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FRONTIER TEXAS, 1850s-90s

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

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ARMY ROLE ON THE RIO GRANDE

See virtually complete set of Annual Reports of the Chief of Engineers (UA24A11). Accompanying the set is the three-volume Analytical and Topical Index to the Reports of the Chief of Engineers..., compiled by John McClure, et al (Wash, DC: GPO, 1818- 1902; UA24A11).

Note in particular the works on Rio Grande exploration, such as William H. Emory's Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey...(F786U45) and Lt J.W. Abert's Western America in 1846-47, ed by John Galvin (San Francisco: Howell, 1966: F800A6), which is a reprinted journal kept during exploration along the upper Rio Grande.

A description of the difficulty ships faced when sailing into the Rio Grande Estuary from the Gulf is found in the first chapter of James Arthur L. Fremantle's Fremantle Diary, ed by Walter Lord (Boston: Little, Brown, 1954; E487F863).

The Corps of Engineers has published a history of the Galveston District, which includes the Rio Grande up to the Laredo area, viz:

Alperin, Lynn M. Custodians of the Coast. Galveston, TX: Galveston District, US Army COE, 1977. 318 p. UG24T4A46.

To locate references on the use of keel boats for supplying West Texas and New Mexican forts, one should consult Quartermaster General records (Record Group 92) in the National Archives, and also examine monthly post returns. Fort McIntosh's returns for 1849-1870 are available on Reel #681 of Microcopy Nr. 617.

A recent study of supplying posts in the Southwest is Robert W. Fraser's Forts and Supplies (Albuquerque: U of NM, 1983; UC263F739. The author notes on pp. 36 & 41 that the most-used route for supplies to New Mexican posts, other than the Santa Fe Trail, was via the port of Indianola and then by wagon train to a San Antonio depot and on the El Paso.

On keelboating and steamboating in the early 19th century, see Leland D. Baldwin's Keelboat Age on Western Waters (1941) and Louis C. Hunter's Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History (1949), neither of which is on file here. Two articles that may be of interest to you are Grant Foreman's "River Navigation in the Early Southwest," Mississippi Valley Historical Review XV (Jun 1928) pp. 34-55, and Roger L. Nichols' "Army Contributions to River Transportation, 1818-1825," Military Affairs (Apr 1969), pp. 242-249. Unfortunately, Foreman covers the Arkansas and Red Rivers, not the Rio Grande, and Nichols describes transport efforts on the Missouri.