

days. Don Athanase's condition became so grave that servants bore him back to Natchitoches on a stretcher. He had thus suffered two serious accidents in a matter of months, and one can speculate that years of exposure to the elements and the infirmities of advancing age had made him more prone to misfortune.⁹⁰

After two months in bed, De Mézières's condition improved somewhat, and he was able to complete the journey to Nacogdoches. While there he disparaged the settlers' fear of the Comanches and pointedly accused them of cowardice. And he unequivocally asserted that the new location was no better than the one abandoned at Bucareli. Its lands were attractive to ranching but lacked open meadows for agriculture.⁹¹

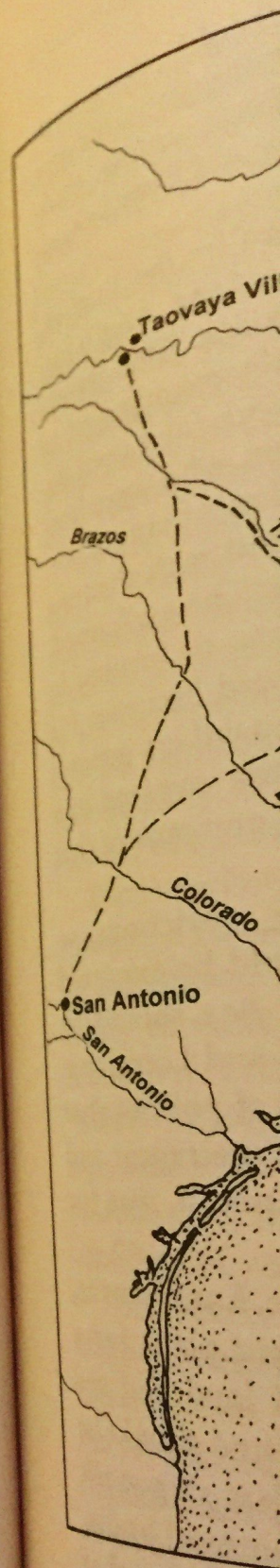
Continuing on to San Antonio, De Mézières distributed many of the gifts supplied by Bernardo de Gálvez to Kichai, Tonkawa, and Tawakoni Indians. The remaining presents, intended for the Taovayas, were placed on deposit at Béxar (Figure 16).⁹²

In San Antonio, Governor Cabello expressed displeasure to Croix at having to expend funds and shower flattery on De Mézières and his entourage. He also informed the commandant general that don Athanase's version of how the settlers at Bucareli had created their own troubles by attacking the Comanches was erroneous. According to the governor's sources, the Comanches had not approached the settlement with good intentions.⁹³

Governor Cabello nevertheless offered hospitality to don Athanase, as he had been instructed to do, albeit reluctantly. With difficulty, he found suitable lodging for the Frenchman and provided a gift of sheep as well. At church services, don Domingo placed a chair next to his for De Mézières. He also provided "medicaments" from his personal apothecary, because, in his view, don Athanase was seriously afflicted with diarrhea and gonorrhea.⁹⁴

Despite ill health, De Mézières attempted to carry out his responsibilities. He placed on deposit at Béxar the merchandise remaining from his visit to the Indian nations and asked for a receipt from the governor. Although without official authorization to accept the goods, which included rifles, axes, knives, combs, and tobacco, Cabello did so, pending orders from Commandant General Croix.⁹⁵

Shortly after his arrival at Béxar, De Mézières penned two forceful communiqués to Teodoro de Croix. This time he did not, as usual, couch his words in diplomatic parlance but rather made forceful pronouncements on a number of topics. The tone of these reports suggests a sense of urgency, most likely brought on by his declining physical fitness. De Mézières wrote of the vastness and fertility of Texas' lands, depicting the



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1785, Cabello turned up the heat on the two Caddo confederations. First, recognizing that their "forces are so few," don Domingo cut off gift giving to them; then he reminded them that their close friends and co-linguists, the Wichitas, had close ties with the Comanches, who had become recent allies of the Spaniards; and, finally, he threatened to inform the Comanches that for four years the Hasinai and Kadohadachos had aided and abetted their despised enemies—the Lipan Apaches.⁵⁶ By a combination of murder and Realpolitik, Cabello had succeeded in isolating the Lipans, and that objective, articulated at the three war councils held by Croix in Monclova, San Antonio, and Chihuahua, had been accomplished.

