

## AMERICAN JOURNEYS COLLECTION



Extract of the Journal of the  
Expedition of the Mallet Brothers  
to Santa Fe, 1739-1740

DOCUMENT NO. AJ-092



WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
DIGITAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES



|| [www.americanjourneys.org](http://www.americanjourneys.org) || [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org) ||  
© Wisconsin Historical Society 2003

# 3.

## THE JOURNAL

The Mallets kept a journal of their expedition, but it has been lost. Surviving documents make it clear that they turned it over to Governor Bienville, but what became of it after that is not known. Fortunately, the governor sent a summary of the journal to Paris, and a copy of this document has survived (AN, Col. F3 24: 387–391vo; photocopy in Library of Congress, Manuscript Division). It is extremely brief and at times confused, but it is the most important record of the expedition.

Folmer (1939a) translated the summary, but he used Margry's (1876–1886 VI: 455–462) published version, which contains some errors of transcription. Only one of these is critical to interpretation of the route. In a section describing the return of the Mallets from Santa Fe, Margry transformed “a la Fourche” (“at the fork”) into “a la Source” (“at the source”) of the River of the Arkansas. Folmer (1939a: 170) translated this as “on the upper Arkansas” but did not seem to recognize the distortion of the route that this implied. The Forks of the Arkansas are in eastern Oklahoma, but its source is in central

Colorado, hundreds of miles to the west. Because the mention of the spot in question occurs after the Mallets had traveled down the river in question for many days, it is unlikely that they would have thought they were anywhere near the source. Rather, Folmer's vague translation was a good stab at making sense of what was otherwise an incomprehensible passage.

An English translation of the abstract follows. The original French version can be found in Appendix A.

**Extract of the Journal of the Expedition of the  
Mallet Brothers to Santa Fe,  
May 29, 1739, to June 24, 1740**

Abstract of the journal of the expedition made to Santa Fe, capital of the province of New Mexico by the two brothers, Pierre and Paul Mallet, Canadians, along with those named La Rose, Philippes, Bellecourt, Petit Jean, Galien, and Moreau.

In order to understand the route which these Canadians explored to New Mexico, it is well to know that it is 100 leagues from Illinois to the villages of the Missouris on the river of the same name, 80 leagues from there to that of the Kansas, 100 leagues from the Kansas to the Oto, and 60 from there to the mouth of the river of the Panis Maha on the Missouri. That nation is settled at the mouth of the river that bears their name, and it is from this point that the explorers made their departure on May 29, 1739.

Up till now, all of those who tried to travel to New Mexico thought they would find it at the sources of the Missouri, and to accomplish this, they ascended as far as the Arikaras, who are more than 150 leagues from the Pawnees. On the advice of some natives, the explorers took an entirely different route, and leaving the Pawnees, they traveled overland, retracing their steps roughly parallel to the Missouri.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, they came upon a river that they called the Platte, and seeing that it did not deviate from the route they had in mind, they followed it upstream along the right bank for a distance of 28 leagues, and at that point, they found that it made a fork with the River of the Padoucas which empties into the Platte.

Three days after reaching the River of the Padoucas, that is to say on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, they turned left across said river and crossed a tongue of land. They camped on the 14<sup>th</sup> on the other side of the River of the Hills which also feeds into the Platte.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> they continued to travel overland, and on the 17<sup>th</sup> they came upon another river which they named the White Hills. During these three days, they crossed a region of plains in which they did not find enough wood to make a fire, and they relate in their journal that these plains extend to the mountains in the vicinity of Santa Fe.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> they camped on the banks of another river that they crossed and which they named the Friendly River.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> they found and crossed another stream which they called the River of Worries.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, they reached the River of the Kansas, which shows the approximate route they took from the Pawnees. They crossed it and in so doing lost seven horses loaded with merchandise. This river is deep and has a strong current.

