

LA HISTORIA GENERAL



y enojan : finalmente es animal feo y fiero de rostro, y cuerpo. Huyé de los los caualllos por su mala catadura, o por nunca los auer visto. No tienen sus dueños otra riqueza , ni hazienda , dellos comen, beuen, visten, calçan , y hazen muchas cosas, de los cueros, cascas, calçado, vestido y sogas: delos huesos, punçones: delos neruios, y pelos, hilo: de los cuernos, buches, y bexigas , vasos: delas boñigas, lumbrre: y delas terneras , odres , en que traen y tienen agua : hazen en fin tantas cosas dellos quantas han menester , o quantas las bastan para su biuienda. Ay tambien otros animales, tan grandes como caualllos, que por tener cuernos , y lana fina, los llaman carneros, y dizen , que cada cueruo pesa dos arrouas. Ay tambien grandes perros, que

An illustration of an American bison from Francisco López de Gómara, *Historia general de las Indias y todo lo acaescido en ellas dende que se ganaron hasta agora y La conquista de Mexico, y de la Nueva España* (1553). This illustration is first known European rendering of the iconic grazer of the North American Great Plains. *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.*

An Interesting and Odd Present: Transporting American Bison across the Atlantic in the Eighteenth Century

BY BRADLEY FOLSOM*

IN THE 1870S, LONG-TIME SAN ANTONIO RESIDENT ANTONIO MENCHACA dictated his memoirs for publication, hoping to preserve the Tejano legacy in Texas.¹ In addition to featuring important events from the author's life, the memoirs include local legends Menchaca had learned growing up in Texas. One such story, entitled, "The First Buffaloes Ever sent to Europe are sent from San Antonio," details what Menchaca believed to be the first time an American bison—more commonly known as buffalo—crossed the Atlantic Ocean. According to Menchaca, in 1760, a hunter named Carbreo captured buffalo from the large herds surrounding San Antonio and "took them over to Spain," where he presented the animals as a gift to the king. Upon receiving the animals, the monarch was apparently so "pleased with the interesting and odd present," he "asked Carbreo to name the reward he desired." The modest hunter, having spent his savings undertaking the voyage, requested only that the king pay for his voyage back to Texas. The king did so and, in spite of Carbreo's protests, gave the hunter a pension and a promotion to the rank of lieutenant. Upon returning to San Antonio, Carbreo gave up hunting, became an "industrious citizen," and the tale of the first buffalo crossing became a local legend.²

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¹Antonio Menchaca, *Recollections of a Tejano Life: Antonio Menchaca in Texas History*, ed. Timothy M. Matovina, Jesús F. Teja, and Justin D. Poche (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 21; George O. Coalson, "Menchaca, José Antonio" *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fme12>> [Accessed April 19, 2015].

² Menchaca, *Recollections of a Tejano Life*, 169–170.

To a large extent, Menchaca's tale is accurate, but he left out important details and his names and dates are inaccurate—understandable errors considering that the author was writing almost a century after the event took place and likely relied on stories he had heard as a child to reconstruct the tale. Just as Menchaca claimed, in the mid-eighteenth century a hunter from Texas captured American bison from the Southern Plains and transported them across the Atlantic Ocean to be presented to the king of Spain. The king did indeed reward the hunter's efforts with a promotion and a monetary reward. However, the hunter was not named Cabreo, the Atlantic crossing took place twenty years after the given date, and the motivation for making the voyage went beyond an altruistic desire to please the king. In addition, Menchaca never explained how the hunter managed to keep his animals alive for the transatlantic crossing and, through no fault of his own, was mistaken in his claim that the first American buffalo to cross the Atlantic Ocean came from Texas.³

In the eighteenth century, leaders in France, Spain, Britain, and the United States tried to transport living American bison over long distances to study, to exhibit as curiosity items, and to domesticate for monetary gain. Among those seeking or receiving buffalo in the eighteenth century were Pennsylvania proprietor and son of William Penn, Thomas Penn; the king of England, George II; French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon; United States presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson; and the king of Spain, Carlos III. Many of these men assumed they could succeed where Indians and prior generations of Euro-Americans had failed in taming and breeding buffalo for their wool, milk, meat, and labor as beasts of burden. Scientific advancements of the Enlightenment, a burgeoning naturalist movement, and improvements in animal husbandry inspired this optimism.⁴

Unlike the many other animals studied by naturalists or paraded before European courts in the eighteenth century, the American bison's resistance to capture, confinement, domestication, and forced herding frustrated most who sought to transport the creatures away from their natural habitats to distant locations in the United States and Europe. As the men sent to capture buffalo quickly learned, the notoriously ornery animals would often harm or kill themselves on the march to faraway destinations. The few bison to survive such journeys tended to be emaciated, unfortunate creatures that rarely did what they had been transported to do.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Helen Cowie, "Sloth Bones and Anteater Tongues: Collecting American Nature in the Hispanic World (1750–1808)," *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* 8, no. 1 (2011): 7; Carlos María Gómez-Centurión Jiménez, "Curiosidades vivas: Los animales de América y Filipinas en la Ménagerie real durante el siglo XVIII," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 66, no. 2 (2009): 200–201.

European and American efforts to transport and breed buffalo provide an important counterpoint to the traditional narrative of the colonization of the New World. As outlined in works such as Alfred W. Crosby's *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900*, Virginia DeJohn Anderson's *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*, and William Cronon's *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, Euro-Americans, both intentionally and unintentionally, brought about significant ecological change in the Americas and in doing so made the New World more closely resemble the Old. In general, conquest and Old World diseases displaced American Indians or forced them to adapt to European ideals. Europeans then cleared American forests to grow Old World crops and graze Old World livestock, which displaced native animals. Euro-Americans also adopted New World crops, such as corn or tobacco, out of necessity and a desire for profit. Over time, they systematically converted the foreign into the familiar, cultivating useful flora and fauna in the Americas and Europe. Species that resisted cultivation were ignored or, in some instances, brought to European cultural centers as curiosities. American bison provide a spectacular example of a species that resisted domestication.⁵

This article will explore the history of transatlantic buffalo transportation, placing Antonio Menchaca's story in historical context. In recent years, historians have written studies of European efforts to acquire and display elephants, giraffes, anteaters, camels, and leopards in the eighteenth century, but there has yet to be scholarship on attempts to transport North America's largest land animal. This is unfortunate because buffalo displayed an even greater resistance to transportation than the aforementioned fauna, and unlike these animals, which Europeans and Americans sought primarily as curiosities, bison were also pursued for the economic advantages they offered. In this capacity, a study of buffalo transportation will help explain the role animals played in the geopolitics of the eighteenth century.⁶