Because relations among Spaniards, Hasinai, Comanches, and the Norteños were much improved after late 1785, Domingo Cabello again called upon Pedro Vial—this time as pathfinder between San Antonio and Santa Fe. Travel between the two provincial capitals had traditionally been long, dangerous, and circuitous. From Santa Fe one had to detour southward along the Río Grande by way of El Paso to reach Nueva Vizcaya. From there travelers journeyed eastward to San Juan Bautista before turning northward to San Antonio.⁵⁷

Vial's passage over the first, more direct overland trail between the ill-defined provinces of Texas and New Mexico began almost one year after treaty-signing ceremonies were concluded at Béxar. Commissioned by Cabello near the end of his Texas governorship, the French-born Indian agent left San Antonio on October 4, 1786, in the company of a single companion, Cristóbal de los Santos.⁵⁸

Vial appears to have become sick and disoriented during early stages of the trek. In any event, his path was hardly on a direct line with Santa Fe. He and Santos traveled by way of Tawakoni villages near present Waco and then continued on to the Red River. From there, the two men turned westward and eventually reached Santa Fe on May 26, 1787. By then Domingo Cabello was no longer governor of Texas.⁵⁹

In early January 1787, Domingo Cabello departed San Antonio for the last time. It must have been a joyous occasion—one that he had yearned for throughout his eight-year term as governor of Texas. Indeed, even in his first year on the job, he had complained bitterly about the mean circumstance that was life on the Texas frontier. Writing to Commandant General Teodoro de Croix in June 1779, Cabello described his quarters as a "pigsty." Referring to an impending visit by Athanase de Mézières, he protested that he could not house an official of don Athanase's rank "in such a miserable place." Warming to the art of complaining, he whined "that, on account of my coming here, a cook who [sic] I

had in my service for fourteen years preferred to stay in Mexico." As a consequence, his daily fare was nothing "but tortillas and jerked beef."⁶⁰

In this same missive, Domingo Cabello complained of a nearly empty supply room and the growing number of Indians who came to Béxar. Specifically, he lacked "the merchandise with which my predecessor used to flatter them." Taking a mean-spirited swipe at Barón de Rip-perdá, whom he replaced as chief executive, don Domingo accused him of having "much left over from his former businesses" so that he could afford large expenditures on merchandise.⁶¹

Writing to Commandant General Croix in October 1779, Governor Cabello had also expressed irritation over having to provide accommodations for Indians traveling in the retinue of De Mézières: "Considering what an unhappy place this presidio is, it cost me drops of blood to procure these arrangements." He reported that one head of cattle each day had to be provided for their fare. The animal's meat, garnished with squash and tender ears of corn, was boiled in two large pots that don Domingo had to rent, since the governor's quarters did not have such cookware. Worse, in the words of Cabello, the Native Americans kept him from performing his duties as governor "for they wish to spend all day talking with me . . . and I must attend to their requests and a thousand other kinds of [inconveniences] which the mind of these peoples devises."⁶²

In Cabello's view, the quality of life at San Antonio did not improve over the years. For example, he complained about the incessant barking and howling of dogs at night, which disturbed his sleep and caused him to observe sarcastically that "there is no reason for making serenades." To quiet the cacophony, don Domingo ordered that stray canines be shot, and he imposed fines on those who would not restrain their animals at night. He also fulminated against Béxar's street gangs (*bandadas*)—youths not under the proper control of their parents who went about "giving cries and disturbing the tranquility at all hours of the day and night."⁶³

