to accomplish that goal. Texan diplomats worked long and hard to negotiate for trading privileges; however, most European powers were unwilling to recognize Texas and risk hurting their commercial partnerships with Mexico. Lamar believed that if Texas was to enter the “commercial intercourse of nations” in any meaningful way, Texan ports needed to become more valuable. Hoping to establish a permanent trade with the people of Santa Fe, Lamar purposely organized the Texan Santa Fe Expedition in 1841 to increase the usefulness of Texan ports. An overland route uniting Santa Fe and Austin would have made the low transportation costs too much for international merchants to ignore.

Regardless of the plan, the expedition to Santa Fe ended in monumental failure. When Lamar left office at the end of 1841, the Republic of Texas continued to spiral downward economically. Texan supporters of annexation to the United States had receded into the background during Lamar’s presidency, but they appeared with a rejuvenated spirit upon his exit.<sup>157</sup> Very few nations had agreed to recognize the independence of Texas and, very much related, European merchants maintained their preference to utilize Mexican and American ports. Simply put, recognizing Texas was not worth the economic risk of losing Mexico’s business. Had the commercial mission to Santa Fe been successful, then perhaps European nations might have reconsidered their stances; however, in 1842, Santa Fe and the Southwest market network

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<sup>157</sup> For an overview of the literature on the issue of annexation, consider Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Morrison, “Westward the Curse of Empire: Texas Annexation and the American Whig Party,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 221-249; David E. Narrett, “A Choice of Destiny: Immigration Policy, Slavery, and the Annexation of Texas,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (January 1997): 271-302; David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973); Lelia M. Roeckell, “Bonds over Bondage: British Opposition to the Annexation of Texas,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 257-278; Edward B. Rugemer, “Robert Monroe Harrison, British Abolition, Southern Anglophobia and Texas Annexation,” *Slavery and Abolition* 28, no. 2 (August 2007): 169-191; Joel H. Silbey, *Storm over Texas: The Annexation Controversy and the Road to Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Mary Lee Spence, “British Impressions of Texas and the Texans,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (October 1966): 163-183; Richard Onofre Ulibarri, *American Interest in the Spanish-Mexican Southwest, 1803-1848* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1974).



continued to operate with Mexico and the United States serving as the primary terminals. Ultimately, without Santa Fe, the Republic of Texas proved to be incapable of economically sustaining itself. Economically helpless and feeling the effects of renewed Mexican attacks, Texans finally opted to join the United States as a state in 1845 simply to survive.

## Conclusion:

### Implications for the Texan Santa Fe Expedition

In June 1841, about 320 individuals—consisting of commissioners, a military force, merchants, and servants—left Austin, Texas with the stated objective of establishing commercial connections with Santa Fe. As they moved westward and entered territory contested by Texas and Mexico, word reached Mexican officials in Santa Fe that a large party of armed Texans had crossed into Mexican jurisdiction. Fatigued and disoriented, the Texans surrendered to Mexican forces in early October and began their march to central Mexico as captives. Thus, the expedition designed to exploit the riches of the Santa Fe trade met its demise.

In his account of the expedition, Thomas Falconer, an Englishman who accompanied the force at the request of Lamar, recalled how ignorant the Texans were before they departed for Santa Fe:

All that was necessary for success, it was assumed, was prepared. The merchants felt, no doubt, that they would find a favorable market for their goods, that they would be peaceably received, and would be allowed to trade without interruption. That their position was precarious did not appear to be imagined by any, or that goods entering Mexico from Texas were liable to confiscation. All were confident and all satisfied. Nor was it asked if the expedition was politic or not. That it might excite the Mexicans to renew hostilities against Texas was not presumed. It was alleged to have been invited by the people of Santa Fe, and this was sufficient to remove all fear of its result. The opinion of the people of New Mexico was said to have been correctly represented, and to have been that of the towns of the Rio Grande. Peace virtually existed between the two countries. There was no preparation to invade Texas, and there was no reason to expect that its further settlement would be disturbed.<sup>158</sup>

Employing the passive voice allowed Falconer to avoid placing the blame for the failure of the expedition on anyone in particular. Anglo-Texans, headed by Lamar, had such high expectations for the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841. On the one hand, Anglo-Texans fit the expedition into their rhetoric of Manifest Destiny and claimed that it would transform the Republic of Texas into the pinnacle of Anglo civilization. On the other hand, the expedition showed how

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<sup>158</sup> Thomas Falconer, *Letters and Notes on the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, 1841-1842* (Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1963), 35-36.

economically desperate Texans were. Domestically, their paper money had fallen into worthlessness. In the broad picture of international trade circa 1841, Texas had little significance for American or European merchants with overland routes to Santa Fe in Mexico and the United States. The blind optimism that Falconer described is thus more understandable when we imagine a commercially distressed but culturally confident Republic of Texas.

The story of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition is one of failure; however, failure manifested at different levels. Indeed, the party of 320 never reached their destination or established the overland trade route that the Texan economy urgently needed. This failure of commercial expansion and economic growth is clear, but the expedition also illuminated the incompetence of Lamar and his administration. From the beginning, Lamar promised that Texas would become a prosperous commercial empire and an enlightened Anglo civilization. Having also failed to protect the frontier and solve the “Indian problem,” Lamar assembled the expedition to Santa Fe to save his presidency. If it was successful, then re-election was a possibility; if the mission ended the way it actually did, then his presidency was a failure anyway. Regardless of the strategy involved, not only did the expedition end unsuccessfully, but Lamar’s administration managed to misinterpret the entire situation as well (as Falconer explained). Finally, the failure of the expedition embodied the failure of the Republic of Texas. Texans’ inability to commercially connect to Santa Fe hindered the nation from tapping into the Southwest frontier market economy and, consequently, gaining leverage in the realm of international trade.