In addition to looking at eighteenth-century attempts to acquire buffalo, this article will use archival research to evaluate the veracity of Menchaca's story, as few historians have looked into the Texas-to-Spain

⁵ See Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 68–69; and William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983). For a similar study focusing on colonial Mexico, see, Elinor G. K. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁶ Carlos Gómez-Centurión Jiménez, "Exóticos pero útiles: los camellos reales de Aranjuez durante el siglo XVIII," *Cuadernos dieciochistas* 9 (2008): 155–180; Erik Ringmar, "Audience for a Giraffe: European Expansionism and the Quest for the Exotic," *Journal of World History* 17, No. 4 (2006): 375–397; Cowie, "Sloth Bones and Anteater Tongues," 7.

buffalo transportation. In 1970, Frederick C. Chabot included a brief summary of the story in his genealogical work, *With the Makers of San Antonio*. Chabot's telling of events is, for the most part, accurate, but he left out details such as the motivation for taking the voyage to Spain.⁷ Jack Jackson's *Los Mesteños* also looked into the transatlantic buffalo transportation, but he relied on Chabot to reconstruct his narrative.⁸

New World bison had fascinated Europeans since the early sixteenth century, when Spanish explorers returned from expeditions into the North American continent with tales of large, hump-backed animals with "very long beards like goats," tails that they carry "erect like a scorpion" when running, and hair "rough like a lion's" but "woolly like a sheep's."⁹ Written descriptions of bison became more accurate after the Spanish settled New Mexico and came into more frequent contact with buffalo in the seventeenth century. French fur traders in Illinois and English settlers on North America's eastern seaboard also started to write about bison after the animals expanded their natural habitat east of the Mississippi River—likely a result of American Indian hunters succumbing to European-introduced diseases.¹⁰ Bison hides soon found their way into European courts, where elites cherished them as curiosity items. Although Europe had its own bison, they were smaller, less hairy, and lacked the pronounced hump, low hanging head, and short horns and legs of their American counterparts. Indeed the bison were so dissimilar, the French and English in North America began referring to the New World version of the quadruped as "buffalo."¹¹

Although tales of these buffalo captivated European courts and European elites frequently imported other New World animals as curiosities, it seems that there were no efforts to bring buffalo to Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There are many likely reasons for this fact. Perhaps the most important of which was that there were few European settlements adjacent to both buffalo and the sea. France claimed Illinois and Louisiana, which were home to buffalo, but few French called this region home in the seventeenth century. The English had settled the eastern seaboard of North America, but buffalo could only be found far inland. Spanish New Mexico teemed with bison, but was apparently too

⁷ Frederick C. Chabot, *With the Makers of San Antonio: Genealogies of Early San Antonio Families* (San Antonio: Artes Graficas, 1970), 155–156.

⁸ Jack Jackson, *Los Mesteños* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 246–247.

⁹ Frederick W. Lodge and Theodore H. Lewis (eds.), *Spanish Explorers in the Southern United States, 1528–1543* (1907; reprint, Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1990), 382–383; Franklin Belue, *The Long Hunt: Death of the Buffalo East of the Mississippi* (Mechanicsburg, Pa: Stackpole Books, 1996): 23–26.

¹⁰ Belue, *The Long Hunt*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

far from the sea to justify the expense required to bring the animals to Europe as curiosities.¹²

In the first years of the eighteenth century, however, settlers expanded deeper into the North American continent, leading to more frequent contact with buffalo. From 1699 to 1718, for example, the French established multiple settlements in bison-filled Louisiana and Illinois. This French expansion, in turn, prompted the Spanish to found missions in Texas, adjacent to the buffalo of the Southern Plains. Likewise, with a burgeoning population on the coast, the English expanded their settlements west into buffalo lands.

Attempts to domesticate and transport buffalo came along with this expansion. Although Indians had never domesticated bison, European settlers—viewing themselves as inherently superior to their native counterparts—believed they could succeed in the endeavor. As early as 1701, for example, Huguenots in Virginia were trying to domesticate bison.¹³ The first buffalo brought to Europe may have come from early eighteenth-century westward expansion, when planters near the Neuse River in North Carolina captured two buffalo calves in 1730. The fate of these animals is unknown, but one contemporary source remarked, “Whether they transported them to Europe, or what other uses they made of them, I know not.” This speculation seems to indicate that it was not only possible that these particular buffalo reached Europe, but such a journey may have occurred before.¹⁴ Fortunately for Menchaca’s story, there is not enough documentation to support this conclusion.

Unfortunately for Menchaca, there is enough evidence to point to 1734 as being the first time a buffalo certainly crossed the Atlantic. The crossing was instigated by Quaker Thomas Penn, son of Pennsylvania founder, William Penn. After the death of William Penn in 1718, the king of England granted proprietorship of the Pennsylvania colony to Thomas Penn and his brothers, and in 1732, Thomas arrived in Philadelphia to assume his duties. In September 1733, Penn departed Philadelphia for the Pennsylvania interior to arrange a treaty with local Indians and to visit with the Quaker settlers of Lancaster and Chester County.¹⁵ While in or near

¹² In the 1530s and 1540s, Spanish explorers sent the first written descriptions of buffalo, and in 1553, Francisco López de Gómara’s *Historia general de las Indias* featured the first visual depiction of a buffalo in the Old World. These visual and written descriptions fascinated European elites. See Christopher Morris, “How to Prepare Buffalo, and Other Things the French Taught Indians about Nature,” in Bradley G. Bond (ed.), *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 28.

¹³ Belue, *The Long Hunt*, 8, 61. Belue notes that there were other attempts to domesticate buffalo in the English colonies. See also Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, 68–69.

¹⁴ John Brickell, *The Natural History of North-Carolina: With an Account of the Trade, Manners, and Customs, of the Christian and Indian Inhabitants. Strange Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Snakes, Insects, Trees, and Plants, &c. Illustrated with Copper-Plates* (London, sold by Charles Corbett, 1743), 108.

