

impudently to the teacher when their children are punished, with the understanding that they will bring upon themselves such punishment as may be fitting[.] They have no right to take their children from school for such a childish reason as it is our duty to see that all children receive instruction[.] No other person can give this instruction since he has offered to maintain the said school for six years counting from this day to the summer of [1795, obliging himself, as he has done, to be subject to the full rigor of the law if he fails to comply[.] . . . We thus decree, command, and sign in this *sala capitular* in the exercise of our rights, and witness in the *villa* of San Fernando, and *Preclio* [sic] of San Antonio de Bexar on the first day of May, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine[.]

Ignacio Calbillo [Rubric]  
 Julian de Rocha [Rubric]  
 Jose Antonio Saucedo [Rubric]  
 Marco de Zepeda [Rubric]  
 Angel Nábarro [Rubric]  
 Joachin Flores [Rubric]  
 Jn Felipe Flores [Rubric]  
 Joaquin de Orendain [Rubric]

*San Antonio de Bexar*  
*1<sup>o</sup> de Mayo de 1789*

I approve the preceding proposition made by Don José Francisco de la Maral.]

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Education during the Mexican Era, 1821–1848*

*The education of youth has always been one of the most important bases for the felicity of Peoples, and the prosperity of their Government. The Mexican, who, unfortunately, groaned under the despotic and savage sway of the ambitious sons of Ibertia, has never occupied himself in perfecting this most important institution, which would already have placed him on a level with the most cultured nations. The corrupt Government at Madrid only cared to suck up, by whatever means within its reach, the precious resources of the Americas, and studiously and craftily to retard the growth of enlightenment.*

—1821 School Ordinance, San Fernando de Bexar, Texas<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The social, economic, and political changes accompanying the independence of Mexico from Spain in 1821 profoundly affected schooling in the far northern colonies. Most significantly, Mexican independence ended the close relationship between education and religion that largely defined the colonial era. The end of state-sponsored religious missions, a new spirit of egalitarianism, and constitutional requirements for schooling combined to bring new importance to public schooling. Unlike before, public schools became a critical component of the creation of an educated citizenry. In this regard, the link between education and the republic echoed Jeffersonian principles articulated in the early Republican Era of the United States.<sup>2</sup> However, decades of political upheaval in the fledgling Mexican state and the unintended negative consequences of the closure of the missions prevented the widespread establishment of public schools.

Royal orders requiring public primary schools had increased during the late Spanish colonial era (1800–1821). In practice, however, government resources favored universities for the upper classes and missions for Native Americans. The Mexican Revolution altered this colonial system. Public education was thrust into debates over the shape and character of the new republic. Borrowing from the ideology of the American republic, the Mexican secretary of state argued, “without education liberty cannot exist.”<sup>3</sup> Mexico’s

1824 constitution adopted these ideals and required the provision of education for the masses. However, neither state nor federal funds were authorized for public schools, leaving local communities with the complete burden of generating resources. Similar to public schooling measures passed in the legislatures of the pre-Civil War American South that went unrealized, ambitious plans rarely resulted in permanent institutions outside of the largest and most prosperous communities.<sup>4</sup> In general, many parallels exist between the evolution of Mexico's public school system during these formative years and that of the United States immediately prior to the common school movement of the 1830s and 1840s.

### POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN MEXICO, 1821-1848

Although many scholars date the beginning of Mexican Independence to the 1810 "Grito de Dolores," criollo military officer Augustin de Iturbide officially declared Mexico independent from Spain in 1821.<sup>5</sup> The Mexican Revolution was chiefly a revolt of the Mexican-born criollos against Spanish domination, but egalitarian principles also stirred reformers.<sup>6</sup> Historians Michael Meyer and William Sherman describe Mexican history during the 1830s and 1840s as one which "constantly reentered between simple chaos and unmitigated anarchy."<sup>7</sup> The average presidential term during the 1830s and 1840s was seven and one-half months. Because of delays in communication and transportation, government officials in the far northern frontier often had difficulty knowing which regime's policies and laws they were following. As a result, local officials often created their own laws or used outdated policies.<sup>8</sup>

The revolution's 1821 Plan de Iguala (Equality) declared "the social and civil equality of Spaniards, Indians, and Mestizos."<sup>9</sup> The Mexican Era thus ushered in changes in social relations between the main populations of colonial society—Spanish, Indian, black—and the many variations (mestizos, Afromestizos, etc.) that three hundred years of intermingling had produced. In the new nation, racial classifications in public documents were forbidden and replaced with the more general cultural term, *gente de razón* (people of reason). Martha Menchaca asserts that by the time of the Mexican Era, "gente de razón" was a term referring to Catholics and the racially mixed heterogeneous population that "practiced Spanish-Mexican traditions," but the term excluded tribal Indians.<sup>10</sup> Despite revolutionary ideals disparaging Spain's three-century-long racial and ethnic caste system, a racial hierarchy that prized whiteness and devalued the darker hued Indian, black, and Afromestizo members of its population continued during the Mexican Era (1821-1848).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, slavery was not abolished, although liberal plans were enacted for gradual emancipation. In fact, the new constitution of 1824 banned the slave trade, set slave children free at the age of fourteen, and required adult slaves to be set free after ten years.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to cultural changes among frontier Mexican society, economic shifts also impacted education. Historians generally agree that during the Mexican Era, trade and accumulation of capital increased stratification between social classes. The abolition of Spain's restrictive policies opened the door for trade with Americans, French, British, and Russians.<sup>13</sup> William Bucknell's opening in 1822 of the Santa Fé Trail, facilitated overland trade between the east and west coasts. Ships from the American northeast and Europe exchanged luxury goods and other manufactured products for raw products in the ports of California. Demand for cattle hides, tallow, and wool among manufacturers overseas contributed to the emergence of a wealthy Mexican ranchero class in Texas, California, and New Mexico, occupying the highest tier of Mexico's new social order.<sup>14</sup> This wealthy class was able to provide financial support to bolster local school initiatives.

