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Creating Urban Spaces on the Frontier of the Spanish Empire: Galveztown, Louisiana (1779) and Nueva Orán, Argentina (1794)

Even in remote frontier areas, Spanish town planning was carefully thought out and managed at every step of the way. Fine examples of two new settlements several thousand miles apart on the Spanish frontier include Nueva Orán, in extreme northwest Argentina, and Villa de Gálvez (Galveztown) in Louisiana.

These two settlements are represented by three late eighteenth century plans in the Library of Congress, which reveal that the settlements were carefully designed at all stages regarding purpose, strategic location, and natural resources. By examining maps of these two towns in their historical context, I hope to show that order and social control were of paramount concern in Spanish town planning.

Galveztown was developed with the idea of expanding the Hispanic population of Louisiana (specifically with immigrants from the Canary Islands) and its location was chosen strategically to counter British settlement and military buildup in West Florida. Nueva Orán was the most isolated of the newly created towns in northern Argentina. It was meant to defend Spanish lands from the Chaco Indians, to protect the *camino real* to Peru, and to support Spanish expansion and control eastward. Further, they were conceived and developed according to the general framework provided by the *Ordenanzas* of 1573 and amplified and amended in the *Leyes de Indias* of 1681. Repetition, order, and ease of access both into and out of town are underscored. In the case of Nueva Orán, the abundant documentation indicates that Governor Pizarro followed closely the protocol established by the *Leyes de Indias*.

Elaborate cartouches adorn Pizarro's plans of the Zenta Valley and Nueva Orán. His depiction of the Zenta Valley includes an unfurled banner that hangs between fragments of architecture suggesting an obelisk and triumphal arch. Likewise, the cartouche on the map of Nueva Orán is framed by local vegetation and contains a perspective view of the town. Both cartouches serve as devices to promote development and expansion into new territory.

That neither Galveztown nor Nueva Orán developed into flourishing towns for an extended period of time was not for lack of intent, but rather due to forces of nature including disease, inundations, drought, and famine.

Anthony Mullan is retired from the Library of Congress where he first served as Fine Arts Specialist in the Main Reading Room and subsequently as a Cartographic Reference Specialist in the Geography and Map Division. His specialty was the historical cartography of Latin America. He is currently an Associate Editor for the journal, *Terrae Incognitae*, and is Editor of a special number of the journal devoted to exploration of and cultural encounter in Cuba.

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Map detail: Plaza de la villa de Galvez, [1778], G4014.G225 1778 .P5 , Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/item/73691644/>

