
The Spain William Maclure Knew

*Alberto Gil Novales**

William Maclure traveled to Spain twice. His first visit was in 1808 just before the Peninsular War, an event that forced him to flee Spain, where turmoil could not provide fertile ground for his philosophical experiments or extended projects. Maclure's first trip to Spain was a fruitful experience, however, giving him enough of a taste of the country that he made plans to return as soon as he could. Despite traveling only briefly through Spain, Maclure left an interesting record of his experience.

Maclure's journey into Spain began in southern France. Coming through Perpignan, he was accompanied by Matthieu Tondi (1762–1837), an Italian geologist and mineralogist who served as his companion throughout his Spanish travels.¹ Maclure himself paid all of Tondi's travel expenses.² His selection of Tondi reveals the character he wanted to give his visit to Spain: Tondi was a man passionately devoted to science and a patriot persecuted by the authorities of his hometown of Naples.

Maclure, who entered Spain on January 24, 1808, took into consideration both the geological features of the landscape as well as the social disposition of the population. Following the coastline, he traveled to the great Mediterranean city of Barcelona, taking note of its beauty, as well as its bustling industry and commerce, and providing commentary on the city's failure to employ the Pestalozzian method of education.³ Maclure commented on a variety of subjects in his travel notes, including the climate, the condition of agriculture, the wages of the cultivators, the prominent Pestalozzian enterprise of Captain Voitel in Tarragona, the "gypsies or bohemians" seen between Benicarló and Alcala de Chivert, the Roman archaeological sites in Sagunto, and the manners of the innkeepers.⁴ Maclure also

*Alberto Gil Novales is professor of contemporary history, University of Madrid, Spain.

¹John S. Doskey, ed., *The European Journals of William Maclure* (Philadelphia, 1988), 106. Information for this article is derived from this source unless otherwise indicated.

²*Ibid.*, 273.

³Alberto Gil Novales, *William Maclure in Spain*, trans. Alonso Carnicer (Madrid, 1981), 25.

⁴*Ibid.*, 27–28.

made observations about the mendicant clergy, whom he described disparagingly as typical representatives of the Ancient Regime: an idle people. He advocated a change in the condition of the clergy so that they would cease to be a social nuisance. Arriving in Alicante, Maclure wrote that his first impression was not very good because of the heavy rainfall, yet the town would eventually become his base in Spain.⁵ He immediately liked the society of the city.

To get to Andalucia he started from Almeria through the back country, where he studied the production of the mines, as was his habit. In a little village on April 30, 1808, a day of solitude, he discovered *gazpacho*, an Andalusian dish made of bread, oil, vinegar, onions, and garlic (although he may never have learned the word for it). Then he moved to Granada, where he enthusiastically observed not only the crafts and arts of the city but also the influence of liberal ideas of the Age of Reason. He found that the cultivated people there were accustomed to reading Condillac, Volney, and other modern liberal spirits. From there he proceeded to Malaga, with its Malaga wine; to Churriana, the location of the large cotton plantation of William Kirkpatrick; to Marbella, the place of the sugarcane plantation of Henry Grevignee; and finally to the pleasant town of Cadiz. Unable to take the stagecoach to Madrid because of the war, Maclure decided on May 28, 1808, to leave the country. "This war is too bad for Spain," he wrote.⁶

Maclure's first visit to Spain lasted four months. During the trip he met other people in the country besides innkeepers, friars, and gypsies. In his travels Maclure always tried to make contact with the institutions of culture and the important men associated with those institutions. At the physics laboratory in Barcelona's Academy of Natural Sciences and Arts he met Francisco Carbonell y Bravo, the author of a number of books on chemistry and pharmacy and founder of the new School of Chemistry in 1805. In Valencia Maclure was in touch with the Economic Society of the Friends of the Country but was not able to meet Juan Sanchez Cisneros, a scientist, military man, mineralogist, and an indefatigable traveler and publicist. Later Maclure did get to know Cisneros after he carried a letter of introduction from Pestalozzi during his 1820 trip. In Alicante Maclure visited the famous Prince Pio, a grandee of Spain and an archaeologist, historian, and philologist who would die soon after in November, 1808. At Granada, too, Maclure stopped at the Economic Society of the Friends of the Country and the Academy of Design and Mathematics, a typical center of the Spanish *Ilustracion*.⁷

⁵*Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁶*Ibid.*, 41.