¹⁵ Howard M. Jenkins, “The Family of William Penn (continued), IX: Thomas Penn,” *The Pennsylvania*

Chester County, Penn met one William Linvil, who had recently come into possession of a male buffalo from the upper Susquehanna River.¹⁶ This was likely William Linville, a frontiersman and hunter who lived on the Susquehanna and would later become an associate of Daniel Boone.¹⁷ On October 16, 1733, Penn purchased the buffalo from Linville. At some point—whether from Linville, Indians, or another source altogether—Penn also acquired a female bison.¹⁸

With winter setting in, Penn returned to Philadelphia with the two buffalo, where he arranged for the animals to be loaded on board the schooner *Samuel and John* for delivery to London.¹⁹ They were to be a gift to British King George II.²⁰ Like other European royals, George II had an extensive cadre of live animals on his various estates, and Penn likely thought that the buffalo would make a worthy addition to the king's collection.²¹ The *Samuel and John* departed Philadelphia with its animal cargo on January 1, 1734, and arrived in London on May 22, 1734.²² There are no records on how the buffalo were kept alive during the transatlantic voyage, but the ship's crew may have secured them with rigging used to transport horses and cattle. In London, Penn's associate Thomas Jackson took possession of the animals and delivered them to George II.²³ Unlike

Magazine of History and Biography 21, no. 3 (1897): 324–346; "Philadelphia," *American Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 20, 1733.

¹⁶ Historians debate the extent to which buffalo could be found in Pennsylvania. There are multiple place names contain the word "buffalo," such as Buffalo Creek, but there is almost no written evidence that bison could be found in this area. In an article for *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, for example, historian Gail Gibson found no documented encounters between Europeans and American bison in Pennsylvania. Gail M. Gibson, "Historical Evidence of the Buffalo in Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 93, no. 2 (1969): 151–158. Franklin Belue writes about this debate at length. See Belue, *The Long Hunt*, 140–147. It seems the authors had read Thomas Penn's account of purchasing the buffalo, but they had not seen the "London" article in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* that confirms its validity. See, "London," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1734.

¹⁷ Robert W. Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle: Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier, 1747–1762* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 31–33. Linville was a close associate of Daniel Boone, had once lived in the Susquehanna region, and was known as a frontiersman.

¹⁸ Gibson, "Historical Evidence of the Buffalo in Pennsylvania," 151–158; "London," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1734.

¹⁹ "London," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1734; The *Samuel and John* had arrived in Philadelphia on November 22, 1733. "Customs House, Philadelphia, Entered Inwards," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 22, 1733; "Entered Out," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 8, 1734.

²⁰ "London," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1734.

²¹ Raymond Phineas Stearns, *Science in the British Colonies of America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 248–249. The week after the buffalo was sent, Thomas Penn held a birthday party for the king in Pennsylvania. This may have been the motivation behind sending the buffalo. See "Philadelphia, Nov. 1," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 25, 1733.

²² "Customs House, Philadelphia, Entered Inwards," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 22, 1733; "Entered Out," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 8, 1734.

²³ "London," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Aug. 22, 1734; "Marriages," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. II, March 1732, 677. It seems the Penn brothers were acquaintances of Thomas Jackson of Chester County, Pennsylvania. He may also have been their banker. They gave him land in 1738; see Henry Eggle (ed.), *Pennsylvania Archives Third Series*, vol. 8 (Harrisburg, Pa.: Clarence M. Busch, State Printer, 1896), 116–118.

Menchaca's story, wherein a grateful king rewarded his subject for bringing him a buffalo, there is no evidence to suggest that King George appreciated, or even received his gifts. Indeed, the two buffalo may have arrived only to fall victim to the king, who enjoyed hunting unusual animals. On July 23, 1735, for example, George II dispatched several "wild beasts" that keepers had released on one of his estates for hunting.²⁴

Menchaca's buffalo would not even be the third of its kind to reach Europe; another American buffalo arrived in France in 1763. The origins of this particular animal are unclear, but the French likely imported it for scientific and economic reasons. France was the heart of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, a period in which thinkers sought to replace superstition and conjecture with reason and scientific knowledge. The French were particularly influential in the naturalist movement, which sought to categorize and understand the world's minerals, flora, and fauna. In 1662, for example, King Louis XIV and French naturalists began assembling live animal specimens at the palace of Versailles for categorization and study. Soon thereafter, the French founded the Academy of the Sciences and the Jardin des Plantes, wherein scientists bred plants and animals to make them more useful to humans.²⁵ A yearning for a better understanding of the world motivated much of this research, but so did France's desire to gain commercial and scientific advantages over rival nations. Indeed, animals would become an important aspect of competition between France, Spain, Britain, and, later, the United States.²⁶

France became interested in domesticating American bison after learning that the animals might be useful in populating and securing their New World colonies. In 1680, French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, sieur de La Salle, sailed from Canada to the mouth of the Mississippi River, where he encountered numerous bison. Upon returning from his voyage, La Salle reported that bison skins could "establish a great commerce and support powerful colonies."²⁷ La Salle's enthusiasm convinced French naturalists that they could domesticate bison and use the animal's thick hair as wool, thereby decreasing France's dependence on Spain and Eng-

²⁴ "Hanover," *The London Gazette*, July 19, 1735. In 1736, an unknown person may have delivered a buffalo to the governor of Virginia, but there are reasons to doubt the veracity of this tale. See Joseph Addison Waddell, *Annals of Augusta County, Virginia, from 1726 to 1871* (Staunton, Va: C. R. Caldwell, 1902), 30.

²⁵ Matthew Senior, "The Ménagerie and the Labyrinth: Animals at Versailles, 1662–1792," in Erica Fudge (ed.): *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans and Other Wonderful Creatures* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 208–232.

²⁶ The French also sought animals as curiosities. The powerful Condé family had a buffalo hide that had been prepared by Indian women from Illinois in their curiosity cabinet. Jacques Christophe Valmont de Bomar, *Dictionnaire Raisonné Universel D'hstoire Naturelle: Contenant L'histoire Des Animaux, Des Végétaux Et Des Minéraux*, vol. 1 (Paris: Didot, 1765), 447–448.

