

GEOGRAPHY—HISTORY

# America Invaded!

## But the Marches of Coronado and De Soto, 400 Years Ago, Were Slow-Motion Campaigns, Not Modern Blitzkriegs

By EMILY C. DAVIS

WHILE gigantic armies reshuffle Europe, the United States is celebrating through a romantic haze the 400th anniversary of invasion of these shores by two Spanish armies, led by Ferdinand de Soto and Vasquez de Coronado.

Re-tracing the advance of gold-seeking conqueror Coronado and his nobles, who came riding up from Mexico in 1540, modern Southwesterners are enacting a progressive pageant. Before summer is over, they will have acted Coronado's adventures at about 20 points along the 400-year-old route in New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas.

Taking up the saga in 1941, Kansas plans to celebrate arrival there in 1541 of the roving invaders, in quest of elusive rich Indian cities.

New Mexico is making 1940 Coronado's year. Scientific meetings will dedicate their discussions to Spanish and Indian archaeological and historical problems. Art exhibits and gatherings of writers will feature Coronado's times. All events memorialize a man who made a tremendous pioneering journey and who ironically was rated pretty much of a failure by those in Mexico to whom he reported the gloomy news: no gold.

### DeSoto Route Marked

Less widely publicized thus far, the Southeastern States' celebration of De Soto's 1539-1542 journey for gold and conquest will last through 1942. The meandering route of De Soto will be marked officially, according to scientific verdict as to most likely landmarks. Local programs are also planned.

As outstanding memorial, a forest honoring De Soto near the place where he reached the Mississippi's waters is provided in a bill before Congress. The Forest of Repentance, Congressmen propose to call it, since the verdant Mississippi Valley which De Soto discovered has been, in terms of the bill, "the victim of reckless exploitation on the one hand and appalling neglect on the other." The forest and a memorial building would remind Americans of importance of conserving America's forest wealth.

Sharp contrast in invasions is offered by these military ventures of the sixteenth century versus present day Nazis.

Roaming thousands of wilderness miles, tiny Spanish armies fought tiny battles with holders of the land.

What De Soto called his army totaled about 600 soldiers. Some 250 rode horses. Servants with supplies, including lively and reluctant pigs, trailed along.

Coronado moved up from Mexico proudly leading 200 Spanish dandies in velvet and shining armor, 70 foot soldiers and about 1,000 Indian allies. He also was accompanied by livestock.

With such armies—small indeed by modern military standards—Spain laid hold on one-half of the United States.

### Half of U. S. Claimed

Politically it was done this way:

Coronado, commanded to extend Spain's dominion north of Mexico and to plant colonies, claimed in vague gestures, as he advanced, land now comprising one-third of the United States.

Another sixth of present United States territory became more firmly Spain's by De Soto's commission to conquer and colonize Florida. Ponce de Leon had already planted the Spanish flag on the Florida shore, but how far "Florida" spread or what lay inland beyond the limited explorations of Ponce de Leon was for De Soto to prove.

Total for Spain from these military and colonizing ventures: one-half of our three-million-square-mile land.

Pitted against armor-clad invaders, the Indian Americans proved feebly unready. They were too scattered, too bewildered by firearms, too ignorant of political forces marshaled against them.

The largest city in the United States was—imagine it!—Pecos in New Mexico.

This Indian pueblo boasted nearly 500 warriors and liked to tell that it had never been defeated. But facing the glitter and authority of Spain, Pecos did not fight. It welcomed Coronado in with drums and pipes and gifts of turquoise and cloth.

Later, regretting the hospitality, Pecos tried fifth column tactics in reverse. An Indian nicknamed the Turk was persuaded to lure these gold-hungry for-

eigners away to the northeast, by promising to show them Gran Quivera, a city of silver and gold.

When Indian towns greeted Coronado with arrows, Spanish arquebuses and crossbows replied effectively. Even though the Pueblo settlements and roving Indian bands had little to tempt treasure hunters, the Spaniards had the duty of conquering for Spain, and also the priestly mission of introducing Christianity for the first time north of the Rio Grande.