The 22<sup>nd</sup>, they crossed another river, which they called the River of the Arrow.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, they again found the great prairies where one finds nothing to make a fire save buffalo dung.

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, they crossed another river, and from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> they encountered some streams every day. Finally, on the 30<sup>th</sup>, they found Spanish markings on some rocks on the banks of the last river.

They had made, in their estimation, 155 leagues overland from the Pawnees, travelling almost always to the west. They believe that this river is a branch of the Arkansas River and is the river that they encountered lower down on their return journey the tenth day after leaving Santa Fe.

They ascended the left bank of this river until the fifth of July, when they found a village of the Laitane [Comanche] nation. They made a present to these people and received some venison in return. They made their camp at a distance of 1 league from the Laitanes, as they noticed that these people had some evil purpose in mind.

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, they left the banks of this stream and upon their leaving, an Arikara Indian who was a captive among the Laitanes, told them that this tribe wanted to attack them. They sent him back saying that the natives could come and that the French would wait for them. The Laitanes did not make any move, and the slave returned to the French. They asked him if he knew the road to the Spaniards, and he answered that he did, as he had been a slave among them and had been baptized there. They hired him as a guide with the promise to procure his liberty. He consented to this, and that day they made 10 leagues in order to put distance between themselves and the Laitanes.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> they saw the Spanish mountains at a distance of over 10 leagues, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> they camped at the first mountain. On the 13<sup>th</sup> they stayed at three Laitane lodges, and they made a small present to them.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> they once again encountered a river, which they named the Red River, but which very likely is another branch of the Arkansas. Twenty-one leagues from here, they found the first Spanish post, which is a mission called Picuris.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> they encountered three Indians to whom they gave a letter for the commandant of Taos who the next day sent them some nutton and a beautiful loaf of wheat bread.

When they arrived at a league from the first post, the commandant and the padre came out to meet them along with the whole population and received them very graciously, even with the ringing of bells, according to their account.

The 21<sup>st</sup>, they left Picuris and arrived at noon at another mission called Sainte Croix, and after dinner they passed another called La Cañada, and they spent the night at a town called Sainte Marie, where they were pleasantly received by the Spaniards.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, they arrived in Santa Fe after having travelled 265 leagues from the river of the Panis Maha. One can see in the certificate enclosed herein the manner in which they were received and how they lived there nine months while they awaited the response from the Viceroy of Mexico. It is not surprising that they had to wait for so long because it is 500 leagues by land from Santa Fe to Old Mexico and no more than one caravan makes the journey each year.

The response of the viceroy, according to the report of the Canadians, was to have them stay in New Mexico. They thought that they would be hired to make the discovery of a country that, according to a tradition of the Indians, whether true or false, lay three months journey overland toward the western coast and where it was said that white men dressed in silk lived in great cities along the edge of the sea. Whatever might be so, they preferred to return and they were allowed to depart with the letters, copies of which are attached.

Santa Fe, according to their account, is a village built of wood and without any fortification. There are about 800 families, Spanish or mulatto, and in the region roundabout are a number of villages of Indians. Residing in each of them is a priest who runs the mission. There are only eighty soldiers in the garrison, a bad gang and poorly armed. There are mines very close by which are not worked at all. There are others in the province which are worked for the royal

treasury, the silver from which is transported every year to Old Mexico by caravan.

It would seem, from one of the enclosed letters, that the governors seize for themselves all the merchandise that they desire and do the little trading that goes on, which the priests and others would like to do.

The Laitane nation, which is mentioned in this journal, is not a Christian tribe like the others in the region, but it is at peace with the Spaniards. The Canadians assert that the little merchandise that they distributed among them had a great effect, and that this tribe would be entirely on our side if we had some sort of post in their country.

### ***The Return***

On the first of May, the explorers, now numbering seven, as Moreau had married in that country, left Santa Fe to find their way to the Mississippi and to New Orleans by a route other than the one they had taken on the outward journey. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May, they arrived at a mission named Pecos, where they stayed two days.