Most significantly, the failure of the expedition represented a momentary lapse in Manifest Destiny and Anglo expansion.<sup>159</sup> Even as popular culture typically mandates that

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<sup>159</sup> For an introduction to the expansive literature on Manifest Destiny, see Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964); Gene M. Brack, *Mexico Views Manifest Destiny, 1821-1846* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1975); Ted C. Hinckley, “American Anti-Catholicism during the Mexican War,” *Pacific Historical Review* 31, no. 2 (May 1962): 121-137; Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*; Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1963); Stephen G. Hyslop, *Bound for Santa Fe: The Road to New Mexico and the American Conquest, 1806-1848* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002); Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Angela Moyano Pahissa, *El Comercio de Santa Fe y la Guerra del 47* (Mexico City: Secretaria de Educacion Publica, 1976); John C. Pinheiro, “‘Religion without Restriction’: Anti-Catholicism, All Mexico, and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 69-96; Daniel Tyler, “Anglo-American Penetration of the Southwest: The View from New Mexico,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (January 1972): 325-388; Richard Onofre Ulibarri, *American Interest in the Spanish-Mexican Southwest, 1803-1848* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1974); Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1963).

expansion inevitably resulted in American acquisition of the Southwest, the nuances of the history of the U.S.-Mexico border region reveal a contrary interpretation. The Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 is a story of a failed attempt at expansion, despite Anglo-Texan employment of obvious Manifest Destiny rhetoric. In a broader sense, the eventual annexation of Texas can be interpreted as a result of the failure of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition and the inability of Texas to sustain itself economically.

To be sure, the people of Mexico should be given the most credit for thwarting Texan expansion. Not only did the Mexican Army and *nuevomexicanos* turn away the party of 320 in 1841, but Mexican ports also kept international merchants from regularly visiting Texan ports. Despite ongoing political strife between federalist and centralist camps since its independence in 1821, Mexico remained rather strong in its northern provinces.<sup>160</sup> Struggling to maintain his power, Santa Anna kept the bulk of Mexican forces in the central provinces after the War for Texan Independence; however, determined to avenge his defeat in 1836, he kept a sizeable military contingent on the northern frontier. In fact, in response to the hostility shown by the Texan Santa Fe Expedition, Santa Anna led a series of vicious attacks on western Texas in 1842. These assaults resulted in the capture of San Antonio de Bexar on multiple occasions.<sup>161</sup> War, or the constant threat of war, greatly hindered Anglo expansion and depleted the national coffers of

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<sup>160</sup> For an introduction to the literature on Mexican Independence and early Mexican politics, see Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico: 1821-1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Anna, *The Mexican Empire of Iturbide* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); Nettie Lee Benson, *The Provincial Deputation in Mexico: Harbinger of Provincial Autonomy, Independence, and Federalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992); Torcuato Di Tella, *National Popular Politics in Early Independent Mexico, 1820-1847* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Peter Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State: Guerrero, 1800-1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Guardino, *The Time of Liberty: Popular Political Culture in Oaxaca, 1750-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Hugh M. Hamill, Jr., *The Hidalgo Revolt: Prelude to Mexican Independence* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1966); Jaime E. Rodriguez O., ed., *The Independence of Mexico and the Creation of the New Nation* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, University of California, 1989); Rodriguez O., ed., *The Origins of Mexican National Politics, 1808-1847* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997); Rodriguez O., "The Struggle for the Nation: The First Centralist-Federalist Conflict in Mexico," *The Americas* 49, no. 1 (July 1992): 1-22; Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Josefina Zoraida Vazquez, ed., *El Establecimiento del federalismo en Mexico, 1821-1827* (Mexico City: El Colegio de Mexico, 2003); Vazquez, "Iglesia, ejercito y centralismo," *Historia Mexicana* 39, no. 1 (July-September 1989): 205-234; Vazquez, "Un viejo tema: el federalismo y el centralismo," *Historia Mexicana* 42, no. 3 (January-March 1993): 621-631.

<sup>161</sup> For more on these attacks, see Miguel A. Sanchez Lamego, *The Second Mexican-Texas War, 1841-1843* (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1972); Joseph Milton Nance, *Attack and Counterattack: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964).

Texas. By 1845, the nuisances of continuous Mexican attacks and Indian raids convinced Anglo-Texans that annexation to the United States might be beneficial. The expedition and related events should serve to remind us that there was absolutely nothing inevitable about Anglo expansion into the Southwest.

The story surrounding the Texan Santa Fe Expedition of 1841 reinforces the idea of a fluid and ever-shifting U.S.-Mexico border region. Moreover, this particular era in this history of the Southwest highlights the persistence of a sort of frontier where “intercultural relations produced mixing and accommodation as opposed to unambiguous triumph.”<sup>162</sup> Certainly, in a vast landscape consisting of Texans, Mexicans, indigenous peoples, and others, Anglos struggled to develop a permanent foothold in the region. As Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron have observed, “competition in trade and not territorial dominion” determined interaction in the Southwest in the early nineteenth-century.<sup>163</sup> In other words, the market shaped the lives of frontier inhabitants. Merchants and entrepreneurs went to great lengths to dominate the frontier economy, focusing their efforts on Santa Fe.

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<sup>162</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the People in Between in North American History.” *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 816.

<sup>163</sup> Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” 816.

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