

A few examples of
Spanish aid to the American Revolution

SOMEHOW OBSCURED OVER THE PAST TWO HUNDRED YEARS, the vital role of Spain in the winning of American independence is slowly but surely emerging back into the consciousness of our nation. Few Americans are aware of Spain's deep involvement in the American Revolution. When speaking or writing about Spain's contribution to the American Revolution, most Americans generally characterize it somewhere between "nothing" to "minuscule, hardly worth mentioning." Recent research by scholars, however, has brought to light new information about the American Revolution that has been literally "swept under the historical rug" for much too long.



Before and after the declaration of war, Spain had a complex network of "observers" throughout the Americas to monitor the course of the revolt. Two observers posted in Philadelphia, Juan de Miralles and Francisco Rendón, gave not only moral support but also served as conduits for material aid sent by Spain to the American patriots throughout the revolution. In 1781, Rendón even offered the hospitality of his home to General Washington during Washington's Christmas visit to Philadelphia.

Gálvez had under his command men from Spain, Majorca, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, and Ireland. From Louisiana he recruited Frenchmen, Acadians, Germans, Canary Islanders, Indians, and Blacks, both slave and free. About thirty Americans, a part of the South Carolina Navy, and a few Texans were in his forces. He also had many troops and ships from México (New Spain). One of his top generals was Major General Gerónimo Girón, a direct descendant of Montezuma. His aide-de-camp in the Pensacola campaign was Francisco Miranda, the precursor of independence in Venezuela.

While all this was going on, public prayers, as requested by the King of Spain in the official Declaration of War issued on June 21, 1779, were being offered by Texas citizens for success in the war. Moreover, on August 17, 1780, King Carlos III issued a decree requesting voluntary donations from all Spanish citizens in the Americas for the war effort.

Spaniards were to pay two pesos, and mestizos and Indians were to pay one peso.

Accordingly, soldiers, citizens, and mission Indians in the province of Texas donated 1659 pesos to defray the costs of the worldwide war that Spain waged against Great Britain, detailed as follows:

The five missions of San Antonio.....	217 Pesos
The inhabitants of Presidio La Bahía	198 Pesos
Mission Espíritu Santo	67 Pesos
Pueblo de Nuestra Señora del Pilar de Nacogdoches.....	181 Pesos
Inhabitants of Presidio de Béxar and the Villa de San Fernando.....	312 Pesos
Individuals of the Company of Cavalry of the Presidio de Béxar.....	452 Pesos
Individuals of the Company of Cavalry of the Presidio de la Bahía.....	232 Pesos
Total	1659 Pesos



Spanish Texas rancheros and their vaqueros, many of whom were mission Indians, trailed these cattle. Soldados (Soldiers) from Presidio San Antonio de Béxar, El Fuerte del Cibolo, and Presidio La Bahía escorted the herds. Several hundred head of horses were also sent along for cavalry and artillery purposes. Extant records even indicate that a few soldiers from Texas were recruited to fight with Gálvez's army.



The upshot of the story is this: Fueled in part by Texas beef Texas long-horns, no less Spanish troops took to the field and waterways in the late summer of 1779 and defeated the British in battles at Manchac, Baton Rouge, and Natchez.



To help feed Spanish forces, some nine thousand head of Texas cattle from the private and mission ranches in the San Antonio River Valley were trailed by Spanish Texas ranchers and escorted by Spanish Texas soldiers to Gálvez's troops in their campaign from Louisiana to Florida. Additionally, several hundred head of horses were sent along for cavalry and artillery purposes.

A drawing of Soldados de Cuera, from page 36 of *Uniformes Militares Españoles Tropas Virreynales (I) Nueva España, Yucatán Yy Luisiana* by Jose Maria Bueno. Left to right:

1. Catalan Volunteer 1769-70 . (Malispina);
2. Soldier of Monterey 1769-70 (Malispina);
3. Soldado de Cuera 1790 (from various sources);
4. Lancer of the Legion of Principe, 1767 (from various sources).

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