

## “NOT A CITY BUT A WORLD”: SEVILLE AND THE INDIES\*

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In the heart of Seville, squarely set between the ramparts of a Moorish citadel and the flying buttresses of a Gothic cathedral, lies the Archivo General de Indias—the Archive of the Indies (Figure 1). Many archives elsewhere in the world house important imperial collections, but none equals the Seville repository in terms of site and relevance. Forget London. Forget Paris. Forget Rome. Lisbon warrants a mention; Madrid, Genoa, and Antwerp too. It is Seville, however, that imparts a palpable sense of the connection between place and empire that no other locale can match, at least none that I’m aware of. For a historical geographer, archival research is fieldwork. I have been engaged in such fieldwork since graduate school a quarter-century ago. Although research trips have taken me across Europe and throughout Latin America, nothing captures my imagination more than fieldwork in the archive in Seville.

What was it that took me there? Even as a schoolboy, geography sparked my spirit of adventure, convincing me that beyond the confines of Glasgow lay truly a wider world. My first year at university, however, was a bit of a disappointment, and not merely because I failed my midterm examination in geography. Instruction at Glasgow University then focused on far-flung parts of the earth that were colored pink on the huge wall maps that adorned our lecture theaters. Discussion of the British Empire, past and present, took up large chunks of class time—Africa, North America, India, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand. Cartographically, that imperial pink rash manifested itself almost everywhere. There was much of interest to learn, granted, but what I wanted was to know more about those nonpink splashes visible for all to see, even on the most tattered of global representations. Not until halfway through my second year was a course offered that catered to my curiosity. Having been a stamp collector in my teens, I knew a bit about the pink flecks in the Caribbean, less about the two pink toeholds on the mainland, but as far as I could discern, Latin America for the most part was refreshingly nonpink, which meant dealing in our curriculum with the legacy of colonial powers other than Great Britain.

That was it. A course on Latin America exposed me to historical and cultural processes very different from the ones about which I’d been accustomed to reading and hearing. It also exposed me to the ideas of Carl Ortwin Sauer. My copy of *Land and Life*, by reason of well-thumbed consultation, opens of its own accord to “Fore-

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