

## “How Imperial Spain Influenced the U.S. Before 1800”

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### A Timeline of How Imperial Spain Influenced the U.S.

- 1513 Juan Ponce de León leaves Puerto Rico with 200 men and explores Florida, which he names “Pascua Florida.”
- 1526 San Miguel de Gualdape is established (Sapelo Island, Georgia) by Lucas Vázquez Ayllón. With Ayllón are more than 500 men, some women and African slaves, and three Dominican friars. One of these friars is the great Antonio Montesinos. This is the first European settlement in U.S. territory.
- 1528-1536 Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca travels from Florida to Arizona.
- 1539 Hernando de Soto expedition begins in Florida.
- 1540 The Francisco Vázquez de Coronado expedition (335 Spaniards including 4 Franciscan friars) begins. Eventually, Coronado will travel through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas.
- 1542 Hernando de Soto travels through Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.
- 1542 Juan de Padilla (traveling with Coronado) dies in Kansas.
- 1559 Tristán de Luna y Arellano establishes Puerto de Santa María (near modern Pensacola).
- 1565 St. Augustine is founded by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.
- 1566 Martín de Argüelles is born in St. Augustine. He is the first European (on record) born in U.S. territory.
- 1586 St. Augustine is attacked and burned by Sir Francis Drake.
- 1607 The British found a settlement at Jamestown, Virginia.
- 1610 Santa Fe becomes the administrative center of the Spanish province.
- 1620 The Mayflower arrives (Provincetown Harbor, Cape Cod).
- 1642 Virginia outlaws priests and disenfranchises Catholics.
- 1647 Massachusetts Bay Colony enacts an anti-priest law.

- 1649 Maryland's general assembly passes an act of religious toleration.
- 1654 The Puritan regime repeals the act of religious toleration in Maryland.
- 1687 Eusebio Francisco Kino, S.J. inaugurates the missions of Arizona.
- 1718 San Antonio de Valero mission is founded.
- 1718 The Catholics in Maryland are disenfranchised.
- 1732 George Washington is born.
- 1755 The Jesuits are banished from Louisiana.
- 1763 Treaty of Paris ends French and Indian War and gives Florida to England.
- 1769 Junípero Serra, O.F.M. founds the first of the 21 California missions.
- 1777 New York's constitutional convention bars Catholics from office through an oath forswearing all foreign powers, "ecclesiastical as well as civil."
- 1777 Bernardo Gálvez is named Governor of Louisiana.
- 1779 Spain declares war on Great Britain.
- 1779 Gálvez leads Spanish forces to victories at Baton Rouge and Natchez.
- 1780 Gálvez captures Mobile from British.
- 1781 Gálvez defeats British at Pensacola.
- 1783 Gálvez helps draft the terms of the Treaty of Paris.
- 1783 Spain takes control of East and West Florida from British.

Modified by Professor Luis Cortest based upon a timeline that appeared in Frank de Varona's *Hispanic Presence in the United States* (Miami: Mnemosyne Publishing Company, 1993).

In considering the role of Imperial Spain in the history of the European settlement in what is now the United States of America, one cannot help but be impressed by the extent of that powerful influence. Already by the year 1600, the Spanish had established communities in what are now the states of Florida (named by Ponce de León), Georgia, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado. In 1610, Santa Fe became the administrative center of the Spanish province. Although in 1680 Santa Fe would be taken over by native peoples who had lived there centuries before the Spanish incursion, Spanish forces recaptured Santa Fe in 1692. That city today still boasts of its Spanish heritage (as does the entire state of New Mexico). Before the Mayflower arrived in Provincetown Harbor on Cape Cod Massachusetts in 1620, the Spanish had been building churches and establishing towns throughout the Deep South and the West.