The military presidio (fort), an institution central to the conquest and maintenance of Spain's far northern colonies, adapted to the new changes wrought by the revolution. The authority of military officers in the presidios, designed to protect settlements and missions, was subsumed to new town councils called *ayuntamientos*. However, the soldiers and officers from the presidios also donated their time and skill as teachers. In addition, they raised funds for the new public schools. Additionally, because Native Americans, often armed with guns and supplies from American traders, increased the frequency of their attacks upon settlements, education often took a back seat to the basic necessity for safety and protection.<sup>15</sup>

The Spanish missions had been agricultural and educational settlements for three centuries; they, too, came under fire in the new order. In the eyes of many reformers, the 1821 Plan de Iguala and 1824 constitution declaring Native Americans as citizens equal to those of Spanish descent rendered the missions antiquated institutions of feudal Spanish society. In addition, many people felt that missionaries had monopolized valuable land for settlement, resulting in their economic and political gain. These sentiments contributed to the government's decision to secularize the missions. Secularization, as described below, ended the formal provision of education to Native Americans. Whether social, economic, or political, the cumulative effect of Mexican independence disrupted traditional hierarchies. Education was no longer reserved only for elite members of society—nor was it simply a tool to impose Christianization and Hispanicization upon indigenous peoples.

### DECLINE OF THE MISSIONS

As the reader may recall from chapter one, during Spanish colonial rule missions were the primary cultural institutions on the frontier. For example, mission libraries were often extensive and operated as informal lending libraries for the surrounding settlers. California's Mission San Loreto contained a library of 466 volumes and Mission San Jose de Comandú possessed 126 volumes.<sup>16</sup> In addition, priests were highly educated men who had

studied at European universities or the new colleges in colonial Mexico. They often brought with them broad philosophical and religious ideas that even the Inquisition could not suppress. Whether or not modern historians evaluate the practices of the missionary priests as beneficial or harmful, it is fact that they taught the Native Americans and mestizos the Spanish language, recorded and translated Indian languages and histories, spread the Catholic religion, and introduced European industrial trades. Furthermore, in the most remote areas, they provided separate schools to settlers' children. Under Mexican independence, cultural, educational, and religious institutions suffered from the diversion of resources and energies to political and military matters.

The original role and purpose of the missions under Spanish colonial times became anachronistic after independence. Since the 1500s, missionaries from various orders, including the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits, were required to accompany all exploring parties to the New World. These priests were called "regular clergy" and they remained under the specific authority of their order. The other branch of clergy, called "secular clergy," were priests who reported to a bishop rather than a private order. The crown supported regular clergy in the missions for ten years. After this period regular clergy were expected to transfer ownership to secular clergy, or "secularize." Unlike its modern definition, the term "secularization" in 1800s Mexico meant a transfer in governance from specific orders (e.g., Franciscans or Jesuits) to parish-supported priests (secular clergy). As a part of this process missions would become self-supporting parishes, no longer requiring government subsidies. Furthermore, land that the missionaries or Crown had held in trust for Native Americans was to be turned over to them as private property. In return, Native Americans were required to pay taxes and support the parish. Lastly, any surplus lands would become a part of the public domain, available for purchase.<sup>18</sup> Although secularization was, on paper, an evolutionary step in the development of Spanish frontier society, in practice it was rarely carried out before the 1800s. In 1813 the liberal Spanish Parliament demanded the immediate secularization of all missions ten years of age or older, but few carried out the orders.<sup>19</sup> It was not until the 1820s that secularization finally began in the northern frontier of Mexico.

Several factors contributed to the end of the missions by the 1820s in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico and the mid-1830s in California. Ideologically, the paternalistic and condescending attitudes toward Native Americans on the part of Spanish priests clashed with the liberal ideals of the independent government. In addition, the fight for independence created anti-Spanish and anticlerical feelings among the colonists. As a result, few Spanish-born priests could be persuaded to work on the frontier.<sup>20</sup> Finally, both the Spanish government during the rebellion and the Mexican government in the 1820s and 1830s directed funds away from the missions to military or other needs. Missionary priests were thus unable to adequately provide for the needs of their "charges."<sup>21</sup>

Historians generally agree that missions in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas had secularized by the 1820s. Obtaining an accurate count of Indians

after Mexican independence becomes problematic because the government forbade enumeration using Spanish racial classifications. Native Americans baptized and still living in the missions were called "neophytes." When missionaries believed they were sufficiently converted to Hispanic and Christian culture, they were gradually allowed first to visit and then return to their villages, or *rancherías*, permanently. Governmental decrees for secularization sped this process as Native Americans themselves left the missions once they were no longer coerced to remain.<sup>22</sup> By 1820 in Arizona only 1,127 neophytes remained in the missions—9,200 Indians were living in their own *rancherías*. In Texas, Indians secularized in the 1800s were counted as part of the 7,800 Mexican gente de razón, making it difficult to estimate their population numbers. In the ethnically heterogeneous population of New Mexico, an 1827 census revealed 43,433 citizens in and around Santa Fé. By 1840 it was estimated that about ten thousand Christianized Indians were living in communities apart from the gente de razón.<sup>23</sup> The most detailed information on secularization and Native American populations is based upon the later-settled and larger system of missions in California.

Extending from San Diego to Cape Mendocino and encompassing 14 million acres of fertile land, the Alta California missions were particularly well endowed.<sup>24</sup> Unlike the New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas missions, which were almost exclusively supported by the government, the California missions were required to find private benefactors.<sup>25</sup> Money from wealthy Spanish benefactors was placed into a financial entry called the "Pious Fund."<sup>26</sup> From that fund the Franciscans invested in land, ranches, and livestock—assets that dramatically increased in value during the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

Native Americans greatly outnumbered gente de razón in California. In 1821 only 3,200 settlers were estimated to be living in scattered towns and ranches. An estimated 21,000 neophyte Indians lived in the missions in the 1820s, a number that rapidly declined after the governor of California officially secularized the missions in 1834. According to historian George Phillips, as the missions secularized, Native Americans left to find work on ranches, headed to larger towns such as Los Angeles, or joined unchristianized tribes.<sup>27</sup>

Disease also decimated an extraordinary number of neophyte Indians in California. Historians Paul Farnsworth and Robert Jackson detail the devastating effect of gathering large numbers of Native Americans in the close, poorly ventilated quarters of the missions. Smallpox, venereal disease, and other infectious European diseases contributed to high mortality rates. The missions brought new "uncivilized" Indians into the missions to keep their numbers up but could not maintain pre-1810 levels. For example, 1,361 neophytes were living in Mission San Juan Capistrano in 1812. By 1820, the number had decreased to 1,064 and by 1830 there were only 925.<sup>28</sup> High infant mortality and low life expectancy in the missions contributed to historians Erick Langer and Robert Jackson's conclusion that the California missions were "death camps" for Native Americans. In their study of Mission