²⁷ Belue, *The Long Hunt*, 38.

land for sheep wool.²⁸ Therefore, when Pierre Le Moyne, sieur d'Iberville, arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi River in 1699 to settle Louisiana for France, he carried instructions on how to domesticate buffalo. His superiors believed the best way to do this would be to drive cows with calves into enclosures, where they could then be tamed. It is unclear if Iberville ever tried this method, but if so, he abandoned it after discovering what Indians had known for years: it was difficult to drive buffalo and even harder to keep them fenced. Instead of rounding up the animals, Iberville asked Indians to bring calves that could be raised into adulthood in captivity. It seems this approach had little success, as did a French plan to keep buffalo confined to Dauphin Island at the mouth of the Mississippi.²⁹ Before long, the French in Lower Louisiana dropped their plans for domestication and did what the Indians did: hunted bison in their natural environment. The French grew so prolific in this endeavor that two decades after the founding of New Orleans in 1718, the lower Mississippi was devoid of bison.³⁰

Although French experiments failed in Lower Louisiana, efforts to domesticate buffalo continued in Illinois, leading to the second transatlantic buffalo transportation. In 1748, the inspector of manufactures at Versailles examined a piece of buffalo wool, determined that it would be "usefully employed in our manufactures, especially those of stockings and of hats," and requested that more of the material be sent to France, implying that colonial leaders should capture and maintain buffalo for these purposes. The governor of Louisiana informed the inspector that Illinois ranchers had attempted to raise bison, but that these efforts had failed, leaving only "one or two" animals as evidence of the undertaking.³¹ One of these buffalo may have been delivered to France in 1763. All that is known of that animal is that local Indians captured a small male buffalo from a tributary river of the Mississippi called Arreco and delivered it to a governor, who tried to cross breed the animal with two cows.³² In 1754, Peter Kalm, whom Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus had sent to inspect and classify the animals of North America, also saw persons in Illinois successfully cross-breed bison and cattle.³³

²⁸ Morris, "How to Prepare Buffalo," 22, 28. See also, Belue, *The Long Hunt*, 41–43.

²⁹ Morris, "How to Prepare Buffalo," 22, 28–32.

³⁰ Morris, "How to Prepare Buffalo," 22, 28–32; Clarence Edwin Carter, *Great Britain and the Illinois Country, 1763–1774* (Washington: The American Historical Association, 1910), 87.

³¹ Theodore C. Pease and Ernestine Jenison, *Illinois on the Eve of the Seven Years' War, 1747–1755* (Springfield, Ill: Trustees of the State Historical Library, 1940), xxvi, 58–60, 85. It seems that the inspector did not understand the difficulty in raising bison, as he replied, "If certain facilities were all that were necessary to induce them to do so [domesticate bison], I should not be indisposed to procure them."

³² Volmont, *Dictionnaire Raisonné Universel D'histoire Naturelle*, vol. I, 447–448.

³³ Martin S. Garretson, "The Catalo," *Report of the American Bison Society, 1917–1918* (New York: American Bison Society, 1918), 30; Belue, *The Long Hunt*, 8–9.

Whether or not these descriptions concern the same buffalo is unclear, but it is known that in 1763 the governor of Louisiana sent a single male bison across the Atlantic Ocean to France. The decision to send the animal was likely made in light of the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 with the result that France surrendered its claims to North America, and hence all lands containing buffalo. The governor may have sent the buffalo in 1763 in a last ditch effort to cross breed the animal in France.³⁴

There are no records detailing how the bison traveled across the Atlantic, but once in Europe, the animal proved problematic to its keepers. With much difficulty, the French managed to offload the animal in Holland, but when they tried to herd the animal, it refused to budge and attacked its handlers. It seems that this behavior was too much for the French, who gave up on their breeding efforts. They instead sold the buffalo to a Swedish animal exhibitor, who placed it in a horse-drawn wheeled cage. To prevent the animal from destroying the cage or harming itself, the exhibitor immobilized the buffalo's head with four ropes connecting the cage to a collar around the animal's head. Keepers stroked the buffalo's mane to keep it calm. Under these conditions, the buffalo traveled to towns throughout France, where the curious could pay to see the animal roar in "the manner of a lion." During one stop, the buffalo broke its bonds and angrily rammed its head against a pole, mangling its horns.³⁵

In 1769, animal handlers featured the buffalo at the Paris Fair, where crowds paid for the opportunity to look at the animal. Swedish naturalist Jacob Jonas Björnsthåhl was one such observer. After seeing the buffalo, Björnsthåhl wrote his friend Carl Linnaeus and reported that the bison "was the first to be seen in Europe."³⁶ Also paying admission was Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, who had come to rival Linnaeus as Europe's preeminent naturalist in recent years. Buffon relished the opportunity to study the strange New World animal, and, after having done so, deduced that, in spite of their differences, European and American bison are members of the same species. He also determined, incorrectly, that American buffalo had become smaller or "less" than their European counterparts after having "passed from one continent to the other, and are become, like other animals, smaller in this new world."³⁷ In reality, American bison,

³⁴ Cowie, "Sloth Bones and Anteater Tongues," 7.

³⁵ Volmont, *Dictionnaire Raisonné Universel D'histoire Naturelle*, vol. I, 447–448; Louise E. Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 55–56 (quotation), 72, 79, 88; Georges L. L. Buffon and J. S. Barr, *Buffon's Natural History: Containing a Theory of the Earth, a General History of Man, of the Brute Creation, and of Vegetables, Minerals, &c. &c. &c.*, vol. 8 (London: Printed for the proprietor, and sold by H. D. Symonds, 1797), 55–56.

³⁶ Jacob Jonas Björnsthåhl to Carl Linnaeus, Apr. 15, 1769, *The Linnaean Correspondence*, <http://linnaeus.c18.net/Letters/display.php?id_letter=L4163> [Accessed Jan. 26, 2015]; Volmont, *Dictionnaire Raisonné Universel D'histoire Naturelle*, Vol. I, 447–448; Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*, 72, 79, 88; Buffon and Barr, *Buffon's Natural History*, vol. 8, 55–56.

³⁷ Buffon and Barr, *Buffon's Natural History*, vol. 8, 35–37, 45–46.

are, on average, heavier than their European relatives, meaning the buffalo seen by Buffon may have been a smaller American specimen or it may have been emaciated from years of being kept in a cage.