They left on the 4<sup>th</sup> and camped on a river of the same name, and they think that this river might be a branch of the Red River or of the Arkansas. They followed it on the 5<sup>th</sup> and left it on the 6<sup>th</sup>. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, they encountered another that flowed in the same direction that they named the River of the Mare. They left this stream to cross overland, following the route they had in mind, and on the 10<sup>th</sup> they encountered a third river, which they believe flows into the Red River or into the Arkansas, and which they think is the same branch on which they found higher up the Spanish inscriptions when they were en route to Santa Fe. They were then 35 or 40 leagues from that capital and they estimate that one could ascend to that place and then return in order to perfect their exploration.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup>, they followed this river and on the last day, three of the seven men quit their comrades to retake the road of the Pawnees to go to Illinois, which they accomplished according to letters sent later from that post. The other four continued in their resolution to come here. The same day, they encountered eight Laitane men with whom they camped.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, continuing along the same river, they found a Laitane village where they said they saw a quantity of horses. They spent the night there. The Indians provided them a feast, and they traded horses for some knives and other trinkets.

They continued to follow this river until the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and on that night they lost six horses. From the 22<sup>nd</sup> until the 30<sup>th</sup>, they kept at a distance from the river. That day, they encountered two men and three women of the Padoucas to whom they offered their hand, but after a bit fear seized the Indians who abandoned the meat they had been carrying and fled with their wives, and it was not possible to make them return.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, the Canadians returned to the bank of the river which they followed until the 14<sup>th</sup>. On the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup>, they camped and having carefully discussed the course of the river, they resolved to abandon the eighteen horses they had and to make elm bark canoes. They did this although they had but two knives among the four of them. At this point, they had come about 220 leagues by land from Santa Fe.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, they embarked in two small canoes and made 6 leagues, as this river does not have a strong current.

The 21<sup>st</sup>, they made the same distance. The 22<sup>nd</sup>, they saw two beautiful river mouths which likely could be the Pecos and Mare Rivers, which they had crossed near Santa Fe. Finally, on the 24<sup>th</sup>, they were agreeably surprised to find themselves at the forks of the Arkansas River. They had made about 42 leagues by canoe. Below the forks,



they found an encampment of Canadians who were hunting in order to make salted meat. Because they had nothing left save their arms and a little ammunition, they went hunting with the others and packed a pirogue with salt meat with which they returned to our post on the Arkansas and from there to New Orleans on                      1741.

Copy of a certificate given to seven Frenchmen at Santa Fe by General Jean Paëz Hurtado, *alcalde mayor* and Captain of War of this capital city of Santa Fe and its jurisdiction, Lieutenant Governor and Captain General of this Kingdom of New Mexico and its provinces.

I myself certify to Captain Don Louis de Saint-Denis, who commands the fort at the mouth of the Red River, and to all other governors and captains, judges and justices of the very Christian King of France, to all military and political officers to whom this may be presented, that on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July of the past year, 1739, there arrived in this city of Santa Fe eight Frenchmen named Pierre and Paul Mallet, brothers, Phillippe Robitaille, Louis Morin, Michel Beslot, Joseph Bellecourt, and Manuel Gallien, native-born men of Canada in New France, and Jean David of Europe, who were received in my presence by Domingo de Mendoza, Lieutenant-Colonel, Governor and Lieutenant General of this realm, at the gate of the palace, where Paul Mallet entered with the governor and with Sir Santiago Reibaldo, Vicar of this realm. The governor asked them where they came from and to what purpose. Paul answered that they came from New France and that they had come with the intent to initiate a trade with the Spanish of this realm because of the intimate connection that exists between the crowns of France and Spain.