Soledad in Alta California, for example, more than 90 percent of the children died before reaching the age of ten; hence, within one generation more than 90 percent of the future indigenous population of that mission had disappeared.<sup>39</sup>

Native Americans and missionaries held differing views on the decline of the missions. Unaccustomed to the notion of Indians as individuals capable of self-governance, missionaries expressed alarm at their fate under secularization. Reverend Gonzales Rubio, returning to California in the 1830s, wrote, "My Mission had already been secularized, and I had no resources. I could do nothing for the Indians, who were like boys of one hundred years. It is only with liberality you can draw them towards you: give them plenty to eat and clothes in abundance, and they will soon become your friends, and you can then conduct them to religion, form them to good manners, and teach them civilized habits."<sup>40</sup> What is also revealed in the priest's statements are the terms (food, clothing, etc.) under which Native Americans would choose to stay in the missions (see document 2.3).

Other contemporary observers illuminated the constrained nature of Indian education during the decline of the missions. British captain Frederick W. Beechey, a frequent visitor to the California missions in the 1830s, reflected, "there may be occasional acts of tyranny, yet the general character of the padres is kind and benevolent . . . It is greatly to be regretted that with the influence these men have over their pupils, and with the regard those pupils seem to have for their masters, the priests do not interest themselves a little more in the education of their converts, the first step would be in making themselves acquainted with the Indian language. Many of the Indians surpass their pastors in this respect, and can speak the Spanish language, while scarcely one of the padres can make themselves understood by the Indians. They have besides, in general, a lamentable contempt for the intellect of these simple people, and think them incapable of improvement beyond a certain point."<sup>41</sup> Comments such as these provide hints of the still-rigid beliefs Europeans held about the educability of Native Americans.

Historians today note the administrative barriers and unrealistic expectations hindering the smooth transition of Native Americans toward land ownership and self-governance. Specifically, Menhaca and others point out that the 1824 constitution's General Law of Colonization resulted in significant parcels of land being placed in the hands of a small number of settlers.<sup>42</sup> Christianized Native Americans often entered into unfair labor contracts with new landowners. Subsequently, without the paternalistic protection of missionaries, many Indians became trapped in a system of debt peonage.<sup>43</sup>

For three centuries missions had provided close, sustained acculturation not only toward Indians but also between Indians and the Spanish. According to Farnsworth and Jackson, the late mission years permitted "stabilized pluralism" in which "native Americans adopted a culture that was neither Native nor Spanish but exhibited elements of both."<sup>44</sup> Overall, the secularization of the missions in the 1820s and 1830s ended an important institution in the educational, religious, and cultural life of the Southwest. When Anglo settlers

began moving into the Southwest in large numbers—to Texas in the 1820s and elsewhere by the 1840s—the abandoned and decrepit missions sent a misleading message that neither Spaniards nor Mexicans placed much emphasis upon cultural institutions in general and education specifically.

## PATHS TOWARD MEXICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Rule No. 2: School. No director or maestro will be appointed to the school who is not examined and approved by the departmental assembly in reading, writing, and counting. At the same time he will have to make evident the depth of his Christian fervor and patriotism, and he should show his comprehension of the republican, federal, representative, and popular system of government and the great advantages which accrue to our immortal nation through this system.*

—Rules and Regulations for a Public School  
Villa de Santa Cruz de la Cañada, New Mexico, 1827<sup>45</sup>

Under colonial rule, the purpose of public education was to transfer and maintain the Spanish culture, language, and the Catholic religion in the New World. For example, the Spanish king's 1782 proclamation requiring Spanish-language schools used "better instruction in the Christian doctrines and polite intercourse with all persons" as the justification for education. This had little to do with Enlightenment ideals of liberty and citizenship.<sup>46</sup> After 1821, the role and purpose of public schools shifted ideologically to reflect the spirit and purpose of independence. Growth in the actual number of public schools in the Mexican Era was less significant than the population's changing perception of the role of education in a republic. Historian Richard J. Altenbaugh found a similar pattern in U.S. history, arguing that schooling "underwent a profound transition, not so much institutionally but conceptually, during the early days of the [American] republic."<sup>47</sup>

The implementation of public schools during the Mexican Era was uneven and depended upon the energies and resources of local communities. However, it was very characteristic of the "district school" stage of educational development in the U.S. frontier of the early 1800s. During this district era, rural communities often obtained their own resources for schools through donations of money, firewood, and food. Furthermore, the qualifications of local teachers were often meager and communities hired itinerant schoolmasters with few formal qualifications.<sup>48</sup>

The Mexican nation's antimonomarchical republican spirit was reflected in both the rhetoric and administrative structure created to support education. The new secretary of state's 1823 view that "without education, liberty cannot exist" received formal backing in the 1824 constitution.<sup>49</sup> Unlike the U.S. Constitution, which did not mention education specifically but declared in the tenth amendment that education is the responsibility of the states, the Mexican constitution specifically required education in Article 50, No.1.

Within Article 50, both primary and university schooling were mentioned. It required the establishment of colleges for the "Marine, Artillery and Engineer Departments" and for teaching "the natural and exact sciences, the political and moral sciences, the useful arts and languages." Furthermore, the General Congress could "regulate the public education in their respective states," as long as Congress did not "prejudice" the "rights which the states possess."<sup>40</sup> Despite the broad-minded and progressive attitude embodied in the constitution, the absence of a predetermined federal funding mechanism (e.g. taxes or land grants) weakened the implementation of the public school system.

The administration of Mexico's public education was top-down. Congress passed laws at the federal level that the various departments (states) were required to implement. At the departmental level laws were then passed on to the local level. Power over local schools regarding finances, teacher hiring and firing, and other administrative matters rested with the local political body called the *ayuntamiento*. The *ayuntamiento* held considerable power over the fledgling public schools, similar to the role of mid-nineteenth-century school boards in U.S. history.