⁷For a discussion of the *Ilustracion*, see Paula de Demerson, Jorge Demerson y Francisco Aguilar Pinal, *Las sociedades económicas de Amigos del País en el siglo XVIII: Guía del investigador* (San Sebastián, 1974), 91-96; Juan Luis Castellano Castellano, *Las sociedades económicas de Amigos del País del Reino de Granada en el siglo XVIII* (Granada, 1984).

Maclure then visited the cotton plantation of William Kirkpatrick at Churriana and the sugarcane plantation of Henry Grevignee near Malaga. At the time Kirkpatrick was the American consul in Malaga and was married to a daughter of Grevignee, who already had a partly Spanish name, Francisca Grevignee y Gallegos. Kirkpatrick, who was related to Eugenia de Montijo, the future empress of France, was a man of great initiative. With Grevignee and a third partner he founded in 1810 a textile factory in Malaga at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Spain. But in 1811 Malaga was occupied by the French, and Kirkpatrick made the error of being their strong partisan. This marked the end of his enterprise, but he was still in Granada in 1821, dedicated to the mining industry.

These people formed the nucleus of Maclure's relationships in Spain during his first trip. Later in his 1820 visit these relationships deepened. At that time Spain had launched a liberal revolution, which experimented with a constitutional form of government that lasted until 1823, when Spain was defeated by a military invasion of French absolutists and the Holy Alliance. The next year, 1824, Maclure left Spain, attended "by the folly, stupidity and cruelty of despotism."⁸ His properties were confiscated in Spain. Maclure's Spanish visit came between two French invasions. As a man who hated all despotism, Maclure came to hate the French style of despotism in particular.

In 1820 Maclure stayed out of Spanish politics, but he leaned toward the liberal parties—to the Cortes and to the Spanish people in general. The Spanish Revolution ended in failure, but the years between 1820 and 1824 were the culmination of a political transformation that had begun with the end of the Ancient Regime and the Napoleonic invasion of 1808. The Spanish Revolution was unlike the French Revolution, which was a concentrated series of events (the French speak of "évènement fondateur"). The Spanish Revolution moved slowly with sudden flashes that extended through two centuries. The so-called "Trienio liberal" was one of the most important of those fulgurations. Despite the revolution's ultimate disaster, those years prepared Spain for a transition to a new order in legislation, in the popular mentality, and even in the habits of the population.

Maclure believed that the Spanish climate, both physical and political, would allow him to initiate a great new experiment near Alicante. His failure was the failure of the Spanish political situation, the failure of Spain. New Harmony would be the new land of social experimentation. What Maclure's Spanish career, his enterprises, journal accounts, and Spanish friendships did accomplish was to provide important means for understanding that beleaguered country.

Maclure arrived in Madrid in November, 1820, for his second visit and remained in the capital until 1822. He was primarily an observ-

⁸Novalles, *William Maclure in Spain*, 96.



MACLURE'S ESTATE AT ALICANTE, SPAIN

Photograph by Alberto Gil Novales. Courtesy of the New Harmony Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Indiana.

er of Spain's political developments, though soon he planned once again to build another kind of world. Maclure's intention was not to descend into politics but to lay down the foundations of a new society. Only then would he become involved in a new kind of political behavior. Most revealing of Maclure's thoughts and actions in Spain is his correspondence with two Pestalozzian teachers, Marie Duclos Fretageot and William S. Phiquepal. With Maclure's assistance both teachers were in Paris working in a school for boys. Maclure's relationship with Fretageot was not only professional, it was personal as well. Maclure also had a friendship with the American diplomat George William Erving (1769–1850), who was formerly United States representative in Madrid (1804–1809 and 1814–1819). To a certain extent Erving was a radical like Maclure, but his affairs in Spain were based largely on a zealous and ill-conceived interest in buying royal deeds and bonds of the Spanish national debt, which tended to move perennially downward.