Whatever the case, the smaller American bison fit with Buffon's theory of New World degeneracy, which he had first proposed in 1761 in the ninth volume of his *Histoire naturelle*. According to Buffon, animals and people raised in the New World were degenerate forms of their Old World counterparts. This owed to the New World's cold climate, which produced smaller, more docile creatures than those seen in hotter places like India and Africa. As proof that "all the animals there are smaller than those of the old word," Buffon had even published a list of animals he believed were smaller in the Americas, a list that included buffalo. After seeming to confirm Buffon's assertion, the Paris Fair buffalo disappeared from history.³⁸

Unlike Penn's bison, which seem to have had no historical impact, the French buffalo helped continue a long-standing debate. Understandably, those living in the Americas disagreed with Buffon's theory of New World degeneracy and many sought to discredit it—perhaps none more so than future president of the United States Thomas Jefferson. Since 1771, Jefferson had been seeking his own buffalo for an animal park at his Virginia home, Monticello.³⁹ He hoped that in addition to pigeons, peacocks, pheasants, squirrels, hares, a shy buck elk, and other non-predatory animals, "a buffalo might perhaps be confined also" in the park.⁴⁰ Although hunters had driven bison to the edge of extinction east of the Appalachian Mountains, the idea was feasible. A little over six years before, *The Pennsylvania Gazette* reported that someone had managed to bring a bison from the Mississippi River to Philadelphia. Unfortunately for the historical record and those like Jefferson desiring their own buffalo, the newspaper did not say how this feat was accomplished. Whether this would have helped the future president or not, Jefferson was unable to procure a buffalo in the 1770s.⁴¹

Jefferson, however, renewed his efforts after reading Buffon's description of bison in *Histoire naturelle*. Hoping to disprove the theory of New World degeneracy, Jefferson made his own comparative list of Old and New World animals in 1781 in his book, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which more accurately described New World bison as weighing eighteen hun-

³⁸ Paul Semonin, *American Monster: How the Nation's First Prehistoric Creature Became a Symbol of National Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 124–125 (quotation on p. 124).

³⁹ Lester P. Coonen and Charlotte M. Porter, "Thomas Jefferson and American Biology," *BioScience* 26, no. 12 (1976): 745–750, 748.

⁴⁰ Edwin Morris Betts and Hazlehurst B. Perkins, *Thomas Jefferson's Flower Garden at Monticello* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1971), 4.

⁴¹ "To Be Seen," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 4, 1765. This may be the same buffalo seen in New York in 1758. See, "A Buffalo," *New York Mercury*, Jan. 16, 1758.

dred pounds and heavier than their European cousins.⁴² In 1783, he sent letters to hunters traveling west of the Appalachian Mountains to weigh and possibly capture an American bison as a means of disproving Buffon. Unfortunately, Jefferson received reports on bison weight, but no bison.⁴³ This failure to acquire a buffalo may have inspired Jefferson to instead request a moose carcass for a personal meeting with Buffon upon traveling to France in 1785. Jefferson's fascination with buffalo would continue later in life and, although he never seems to have acquired a live bison, a buffalo head, sent by explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, would later adorn his Monticello home.⁴⁴

Another United States president sought a bison, albeit for a different reason than Jefferson. As a young land speculator in the Ohio Valley, George Washington had seen and eaten buffalo on multiple occasions.⁴⁵ These experiences, and perhaps Peter Kalm's descriptions of tame buffalo in Illinois, convinced Washington that he could breed bison to be draft animals at his Mount Vernon estate in Virginia. Accordingly, in 1775, when one of his overseers, James Cleveland, set out to establish a settlement in Ohio Territory, Washington requested, "After you have got a place Inclosed, try and buy me all the Buffaloe Calves you can get and make them as gentle as possible. I would not stick at any reasonable price for them, especially the Cow Calves, but I should like at least two Bull Calves for fear of Accidents as I am very anxious to raise a Breed of them."⁴⁶ After arriving in the Ohio Territory, Cleveland faced multiple setbacks and was unable to acquire the requested buffalo. By the time he returned, Washington had taken command of the Continental Army and joined the independence movement against Britain.

The American Revolution did not temper Washington's enthusiasm for breeding buffalo. Indeed, during the war the future president received encouraging signs—in 1779, someone sent Washington cloth made from bison hair—that tame buffalo could turn a profit.⁴⁷ Once the war was

⁴² Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Boston: Lilly and Wait, 1832), 48. Jefferson may have acquired the 1,800 pound number from reports of a buffalo shot in Pennsylvania in 1729. See, "John Pemberton," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 8, 1730.

⁴³ Archibald Cary to Thomas Jefferson, Oct. 12, 1783, *Founders Online*, <<http://founders.archives.gov/?q=Project%3A%22Jefferson%20Papers%22%20elk&s=151131111&r=31>> [Accessed Jan. 9, 2015].

⁴⁴ Lee A. Dugatkin, *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose: Natural History in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 87.

⁴⁵ Frank E. Grizzard, *George Washington: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 136, 157.

⁴⁶ George Washington to James Cleveland, March 1775, *Founders Online*, <<http://founders.archives.gov/?q=buffalo&s=1111311111&sa=&r=25&sr>> [Accessed Jan. 20, 2015].

⁴⁷ George Washington to Daniel Bowers, May 28, 1779, *Library of Congress: American Memory*, <[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mgw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(gw150157\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mgw:@field(DOCID+@lit(gw150157)))> [Accessed Jan. 20, 2015].

over, Washington was heavily in debt, and, after returning to Virginia, he renewed his efforts to procure a living bison.⁴⁸ In 1787, when Washington's friend and relative David Stuart mentioned in a letter that he knew someone in possession of a buffalo, Washington replied, "the Buffalo Bull mentioned by him I should [like] to receive—and doubly glad if a mate could be obtained for him."⁴⁹ When Stuart failed to procure the animal, Washington wrote the buffalo's owner directly, stating, "Doctr Stuart informed me by letter from Richmond, that you had it in contemplation of offer me a Buffaloe calf, of which you were possessed; & desired to know if it would be acceptable. In answer, I assured him it would be very much so, as I had been endeavouring for sometime to get a pair (male and female with a view of propagating the Breed for the drought)."⁵⁰ It is unclear if Washington obtained the requested buffalo, as his extensive diaries and letters make no mention of taking any of the creatures into his possession. In spite of this lack of documentation, it seems that Washington did obtain bison at some point: a catalog of the first president's estate at his death lists two "buffaloe," a male and a female.⁵¹ Menchaca's buffalo, therefore, were not the first buffalo to cross the Atlantic Ocean, and they were not the only animals to come into possession of a head of state.

Although the buffalo featured in Menchaca's story did not achieve any historical firsts, the means by which the people of Texas acquired and transported the animal are better documented, as are the reasons the Spanish king wanted a buffalo. Not long after Carlos III ascended to the Spanish throne in 1759, he began instituting measures to increase Spain's prestige in the scientific community and to diversify the Spanish economy. He also asked officials to send him monsters: strange, terrifying animals that he could display in his personal zoos.⁵² In April 1776, for example, Carlos III asked officials to send him "*piezas curiosas* [curious pieces]," including rhinoceroses, gazelles, bears, armadillos, dragons, savage rats, "men of

⁴⁸ Bruce Chadwick, *The General and Mrs. Washington: The Untold Story of a Marriage and a Revolution* (Naperville, Ill: Sourcebooks, 2007), 67, 256–257.