I certify that, with this understood, the lord governor sent their guns to the guards and searched for a place for the Frenchmen to stay, because he had no room at the palace. I took them into my home where I lodged them all, and, a few days later, I sent for their arms and ammunitions and for some old clothes for their use, that they had salvaged from an accident they suffered while crossing a river, where they lost nine horses laden with merchandise and their clothing, the remainder amounting to nearly nothing. According to their report, they were still intent to discover this kingdom and to open communication with the colonies of New Orleans and Canada, and disdainful of all sorts of troubles and of risks from the savage nations that they might encounter, they came to see the Spanish, by whom they were well received, as

they were invited by them to dine in their homes and to stay with them, while awaiting the response of the Lord Archbishop, Viceroy of Mexico, Don Juan Antonio Vizarrón, which took nine months.

During this interval, the Mallet brothers, who stayed with me and dined at my table, maintained a very regular and very Christian conduct, and as they intended to return, I recommended that should they obtain a royal patent for trade with this kingdom, they should bring a certificate and passport from their governor, because without these, they would expose themselves to the confiscation of what they carried, which would be regarded as contraband.

Sincerely,

Given at Santa Fe, 30 April, 1740

*Signed:* Juan Paëz Hurtado

‡ ‡ ‡ ‡

**Copy of a letter written to Father de Beaubois by Father Santiago de Rebald, Vicar and Ecclesiastical Judge of New Mexico.**

I write to you, sir, on the occasion of the arrival of nine Frenchmen who have come from New France, named Pierre and Paul, brothers, La Rose, Phillippe, Bellecourt, Petit-Jean, Gallien and Moreau, who have communicated to me the desire they have to introduce trade between these provinces, which find themselves completely devoid of money. If they are permitted to execute their plan, one could easily remove this obstacle, as we are not more than 200 leagues from a very rich mine, abundant in silver, called *Chiguagua* [Chihuahua], where the inhabitants of this country often go to trade. And if the people were to see a chance to spend some of this unused silver, it would encourage them to work more mines that they have.

And, as these Frenchmen spoke to me about Your Reverence, and of the great credit you have in the province and city of New Orleans, I write this in

Spanish and not in Latin, not in order to worry you but so that I may inquire of your health, which I pray is perfect, to wish you prosperity, and to offer my services. I occupy here the position of vicar and ecclesiastical judge of the colony.

My Reverend Father, these Frenchmen would have me believe that I could ask you for merchandise that I need for business and to provide for the needs of my family. They say that I could obtain these easily with your help, in light of the credit you have in your community. Therefore, I immediately took advantage of this opportunity to ask that you obtain for me the goods on the enclosed list and to send them, if possible, telling me the price in silver or coins. This I will repay as an honest man and as quickly as I can. And while I am live a country where money hardly ever flows, the salary I earn from my office is paid in silver or in money that I can amass. As for the future, I have four thousand piastres at Chihuahua that I will send for when I receive an answer from Your Reverence and after we agree on prices, so long as I am pleased with the merchandise from your country, but, given what they tell me, I am sure I will be.

Fearing to have troubled you, I am the servant of Your Reverence.

*Signed:* Santiago de Rebald

‡ ‡ ‡ ‡

#### Letter to the Minister of the Marine from Bienville and Salmon.

There arrived here last March four Canadians returning from Santa Fe, the capital of the province of New Mexico, where they had gone by land without informing anyone of their intent. We were as surprised as we were satisfied by this discovery, which could offer a very important opportunity for the colony. The Company of the Indies incurred very heavy expenses to obtain knowledge of these Spanish lands. It had a fort constructed on the Missouri, where it had as many as fifty men in garrison, and counted on making it a center for

large scale trade. It obtained honors and rewards for Lord Bourgmont, who had undertaken to attempt this discovery and who fell short, as several others had before him.

The most singular thing is that Lord de La Harpe who had tried by way of the Red River and the Arkansas, did not succeed better. It appears, nevertheless, from the journal, an abstract of which is enclosed, *that a branch of the latter river flows from the Spanish territories and that one may ascend it to within about forty leagues of Santa Fe*. It is also possible that there are other branches that approach Santa Fe much more closely. Whether or not this is so, the journey of these Canadians would have been fruitless and no one could have returned to Santa Fe by using their journal, where the routes are not marked, if we had not found someone capable of returning with them in order to make this route known and to make all of the appropriate observations of the country and to lay the foundations of a trade that could become extremely important.

