

CALLIS DE FAGES, EULALIA FRANCESCA Y JOSEPHA (1758-?)

Eulalia Callis was born in Barcelona, Spain and she was part of a prominent group of Catalans who lived in Mexico City and enjoyed a privileged upbringing. She married a lieutenant colonel who was twenty-nine years her elder. His position required frequent travel and in 1782 he was to appointed governor of California. Eulalia reluctantly followed her husband and from her initial arrival at the Pacific coast she encountered great difficulties. Her tenure as the governor's wife was largely an unhappy one. During her third pregnancy she began to request that her husband allow her to return home, which he refused. In 1785, she discovered her husband in a compromising position with an adolescent Yuma Indian girl. Callis accused her husband of adultery and petitioned for divorce, but was denied. Her role as the wife of the Spanish colonial governor was to uphold the honor status of her husband. She was threatened with excommunication by authorities for making her accusations public. Ultimately she retracted the charges and renewed marital life with her husband. Little else is known about Callis after her departure from California and the death of her husband in 1794, which left her a widow at the age of thirty-six. Callis will be remembered as the First Lady to petition for divorce in Spanish colonial California.