⁴⁹ Gertrude R. B. Richards, "Dr. David Stuart's Report to President Washington on Agricultural Conditions in Northern Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 61, no. 3 (July 1953): 283–292; George Washington to David Stuart, Dec. 29, 1787, *Founders Online*, <<http://founders.archives.gov/?q=buffalo&cs=1111311111&sa=&r=61&sr=>>> [Accessed Jan. 20, 2015].

⁵⁰ George Washington to Andrew Lewis Jr. Feb. 1, 1788, *Founders Online*, <<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-06-02-0061>> [Accessed Jan. 20, 2015].

⁵¹ Eugene E. Prussing, *The Estate of George Washington, Deceased* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1927), 449–450.

⁵² Carlos Gómez-Centurión, "Treasures Fit for a King, King Charles of Spain's Indian Elephants," *Journal of the History of Collections* 22 no. 1 (2010), 29–30. Paula De Vos, "Natural History and the Pursuit of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Spain," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40, no. 2 (Winter, 2007), 209–239; Paula De Vos, "The Rare, the Singular, and the Extraordinary: Natural History and the Collection of Curiosities in the Spanish Empire," *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500–1800*, ed. Daniela Bleichmar, Paula De Vos, Kristin Huffine, and Kevin Sheehan (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 271–289.

the forest,” and other animals he had read about in Buffon’s texts.⁵³ The king’s request included tips for keeping the creatures alive for their trip to Spain and offered advice on how to preserve dead specimens.⁵⁴ Interestingly, Carlos III’s 1776 order—which netted the king alligators, monkeys, anteaters, leopard cubs, iguanas, a hermaphroditic horse, a jawbone of a “strange monstrous animal” from Nicaragua, an unusual creature born from a pig, and the “bones of a giant”—did not include a buffalo.⁵⁵ Indeed, the king waited until 1779 before pursuing American bison, and he sought the animal directly, not through a general order.⁵⁶ The king’s ministers—hoping to succeed where the French had failed in domesticating bison for their wool and “tasty meat,” and believing bison to be “stronger than the common ox” for use as draft animals—requested that Carlos III have buffalo delivered to Spain.⁵⁷ Carlos III, likely also motivated by the possibility of adding another monster to his menagerie, agreed to his ministers’ plans. Buffalo, like the camels Carlos III also sought to import, would be “exotic but useful.”⁵⁸ He would house the buffalo in the Casa de Vacas, a breeding facility on one of his estates where Spanish scientists worked to make quadrupeds profitable.⁵⁹

Using Spain’s bureaucratic network, the king ordered Interim Viceroy of New Spain Martín de Mayorga to send him as many living bison as he could procure in the hopes of starting a brood in Europe. On March 5, 1779, Mayorga relayed Carlos III’s request to the commandant general of the Eastern Internal Provinces, Teodoro de Croix. Recognizing Texas to be the best place to capture and transport a buffalo, Croix passed Carlos III’s orders to Texas governor Domingo Cabello y Robles. Cabello would have to send someone to the plains of Texas, capture the notoriously ornery animal alive, somehow deliver it hundreds of miles over rough terrain to a Spanish-controlled port, and hope the buffalo survived a long sea voyage to Spain. The king also expected the governor to include detailed

⁵³ A copy of Carlos III’s instructions can be found in Carlos III, “Instruccion Siguientes,” *Mercurio Histórico y Político*, May 1776, 92–93, 99–102.

⁵⁴ Many of the animals had been culled from Buffon’s list of animals. María Eugenia Constantino Ortiz, “Instrucciones y prácticas para coleccionar naturaleza en Nueva España, 1787–1803,” *Cuicuilco*, 18, no. 52 (2011): 124–125; 178–179 (quotation).

⁵⁵ Gómez-Centurión, “Treasures Fit for a King,” 29; Carlos III, “Instruccion Siguientes,” 92–93, 99–102.

⁵⁶ Translation of Croix to Cabello, approving measures taken for the capture of buffalo to send to Spain, May 14, 1779, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=c_bx_002919> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015].

⁵⁷ Carlos María Gómez-Centurión Jiménez, “Curiosidades vivas: Los animales de América y Filipinas en la Ménagerie real durante el siglo XVIII,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 66, no. 2 (2009): 181–211, 201–202. Gómez-Centurión describes the buffalo as having arrived in Spain in 1770. I believe this to be in error.

⁵⁸ Gómez-Centurión, “Exóticos pero útiles, 80–82.

⁵⁹ Cowie, “Sloth Bones and Anteater Tongues,” 7–8.

instructions on how to feed and care for the buffalo so they would not die upon reaching Europe.⁶⁰

Capturing the requested buffalo proved difficult, and it required multiple trips to the Southern Plains to obtain the animals. Having only been in Texas a year, Cabello knew little about bison and even less about catching one of the animals.⁶¹ The governor, however, realized that if anyone were up to the task, it would be Carlos Rioja, whom Cabello seems to have regarded as Texas's most experienced hunter and rancher. After Cabello supplied Rioja with "substantial provisions," in May 1779, the hunter gathered some companions in San Antonio and set out. Although Rioja had little difficulty locating and capturing bison, he found that when he tried to herd the animals, they "kill themselves in anger." Other died of heat stroke and still others succumbed to the light blows administered to drive the animals. By the time the men reached their destination, only a single female survived. Cabello made sure the animal was kept in "splendid condition."⁶² Knowing the king hoped to breed the bison, Rioja and five companions set out again in June, this time with two nursing cattle to lure and nourish young bison. The strategy proved somewhat effective. The second expedition rounded up twenty buffalo, but, as it was an especially hot summer, heat exhaustion once again depleted the herd. Only two six-month-olds who had taken to nursing from Rioja's cows remained alive by the time the expedition reached San Antonio. There presidio soldiers did their best to keep the two animals and the female from the earlier expedition alive.⁶³ Cabello and Rioja decided to wait until winter for a third expedition to avoid the deaths from heat exhaustion. It seems, however, that the third trip was unnecessary, as soldiers or ranchers in La Bahía had captured four living buffalo. One of the seven buffalo would die in the coming months, leaving six to be delivered to the king.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Translation of Croix to Cabello, approving measures taken for the capture of buffalo to send to Spain, May 14, 1779, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_002919> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015]. The king had requested that Cabello's predecessor send him pelicans. See translation of Bucarely y Ursua to Governor of Texas, concerning request for pelicans to send the king, March 22, 1775, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_002463> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015].

