

**THE JOURNEY OF  
CORONADO,  
1540-1542**

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The Journey of Coronado, 1540-1542 by George Parker Winship

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## INTRODUCTION

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THE narratives printed in the present volume tell the story of one of the most remarkable explorations recorded in the annals of American history. Seventy-five years before the English succeeded in establishing themselves on the northeastern coast of North America, a band of Spaniards, starting from what was already a populous and flourishing colony at the City of Mexico, penetrated the opposite extreme of the continent, and explored thoroughly a region as extensive as the coast line of the United States from Maine to Georgia.

The accounts of their experiences printed herewith were all written by members of the expedition. With two exceptions they were written during the journey, and were the official reports prepared by the general and sent to the viceroy in Mexico or the emperor-king in Spain, or by the lieutenants in charge of special explorations. The first and principal narrative was written for the purpose of providing a history of the expedition, by one of the common soldiers some time after his return to Mexico, when he apparently felt that there was danger that posterity would forget the deeds of those with whom

## THE JOURNEY OF CORONADO

he had toiled and suffered in the vain search for something which would reward their costly undertaking. All that is known of the author, Pedro Castañeda, beyond what he relates in this narrative, is that he was a native of the Biscayan town of Najera in northern Spain, who had established himself in the Spanish outpost at Culiacan, in northwestern Mexico, at the time Coronado organized his expedition, and that he was the father of eight surviving children, who, with their mother, presented in 1554 a claim against the Mexican treasury, on account of the father's exploits. The Spanish text of Castañeda's history is preserved in the Lenox Library, now absorbed into the New York Public Library. It is printed, together with the translations reprinted herewith, in the Fourteenth Annual Report of the United States Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, D. C., 1896, a volume which has long been out of print. In the present book many passages in these translations have been revised and corrected. The editor is under obligations to Mr. F. W. Hodge of the Smithsonian Institution, Mr. W. M. Tipton of Santa Fé, Mr. Charles F. Lummis of Los Angeles, and Mr. Ripley Hitchcock and Mr. F. S. Dellenbaugh of New York, for suggestions and assistance in regard to these improvements in the text.

In February, 1540, the army whose fortunes are recounted in these narratives assembled at Compostela, on the Pacific coast west of Mexico city. When it passed in

## INTRODUCTION

review before the viceroy Mendoza, who had provided the funds and equipment, the general in command, Francisco Vazquez Coronado, rode at the head of some two hundred and fifty horsemen and seventy Spanish foot soldiers armed with crossbows and harquebuses. Besides these there were three hundred or more native allies, and upward of a thousand negro and Indian servants and followers, to lead the spare horses, drive the pack mules, carry the extra luggage, and herd the droves of oxen and cows, sheep and swine.

The expedition started on February 23d, and a month later, on Easter day, it entered Culiacan, then the northwestern out-post of European civilization, half way up the mainland coast of the Gulf of California. Here Coronado reorganized his force and, toward the end of April, he started northward into the unknown country with a picked force of two hundred men equipped for rapid marching, leaving the rest to follow at the slower pace of the pack trains and the four-footed food supplies. Following the river courses up stream, the advance party was soon deep in the mountains. For two long months they persistently pushed ahead, the inhospitable country steadily growing worse. Eventually other streams showed them the way out on to a level district crossed by well-worn trails which led them toward the "Seven Cities of Cibola." These were the goal of whose fame they had heard from the Franciscan friar, Marcos of Nice,



## THE JOURNEY OF CORONADO

who had viewed them from a distant hill-top two years previously, and who now accompanied the expedition as guide and chaplain.

It was perhaps on July 4th, 1540, that Coronado drew up his force in front of the first of the "Seven Cities," and after a sharp fight forced his way into the stronghold, the stone and adobe-built pueblo of Hawikuh, whose ruins can still be traced on a low hillock a few miles southwest of the village now occupied by the New Mexican Zúñi Indians. Here the Europeans camped for several weeks, seeking rest, refreshment, and news of the land. A small party was sent off toward the northwest, where another group of seven villages was found in the region still occupied by the descendants of the people whom the Spaniards visited, the Moqui tribes of Tusayan. As a result of the information secured here, another party journeyed westward until its progress was stopped by the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, then seen for the first time by Europeans. Explorations were also made toward the east, where the river villages along the Rio Grande were found to be larger and better stocked with food supplies than the settlements at Cibola-Zúñi. Coronado therefore moved his headquarters to the largest of these river towns, Tiguex, near the modern Bernalillo, a short distance north of Albuquerque. Here, as the winter of 1540-41 was setting in, he was rejoined by the main body of the army, which had laboriously followed the trail of

## INTRODUCTION

its general through the mountains and across the desert.

In one of the river villages Coronado found an Indian slave who said he was a native of Quivira, which he described as a rich and populous place far away in the east. Acting upon this information, with the Indian as a guide, Coronado started on April 23d, 1541, with his whole army to march to Quivira. From Cicuye or Pecos, whose ruins can still be seen by the traveller from the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé trains, the guide seems to have led the white men down the Pecos River until they were out of the mountains, and on to the vast plains where they soon met the countless herds of bison or "humpbacked oxen." For five weeks the Europeans plodded onward across what is now known as the "Staked Plains," following a generally easterly direction.

They had probably crossed the upper branches of the Colorado River of Texas and reached the head waters of the Nueces, when Coronado became convinced that his guide was endeavoring to lose him in this limitless expanse of rolling prairie. The food supplies were beginning to run low, and so the army was ordered to return to the villages on the Rio Grande. Some of the natives of the plains, met with on the march, had answered the questions about Quivira by pointing toward the north. That no chance might be left untried, the general selected thirty of the freshest and best-mounted of his men to

## THE JOURNEY OF CORONADO

accompany him in a search in that direction. For forty-two days they followed the compass needle, whose variation probably took them about three degrees west of a true northward course. At last their guides told them that they had reached Quivira, when they were not far from Great Bend on the Arkansas River, whose course they had followed from the neighborhood of Dodge City. It was a village of Wichita Indian tepees.

Coronado spent a month in exploring the surrounding country, moving his camp to a larger village further north, and sending out messengers and reconnoitering parties in all directions. Having assured himself that there was nothing to reward his search, he returned to the main body of his army, the Quiviran guides leading him by a much shorter route, along the line of the famous Santa Fé trail, to the Rio Grande. Every clew which promised anything of value to the Spaniards had been followed to its utmost, without revealing anything which they desired. In the spring of 1542 Coronado started back with his men to Cibola-Zuñi, through the rough mountain passages to the Gulf of California, and so on down to the city of Mexico, where he arrived in the early autumn, "very sad and very weary, completely worn out and shame-faced." He had failed to find any of the things for which he went in search. But he had added to the world as known to Europeans an extent of country bounded on the west by the Colorado River from its mouth to the Grand Cañon,