Almost all of Maclure's relationships during this time were related to Spain and the United States and constituted a strong tie between the two countries. Fretageot and Phiquepal arrived in New Harmony with Maclure on the keelboat *Philanthropist*, which plied the Wabash River in 1825 to inaugurate the social experiments of the Owenite-Maclurian period. Phiquepal later returned to France and in 1831 married Frances Wright, the famous author of *Views of Society and Manners in America* (1821) and the inspiration of the antislavery Nashoba community (1826).

In 1820 Maclure went to Spain for both health reasons and political considerations. He found Spain attractive because it offered a climate salutary for his rheumatism and because out of the political situation a constitutional government had emerged. Maclure liked this form of government. He found the Spanish people in a terrible condition of ignorance, but he hoped that the constitutional regime would help them with education and democracy. He followed the country's political evolution daily, standing with the people against the government, which was officially liberal. In those years Maclure spoke repeatedly of the terrible ignorance of the Spanish masses, but he believed in the force of education and came to admire the great qualities of the Spanish people—their energy and firmness along with their restraint and respect for order.

Maclure's thoughts on Spanish society are clear. He observed:

Spaniards are as ignorant as any other people, but they have acquired a faith in the value of their own effort after a long and anarchic apprenticeship. For Spaniards, anarchy occupies the place of reason, and it eggs them on to defend their rights without a perfect understanding either of the principles on which they are based or the effects derived from them. In this way anarchy is an advantage. Another advantage is that the ruling classes in Spain are almost as ignorant as the masses, and because of this are unable to take advantage of their economic superiority. There should always be a balance between knowledge, property, and power, but in Spain the wealthy classes have no knowledge, only indolence and imbecility, which nullifies their achievements

and makes the illusion that property is more properly distributed. So if Spain maintained its democratic constitution, the division of property would come about despite all the efforts of the rich to resist it.⁹

The Spanish constitution may have been centuries ahead of the country's civilization, but for Maclure the problem was the effect of the "obstinate habits of pride" and presumption that drove "the lower classes to defend their freedom, that is to say, their anarchy."¹⁰

The first thing Maclure tried to do in Spain was to introduce a printing press and two technicians who would publish the dispatches of the Spanish state department under a contract with the government. It is curious to find Maclure attempting to publish a documentary collection in Spain. He was not, after all, a historian. Indeed, he adhered to the idea that history was a tale where the adventures of villains are told. Yet, in his view, history also opened the eyes of the simple people. Resolved to print the dispatches, Maclure tried to import from France a new printing press, which demonstrated his faith in technological progress. Despite several references to the printing press, it is unclear whether or not it finally arrived in Spain.

Maclure was interested in translating Joseph Neef's book, *Sketch of a Plan and Method of Education* (Philadelphia, 1808) into French and Spanish. He thought two thousand copies for Spain and Spanish America would be enough. Even in Spain Maclure thought not only of the European country but of Spanish America as well. He also wanted to publish some of his political essays written in 1819 in Spanish for the *Revue Encyclopédique*, but they would not appear because of French censorship. The essays were eventually published in Spanish and appeared later again in English in the *New Harmony Gazette*. Finally they appeared in Maclure's book, *Opinions on Various Subjects* (New Harmony, 1831). The size of those essays increased from the French translation into Spanish and again into English. The Spanish edition, unfortunately, is full of problems. The essays were published in Madrid, but nothing else is known about them. Perhaps saying *published* is saying too much, for nobody has seen a single copy. Maclure translated and printed the essays, but it is not certain that he gave them out for distribution. He thought that their themes were too advanced for the Spanish mentality, so he made a leaflet out of his work. He first sent three hundred copies to Freta-geot and later another one hundred fifty. It seems he ordered a special publication of only twenty-two pages, and it also seems that they appeared in a newspaper.