At least two major pieces of educational legislation were passed in the National Congress between 1821 and 1848. In 1833 Congress issued sweeping and detailed legislation regulating the public schools. (See document 2.3 for entire School Act of 1833.) Among the 19 articles in the School Act were requirements for the creation of normal schools and the appointment and pay of school inspectors to visit public schools. Furthermore, it was ordered that primary schools be opened at each of the six national colleges. Tensions between the Catholic Church and the state appear to underlie Article 9, which ordered fines for parishes or religious orders who were requested to open schools and "fail[ed] to do so." The 1833 decree further required annual public examinations at local schools and provisions for children who, "due to their poverty, deserve to be helped." Primary education for girls was also specifically addressed. In addition to the prescribed curriculum of "reading, writing, arithmetic and the political and religious catechisms," it was stated that girls "shall be taught to sew, embroider, and other useful occupations of their sex."<sup>41</sup>

Three years later, in 1836, Congress ordered departments to establish public schools in each pueblo (village). The *ayuntamientos* were also named as the chief administrative units, a function they fulfilled de facto for numerous years.<sup>42</sup> The legislative acts of the 1830s, designed to be a blueprint for the constitution's educational mandate, were implemented with varying success across the new Mexican nation. In large urban areas such as Mexico City, public primary and secondary schools were numerous, well-supported, and in the close vicinity of institutions of higher education. In rural Mexico, most notably the far northern departments of California, New Mexico (which included Arizona), and Texas, the ability to find qualified teachers, adequate supplies, and even buildings presented a formidable challenge. Of course, this should come as no surprise since remote, rural schools in any nation are the hardest to establish and support.

### EARLY TEXAS SCHOOLS IN THE MEXICAN ERA

The evolution of San Fernando de Béjar (modern-day San Antonio), illuminates the conditions under which public education attempted to secure a permanent footing in Mexican society. Béjar, as the town was commonly called, attempted to carry out in good faith the state of Texas-Coahuila's constitutional requirements for education. On March 11, 1827, the Congress of Texas-Coahuila ratified its new constitution. Title VI, Article 215 required: "In all the towns of the state a suitable number of primary schools shall be established, wherein shall be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, the catechism of the Christian religion, a brief and simple explanation of this constitution, and that of the republic."<sup>43</sup> A commissioner appointed by the state legislature issued a ruling in September of that year further requiring new towns to set aside lands for a market square, jail, burial grounds, and "a school and other edifices for public instruction."<sup>44</sup> Although educational historians have often noted that both constitutional and rhetorical demands for schools during formative eras were often ignored, Béjar possessed the resources to carry out these legislative acts.<sup>45</sup>

In 1828 the *ayuntamiento* of Béjar issued an ordinance for public schools. Victoriano Zepeda, secretary of the *ayuntamiento*, and five other members articulated their views of schooling. They linked education with the recent revolution, stating that Mexicans had "broke finally the ominous chain which bound us, elevating us to the rank of free men, independent of any other." (Refer to document 2.1 for entire text.) Furthermore, the *ayuntamiento* pointed out that an annual gift of six hundred dollars for four years from local citizen General Anastacio Bustamante would allow Béjar to create permanent schools, despite being "one of the most distant [towns] from the center, of the least populous, of the poorest in moneyed citizens, and finally, vexed by the terrifying hostilities which it has suffered from the savages through long periods of time."<sup>46</sup> The school was created and benefited from some state assistance. For example, in 1828 the State of Texas-Coahuila "brought one hundred charts, thirty six catechism and other supplies" for the school children of Béjar.<sup>47</sup>

San Fernando de Béjar was not the only town in Texas-Coahuila to create schools or maintain those schools begun during the colonial era. Early in 1829 the Congress of Texas-Coahuila issued Decree No. 92. The decree required schools based upon the Lancaster Plan to be established in the capital of each department. The Lancaster Plan, originating in England, was a monitorial system of education that gained popularity in Europe, the United States, and Mexico in the early 1800s. Under this plan, advanced students could efficiently train or "monitor" those students below them, thus saving money for the schools.<sup>48</sup> The scope of Decree No. 92 was broad and ambitious for the times. It required towns to pay teachers 800 dollars per annum and expected each school to have a minimum of 150 scholars. In addition, although allowance was made for children whose parents were "unable to pay," tuition was charged to the parents. Parents were required to pay 14 dollars a year for

each primary-school child and 18 dollars for each student receiving secondary instruction.<sup>49</sup> The city of Leona Vicario carried out this directive, establishing a Lancastrian school. In 1829 the school had 57 pupils, the teacher was paid his full eight hundred dollars, including a house rented for him, and money was spent on slates, table, benches, and paper. Indeed, the city paid out \$1,250.00 for its school that year, many of those funds collected from tuition.<sup>50</sup>

The State of Texas-Coahuila's plan for Lancastrian schools was quickly scaled back to one that was more financially feasible. In April of 1830, the congress formally recognized "the obstacles that have arisen for strictly fulfilling the decree No. 92." Instead of renewing the original plan, they asked for "six public primary schools," a teacher salary that was only five hundred dollars per year, and other measures that revised the original decree, creating more realistic goals.<sup>51</sup>

The town of Nacogdoches also actively worked to create a school. Similar to nineteenth-century associations in the United States that called themselves "friends of education," the citizens of Nacogdoches created a Board of Piety on January 16, 1831, to raise funds for both a new church and school. The group posted and distributed a circular in March of 1831 in both the English and Spanish languages, reflecting the rapid increase in the number of Anglo settlers who came to Texas in the 1820s. The circular emphasized that a church was necessary to "worship the Gospel agreeable to the Roman Catholic Religion which is professed by the Mexican Nation." The primary school was, in their opinion, "of absolute necessity in civilized society attended by any form of government wherever." The community's response illuminated the range of frontier resources in early-nineteenth-century Texas. Two colonels were able to donate one hundred pesos each; other donations ranged from Don Patricio Torres's "month's service of a hired laborer," to the "yearling calf" from Don Concepción Ybarba and the five pesos from Don Jesús Santos (see document 2.4 for entire list of contributors). The State of Texas-Coahuila further boosted funding to the new schools with an 1833 land grant of "four sitios of land," whose proceeds would be "appropriated entirely and exclusively as a fund of the primary schools."<sup>52</sup> In Texas, existing records document the initiative of several communities to create public schools. The pattern in California reflected another strategy in the Mexican Era—utilizing mission properties to open public schools.

## PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN CALIFORNIA DURING THE MEXICAN ERA

The two principal colonial institutions—the mission and the presidio—continued to adapt and change (or be changed) under Mexican governance. Unlike in Texas, where local communities created and funded schools, the governors of Mexican California provided more top-down direction regarding public schools.

In San José, the estimated population of whites and Indians was still small at the time of independence. For instance, the total population in 1822 was about 300 and increased to 600 by 1830.<sup>53</sup> The public school (preserved today as a historical site in downtown San José), had two teachers in 1821—brothers Joaquin and Antonio Buelna. In 1822 a "one-legged soldier named Labatida" was appointed as the teacher, presumably as a replacement. José Antonio Romero became the teacher in 1823 and apparently remained in that position for several years.

The salaries for the San José teachers were 15 dollars per month.<sup>54</sup> The average teacher salary in the Mexican Era—between 15 and 20 dollars per month—compared poorly to that of other public servants. The average pay for a presidential soldier was 30 dollars monthly; in some cases, soldiers drew dual pay from their roles as both soldiers and teachers.<sup>55</sup>

The scattered records from Monterey indicate that a school was in operation in the 1820s but closed temporarily in 1829, "for want of a teacher."<sup>56</sup> Manuel Crespo and Antonio Buelna (apparently the same from San José) taught for 15 to 20 dollars a month. The city's school inventory in 1829 consisted of "a table, one arithmetic, and copy-books."<sup>57</sup>

Further south in San Diego, the public school was held at the presidio. In 1829, 18 students were enrolled. Reflecting Mexico's official recognition of the Catholic Church as the church of the State, a "Padre Menendez" was reported as the teacher and he received from 15 to 20 dollars a month from the city funds.<sup>58</sup>

The governors of California issued numerous public pronouncements and decrees for public schools during the 1820s and 1830s. In 1822 Governor Pablo Vicente de Sola recommended that since no schools existed at the mission, "for a small sum the padres might hire teachers and do great good."<sup>59</sup> In 1824 a "hospicio de estudios" was proposed in the California legislature with four members voting in favor, but no further mention is found of the proposed school, and it is uncertain whether four members were sufficient for a passing resolution.

Under Governor José María Echeandía (1825–1831) California became more involved in the creation of school policy. In 1827 the legislature recommended the federal government send teachers to a small "colegio ó academia de gramática, filosofía, etc." (secondary school, or academy of grammar and philosophy).<sup>60</sup> The same year, in 1827 Echeandía ordered the establishment of public schools in the missions, but his orders were not favorably received at the struggling missions. Resistance may have stemmed from his policy requiring that "masters should be employed and all expenses paid by the missions, but that the schools should be under control of the ayuntamientos or other authorities."<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, by 1829 Echeandía reported that seven of the southern missions had established schools—with student populations ranging from eight to forty-four.<sup>62</sup>

The patchwork school system of the 1820s improved in the 1830s with assistance from the federal government. In 1833 the California legislature passed an act requiring all towns to establish primary schools. The following

year the central government sent 20 teachers to carry out this mandate. The teachers arrived in San Diego as part of the larger Higar-Padres Colony, which totaled 239 people and included several professionals and skilled craftsmen. According to Cecil Hutchinson, the teachers then migrated to Los Angeles, San José, and Santa Barbara.<sup>61</sup>

### PUBLIC SCHOOLING IN NEW MEXICO AND ARIZONA

Educational progress in New Mexico (which included Arizona during the Mexican Era) appears to have been the slowest among the new nation's northern settlements in terms of formal institutional development. The work of teacher and priest Antonio José Martínez dominates the narrative of New Mexican education. A native of Taos, Martínez spent six years in advanced schooling in central Mexico before returning to establish a boys seminary in 1823. He soon expanded the Taos seminary to boys wishing to receive higher-level lessons in grammar, morals, rhetoric, logic, reading, writing, and arithmetic.<sup>64</sup> An additional educational contribution was Martínez's purchase of a printing press; in 1835 he brought a press and a printer named "Baca" to Taos. The press produced urgently needed schoolbooks, religious materials, and newspapers.

Historians know more about the qualifications desired of New Mexico's public school teachers than the individuals themselves. In 1827, for example, Villa de Santa Cruz de la Cañada adopted detailed rules for their teacher or "maestro." Political values of the new nation were blended with progressive European pedagogical views of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The maestro was ordered to "take great care in teaching the children to treat citizens with the kind of courtesy and politeness which ought to shine forth in a son of our glorious Republic." The close Church-State relationship is illuminated in Rule No. 11, which required teachers to assemble the entire school after each Sunday mass for a visitation/inspection by the ayuntamiento. Students were required to "present for review their books, copy books, etc."<sup>66</sup> This type of public accountability was certainly a feature of many rural schools in the United States of the nineteenth century, often taking the form of public spelling bees or award presentations.<sup>66</sup> The close link of these activities with Catholic religious practices distinguishes it from the Pan-Protestant American experience.

### NONFORMAL EDUCATION DURING THE MEXICAN ERA

Outside of the publicly recorded measures taken toward public schools in the Mexican-Era Southwest are the numerous informal arrangements for school-

ing held in various settings, called nonformal education. While documented less frequently, this was most likely the most prevalent form under which literacy was obtained in the frontier southwest. Furthermore, the opening of trade with other countries and the arrival of British, American, and other "foreigners" and their supplies spread the printed word and the need for and interest in at least rudimentary literacy.