⁶¹ Jesús F. de la Teja, "Cabello y Robles, Domingo," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fcao3>> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015].

⁶² Translation of Cabello to Croix, reporting on difficulties encountered in securing buffalo for the king, June 18, 1779, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_002945> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015]; Croix to Cabello, approving measures taken for the capture of buffalo to send to Spain, May 14, 1779.

⁶³ Translation of Cabello to Croix, reporting on difficulties encountered in securing buffalo for the king, June 18, 1779.

⁶⁴ Translation of Croix to Cabello, giving instructions for the remittance to the viceroy of buffalo secured for the king, Aug. 16, 1779, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_003022> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015]; Translation of certified copy of Cazorla's letter to Croix, requesting instructions for payment of expenses involved in securing buffalo for the

On January 10, 1780, Cabello reported, "it is impossible for me to explain to Your Lordship the pains I am taking to ensure [the project's] success, sparing no expense or other requirement, for it is my hope to pursue the delight of serving and pleasing Your Lordship."⁶⁵ Indeed, arranging for the trip to Spain and caring for the buffalo proved costly, but Cabello, perhaps understanding that pleasing the king came with benefits, covered the expenses. For example, he repaid the commander of La Bahía's presidio 125 pesos, 6 reales, and 9 granos spent in caring for buffalo in 1779.⁶⁶ He also sent three buffalo pelts, prepared by Lipan Apaches, to appease the king until the live specimens arrived.⁶⁷ In response to Cabello's efforts, the commandant general of the Internal Provinces claimed, "I have seen that for the pursuit of buffalo and the maintenance of those already acquired, your zeal has dictated the most efficacious provisions, and they all justly merit my approval."⁶⁸ The king even singled out Governor Cabello for praise and asked that the governor suspend any future plans to send large animals from Texas.⁶⁹

In 1780, Cabello assigned a military officer and well-known hunter, Antonio Curbelo, to deliver the six remaining buffalo from Texas to Spain. The trip was difficult. Curbelo, who was likely the "Cabreo" from Menchaca's account, set out from Texas in early 1780 for Veracruz, where he would load the buffalo on to a ship bound for Spain. He was joined by ranch hands Francisco Pacheco and Lorenzo Reñie.⁷⁰ It is unclear how

King, Aug. 30, 1779, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_003044> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015]. For some reason, the August 30 letter indicated that only two buffalo remained alive in La Bahía. Cabello also mentions on January 10, 1780, "I therefore am preparing an expedition with nursing cows which are to have suckling calves at their side, to see whether by this means I can avoid the disappointments [of the past] when the large [buffalo] were caught." It is unclear if the governor was planning another expedition to the Southern Plains with suckling cows or referring to the earlier expedition. See also Robert H. Thonhoff, "Cazorla, Luis," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fcae>> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015].

⁶⁵ Translation of Cabello to Croix, acknowledging receipt of Croix's promotion to field marshal and reporting on efforts to secure buffalo for the king, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_003251> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015].

⁶⁶ Translation of Cabello to Croix, acknowledging receipt of Croix's dispatch to Cazorla concerning payment of expenses for the maintenance of buffalo for the king and other matters presented by Cazorla, Jan. 10, 1780, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_003187> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015].

⁶⁷ Translation of Neve to Cabello, transmitting royal appreciation for buffalo sent from Texas, Oct. 22, 1783, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_003641> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015].

⁶⁸ Translation of Croix to Cabello, praising Cabello's efforts for saving buffalo captured for the king and for handling all matters impartially, Apr. 4, 1780, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_003299> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015].

⁶⁹ Translation of Neve to Cabello, transmitting royal appreciation for buffalo sent from Texas, Oct. 22, 1783.

⁷⁰ Translation of Gálvez to Governor of Texas, announcing promotion for José Antonio Curbelo, Francisco Pacheco and Lorenzo Reñie for their participation in collecting buffalo for the king, May 22, 1784, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_006969> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015]; translation of Croix to Cabello, discussing several matters such as Cabello's

Curbelo, Pacheco, and Reñie transported the buffalo the seven hundred miles between Texas and Veracruz, but the journey claimed the lives of four of the six animals, leaving only a single female and single male for the king. The trip also bankrupted Curbelo, who had to spend his own money to reach Veracruz. Once there in April 1780, Curbelo, Pacheco, and Reñie loaded the buffalo on to a ship, which contained other exotic animals for the king.⁷¹ If this voyage were like others carrying New World animals to Europe, only 25 percent of animals would reach Spain alive. Owing to Curbelo's care, the buffalo would not be among the casualties. The hunter suspended the animals in leather straps to prevent them from harming themselves, fed them a steady diet of corn, and soaked them daily to prevent overheating.⁷² Although this treatment ensured that both buffalo arrived in the Spanish port of Cadíz alive, it seems that the male buffalo may have suffered from muscle atrophy or another malady. It died on the 164-mile trip from Cadíz to Córdoba.⁷³

Curbelo delivered the surviving buffalo to Madrid, where Carlos III expressed "great satisfaction" upon seeing the animal.⁷⁴ The king then asked Curbelo to bring the quadruped to the Real Heredamiento de Aranjuez, the Spanish royal family's spring residence and home to the Casa de Vacas. Upon arriving in Aranjuez, the buffalo joined camels, ostriches, an Indian elephant, a herd of European bison, and other exotic animals. The buffalo spent the next three years at Aranjuez, where it took to grazing with its European cousins and became one of Carlos III's favorite animals. Indeed, the king was so pleased with the buffalo, he ordered sculptor Juan Reyna to construct two fountains at the estate's entrance: one with the likeness of the Asian elephant, the other the Texas buffalo.⁷⁵ It is unclear if the scientists of the Casa de Vacas ever attempted to breed the buffalo with cattle or European bison, but they would not have a long time to do so. The Texas buffalo died in 1784.⁷⁶

injury, the lack of clerks at Béxar, the report on Fort Cibolo, and the temporary appointment of José Félix Menchaca and José Antonio Curbelo to take care of military and political matters at Béxar during Cabello's absence, January 31, 1780, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_003214> [Accessed Jan. 7, 2015]. The above sources mention that in January 1780, Cabello had trusted Curbelo to oversee San Antonio while he was away.

⁷¹ Gómez-Centurión, "Curiosidades vivas," 181–211, 201.

