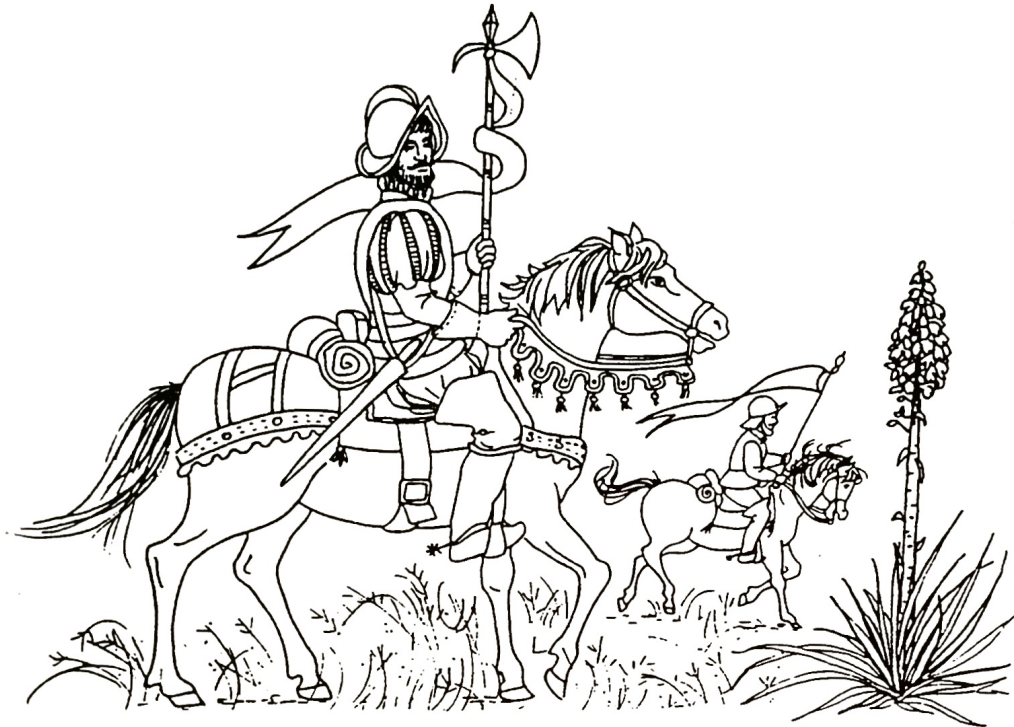


# CHAPTER 4

## 1500'S THROUGH 1700'S



### NEW AMERICANS IN ARKANSAS

#### SPANISH

The first known non-Indian exploration into Arkansas was by the Spanish. The record of Coronado's expedition in 1541 was written into diaries by men assigned to the task. These writings tell us about the Indians and the geography of the region.

Hernando De Soto, with about 600 Spanish followers, traveled through Arkansas in the summer and fall of 1541. Their main purpose was to find gold or other precious minerals. Four members of the Spanish party wrote accounts of the journey. They wrote about the almost constant contact with different Indian groups. Most of these people lived in villages. De Soto probably crossed the Mississippi River at the Sunflower Crossing near Helena. He then traveled north through villages he called Aquixo and Casqui on his way to a province called Pacaha. These villages were most likely in the vicinity of where the St. Francis River meets the Mississippi River.

## FRENCH

The French were more interested in acquiring furs than in finding gold. The earliest recorded French visitors were led by Louis Jolliet and Père Marquette in 1673. Their reports were very different from De Soto's group 132 years before. The French did not find very many villages along the Mississippi River.

The first Indians sighted were the Arkansia, often called the Quapaw. The historic Quapaw are described as having humor and of being the \*"tallest and best shaped" of all Indians sighted in America. Four major Quapaw villages were visited near where the Arkansas River and the White River dump into the Mississippi River. Tourima was west of the junction of the White and Mississippi Rivers; Kappa was on the Mississippi River north of the White River; and Osotouy was about 25 to 30 miles up the Arkansas on the north bank.

When the French traveled to northwest Arkansas, they encountered the "Mighty Osage." The Osage were described as large in size and warlike. They lived in the land now called Missouri, but used northwest Arkansas as a hunting ground.

Nine years later, in 1682, another French explorer named La Salle visited Arkansas. He wrote about prosperous Caddo Indian villages in southwest Arkansas near the area of present day Fulton. These Caddo were both hunters and farmers. They cultivated corn, squash, beans, pumpkins, and sunflowers. Permanent Caddo settlements were located along many streams of southwest Arkansas. La Salle recorded as many as 8,000 Caddo people living in that area.

The Ouachita tribe was also visited by La Salle. He recorded that there were four different Ouachita villages scattered along the river that bears that name.

\* Charles R. McGimsey III, Indians of Arkansas (Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1969).



## FIRST SETTLEMENT

On the north bank of the Arkansas River, a village called Arkansas Post was established in 1687. La Salle's lieutenant Henri de Tonty is given credit for establishing this trading post. French hunters, trappers and traders lived there until about 1700. This new store ordered supplies to be brought up the river from New Orleans. Hides and furs were shipped out on the return boat. These Arkansas rivers became the equal to our modern-day highway system. They were the only means of shipping large amounts of freight.

## 1700's

In 1719, Bernard de La Harpe, another Frenchman, explored both the Red and Arkansas rivers. This was the first recorded journey of any distance up the Arkansas. Also, during the years of 1719 through 1721, the French government moved several hundred criminals and army deserters into the lower Mississippi River Valley.

John Law, a Scotsman, came to the Arkansas Post area in 1721. He received a grant of land from the French government to establish a community near Arkansas Post. Several hundred German and Dutch settlers moved into this new Arkansas community. This settlement was officially abandoned in 1723, but a few brave settlers remained. Many of these had hunting skills that supplemented their farming.

In 1731, Arkansas Post was officially re-established by the French. From that time on, this area was occupied by European settlers.

By 1750, it was estimated there were only 1,500 Quapaw living around the mouth of the Arkansas River. The Quapaw spoke a Siouan language closely related to that of the Omaha, Kansa, Ponca, and Osage tribes who lived farther north and west. By the time the Quapaw left Arkansas in the early 1800's, it is estimated that there were less than 500 in number. Indians had no immunity to European diseases. This may have been one reason for their decrease.

## CHEROKEE

Cherokee refer to themselves in their own language as "Ani-yun-Wiya" meaning "Principle People." It is generally accepted that originally the Cherokee were residents of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. The Cherokee's home when non-Indian settlers came on the scene was northern Georgia, northern Alabama, southern Tennessee, and North Carolina. They called themselves "Upper" or "Mountain Cherokee" and "Lower Cherokee." The mountain people were more agricultural and advanced in civilization. The Lower Cherokee lived at lower elevations and were more dependent on wild game for a living. The diminishing supply of game caused the Lower Cherokee to seek more desirable hunting lands farther west.

The Cherokee tribe was reported to have "very pretty women," and this encouraged mixed marriages with the English traders. Some of these people were Christians and established Christian homes. There were several missionaries who worked among the Cherokee in their original homeland. Many Cherokee were "born again" (John 3:3) and became new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17) during the 1700's.

The first significant Indian colonization west of the Mississippi River occurred among the Cherokee. As the Cherokee migrated westward, they began to hunt on Osage hunting lands. This was mostly in northwest Arkansas. The Osage responded with force. Finally, a full scale war came to Arkansas. Around 500 Cherokee warriors attacked an Osage village killing about 100 Osage and capturing 100 women and children. The village was burned, crops destroyed, and goods stolen.