On other occasions, Cabello objected to the raucous dances (*fandangos*) and insolent songs that served as frontier amusements. Such activities, in the governor's view, contributed to moral degeneracy and affairs that were "grave offenses to God." More serious, when fueled by alcohol, hurled expletives and insults between Latino males often provoked bloodletting or bodily injury. Calling someone a "bastard" (*cabrón*) or a "snot-nosed dog" (*perro mocoso*) was almost certain to cause trouble for don Domingo in his capacity as chief magistrate of the villa.⁶⁴

Disaffected with his appointment as governor of Texas, Cabello never

ceased his determined efforts to acquire a better assignment. In May 1779 he accepted appointment as interim governor of Coahuila, but obligations in Texas kept him from assuming that post; in April 1785 he received appointment as interim governor of Nueva Vizcaya and begged to be immediately relieved of his duties at Béxar, but reassignment was again delayed until a new governor could be chosen for Texas. Finally, in December 1785 Cabello fared better. He received a prestigious appointment as lieutenant to the king and subinspector of troops in Cuba, where his military career had initially blossomed. But even then, don Domingo had to wait a year before he could transfer the office of governor to his successor, Rafael Martínez Pacheco.⁶⁵

Martínez Pacheco, the new chief executive of Texas, was an old hand on the Texas scene, and a controversial one as well. In 1764, as commander of Presidio del Orcoquisac on the lower Trinity River, don Rafael had clashed with Texas governor Angel de Martos. As garrison commander, Martínez Pacheco was repeatedly charged with abusive conduct, actions that had caused most of his presidials to desert. To correct the situation, Martos sent Lieutenant Marcos Ruiz to forcibly remove Martínez Pacheco from command, but the officer and two servants barricaded themselves within the walls of El Orcoquisac. In the confrontation, Martínez Pacheco fired a cannon, killing a corporal, and he wounded two of Ruiz's soldiers in a firefight. The lieutenant finally drove the presidial captain from his stronghold by burning the garrison to the ground! Martínez Pacheco, however, escaped the inferno through an underground passage and later stood trial in Mexico City, where he was exonerated. Ironically, a military officer with such a checkered record was enthusiastically accepted as Domingo Cabello's replacement at Béxar. This strange circumstance relates in part to don Domingo's handling of livestock exported from Texas, and it arguably constitutes the most controversial aspect of his governorship.⁶⁶

While visiting San Antonio in early 1778, Commandant General Teodoro de Croix had noted the large number of unbranded cattle that grazed the surrounding prairies. On January 11 don Teodoro posted a decree that gave the owners of livestock precisely four months to corral and brand their animals (Figure 20). After May 12 all unmarked livestock, as well as the semi-feral offspring of branded animals, would automatically become crown property. Cattlemen must design different brands and register them with the governor, who was then Barón de Ripperdá. Rustlers, according to the Croix decree, were to be punished in accord with the damage caused by their actions. And, finally, all set-

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ters, irrespective of their position and rank, were subject to all provisions and penalties.⁶⁷

Because the unpopular decree required the approval of the king before it became permanently operative, it raised a continuing storm of protest among civilians and missionaries alike. Through petitions and letters, they decried to the king in far-off Spain the unfairness of Croix's mandates, but in the interim the commandant general's edicts went into effect in late spring 1778.⁶⁸

Implementation of don Teodoro's pronouncements coincided almost exactly with the governorship of Domingo Cabello, for royal revocation of Croix's initial order and all subsequent modifications of it did not reach Texas until early 1786. And during that interval, don Domingo's actions stirred up a hornet's nest of hatred among Texas stockmen.⁶⁹

