

Summary: New Spain

New Spain Grows

By the 1570s, Spain ruled Mexico as a colony. Spanish settlers farmed and built mines to find gold and silver. Soon more Spanish soldiers, government officials, and priests came. Over the next 250 years, the soldiers and priests traveled north and started missions. Priests wanted to convert American Indians to Roman Catholicism. Other European nations sent explorers and settlers to the Americas. The Spanish wanted to stop these nations from claiming land. They built forts called presidios to protect Spanish claims and guard against attacks. In 1565, Pedro Menéndez de Áviles started St. Augustine in Florida. It was the first town built in the present-day United States by Europeans. In 1598, Don Juan de Oñate started a settlement at Santa Fe, New Mexico. In 1769, a priest named Junípero Serra founded missions on the California coast.

Life in New Spain

The Spanish did not find much gold in North America. They started farms called haciendas to make money. They forced American Indians to work on farms and in mines. Many Indians died from overwork and bad treatment. A priest, Bartolomé de las Casas, spoke out against this bad treatment. Most settlers ignored him. Later, the Spanish imported enslaved Africans to replace the many American Indians who died. Most of the enslaved Africans worked on sugar cane plantations in the Caribbean colonies. By 1650, about 130,000 enslaved Africans and their descendants had been brought to New Spain. Some American Indians moved to missions, converted to the Spanish religion, and learned to speak Spanish. Others refused. In 1680, Pueblo Indian leader Popé led a revolt against the Spanish in New Mexico. They killed hundreds of Spanish and kept the Spanish out of the area until 1692. Then Spanish soldiers reconquered the area.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

colony *noun*, a territory ruled by another country

mission *noun*, a religious community where priests teach Christianity

convert *verb*, to change a religion or a belief

hacienda *noun*, a large farm or ranch, often with its own church and village

revolt *noun*, a violent uprising against a ruler



After You Read

REVIEW Why did the Spanish build presidios in New Spain? Highlight the sentence that describes the Spanish forts.

REVIEW What did some American Indians do when they moved to Spanish missions? Highlight the sentence that gives the answer.