THE SPANISH-AMERICAN ERA

Three centuries of Spanish splendor and achievement followed the discovery of America. Explorers, conquerors, colonizers and builders, they laid the foundations for a new civilization and showed themselves men of force and character. The padres worked with the Spanish leaders to promote industrious life. They traveled into the far places on the two continents and their missions rose to stand through the ages as monuments to their zeal and ability and evidences of their refinement and culture. In those days the best of men sought churchly career and brilliant men of all races sought distinction under the Spanish flag, [illegible] changing their names to Spanish form.

Through conflict and stress [illegible] rose to the control of a half of the two continents. They spread over pathless seas. They conquered the Phillipines the same year they drove the Huguenots from Florida and founded San Agustín, the oldest city in the United States. For 250 years the Manilla galleon brought rich cargoes from those islands of the China sea to the port of Acapulco, near Mexico City.

The Gulf of Mexico

became a Spanish lake. Their little ships supplied the scattered settlements and returned to Spain loaded with wealth. Im

Later years the poet sangs

"Spanish waters, Spanish waters, you are ringing in my ears,
Like a slow sweet piece of music from the grey forgotten years."

Occupying the Southern United States

Cortés conquered Mexico in 1521 and Mexico became the base for continental operations and development. Florida in 1565 became the eastern seat of operations. [illegible] Nueva España were the two great divisions of territory. New Spain embraced Mexico and the southwestern United States. Florida extended to the New Spain territory. The great works were in the Southwest. In the Southeast the Indians remained masters.

Land La Florida

in that period extended indefinitely northward, and westward to New Spain territory. Before the Spaniards pushed northward through Mexico and occupied Texas the boundary between La Florida and Mexico was the River of Palms, apparently the Rio Grande. As the years passed, the great Spanish works were in the Southwest. In the Southeast the Indians remained masters.

Saint Augustine, 1565, was the first permanent settlement in La Florida. Powerful, orderly Indian tribes, resentful of cruelties, defeated Spain's plans for colonizing and development. Spain made five strong attempts to occupy that eastern territory before founding Saint Augustine. She also conducted numerous mapping and exploring expeditions along the coats. Prior to the landing of colonizing expeditions careful explorations and preparations were made--very careful, the times and strangeness of the New World considered.

In 1521 Ponce de León landed a colony far below Tampa Bay. In 1526 de Ayllón colonized on the Carolina coast. Both colonies quickly failed. In 1528 Narváez landed at approximately Tampa Bay with five ship-loads and near this same bay de Soto landed in 1539 with nine ship-loads. Both were commissioned to colonize but both started a hunt for another Mexico or Peru to plunder. Narváez, driven by Indian warfare, built flimsy boats and sought escape from St. Mark's Bay, south of Tallahassee. The Soto expedition was north to the Carlinas, Tennessee, Arkansas and Oklahoma--one of the greatest explorations of all times. The survivors built little ships and escaped down the Mississippi River to Mexico in 1543. Both Narváez and Soto lost their lives and half their people. Then, with Government help, benign padres entered Florida to win the natives by brotherly ministrations. Fray Luís Cancer, of noble attainments, found a martyr's grave; the others escaped to Vera Cruz. (Again) Spain tried to colonize. Ships again set forth to find the best place. Pensacola Bay was chosen, and in 1559 Luna y Arellano, who had been a captain with Coronado in the West, headed the colony of 1,500 soldiers, families and priests. Misfortune and Indians sent them back to Mexico in 1561.

Ponce de León, Ayllón,

Vera Cruz

Spanish activites henceforth centered in Saint Augustine and in Mexico, and north in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California.

Spanish dominion in La Florida was broken in two when the French took possession of the Mississippi River Valley and settled Old Louisiana in 1699. Later (1763-1800) Spain controlled French Louisiana and again Spanish dominion extended over the southern and western United States, Mexico, Central and South America except Portuguese Brazil, and except Florida west to New Orleans held by the English, 1763-1783.

The Hardships of the Explorers

The trails of the Spanish pioneers on sea and land, when traced on the map, cover it like a tangled cobweb. On land, burdened with pack-animals, baggage, and livestock for food, they broke through the tangled jungles, forded rivers and torrents, and crossed the trackless mountains and deserts to learn more of the vast and mysterious new country. They built flimsy ships despite lack of tools, proper material and skilled labor, and with the crudest of navigating instruments they braved storms, hunger, privation and scurvy to explore the seas and inlets and record their discoveries for their country.

A picture of Spanish organization is gathered from the Coronado explorations, 1540-42. He left Mexico with 300 Spaniards, 800 Indians, 1,000 horses, 7,300 animals for food, pack-animals and equipment. The Indians had no domestic animals except the dog; the Spanish filled the land with livestock, fruit and ornamental trees, and industrial equipment in an age of little ships. Tribute to their achievements is easier when these facts are remembered.

Eldorados

For a century the Indian tale of El Dorado (the Gilded King), somewhere in the jungles of South America, drew Spanish, English and German expeditions to disaster, one led by Sir Walter Raleigh.

"Where can it be--this land of El Dorado?
Over the Mountains of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow." Poe

Indians could not successfully combat horsemen in armor, guns and bloodhounds but they could use their wits to bring disaster upon the invaders. Indian tales of Cities of Gold, of the Gilded King, of the Gran Quivira, and other myths, bred disaster to expeditions everywhere.

"An alien Indian, hailing from afar,
Who in the town of Quito did abide,
And neighbor claimed to be of Bogatá,
There having come, I know not by what way,
Did with him speak and solemnly announce
A country rich in emeralds and gold.

"Also, among the things which them engaged,
A certain King he told of who, diarobed,
Upon a lake was wont, aboard a raft,
To make oblations, as himself had seen,
His regal form o'erspread with fragrant oil
On which was laid a coat of powdered gold
From sole of foot unto his highest brow,
Resplendent as the beaming of the sun.

"Arrivals without end, he further said,
Were there to make rich votive offerings
Of golden trinkets and of emeralds rare
And divers other of their ornaments;
And worthy credence these things he affirmed;
The soldiers, light of heart and well content,
They dubbed him El Dorado, and the name
By countless ways was spread throughout the world."

--Elejias de Varones Ilustres de Indias, Madrid.