In 1778, a grand tour of exploration was made by a Frenchman named Pierre Vial from San Antonio de Bexar, Texas, to Santa Fe; thence, under the orders of Don Fernando de la Concha, Governor of New Mexico, to Natchitoches, Louisiana; and thence back to San Antonio. The expedition from Santa Fe was authorized for the purpose of discovering and demonstrating a direct and feasible road between that capital and Natchitoches, and in the hope of establishing a regular trade between Louisiana and the Provincias Internas. Pierre Vial, who was a native of Lyons, France, was evidently a man of intelligence and energy; for in this tour he almost circumscribed the southern plains. He also compassed "the general pacification of the Comanche nation" in that region; and in 1792, under authority of the same governor, he explored a route from Santa Fe eastward and northeastward across the central plains to "San Luis of the Illinois", now St. Louis, Missouri, returning later to Santa Fe, which he reached on the 15th of November, 1793. His achievements were recognized by Governor Concha, as well as by General Pedro de Nava, Commandante General of the Internal Provinces, sufficiently meritorious to warrant some special recognition, and he was by these officials, therefore, recommended to the King of Spain for appointment to the rank and pay of Second Ensign. In his expedition from Santa Fe to Natchitoches he was accompanied by Francisco Xavier Fragoso, of the City of Mexico, who kept a diary of the journey, and by three natives of Santa Fe. The following is the account of this expedition preserved to us by Fragoso:

*Translated in Executive Document No. 21, 50th Congress; and reproduced in the Supreme Court Record of the Greer County Case.*

Itinerary, diary, and computations of leagues of a journey of discovery from this the province of New Mexico to the fort of Natchitoches and the province of Texas, undertaken by superior orders, jointly with Don Pedro Vial, by me, the undersigned, commissioner for this purpose, Francisco Xavier Fragoso, Town of Santa Fe, the 24th of June, 1788.

June 24. — This day, all preparations having been made, and after having received the orders of his lordship, the governor of this province, Don Fernando de la Concha, and the correspondence and dispatches addressed to their lordships the government of said fort and the province of Texas, in the morning, I started from this capital, the following persons: Don Pedro Vial, a n Christian Vial, and Francisco Xavier Fragoso, of the city of Mexico; Gregorio Leyva, and Juan Lucero, natives of Santa Fe, shaping my
For President'ship fr. Patmore from 6 to 9 Fe (about 1765) the Green Co. Care. Feb. 25 17-25.
the upper branches of the river of that name, across to the Canadian river, on which after following it for three days, they separated three of them desiring to return by the route to the Pawnee villages and thence to the Illinois, and the four continuing down the Canadian river, the lower forty or fifty leagues of which, having abandoned their horses, they descended in canoes made with the only two knives that remained in the party. The Canadian river having thus been entered, the whole party explored the whole length of it, by these hard, Canadianis, eighty years before it was described by Becler Long and Sixgina.

We have seen that the first manned expedition known to have passed through the upper Arkansas valley was by the civilized Pueblo Indians, in two and a half centuries ago; that the first one by white men was by Spaniards, about two centuries ago; and that the first one by white men from the East — "Tabbybo," as the Comanches, Utes and Shoshones called them — was by the French, nearly 166 years ago. But all of these were mere travellers; none of them came as residents, either temporary or permanent, and none of them built a habitation.

The first house known to have been constructed for human occupancy in the valley of the upper Arkansas was built for commercial purposes, and that was in 1763, and was built by Frenchmen. It probably dates but little prior to that year, as one of the members of the expedition that built it still lived in 1812, the year of the publication of Captain Amos Stoddard's Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Louisiana, a work in which the following account of the enterprise is given:

"While Louisiana was in the hands of France, some of the French traders from the upper Mississippi, by way of the Arkansas, erected a temporary store, and opened trade with the Indians. From this description it is evident that the "temporary store" was in the neighborhood of the modern city of Pueblo, Colorado, and was therefore the first structure known to have been erected by white men within the limits of the state of Colorado."

The prisoners were liberated, and their property restored, on the ground, that the store in question (situated on the east side of the summit of the mountain, and below the source of the Arkansas) was within the boundaries of Louisiana. One of the persons concerned in this transaction is now living, from whom were obtained the several circumstances attending it."

Commenting on Stoddard's narrative, Captain Hiram H. Chittenden, in his excellent History of the American Fur Trade of the Far West.
CHAPTER XVI

SOME FRENCH JOURNEYS TO AND FROM NEW MEXICO IN MIDDLE AND LATER DECADES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

There were two arrivals of Frenchmen in New Mexico, that closely followed the Mallet adventures, and that doubtless resulted from the interest which these aroused in Mississippi possibilities of trade with New Mexico, on the part of the inhabitants of the Mississippi valley, if indeed they were not also ventures with which the Mallet brothers themselves had a business connection.

On page 245 of Bancroft's "Arizona and New Mexico", we are told that (Amongst the Early French intercourse with New Mexico N.B. P. 2 76 Vol. XVII Bancroft's Works But see journal of Vidal's expedition in New Co. Case in connection)

From Bancroft's "Arizona and New Mexico", we learn of two advents of Frenchmen to New Mexico, which closely followed the two Mallet adventures, and must have resulted from the interest these aroused in the Mississippi valley, if indeed they were not also ventures with which the Mallet brothers themselves had some business connection. On page 246 of that volume we are told that in 1744, a Frenchman named Velo arrived at the village of Pecos; and that he was arrested and sent to Mexico.

In 1748, the same page and volume informs us, 33 Frenchmen visited the Comanches at the Rio de Jicarilla, and sold them muskets. The governor thought that in this party must have been some of those who visited New Mexico before, and that the French had hostile designs; he therefore recommended a presidio of 50 men at Jicarilla, but the viceroy declined to authorize it.*

*MINIMUM: The time of the Mallet expeditions and MXXIII there had been a change of administration; which may account for the supposed "hostile designs" of the French. The governor from 1739 to 1743, Don Domingo de Mendoza; from 1743 to 1749, Joaquin God逃llos was governor.
French Expedition

Viel’s Expedition. (Wyoming Plains(1788))

See note “Pierre Viell(1788)” in Pioneer Emigrant.

Louis Blaine (1788)

Commander at Natchez in 1804

for trade w. T. M. See F. 278 Vol. XVI, Bancroft. (NB: His name Blaine or Blemou went 1805-1809)

Francisco Bruno Fragoso’s Expedition

F.X. Villa Ferre, M.M., with Pierre Viel who
had gone across the plains from
Red River to Natchez and 3 others
back from Santa Fe to Natchez via Red
River and back by Red River to Natchez.

June 24 to Aug. 26, 1788; and thence, Aug. 30 to Nov.
3, 1788 to San Antonio de Bexar. [For his itinerary, see pp. 278-279, and see also the map on p. 278.]