Scholars are on firmer ground in studying Maclure's mining interests in Spain. Although he approached his mine visits and his collection of minerals scientifically, his intentions were also idealis-

⁹*Ibid.*, 44-45.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

tic. His correspondence reveals his confidence in the mines as the potential basis of a future industrial revolution. He was also a financial partner in a silk factory in Valencia, which he spoke of in 1833 and noted in his last will of 1840.

Between 1820 and 1822 Maclure's relationships were varied. One association that he built was with Rafael de Rodas from Aranjuez, his representative in the region surrounding the Tagus River. Rodas owned a soap factory and was a man of ideas prepared to sell his production in Spain and Portugal as well as in the United States. In 1824 he was a member of the Junta de Fomento del Reino, which was a kind of board established to improve the material conditions of the country. In 1838 he became director of the Savings Bank of Madrid.¹¹

Fortunately more information exists on Jacobo Parga y Puga, former minister of the Supreme Council of the Treasury, provisionally appointed minister of the Interior of the Peninsula in March, 1820, and in Maclure's own words, "the only scientific gentleman in Madrid."¹² Professor Antonio Mejjide Pardo of La Coruna has dedicated a book to Parga y Puga, which follows his studies at Santiago University, his problems with the Inquisition in 1795, his beginnings in the civil service, and his scientific and economic significance at the Museum of Natural Sciences in 1815 and the Credito Publico in 1816. As a naturalist he was known by his work in the museum and for his mineralogical collection. Finally, he was a member of the Cortes in 1834 and was a senator in 1845.

In July, 1822, Maclure was in Madrid, where he witnessed the counterrevolutionary movement, and his descriptions of the movement in letters to Professor Benjamin Silliman of Yale College and to Fretageot are of great interest. After the counterrevolution Maclure went to Alicante, where he arrived on November 21, 1822. The trip was motivated by his taking possession of the lands bought from the Credito Publico in the states of San Gines, El Carmen, and La Guzman. There are several descriptions of those properties, which were formerly owned by the church.¹³ Maclure, glad about the possibilities the states offered to him, sought an agreement with the governor of Alicante for a Lancastrian school. He pledged to pay half the salary of a teacher. He also wanted to build a new school, an agrarian institute, which he promoted as beneficial not only for Spain but also for the two Americas. This institution was to be rooted in the American tradition laid out by Washington and Jefferson in their letters to Arthur Young or in the tradition of the *Letters from an*

¹¹Alberto Gil Novales, *Diccionario biográfico del Trienio liberal* (Madrid, 1991).

¹²Antonio Mejjide Pardo, *El ilustrado político y economista gallego Jacobo Maria de Parga y Puga (1774-1850)* (La Coruna, 1992).

¹³Novales, *William Maclure in Spain*, 83-84.

American Farmer of J. Hector Saint John de Crèvecoeur.¹⁴ Maclure wanted to improve cultivation with new methods and new plants, including tropical ones.

The Lancastrian school, located at first in the city because it would be cheaper, would be based on this improved agriculture, but it would soon be joined by a Pestalozzian school in the countryside. As Maclure explained in his *Opinions*, the Pestalozzian methods could be incorporated into a Lancastrian framework. Both schools were to form the nucleus of a new kind of society. He persuaded the Alicante orphanage to place sixty orphans under his care, just as in 1829 he announced that he would take Mexican children to the industrial school in New Harmony. In the Alicante region the idea was to combine an industrial school with experiments in agriculture and with Pestalozzian methods of education.

