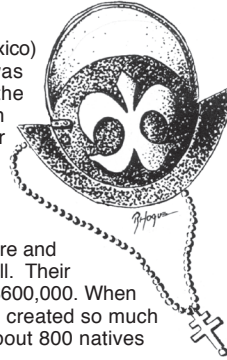


A LOOK BACK IN HUTCHINSON COUNTY HISTORY

The Coronado Expedition

In 1540, the viceroy of New Spain (what is now Mexico) was Don Antonio de Mendoza. His best friend was Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. Upon hearing the fabulous descriptions of the golden cities of the north from entrepreneur, explorer and Catholic priest, Father Marcos de Niza, Mendoza and Coronado decided to outfit an expedition to find and conquer the rich cities to the north, particularly Cibola and Quivira.



Coronado invested most of his fortune in the venture and Mendoza invested a substantial share of his as well. Their investment, in present-day terms would be about \$600,000. When Father Marcos' report on Cibola was published, it created so much interest in Mexico City that 300 Spaniards and about 800 natives volunteered to join the expedition.

Many of the Spaniards were young men of high status families in Mexico City. They hoped to make their fame and fortune in the enterprise of Mendoza and Coronado. Some were also in need of funds at the time.

The physical effort of the expedition proved to be more than many of the young aristocrats from Mexico City had counted on. Father Marcos had said the trail was easy, but like most of his tales, this too was an exaggeration. After having survived hundreds of miles of desert in the future American southwest and traversing what is now Hutchinson County in what would become the Texas panhandle, they realized that their dreams of treasure would be unfulfilled.

Though the expedition discovered and described vast expanses of new country and many new cultures, it was a dismal failure. The majority of the expedition's members returned to Mexico deeply in debt and angry at their weak and flawed leader, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. ■

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