

*The Merchant of Manchac: The Letterbooks of John Fitzpatrick, 1768–1790.* Edited by MARGARET FISHER DALRYMPLE. Baton Rouge, 1978. Louisiana State University Press. Maps. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xii, 451. Cloth. \$30.00.

Between 1763 and 1783 when the British flag flew over West Florida, the influx of British settlers along the Gulf of Mexico and up the Mississippi River opened the area to a flurry of trade and economic development. One of the centers of the fur trade was a small British settlement east of the Mississippi where the Iberville River (now Bayou Manchac) joined its muddy waters with the Father of Waters. It was here in 1779 that Bernardo de Gálvez initiated his campaign against the British just before the siege and capture of Baton Rouge. John Fitzpatrick was an Irish merchant who came to Manchac from New Orleans in 1769, and his letters to customers, friends, and Spanish frontier officials furnish an interesting and varied view of the British–Spanish frontier during the eyeball-to-eyeball days of the American Revolution. Just as the Scot William Dunbar and the Sephardic Jews the Monsantos, Fitzpatrick was a product of the frontier during a stage of early development. The letterbooks, located in the manuscript division of the New York Public Library, are ably edited with strong bibliographical support by an archivist at Louisiana State University who drank deeply from the historical fountain provided by Max Savelle, with whom she collaborated on *The Origins of American Diplomacy* (and to whom the book is dedicated).

The book is not meant for casual reading; rather, it is a solid source book. The analysis provided in her introduction, however, is a good summary of British–Spanish relations and the importance of the burgeoning trade patterns which foretold the tremendous development of the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans under Spain and, after 1803, under the United States. Minor editorial imperfections include an incomplete index and mislocation of the four pertinent maps of the area (said to be following p. 164, when they actually follow p. 196!).

Sponsored by the historically-minded Baton Rouge Bicentennial Corporation, which also published this reviewer's brief account of the Spanish campaign against Manchac and Baton Rouge, this solid volume contains much fascinating information, not the least of which is the excellent glossary of eighteenth-century mercantile terms and bibliography for further study. More primary sources of this type are essential to write a full study of the early development of trade in the area. This is a good beginning.

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