



Primary
Source
Adventures:

Cabeza de
Vaca



From Justin Winsor's,
*Narrative and
Critical History of
America*

RIBERO, 1529.



THE JOURNEY OF
ALVAR NUNEZ CABEZA DE VACA

I could no longer stand the life I was compelled to lead. Among many other troubles I had to pull the eatable roots out of the water and from among the canes where they were buried in the ground, and from this my fingers had become so tender that the mere touch of a straw caused them to bleed. The reeds would cut me in many places, because many were broken and I had to go in among them

This is why I went to work and joined the other Indians. Among these I improved my condition a little by becoming a trader, doing the best in it I could, and they gave me food and treated me well.

They entreated me to go about from one part to another to get the things they needed, as on account of constant warfare there is neither travel nor barter in the land.

So, trading along with my wares I penetrated inland as far as I cared to go and along the coast as much as forty or fifty leagues.

*From The Journey of
Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca
and His Companions,
from Florida to the Pacific,
1528-1536*



THE JOURNEY OF
ALVAR NUNEZ CABEZA DE VACA

This trade suited me well because it gave me liberty to go wherever I pleased; I was not bound to do anything and no longer a slave. Wherever I went they treated me well, and gave me to eat for the sake of my wares. My principal object in doing it, however, was to find out in what manner I might get further away. I became well known among them; they rejoiced greatly when seeing me and I would bring them what they needed, and those who did not know me would desire and endeavor to meet me for the sake of my fame.

75

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PLACIDO, CHIEF OF THE TONKAWAS.

From Homer S. Thrall's,
*A Pictorial History
of Texas,
from the earliest visits
of European Adventurers,
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Trinity River

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Here they brought to me a man who, they told, a long time ago had been shot through the left side of the back with an arrow, the head of which stuck close to his heart. He said it gave him much pain, and that on this

140

account he was sick. I touched the region of the body and felt the arrowhead, and that it had pierced the cartilage. So, with a knife, I cut open the breast as far as the place. The arrow point had gotten athwart, and was very difficult to remove. By cutting deeper, and inserting the point of the knife, with great difficulty I got it out; it was very long. Then, with a deer-bone, according to my knowledge of surgery, I made two stitches. After I had extracted the arrow they begged me for it, and I gave it to them. The whole village came back to look at it, and they sent it further inland that the people there might see it also.

On account of this cure they made many dances and festivities, as is their custom.

141

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The next day I cut the stitches, and the Indian was well. The cut I had made only showed a scar like a line in the palm of the hand, and he said that he felt not the least pain.

Now, this cure gave us such fame among them all over the country as they were capable of conceiving and respecting.

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At all this the Christians were greatly vexed, and told their own interpreter to say to the Indians how we were of their own race, but had gone astray for a long while, and were people of no luck and little heart, whereas they were the lords of the land, whom they should obey and serve.

The Indians gave all that talk of theirs little attention. They parleyed among themselves, saying that the Christians lied, for we had come from sunrise, while the others came from where the sun sets; that we cured the sick, while the others killed those who were healthy; that we went naked and shoeless, whereas the others wore clothes and went on horseback and with lances. Also, that we asked for nothing, but gave away all we were presented with, mean-

171

while the others seemed to have no other aim than to steal what they could, and never gave anything to anybody. In short, they recalled all our deeds, and praised them highly, contrasting them with the conduct of the others.

172

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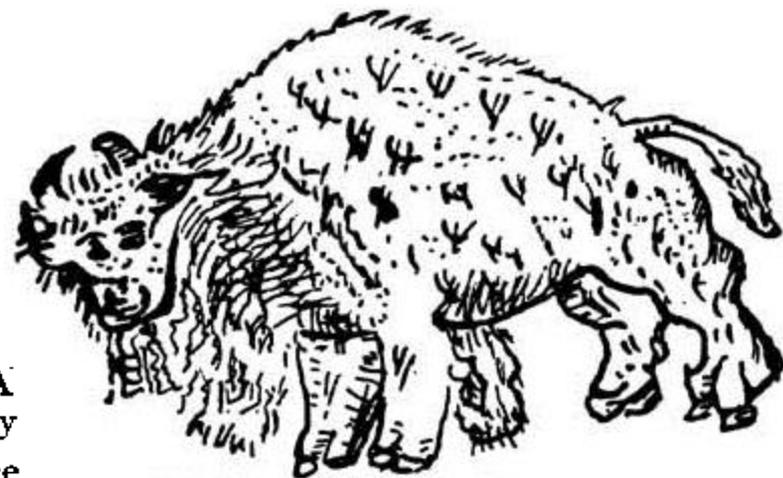
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Here also they
come up with cows; I have seen them thrice
and have eaten their meat. They appear to
me of the size of those in Spain. Their horns
are small, like those of the Moorish cattle;
the hair is very long, like fine wool and like
a peajacket; some are brownish and others
black, and to my taste they have better and
more meat than those from here. These
cows are found all over the land for over
four hundred leagues.

94



SKETCH OF THE BUFFALO.

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