⁷² Gómez-Centurión, "Curiosidades vivas," 207–208; Translation of Gálvez to Governor of Texas, announcing promotion for José Antonio Curbelo, Francisco Pacheco and Lorenzo Rénie for their participation in collecting buffalo for the king, May 22, 1784.

⁷³ Gómez-Centurión, "Curiosidades vivas," 201–202.

⁷⁴ Translation of Gálvez to Governor of Texas, announcing promotion for José Antonio Curbelo, Francisco Pacheco and Lorenzo Rénie for their participation in collecting buffalo for the King, May 22, 1784.

⁷⁵ José Luis Morales y Marín, "Artistas Muricanos de los Siglos XVII y XVIII en la Corte," *Murgetana* 50 (1978): 93, 107; Juan Antonio Álvarez, *Descripción histórica del Real Bosque y Casa de Aranjuez* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1804), 333–334.

⁷⁶ Gómez-Centurión, "Treasures Fit for a King," 30; Gómez-Centurión, "Curiosidades vivas," 201–202.

Curbelo, Pacheco, and Reñie remained in Spain from 1780 to 1784 caring for the buffalo until its death.⁷⁷ As in Menchaca's account of events, the king rewarded the men for delivering and caring for the animal. He promoted Curbelo to the rank of lieutenant and, following the death of the buffalo, ordered officials in Cadíz to give the hunter a 10,000 reales bonus and pay for his return trip to New Spain. Once he reached Veracruz, Curbelo was to receive an additional 300 pesos for travel expenses to Texas. Curbelo's assistants, Francisco Pacheco and Lorenzo Reñie, received a 2,000 reales bonus, free passage to New Spain, and a seven reales daily allowance while traveling from Veracruz to Texas. The king also granted all three men a daily pension of three reales for the remainder of their lives.⁷⁸ The men left Spain in September 1784.⁷⁹ Upon reaching Texas, the men collected their pension and their exploits became a local legend.

Unfortunately, Curbelo was not able to enjoy his newfound fame and wealth for long. In 1790, he was ambushed and killed after setting out in pursuit of Comanche Indians who had stolen from his herd.⁸⁰ Lorenzo Reñie served as a shoemaker in La Bahía, where he continued to receive his pension until his death.⁸¹ Pacheco's fate is unknown. In 1786, Carlos III gave Governor Cabello the position of lieutenant to the king, made him a sub-inspector of Cuba, and soon thereafter promoted him to field marshal. It is unclear how much Cabello's efforts to transfer the buffalo played in the king's decisions.⁸²

Transporting buffalo over long distances became much more routine at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1793, the Tammany Society's American Museum in New York City put a stuffed buffalo on display.⁸³ On May 16, 1796, an exhibitor brought a buffalo to Hartford, Connecticut. Described as "the most surprising animal ever exhibited in this country,"

⁷⁷ Gómez-Centurión, "Treasures Fit for a King," 39; Gómez-Centurión, "Curiosidades vivas," 201–202.

⁷⁸ Translation of Gálvez to Governor of Texas, announcing promotion for José Antonio Curbelo, Francisco Pacheco and Lorenzo Reñie for their participation in collecting buffalo for the King, May 22, 1784; Passport for José Antonio Rafael Curbelo, Francisco Pacheco, Lorenzo Rene, Miguel Francisco Vandala, and José Antonio Fernández, Sept. 18, 1784, *Portal de Archivos Españoles*, <http://pares.mcu.es/Pares-Busquedas/servlets/ControlServlet?accion=3&txt_id_desc_ud=165844&fromagenda=N>.

⁷⁹ Passport for José Antonio Rafael Curbelo et al.

⁸⁰ Petition by Citizens of Bexar, March 1 and 2, 1790, Supplement No. 2, 259, Robert Bruce Blake Research Collection (Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin)

⁸¹ Governor Manuel Muñoz to Ramon de Castro, May 21, 1792, Supplement No. 3, 17, Robert Bruce Blake Research Collection.

⁸² Rengel to Cabello, announcing Cabello's appointment as lieutenant to the king and sub-inspector of Cuba, Feb. 9, 1786, *Bexar Archives Online*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/bexar/gallery_doc.php?doc=e_bx_004268> [Accessed Jan. 6, 2015]; translation of Neve to Cabello, transmitting royal appreciation for buffalo sent from Texas, Oct. 22, 1783.

⁸³ Charles C. Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: Norton, 1980), 69. Semonin, *American Monster*, 293. See also, "The Greatest Natural Curiosities," *Albany Gazette*, July 6, 1789.

the buffalo knelt down on command.⁸⁴ On October 1, 1796, a live buffalo—perhaps the same one seen in Connecticut—was paraded through the streets of Philadelphia accompanied by a fiddle player and waving flags. The animal appeared “far from wild,” and looked “quiet and innocent, and much fatigued—far from handsome.”⁸⁵ There were also more frequent transatlantic buffalo voyages. In 1795, an English animal breeder advertised that he had come into possession of “a young Buffaloe Bull,” although this may have been a water buffalo from India.⁸⁶ In 1798, the Duke of Norfolk, a prolific animal collector, received an American bison, as well as three elk and four cranes.⁸⁷

Although Menchaca was incorrect in believing that the first American bison sent to Europe came from San Antonio, he was right to include that remarkable story in his memoirs. Thomas Penn and the French may have accomplished this task before the people of Texas, but that does not make the feat any less extraordinary. After all, the people of Texas did something that many others, including Thomas Jefferson, could not.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ “To the Curious,” *Connecticut Courant*, May 16, 1796.

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker, *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker, 1735–1807*, vol. 2, ed. Elaine Forman Crane (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 854. In 1796, an article that appeared in newspapers throughout the United States claiming that a man had used a buffalo alongside a steer to plough a field. The buffalo proved faster and stronger than the steer. See “An Account of the American Buffalo, by Mr. Turner,” *The Independent Gazetteer* (Philadelphia), Nov. 19, 1796.

⁸⁶ “Just Arrived,” *The Times* (London), Aug. 12, 1795. The animal breeder, Peter Grellier, may have been in possession of a buffalo as early as 1777. There is the possibility that these buffalo were water buffalo from India, as Britain had claimed this region as part of its colonial empire by the late eighteenth century. See also, “Cows” *The Public Advertiser* (London), June 19, 1777.

⁸⁷ “Arrivals,” *The Times*, Dec. 24, 1798.

⁸⁸ Menchaca, *Recollections of a Tejano Life*, 169–170.