

from France) and cultivated wheat in the prairies with much success, and made excellent flour for several years, till, by the repeated incursions of the Oza, they were compelled to abandon their settlements." The Spaniards, too, had attempted to develop this region, sending some priests and soldiers with several families, but the post was destroyed by these same Indians. Natchitoches, according to Sibley, was a "small, irregular, and meanly built village" with not more than half a dozen good houses. It had been a considerable settlement, but the better people had moved to farms, leaving some forty families, mostly French, in possession of the decaying public buildings. "From this place the great western road takes off toward Mexico, and it will ever be an important place, being the key to an immense rich country."

Dunbar reported that the French settlements along the Washita had well-nigh disappeared, the people having fled after the Natchez massacre. At the mouth of Black River he found an old Frenchman in charge of a ferry for the transportation of the occasional travellers who followed the trail between Natchez and Natchitoches. At the army post farther up the river was a small settlement — some five hundred souls — eking out a miserable subsistence by hunting deer and bear for peltry. There was a rich alluvial soil, but they raised only a little corn and were content to buy everything else of the traders who, taking advantage of their ignorance, charged them high prices for imported goods while giving them little for the hides and bear's grease