It is true that the trade will pose great difficulties because of the distance in leagues; nevertheless when one can go by water, it will be as easy to make a convoy every year at high water as it is to go to Illinois. As for the rest of the route overland, horses, which are numerous in that country, render the transport of merchandise practical. Anyway, it may be possible to hire Spaniards to come for goods at a point of trade, as it appears (according to one of the enclosed letters) that the people of Santa Fe trade at the mines of Chikagua, at a distance from them of 200 leagues. It is also possible, according to the letter, and the Canadians assure me so, that there are known mines in the vicinity of Santa Fe. They say that the Spaniards showed them one, three-quarters of a league from the city, and that if the Spaniards had a market for the silver they would soon open the mines and put them to good use.

All of these aims, together with those contained in the attached memoir presented us by Lord Fabry, clerk of the Marines here, have made us decide to accept the offer which he makes to go with the Canadians to perfect their discovery; the voyages he has already made in the colony lead us to believe that he will continue to stand up to the strain and risks as he has previously. He is

moreover, a person to be emulated, of known talents that predict success not only in this enterprise, but also in all other sorts of affairs where one might employ him. He intends to go to the Arkansas with the next convoy to Illinois, and from there with eight or ten Canadians he will continue the journey to New Mexico, whence he hopes to return in the spring of next year.

We hope that your lord approves the expenditure as suitable for this important discovery and also agree that it bodes well for the balance sheet of the colony.

We are with very profound respect, Your Majesty, your very humble and very obedient servants.

*Signed:* Bienville

Salmon

At New Orleans, 30 April, 1741

‡ ‡ ‡ ‡

**Letter dictated by Pierre Mallet to be given to Governor Cachupín Monsieur Governor and Captain-General.**

Pierre Malet, Jean-Baptiste Boiser, Pierre Jofrellon, Baptiste Rocque, inhabitants and natives of the province of New Orleans place themselves at your lordship's feet. We say:

I, Pierre Mallet, in the year 1740, with eight comrades from the city [sic] of Canada, with the intent to see the country and to provide support for our families, and with New Spain so close, we came from the post of *Ile Noir* [Illinois] in New France, whence we left for Taos in the province of New Mexico and from there to the city and post of Santa Fe, its governor being Don Gaspar Dominique de Mendoça. We stayed there for eight months. The Spaniards were very helpful, and their principal merchants proposed that I go back and get from my governor, Monsieur de Bienville, permission to carry merchandise to them.

This I did, and the governor, in light of what I told him, sent me back to the said province with considerable merchandise, along with my four comrades and ten soldiers that he gave me, a sergeant, an *adjutant de la place*, and a corporal. I carried a passport and a letter for the governor of this kingdom and also one for the merchants of the city of Santa Fe. Thus provided, we left. Then, after eighteen months of travel, we suffered the disgrace of losing all of the merchandise in the Red River. Because of this, we returned to our country, arriving there sick.

But never giving up intent of returning, I went to our new governor, Monsieur de Vaudreuil, who gave permission to return to New Mexico with some merchandise. He gave us a passport and a letter bearing his seal for your lordship and also another for a merchant of the city of Santa Fe, written by Monsieur Duran, a very rich man, and Monsieur Fuillet, also a wealthy man. So that your lordship might give permission to open trade as asked in the letter, the merchants wrote that they were sending invoices with us for all the Spanish might want, which they could provide most readily, even if it

came to a half million or more. And if the Spaniards wanted negroes, they would send as many as needed to open the road against any enemies that might be in the vicinity.