Prior to Mexican Independence, government officials from the Spanish Inquisition monitored and censored reading materials brought to the colonies. The end of Spanish rule, the spirit of freedom imbued in the ideology of the new nation, and the weakened status of the Catholic Church encouraged the introduction of a greater number and variety of books and other print materials in northern Mexico after 1821.<sup>67</sup> In addition, the government provided formal protection of freedom of expression, further creating a more enlightened atmosphere concerning controversial ideas and literature. For instance, Article 12 of the 1827 constitution of Texas-Coahuila declared, "the state is also obligated to protect all its inhabitants in the exercise of the right which they possess of writing, printing and freely publishing their sentiments and political opinions, without the necessity of an examination, or critical review previous to their publication."<sup>68</sup>

The political and economic changes of the Mexican Era led to the creation of a wealthy *ranchero* class. This class was able to use its greater expendable income to purchase luxury items such as leather bound books.<sup>69</sup> Young men from this class also learned from local officials and professionals to expand their education. For example, California Juan Bautista Alvarado clerked for the Monterey settler Nathan Spear. Spear reported that he "was in the habit of imparting to him [Alvarado] when in his employ a good deal of information about other countries and governments."<sup>70</sup> Mexican Governor Pablo Vicente Sola tutored Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo in political and historical events and guided a reading of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. For a brief period in the 1830s a small group of Californios were tutored together at the ranch of William E. P. Harnell in Monterey.<sup>71</sup>

Although the education of girls was formally prescribed in the School Act of 1833, contemporary observers note that girls were usually taught at home or in local arrangements. For example, Apolinaria Lorenzano recalled her early experiences teaching in a small school "established by a widow, where gente de razón girls learned to read, pray, and sew." She was also employed at the San Diego mission teaching sewing and reading to girls.<sup>72</sup> Lorenzano's teaching experiences appear similar to the female-run "amiga" schools of the colonial era, which appear to have continued during the Mexican years.

The introduction of printing presses to the far northern Mexican states also expanded opportunities for literacy. An American entrepreneur began operating a press in San Antonio in 1823. His bilingual newspaper was short-lived, but it was the first in Texas. By the early 1830s, presses were operating in New Mexico and California producing newspapers, leaflets, and books to a receptive audience.<sup>73</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The development of public schools in the far northern Mexico frontier began during 27 years of rapid political, economic, and social change. By 1844 Mexico as a whole had almost 60,000 students attending 1,310 public primary schools.<sup>74</sup> However, educational development was relatively slow in the frontier communities of New Mexico, Texas, and California. Most children were educated at home, at a neighbor's home, or in a private or public school. The elite were sent to the United States, England, France, or even the Sandwich Islands.<sup>75</sup> The resources of the Mexican government between the 1820s and 1840s were put toward maintaining inner political stability and protection from the warring Native Americans on the frontier. Daniel Tyler calculated that the Mexican government was allocating only a miniscule amount of funds toward education compared to the amount given to the military during those tumultuous decades.<sup>76</sup> The constitutional requirements for schools and subsequent legislative acts remained only partially fulfilled during the Mexican Era. As Anglo settlers began moving into Texas in the 1820s and ultimately declared independence in 1837, Tejanos had established, at least in concept, the idea of government-sponsored schooling. The U.S. victory in the Mexican-American War (1846-48) led to the subsequent subordination of Mexican laws and customs to U.S. goals. These changes were carried out in political, economic, and social arenas, including education.

## DOCUMENT 2.1

*Statement of the Ayuntamiento on the  
Purpose of Public Education*

*The nationalist tone of this document illuminates the desire of Mexicans to distance themselves from Spain's tight monarchical control over the colonies. Similar to resolutions for schools in the Republican Era of the United States, education is linked to the creation of a freethinking citizenry.*

From I. J. Cox, "Educational Efforts in San Fernando de Bexar," *Texas Historical Association Quarterly* (July 1902): 62-63. Courtesy the Texas State Historical Association, Austin.

*San Fernando de Bexar,  
13 of Feb., 1828.*

The foregoing Ordinance having been put under general discussion, it has been approved in its entirety by this Ayuntamiento.

*Capitular Hall of San Fernando de Bejar,  
13 of March, 1828.*

Ramon Musquiz  
Juan Martin de Beramendi  
José Maria de la Garza  
Manul. Flores  
Juan Angl. Seguin  
Victoriano Zepeda  
Sec'y ad Interim.

The education of youth has always been one of the most important bases for the felicity of Peoples, and the prosperity of their Government. The Mexican, who, unfortunately, groaned under the despotic and savage sway of the ambitious sons of Iberia, has never occupied himself in perfecting this most important institution, which would already have placed him on a level with the most cultured nations. The corrupt Government at Madrid only cared to suck up, by whatever means within its reach, the precious resources of the Americas, and studiously and craftily to retard the growth of enlighten-



ment. Nothing, in truth, was more natural than this iniquitous behavior, since the first, ~~increasing~~ <sup>reversing</sup> its riches, satisfied all the desires of its vain and haughty nature (caprice) and the second secured it in the domination of the richest and most productive of its evil-acquired patrimonies, blinding us to the important knowledge of our Native rights.

Nevertheless, the natural empire of the reason, which some day comes to prevail, and the characteristic qualities of all the children of this soil, in union with other joint causes, broke finally the ~~ominous~~ chain which bound us, elevating us to the rank of free men independent of any other.

In spite of this, and of the paternal ~~beneficent~~ institutions of our Present Government, to which belongs the establishment of primary Schools, the spirit of discord which still endures amongst us has impeded it from occupying itself with this, as with other matters that undoubtedly make for the aggrandizement of the Nation, all its efforts being employed in assuring our internal and external tranquility, which is doubtless the corner stone of the social edifice.

In spite of all, and in virtue of the ardent desires of the towns, there are already seen in most of them educational establishments for the youth who will form the future generation, which will come to secure completely Mexican Liberties; and among these, although one of the most distant from the center, of the least populous, of the poorest in moneyed citizens, and finally, vexed by the terrifying hostilities which it has suffered from the savages through long periods of time, [Béjar] has just made a heroic and extraordinary effort, stirred up by several of its citizens, and by that worthy citizen, General Anastasio Bustamante, to make a collection amongst all its citizens, amounting to six hundred dollars annually and ~~lasting for four years~~, in order to carry to accomplishment the desire which in all time it has had for the education of its youth.

Yes, unfortunate Béjar, truly worthy of a better fate, you are the one which has just given so heroic a testimony of beneficence in spite of your notorious poverty; with difficulty do you commence to lift yourself from the abject state into which you had sunk, thanks to the presence of that philanthropic General and the aid of the Supreme Federal Government.

Be filled, then, citizens of Béjar, with the ineffable satisfaction which is produced by the important services directed to the good of your children, of society in general, and of the adored Country to which we belong, awaiting the glorious day in which you may either experience the fruit of your sacrifices for this pious establishment, or in which your ashes may receive a new being, through the eulogies which, without doubt, your posterity will lavish upon you.