There were great problems on the horizon not only because Spain was approaching a civil war but also because of technical questions. Yet Maclure remained confident. He believed in the future of Spain, and he hoped that the political struggles would not interfere with his plans. Even in financial questions, Maclure was confident, at least publicly. His article "Spanish Bonds" in the London *Morning Chronicle*, November 23, 1822, was an attempt to placate and disarm international public opinion on the question of Peninsular finances. Privately, his doubts were greater, but Maclure wanted to help the country overcome its difficulties. The thought Maclure gave to his school is understandable when the number and quality of the would-be professors of the future school are considered. He planned to bring M. Conti, who taught gymnastics in Paris; Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, the famous French naturalist who later taught in New Harmony; M. James, a disciple of Piquet in Paris, who would take care of the instruction of the orphans; one of the four Combe brothers who were Scottish Owenites in the frontier of British Saint-Simoniens; and one of their uncles, known because he was the keeper of one of the best cafes and taverns in Edinburgh. M. Puriles, who knew both Spanish and the Lancastrian methods of education, would be in charge of the Alicante school. Piquet himself would be in charge of the agrarian Pestalozzian school in the country. Maclure also began negotiations with an excellent mechanic—unfortunately he does not indicate his name—who was to join his enterprise. He intended to create one of the so-called "moral manufactories" believed to be useful for the exceptional conditions of intelligence and natural skill of the Spanish children.

Founded to foster the development of new agricultural techniques and crops, Maclure's Spanish school would be under the direc-

¹⁴J. Hector Saint John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (Paris, 1782).

tion of the industrial institute. Maclure had tools sent from Philadelphia to the institute apart from those he tried to manufacture in Spain itself. In addition to the Lancastrian school in Alicante, there was to be another Pestalozzian school in the country, separate but connected with the industrial and agrarian institute, where mechanics and drawing would be taught. One name must be mentioned immediately as a model for Maclure's concept, the Swiss pedagogue and Pestalozzian, Philipp Emmanuel von Fellenberg, to whom Maclure devoted an article collected in his *Opinions*. For Fellenberg, as for Maclure, the school, which marked the beginning of a wider social community, was to cover its own expenses. Fellenberg and Maclure differed, however, in their aims. Fellenberg wanted to preserve class distinctions, reasoning that since there would always be rich and poor, both should be educated in mutual respect.¹⁵ Maclure was probably more radical in his aims.

The agrarian-industrial school was the last of Maclure's projects in Spain. Unfortunately it collapsed because of the French invasion of Spain in 1823 and the confiscation of Maclure's property. He lost from \$30,000 to \$40,000 (he himself spoke once of \$60,000), a tremendous loss that he accepted stoically. Worst of all was the loss of hope. But New Harmony emerged in 1825 as the continuation of the experience, the new promised land where the Spanish idea would be fulfilled far removed from French bayonets and Spanish despots.

Besides Rodas and Parga, the collaborators of Maclure in Spain between 1820 and 1824 were indicative of the variety of his interests. First came the bankers. In a time when the modern concept of a bank was in its incipient stages—it was born after and derived from the Napoleonic wars—for Maclure, the banker was still a friend and administrator of his money and private correspondence. Maclure operated with Henry O'Shea of Valencia, a well-known name in the development of banking in Spain during the nineteenth century, an Irish name that is still heard in Spanish banking circles. Also, he dealt with Henry McCall of Gibraltar. But Maclure preferred another firm—Wiseman, Gower and Company, a kind of old-fashioned bank belonging to an Anglo- or Irish-Spanish family. To the same family belonged the future Cardinal Wiseman, born in Seville in 1802. There are other names: George Barrell, American consul in Malaga, as well as several commercial agents such as Casas y Costa; Manuel Basterrica of Irun; Juan Bautista Iribarren and nephews, Balmaseda and Nelson; and Santiago Aramburu in Madrid.