In 1542 (almost 100 years before the arrival of the Mayflower), the Franciscan friar, Juan de Padilla, traveling with Francisco de Coronado, was killed by Indians somewhere near Salina, Kansas. What makes this case important is that Juan de Padilla is the first known Christian martyr killed on what is now U.S. soil. The Spanish expeditions of Ponce de León, Lucas Vázquez Ayllón, Hernando de Soto, and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado all included members of religious orders. These men were deeply committed to their Christian mission in the New World. This is the reason we find churches built by the Spanish from Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of Chile and Argentina to Northern California. What is most amazing is that the Spanish were able to accomplish this traveling either on foot or on horseback. It would be very hard for anyone today to imagine how difficult the conquest and settlement of these U.S. territories must have been for the Spanish explorers.

Louisiana has a very important Spanish history. Before Louisiana became a colony of France in 1682, the Spanish had been there. Pánfilo de Narváez traveled to Louisiana in 1528. He may have been the first European to see the mouth of the Mississippi River. In 1542, the Hernando de Soto expedition passes along the western part of the state. More importantly, in 1763 Spain takes possession of Louisiana.

It is certain that Spanish was the European language most spoken on U.S. territory before 1700. In 1691, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino arrived in Arizona. In 1692 he established San Xavier del Bac. This mission was destroyed by the Apache in 1770. The building that stands today was built between 1783 and 1797. It is the oldest European building in the state of Arizona. It still serves as a mission church. Although Father Kino was born in Italy, he founded the missions in Arizona as a part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

In 1718 San Antonio de Valero mission was founded. The Spanish history of San Antonio is very extensive. One must remember that Mexico did not become an independent nation until 1821. Therefore, what is now the state of Texas had a very short history under Mexican rule. Many towns and even cities in Texas have Spanish names. A few prominent examples are: San Antonio, El Paso, and Amarillo. The city of Galveston is named for Bernardo Gálvez, who was named Governor of Louisiana in 1777. After Spain declared war on Great Britain in 1779, Gálvez led Spanish forces to victories at Baton Rouge and Natchez. He also captured Mobile from the British and defeated British forces at Pensacola. It is not insignificant that Bernardo Gálvez also helped draft the terms of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, concluding the English colonies successful revolution against Great Britain. We know from correspondence that George Washington wrote to Bernardo Gálvez about the Spanish leader's important role in America's victory in the Revolutionary War. Long before Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin

were born (both men were born in 1793) the Spanish had established settlements throughout Texas. The Spanish presence in Texas even predates Davy Crockett, who was born in 1786.

Anyone who has seen the California missions has to be impressed by the beauty of those churches. In 1769, Father Junipero Serra established the first of the 21 missions in what is now California. Despite his physical limitations (he walked with a severe limp because of a leg that had been infected many years before) he established nine of the California missions. When Father Serra started his work on the first mission he was already 56 years old. His hard work and dedication were very important in the European settlement of California. The Spanish history of California can be seen in the names of many of the most important cities in the state. Some examples are: Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Sacramento, San Jose, Fresno, Santa Ana, Chula Vista, San Bernardino, Modesto, and Santa Rosa.

When Great Britain returned Florida to Spain in 1783, after the American Revolutionary War, Spanish territory encircled the Gulf of Mexico and stretched west from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean and north to Canada. The following states were entirely or in part under Spanish rule: Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, Wyoming, South Dakota, North Dakota, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Utah, Nevada, Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington.

More perhaps than ever before, our students need to know about this history. This knowledge can greatly enrich the picture we have of the history of this great nation. A more complete knowledge of this history is especially important at a time when the Hispanic population has grown exponentially. It is estimated that by the year 2050, more than 100 million Hispanic people will live in the U.S. Whether or not many U.S. citizens realize or accept this fact, it is true that the United States of America is becoming more and more Hispanic.

*Editor's Note:* Professor Cortest also excerpted a few images and supporting 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> century primary texts that assist instructors and students to better understand early Spanish activities in much of what is now New Mexico. This document is available at the Center for Reflective Citizenship website: <https://www.utc.edu/center-reflective-citizenship/june2018readings.php>.

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#### References and Resources

Thomas E. Chavez, *An Illustrated History of New Mexico* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1992), 42-66.