## DOCUMENT 2.2

### Secularization of the Missions— Missionary Point of View, 1833

*In this recollection of the demise of the missions, an active participant paints a bucolic scene of their former glory. The Native American point of view of this event has unfortunately received little documentation. Through the work of modern day archeologists, estimates of Indian illness and disease in the missions—as mentioned below—has received greater attention and inclusion in the historical narrative.*

From Msgr. Francis J. Weber, as first published in *Documents of California Catholic History* (1784–1963) (Los Angeles, CA: Dawson's Book Shop, 1965), pp. 33–36.

GONZALES RUBIO TO JOSÉ JOACHIM ADAM, SANTA BARBARA,  
SEPTEMBER 1864.

On my landing in this country, which happened on the 15th of January, 1833, there were in existence from San Diego up to San Francisco Solano 21 Missions, which provided for 14,000 to 15,000 Indians. Even the poorest Missions, those of San Rafael and Soledad, provided everything for divine worship, and the maintenance of the Indians. The care of the neophytes was left to the Missionary, who, not only as Pastor, instructed them in their religion and administered the sacraments to them, but as a householder, provided for them, governed and instructed them in their social life, procuring for them peace and happiness.

Every Mission, rather than a town, was a large community, in which the Missionary was President, distributing equally burdens and benefits. No one worked for himself, and the products of the harvest, cattle and industry in which they were employed was guarded, administered and distributed by the Missionary . . .

In the inventory made in January, 1837, the result showed that said Mission [San José] numbered 1,300 neophytes, a great piece of land, well tilled, store-houses filled with seeds; two orchards, one with 1,600 fruit trees; two vineyards—one with 6,039 vines, the other with 5,000; tools for husbandry in abundance; shops for carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and even tanners, and all the implements for their work.

The fields were covered with live stock: horned cattle, 20,000 head; sheep, 500; horses, 459. For the saddle 600 colts of two years, 1,630 mares, 149 yoke of oxen, 30 mules, 18 jackasses, and 77 hogs.

Twice a year a new dress was given to the neophytes, amounting in the distribution of \$6,000. When the mission was secularized I delivered to the Mayor-domo then in charge some \$20,000 worth of cloth and other articles which the store-house contained.

... The other Missions, called "the Northern," though having been already secularized, were in utter bankruptcy, and the same can be affirmed for the most part of those of the south, down to San Diego; for it was observed that as long as the Missions were in the hands of the missionaries everything was abundant; but as soon as they passed into the hands of laymen everything went wrong; essentially completely ruin succeeded, and all was gone. Yet, we cannot say that the ambition of those men was the cause, since, though the Government in the space of four years, divided seven ranches to private individuals—the smallest of a league and a half—yet in spite of this cutting off of part of my Mission lands, the Mission was every day progressing more and more...

I was able to save only a small relic of these tribes during the pestilence of 1833, in which I collected together some 600 Indians. I would have saved more during the small-pox epidemic of 1839, but my Mission had already been secularized, and I had no resources. I could do nothing for the Indians, who were like boys of one hundred years. It is only with liberality you can draw them towards you: give them plenty to eat and clothes in abundance, and they will soon become your friends, and you can then conduct them to religion, form them to good manners, and teach them civilized habits.

Do you want to know who were the cause of the ruin of these Missions? As I was not only a witness but a victim of the sad events which caused their destruction, I have tried rather to shut my eyes than I might not see the evil, and close my ears to prevent hearing the innumerable wrongs which these establishments had suffered. My poor neophytes did their part, in their own way, to try and diminish my sorrow and anguish.

*Paula...*

## DOCUMENT 2.3

### 1833 Legislative Act for the Public Schools of Mexico

*The federal government of Mexico actively passed several decrees regarding education during its first two decades. The individual states of Mexico were then required to implement these decrees at the local level. This central governmental involvement in education was different from the U.S. emphasis on state regulation of public schools. Note the details regarding teacher education and preparation. The first state-supported normal school in the United States was established by the State of Massachusetts in 1837, four years after this decree. Provisions for girls' education and children in impoverished circumstances distinguish this decree from similar measures passed in the colonial era.*

From Frederick Eby, compiler, *Education in Texas: Source Materials*, University of Texas Bulletin no. 1824 (Austin: University of Texas, 1918), pp. 85-88. Originals can be accessed at the Bexar Archives, a collection of official Spanish documents from the Spanish and Mexican eras. The documents are housed at the East Texas Research Center, R.W. Steen Library, Stephen F. Austin State University Campus, Nacogdoches, Texas.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
Department of the Interior  
Decree No. 56

His Excellency, the Vice-President of the United Mexican States has been pleased to send me the following decree.

The Vice-President of the United Mexican States in exercise of the supreme executive power and the power granted him the 19th instant law of the general congress, decrees:

Art. 1. That a normal school be established for those preparing themselves to give primary instruction.

Art. 2. A similar school shall be established for women preparing themselves to give primary instruction.

Art. 3. A primary school for children shall be established in each of the six institutions of higher education, and they shall be separated from each other

as much as circumstances will allow having if possible, a separate door of entrance; but they shall be under the supervision and care of the president or vice-president of the institution.

Art. 4. Reading, writing, arithmetic, and the political and religious catechisms shall be taught in these schools. The teacher shall enjoy a salary of seventy-five dollars a month, but no quarters will be furnished.

Art. 5. The Board of Directors shall establish in each parish of the federal city where schools of higher education do not already exist similar primary schools for children in which reading, writing, arithmetic and the two aforesaid catechisms shall be taught.

Art. 6. The same shall be done in each parish and sub-parish of the federal district.

Art. 7. The Board of Directors shall also establish subsequently in each parish of the different cities in the federal district a primary school for girls in which they shall receive the same instruction as outlined in article 4, and in addition they shall be taught to sew, embroider, and other useful occupations of their sex.

Art. 8. In addition to these primary schools which shall be supported from the funds appropriated for public instruction, the Board of Directors will be authorized to see that the obligations which some parishes and religious orders have contracted for the establishment of certain schools at their own expense be complied with, and these shall not be considered as free schools.

Art. 9. The Board of Directors shall have power to impose a fine of sixty dollars on each parish or religious order thus bound to support a school if it fails to do so, and the said sum shall be used to establish the said school in the place agreed upon, and which, in the judgment of the Board of Directors is best suited for the purpose.