In July 1779, as mentioned earlier, Spain joined the war for American independence as an ally of France, which had entered the conflict in the previous year. Accordingly, Spanish possessions in Louisiana were especially vulnerable to English attacks. Trade between Louisiana and the Commandancy General of the Interior Provinces was expressly forbidden by royal decree, but out of expediency Teodoro de Croix deliberately bent the law. He justified illegal commerce on the grounds that the Gulf of Mexico was likely to become a war theater and because Governor Bernardo de Gálvez of Louisiana needed beef. This new market provided incentives for Texas cattle drives through the piney woods of East Texas, and it opened Domingo Cabello to charges of profiteering under the pretext of defending imperial interests.⁷⁰

Initially, Gálvez dispatched Francisco García to Texas with a commission to buy fifteen hundred to two thousand head of cattle. Commandant General Croix ordered Cabello not only to supply the beeves but also to provide a military escort for the drovers who trailed the livestock eastward. Thus began a series of organized cattle drives, the first in Texas history. Cabello, however, by implementing Croix's unpopular decree of January 1778, was later charged with outright theft and moral laxity.⁷¹

After he left Texas in January 1779, and it was safe to "lay bare the former governor's black heart," a litany of complaints descended upon Cabello. His refusal to take communion and confess once a year set a bad precedent; his unexplained failure to attend Mass and his shocking use of profanity appalled the citizenry; his insistence that God did not have the power to alter things—by pointing out that accidents had happened to him—served to undermine the faith; his sexual insinuations toward Bexareñas created endless gossip; and so it went.⁷²

But the greatest controversy stirred by don Domingo was his alleged profiteering at the expense of the king and the blatant defrauding of civilian and missionary stockmen. Specifically, it was charged that Cabello's accounting of cattle exports from Texas to Louisiana was both erroneous and incomplete. For example, some herds contained far more livestock than recorded, with the clear implication that the governor had pocketed the difference. In other instances, entire herds were missing from the ledger books. When faced with a shortage of animals for export, Cabello routinely rounded up privately owned cattle, even those bearing brands, and declared them royal property.⁷³

In the latter category, ranchers insisted that they had been defrauded of 10,901 head of cattle, amounting to 27,254 pesos. Additional "unrecorded sales" brought Cabello's indebtedness to a total of 32,508 pesos. Since he had deposited only 13,096 pesos in the royal treasure chest, don Domingo additionally owed more than 19,000 pesos. To this sum stockmen added the cost of litigation against their corrupt governor, bringing the grand total to 34,468 pesos. On a lesser scale, without paying the owner a fair price, Cabello had seized two pet buffaloes raised from calves by Juan Andrés Travieso and sent the animals to Spain to please his monarch, Charles III. Worse, instead of defending the ranchers' herds from various thieves who preyed upon them, don Domingo had ordered his soldiers to shoot the stockmen's dogs if they wandered into San Antonio. Being charged as a *mataperros* (killer of dogs), meant, as historian Jack Jackson has noted, that in the minds of Texas ranchers Cabello had sunk to about the lowest level of humanity.⁷⁴

But there was more. When Commandant General Croix had visited San Antonio in early 1778, he badly needed additional sources of revenue to finance a war against the Lipans and provide gifts for the Comanches and Norteños, whom he wished to recruit as allies. Again, it did not take Croix long to observe that a potentially rich source of new funds lay in Texas's thousands of head of *mesteños* (feral and semi-wild livestock). These animals, according to don Teodoro, had no known owner; they were born and raised on untitled lands; therefore, they belonged to the king.⁷⁵

In the past, unclaimed cattle and horses had been killed with impunity by Indians or vagabonds. Oftentimes only the choicest parts of cattle were harvested, while the rest of the carcass became fare for coyotes and buzzards. Henceforth, decreed Croix, no one in the entire province could round up or kill these animals. Fines for initial offenses, plus increased fines and hard labor for subsequent misdeeds, were also set forth by the

brands used in Spanish Texas. These brands were in use during the governorship of Domingo Cabello, 1778-1786. (Artwork by Jack Jackson.)

How the cattle were branded
Cabello - unrecorded