One of Maclure's collaborators in Spain was especially notable: Obadiah Rich, United States consul in Valencia, who had the task of acquiring books and mineral specimens for Maclure. Rich was also a keen naturalist interested in the Pestalozzian methods of education, and he was later to become a famous bibliophile, the creator of

¹⁵Novales, *William Maclure in Spain*, 92-93.

the *Americana* branch of bibliographic science. The Smithsonian Institution is partly linked with his name. Obadiah Rich is one of those famous names, important in British and American culture, that belongs also to the Spanish heritage. He held several diplomatic posts in Spain for many years. In 1822 his children were completely Spanish, as Maclure wrote Fretageot. And he was the best ambassador of the Spanish literary tradition in the Anglo-Saxon world. Obadiah Rich was married in Alicante to Anna Montgomery, daughter of Robert Montgomery, American consul in Alicante since 1793, the partner of Maclure in the state of San Gines, and himself a man of great initiative. He died in 1823. A son of Robert Montgomery and therefore the brother-in-law of Obadiah Rich was called George Washington Montgomery Irving. For a long time he was in charge of Maclure's affairs in Spain after the latter's departure. This George Washington Irving, born in Alicante and not to be mistaken with Washington Irving, was also a writer. He wrote in Spanish with the pen name of "El Solitario" (the lonely one) and was perhaps the first to write in the Romantic tradition.

Another associate of Maclure's in Spain was the French doctor, later turned American citizen, Jean Leymerie. The attitude of Maclure and his circle toward him was one of friendship but not of total approval. In 1821 Leymerie was an exponent of the anticontagionist theory concerning the question of the Barcelona epidemic that divided medical doctors into two factions—contagionist and anticontagionist. Although basically a medical question, it immediately acquired a political meaning and a kind of urgency. The French government sent to Barcelona a medical mission whose members were all contagionists. It is difficult to doubt the professional honesty of those doctors, but their position served the French government. They intended to install a sanitary corridor behind which they would concentrate an army of the invasion. Today Maclure's association with the impulsive and imprudent Leymerie probably means that he was interested in health questions in the Spain of those years.

The Spanish seed grew fully in New Harmony. The famous program "Knowledge is Power" was applied by Maclure in the New World. His ideas can be traced back to the Age of Reason, to Montesquieu, French Jacobinism, and English Radicalism, as well as to Adam Smith, John Grey, David Ricardo, Constantin François Volney, and various followers of forms of utopian socialism such as Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen himself. But Maclure was not a man who experienced ideas only through reading. He was a geologist, a man of science, and also a traveler. What he saw in his travels went directly to the formation of his thought. In this way the Spanish experience of William Maclure was crucial. He was a man on the edge of two worlds, not only geographically but also ideologically. He was a progressive radical who distilled the best of the revolutionary struggle in Europe and America between the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries. And he was also a utopian socialist because he sought a new social order based on kinds of social relationships different from those that were dominant at this time. Utopian socialism, as the Argentinian historian Claudio Ingerflom has observed, was not only abstract and speculative, it also developed a critique of contemporary society that took historical factors into account.¹⁶

It was remarkable progress. What Maclure learned in Spain put his thoughts in order. The ideas were abstractions derived not from abstraction but from daily experience. And in Spain the liberal revolution was for him an open book. Ideas were not separated from politics: the man of science and the thinker belonged to the same world as the worker, peasant, the soldier, or the city dweller. In a word, the people. Maclure wanted to save himself by saving the people. This last word is perhaps utopian, but all movements of human liberation need a political framework that serves as a constitution. It is interesting to note that one of Maclure's essays, *The Incompatibility of the Two Powers, Hereditary and Elective, to Exist Peaceably in the Same Body Politic*, already translated into Spanish in 1822, contains praise of the Spanish constitution of 1812 as he saw it during the liberal Triennium.

In summary, Maclure became part of a Spain in full transformation. His failure was the failure of Spain. Yet out of this calamity his personality acquired a deeper dimension. New Harmony would become the appropriate theater for displaying all his potentialities.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 126.