Curiously, considering the vast achievement of this pioneering journey, Coronado's return to Mexico was dejected and sheepish. No riches to match those of the Incas in Peru and the Aztecs in Mexico had been found. The alluring "Northern Mystery" was no mystery now. The Seven Cities of Cibola had no golden dwellings, no children playing in the street with precious stones. Cibola was a land of plain Indian farmers, swarming in queer towering masses of dwellings. The golden Gran Quivera of the Kansas plains was worse—a land of native hunters living in tipis.

De Soto fared as badly as Coronado in finding no gold. Beset by hardships and sufferings, his men roved from one Indian town to another through Georgia, the Carolinas and hither and yon to the Mississippi River and then beyond into Arkansas. A nightmare journey, yet a tremendously eventful one.

### Mech-e-se-be River

De Soto explored a huge area, climaxed by discovering the great river Indians called Mech-e-se-be, Father of Waters. Technically, one explorer had reached the Mississippi before, at the mouth. But De Soto remains "the discoverer" since his expedition led to opening and settlement of the Mississippi Valley.

Pigs that won freedom from De Soto's herds, and horses turned loose by Coronado when forage was scant, were historic animals, for they established pigs in the Southeast and horses in the Southwest. De Soto's horses did not play any part in America's livestock history, it is generally believed. His horses were all killed, and none escaped to rove Southeastern country. Nor did any of Coronado's sheep remain to start Indian herds in the West. Modern Navajo sheep are descended from Spanish flocks brought in 1598.

First white men to view the wonder of the Grand Canyon were a detachment of Coronado's army. They said the cliffs were taller than Seville Cathedral.

Roaming so vast a country, it is curious that the two expeditions came to points within a couple of hundred miles, probably, of one another. Not at the same time, though. Some historians think that Coronado in 1541 got as far east as Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle. And Moscoso, succeeding to leadership of the De Soto party in 1542, when the leader died by the shores of the Mississippi, attempted an exit march westward toward Mexico. Part way across Texas, Moscoso turned back, discouraged. The remnant of De Soto's army ultimately made its exit by boat down the Mississippi and thence to Mexico.

A tough problem for archaeologists and historians is the task of trailing the Spanish conquerors, 400 years late. Chronicles and diaries were kept by the Spanish expeditions, and certainly these were not meant to prove confusing to readers. But many tribes, and towns, and even topographical landmarks have vanished or changed in 400 years.

Leading authority on the route of De Soto, Dr. John R. Swanton of the Bureau of American Ethnology, has charted what he regards as the most likely route, from present knowledge. Dr. Swanton's special interest in the De Soto route was aroused by Col. John R. Fordyce, of the Arkansas

**LINES OF MARCH**

*Coronado from the southwest and De Soto from the southeast covered a large part of the southern half of this country in their wanderings, unrewarding in the treasure they sought but rich in historic importance.*

Historical Commission. Col. Fordyce paced out portions of De Soto's journey, figuring each day's march and checking his computations by landmarks and Indian sites.

Doing similar duty for Coronado, Prof. Herbert E. Bolton of the University of California has this year been re-traveling the uncertain portions of the Southwestern explorations. The Kansas and Texas detour of the Coronado party is particularly hard to chart.

Locating the neighborhood where Coronado stood in Mexico and caught his first glimpse of the United States required a special scouting expedition last spring. The most likely point—at the southern end of the Huachua Mountains in the area of Montezuma Pass and Yaqui Springs—is the selected place for a \$10,000 monument. Like De Soto discovering the Mississippi, Coronado was not strictly the first white man to discover the United States from the Mexican angle. A scouting party had preceded him. But Coronado, in the world's mind, rates as the discoverer.

*Science News Letter, August 3, 1940*



**EARLY INVADER**

*Portrait of De Soto, one of the two first white men to "invade" what is now the United States. Apparently no contemporary likenesses of Coronado have survived.*

**CHEMISTRY**

**Self-Washing House Paint Contains Titanium Oxide**

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*Science News Letter, August 3, 1940*

**● RADIO**

Frederic G. Melcher, editor of Publishers Weekly, John F. Cuneo, president of the Cuneo Press, and Harvey D. Gibson, chairman of the board, New York World's Fair, will discuss "Five Hundred Years of Printing," as guest speakers on "Adventure in Science" with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over the coast to coast network of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Thursday, Aug. 8, 4:00 p.m., EDST, 3:00 EST, 2:00 CST, 1:00 MST, 12:00 PST.

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