For this reason, I started out with my companions and the merchandise. After travelling more than seven months, the misfortune occurred that before reaching the village of Pecos, seven days before our arrival, the Comanche nation with many Indians fell upon us. They opened all our merchandise, taking pieces of wool and calico and all of our papers and letters, which we were unable to retrieve from them. We offered them all that we had for only the letter that we carried to your lordship, of which they gave us only a small piece of the envelope and the letter addressed to Morenne [Moreau?] who lives in the vicinity of the Santa Fe, which cost us a fusil valued at 100 piastres. When we arrived at the village of Pecos, we delivered these papers to your lieutenant, Don Bernar de Bustamente, along with the few items the Comanches had left us and twelve horses. In accordance with the orders that Lieutenant Don Bernardo Bustamente had given us, we have come to this royal post and into the presence of your lordship where we await with hope your orders to us so that we might obey, whether or not you give us permission to open the trade, so that we may return to our governor, Monsieur de Vaudreuil, and so that delay does not cause the loss of our homes and our families. This we beg of you, confident in your lordship, because it has been seven months since we have been gone from our country. So that you believe better, our lord, the truth of what we have said, and of our intentions as faithful Catholics, which we are, we swear to God our Lord and by the sign of the Cross that this is the truth, and we sign this with our names for the others who do not know how.

*Signed:* Pierre Mallet  
Jeanbatis Boiser



## Pierre Mallet's goods as listed by Bernardo de Miera y Pacheco:

- 2 black beaver hats with gold braid
- 4 pairs of men's Lyon stockings, damaged
- 12 other pairs of women's in god-awful (*para fe males colores*) colors
- 2 pieces of ribbon embroidered in pink and green
- 1 other of solid yellow
- 47 varas of simple black taffeta
- 40 more varas of yellow, damaged
- 6 papers of buttons, artificial gold, 24 doz. ea, and 3 papers of 4 doz.
- 6 more strips of buttons of false silver, very small
- 1 piece of heavy nankin, damaged, 35 varas
- 4 loose mesh sheets of striped Cambric, 40 varas
- $\frac{1}{2}$  vara of striped gauze, damaged
- 2 sheer stockings of Cambric with 22 Varas both
- $\frac{1}{2}$  of another sheet of silk of combined colors without embroidery, 12 varas
- $\frac{1}{2}$  of another sheet of Cambric without embroidery, 8 varas
- 37 bales of Brittany, narrow width,  $194\frac{3}{8}$  varas
- $38\frac{1}{2}$  varas of same, damaged
- 6 double platters, damaged, very ordinary
- 20 other simple ones, damaged
- 3 measures of thread
- 156 sewing needles, worn
- 400 pieces of fusil shot
- 2 pounds of ordinary powder
- 27 varas of damaged cambric
- 1 old cloth hood
- 1 scarf old and torn
- 2 old shirt fronts with silver buttons
- 3 women's blouses of pure Silesian linen, damaged
- 1 petticoat of old chintz, damaged
- 1 coat of the same
- 1 old striped smock
- 1 women's dressing gown of the same material, old
- 1 other smock of the same
- 1 other robe of the same, slightly worn
- 1 other of white chintz
- some very b

**A list of personal property belonging to Pierre Mallet and his companions  
compiled by Compañero Joseph Manuel Morales:**

One silver horse  
a blanket  
a [illegible]  
A cloth gun sheath  
a bison hide overcoat  
another [illegible]; didn't come  
a flask with a bag and a saddletree, broken  
a saddle with 5 saddle blankets and a bridle  
a blanket  
a bison hide  
a whip  
a bridle  
a spur  
a saddletree and saddle blanket  
a bag for gunpowder  
its contents  
a saddle with its saddle blanket  
a bridle with a piece of halter  
a dark horse  
a bison hide  
a blanket  
a saddle with saddle blanket  
a bridle and halter  
three firearms, two of which are fusils and one a shotgun  
a bag of rope  
a small sword of [illegible]  
a copper pot  
a handmill and three chocolate cups