

1796: SPANISH ON THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI

[Extract from the secret orders given to Lieut.-Col. Carlos Howard,⁶⁹ dated New Orleans, Nov. 26, 1796. MS. in Archives of the Indies, Seville; pressmark, "Papeles procedientes de la Isla de Cuba."]

There are two essential objects which are to occupy the attention of Lieutenant Colonel Don Carlos Howard, the defense of the town of San Luis, and the destruction of the English trade both on the upper Mississippi and on the Missouri. We have already treated of the former, and as far as concerns the latter, if immediately after having attended to providing his detachment with quarters, and received the necessary information, he should send an expedition to reconnoitre the banks of the Mississippi from San Luis to the mouth of the river San Pedro, it is likely that he would destroy and capture many English trading canoes, the goods in which may be divided, half to the king, and half to those who compose the expedition. But for the sake of protection against an attack by the savages on the side of

⁶⁹ The occasion for issuing these orders and sending Colonel Howard to St. Louis was alarm over the reported gathering for an attack upon Louisiana by British forces, caused by the Spanish-British War, which was declared Oct. 7, 1796. France, who had previously been seeking to secure Louisiana either by force or diplomacy, had now become a Spanish ally; and had sent out Gen. Victor Collot to report on conditions in the Western country. His reports to the Spanish authorities alarmed the governor of New Orleans, who quickly dispatched a force to fortify St. Louis and guard the approaches on the upper Mississippi. In his report, Collot speaks of the former routes open to the English by the Fox-Wisconsin, Illinois, and Maumee-Wabash, as being blocked because of the surrender of the Northwest posts to the Americans. There was left the route via Lake Superior, Coppermine, Vermillion, and Chippewa rivers; or that from the west end of Lake Superior via River Froid (Cold) to the Mississippi; see *Am. Hist. Rev.*, x, p. 574.

Carlos Howard, whom Carondelet chose from his available officers for this advance to St. Louis, was an Irishman in the Spanish service. In 1790 he was secretary of East Florida, being at this time lieutenant-colonel in the regiment of Louisiana. He was in St. Louis from February to August, 1797; see *Missouri Hist. Colls.*, iii, p. 71.—Ed.