Art. 10. The salary of the teachers of the two normal schools shall be one hundred dollars a month, with quarters furnished. The teachers shall give instruction in the mutual method of teaching, and they shall teach the Castilian grammar, elements of logic, elements of ethics, arithmetic, and both the political and religious catechisms.

Art. 11. The teachers of primary instruction shall receive a salary not exceeding sixty dollars a month, and they shall be furnished a school house.

Art. 13. The method of mutual instruction shall be put in practice in the primary schools established by the Board of Directors as soon as the necessary teachers can be secured.

Art. 14. In those supported by parishes and religious orders, all endeavors shall be made for the gradual adoption of the same method.

Art. 15. All the schools of the district except the institutions of higher learning shall be under the immediate supervision of a school inspector who will look after them, make frequent visits of inspection, and will report to the Board of Directors anything requiring their decision.

Art. 16. The school inspector shall be appointed [sic] by the government from a list of three submitted by the Board of Directors, and he shall receive a salary of 2,000 a year.

Art. 17. In each school there shall be an annual public examination presided over by the school inspector, and at such a time the prizes designated by the Board of Directors shall be awarded to those showing special advancement.

Art. 18. The teachers for the different schools shall be appointed this time by the Board of Directors at the proposal of the presidents of the schools, but in the future they shall be appointed by competitive examination.

Art. 19. The boys and girls who, due to their poverty, deserve to be helped with the necessary school supplies in order to be able to attend school, shall receive such help at the discretion of the said Board of Directors, and the previous recommendation of the inspector of schools.

Therefore I command this to be printed, published, circulated, and given its due observance. Palace of the Federal Government, Mexico City, October the 26th, 1833.—Valentin Gomez Farias—to D. Carlos Garcia.

And I transmit the same to you for your intelligence and subsequent action.

*God and Liberty* Mexico, October 26, 1833.

*Sydney M. ...*

DOCUMENT 2.4

Petition Written in Spanish and English  
to Raise Money for a School and Church,  
Nacogdoches, Texas, 1831

The fact that this circular was printed in both English (with several errors) and Spanish reveals the influence of Anglo settlers arriving to Texas in the 1820s. The petitioners' names also reflect the diverse ethnic (particularly Anglo and Mexican) population and the intertwined relationship of the Roman Catholic Church with the public schools. Donations of labor, animals, and even beans reflect both frontier conditions and community spirit.

From Frederick Eby, compiler, *Education in Texas: Source Materials*, University of Texas Bulletin no. 1824 (Austin: University of Texas, 1918), pp. 43-46. Originals can be accessed at the Bexar Archives, a collection of official Spanish documents from the Spanish and Mexican eras. The documents are housed at the East Texas Research Center, R. W. Steen Library, Stephen F. Austin State University Campus, Nacogdoches, Texas.

CIRCULAR

The Board of Piety of Nacogdoches, to the Settlers of this Frontier.  
Fellow Citizens: A happy event of the most imperious, exquisite and irresistible circumstances, is, the necessity of two Establishments of piety usefull [sic] and necessary; the idea was brought forth by an assembly under the denomination herein mentioned.

A Church intended to celebrate and worship the Gospel agreeable to the Roman Catholic Religion which is professed by the Mexican Nation, and a primary School for the Education of the youth of this Circuit, they are both great and exclusive objects which the Junta expects to promote and raise by every legal, lawful and honorable means . . .

The building of a Church is of the greatest necessity for a christian and religious people. To maintain a School for the education of children is of absolute necessity in civilized society attended by any form of government whatever. If [eliments] elements constitute a man in his nature, religion and education insinuates moral principles in him . . . if you wish to have a School where to send your children to receive education and acquire the principles of

Religion and natural morality, make the sacrifice of a small portion of your interests, and deposit the same in the hands of the Treasurer appointed for the purpose; subscribe to the amount you think proper for so important an object, and be persuaded the funds shall not be disposed of contrary [contrary] to the aforesaid objects . . .

Jose de la Piedras, President.—Pedro Elias Bean, V. President.—Adolfo Sterne (absent) Treasurer.—Frost Thorn.—Fr. Antonio Diaz de Leon, (temporary), Curate.—Mannuel de Los Santos Coy, Alcalde.—J. Antonio Padilla, Secretary.

Nacogdoches, March the 10th, 1831.

List of the names of the persons who subscribed toward the construction of the church and school.

Colonel Dn José de las Piedras, on the part of the military contingent, and for the present, one hundred pesos.

Colonel Dn Pedro Bean, one hundred pesos.

Dn Adolfo Sterne, twenty-five pesos and one hundred pounds of nails.

Dn Patricio Torres, a month's service of a hired laborer.

Dn Juan Mora, ten pesos.

Dn Jesus Santos, five pesos.

Ynes Santaleón, a barrel of beans.

Dn Martin Ybarbo, a two-year-old steer and a barrel of corn.

Andres González, his person service with a yoke of oxen for eight days.

Dn Juan Lazarin, the same.

Dn Concepcion Ybarbo, a yearling calf.

D. Antonio Manchaca, ten pesos.

D. Bautista Chirino, a three-year-old steer.

Brígido Sineda, the service of a hired laborer for eight days.

Nacogdoches, January 18, 1831.

José de las Piedras, Treasurer

José Antonio Diaz de Leon, as Secretary.

This document is a copy of the original sent of the State Government. Bejar, 12 of February, 1831.

*Copy from*

Additional Praise for Victoria-María  
MacDonald's *Latino Education in the  
United States:*

MacDonald has provided a comprehensive, readable, and provocative guide for those interested in the historical evolution of Latino education in the United States. The combination of shrewd introductory essays, carefully selected readings, and extensive bibliography should make *Latino Education in the United States* one of the preferred reference books in the fields of Latino studies, education, and history. . . . One of the most impressive elements of *Latino Education in the United States* is that it provides an outlet to the many voices associated with Latino educational issues: voices of oppression, hope, discrimination, opportunity, and relentlessness. MacDonald's scholarly command of the historiography of Latino education, combined with extensive archival research, make this book a must-read for those interested in Latino and educational issues.

—*Félix V. Matos-Rodríguez, Ph.D. and Director, Centro de Estudios  
Puertorriqueños, Hunter College*

Latino Education in  
the United States

A Narrated History from 1513–2000

*Victoria-María MacDonald*

palgrave  
macmillan