Controversial Columbus Quincentenary Puts Southwest In Global Perspective

Christopher Columbus, we all know, was an explorer who accidentally encountered America while searching for Asia. His “discovery” should be viewed in the context of Spain’s aggressive colonization schemes. Latin American history scholar Silvio Zavala reminds us that the Spanish experiences in expelling the Moors from Spain years before Columbus ever sailed helped set the scene for what would occur; namely, conquest and colonization of the infidel.

The Quincentenary of Columbus’ fateful voyage has focused much light (and heat) on the issue of European contact and its impact on Native Americans. Columbus left a legacy of destruction on the one hand and creation on the other, for he opened the flood gates for new peoples, ideas, and institutions to pour into the Americas. As the “Encountering the New World—1493 to 1800” exhibit at Fort Worth’s Amon Carter Museum recently demonstrated, Europeans naturally had a “tendency to view the New World through Old World Expectations.” The current “Seeds of Change” exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., points out that the New World profoundly affected the Old World, too. That is why the Columbus Quincentenary is best viewed as the “Columbian Exchange.”

Although Columbus never set foot in the vast region we call the Greater Southwest, his descendants left their mark on it: Within thirty years, Spanish explorers had found (or lost) their way into the region, as we know from Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca’s journeys into what is today Texas and Northern Mexico. Persistent rumors of the Seven Golden Cities of Cibola and the fabled “Land of Quivira” led the Spanish farther into the frontier north.

By 1542, just half a century after Columbus’ first voyage, the intrepid Francisco Vasquez de Coronado had penetrated into the heart of the region. Coronado was followed by others in a tradition of exploration/exploitation that lasted well into the 18th century. In truth, the actual wealth of the region never measured up to the Europeans’ dream. Historians tell us that the Spanish legacy of the region

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Quincentenary Events to Focus on Southwest

Southwesterners interested in the encounter between the Old World and New World peoples that began 500 years ago will want to mark two dates on their calendars.

- The Bureau of Land Management’s Quincentenary commemorative events titled “A Meeting of Two Worlds” will take place October 3 - 9, 1992, combining high-powered symposiums in Tucson and Albuquerque with a five day bus tour of historic sites in Arizona and New Mexico. Historic sites associated with Spanish (e.g., San Xavier del Bac, Tubac, San Xavier Mission, and the San Xavier del Bac mission in Arizona and Santa Fe, New Mexico), and Native American peoples (e.g., Zuni, El Morro, Pecos Pueblos in New Mexico) will be visited. The opening symposium (October 3) will be held at the University of Arizona in Tucson and the two day concluding symposium (October 8 - 9) will be held at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. For more information, contact Rem Hawes, BLM, 3707 N. 7th Street, Phoenix, AZ 85011, (602) 640-5504.

- The National Park Service Quincentennial Symposium entitled “After the Encounter: A Continuing Process,” will be held at the Sheraton Gunter Hotel in downtown San Antonio, Texas, November 12-14, 1992. Topics include: Exploration and Discovery; the Maya Frontier and Mission Architecture; Conversos and Other Minorities; Women in the Spanish Colonial Americas; Spanish Cattle in the Americas; Landscapes of the Americas; Voices of the Borderland Frontier; Spanish Scientists; and Spanish Perspectives on the Arts. Regional entertainment and a tour of the San Antonio area missions will be included. For more information, contact Dr. Ross N. Conner, NPS, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, 2202 Roosevelt Avenue, San Antonio, Texas 78210, (512) 229-5701.
was mixed: Despite the nearly complete transformation and permanent settlement of portions of the region, much of it was at the periphery of New Spain and poorly managed and defended—a factor that led to the region’s frontier character where at least three major cultures (Native American; Hispanic; and Anglo American) constantly interact.

The Europeans are often credited with depopulating much of the New World, but the depopulation and cultural dislocation within our region did not begin with Columbus and his European successors. Even the sedentary Pueblo Indians (who successfully drove out the Spanish in 1680 and have managed to live in the area more or less continuously) can point to abandoned settlements, such as the cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde or Chaco Canyon, left by their ancestors. The region has been in a state of flux for millennia. Even during the period of Spanish colonization historian Albert Schroeder tells us, “ecological factors and intertribal enmities played a far greater role in affecting native populations than did the presence of, or pressures from, the Spaniards.”

Looking at the legacy of Columbus on the region, we see a tapestry that contains ancient “pre-Columbian” fragments interwoven into a more modern patchwork: Native American peoples who have occupied the region for thousands of years; the Hispanic peoples who represent varying degrees of fusion between Spanish and Native American peoples—and who colonized and developed the northern frontier of New Spain between about 1600 and the 1800’s; the Anglo Americans who help to define part of the character of this frontier area which they still call “the Southwest”; the African American presence which significantly predates the Anglo American presence in the region and has left a rich but mostly unwritten legacy; and, the more recent Asian American presence which began in the 19th century and promises to have profound cultural impacts as the Pacific Rim economy grows. This should remind us that the character of the region is a result of mobility of all the world’s peoples. Can we conceive of the region without the horse, livestock, the wheel, the rifle, the plow? Or the world without the potato, maize, tobacco, and the textiles, basketry, and pottery techniques of the native Southwest (all New World in origin)?

The legacy of Columbus, then, is mixed. Through disease, abuse, and military action, many Native American populations were decimated; others, however, survived and gave parts of the region its character. In terms of the region’s peoples, cultures, foodways, and architecture, most of what we see in the region today is a mixture of New World and Old World cultural traits. The Quincentenary has forced a revision of history, but no one can deny that the steps taken by Columbus permanently transformed the world. The process helped create the distinctive cultural geography of what we now call the Greater Southwest. If we have learned anything from the Columbus Quincentenary, it is that cultures are not static, that it is not always possible to predict the consequences of actions, and that it is still not too late to learn from peoples whose cultures were almost lost in the inevitable confrontations that occurred when two separate parts of the world were forever joined five hundred years ago.

**Center’s First Year Accomplishments Highlighted**

September 1, 1992, marked the first anniversary of operations of the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography. Highlights of the first year include:

- Establishment of offices in UTA's Central Library
- Formation of all governing and working committees
- Co-sponsorship of two successful programs: “Entrada,” and “Changing U.S.-Mexico Relations”
- Beginning of a public outreach program that includes publication of the Center’s newsletter, *Fronteras*
- Identification of major funding needs and funding sources
- Writing and submission of several grant proposals for projects and programs in 1993
- Creation and filling of the Sandra Myres Graduate Research Assistantship in Southwestern Studies

To learn more about the Center’s first year of operation, which was the result of many people and committees working together, readers are referred to the Fall 1992 issue of the *History Newsletter*, published by UTA’s History Department, (817) 273-2861.

**New Center Brochure Now Available**

As anticipated in the last issue of *Fronteras*, the Center’s new brochure describing Southwestern Studies at UTA will be sent to you upon request. Call or write the Center.
Southwest’s Railroads Focus of Proposed Teachers’ Geography Institute

Social studies teachers (K-12) will want to mark June 7-18, 1993, on their calendars. A summer institute entitled “Geography, Transportation and the

Shaping of the Greater Southwest: A New Look at the Region’s Railroads” will feature representatives from the region’s railroads and transportation scholars. Field trips to the region’s railroad facilities will also be included. According to Center Director Richard Francaviglia, “The term ‘Southwest’ is largely a creation of the region’s railroads in the 19th century, and the region continues to be highly dependent on its railroads.” Francaviglia notes that the railroad provides a perfect vehicle to study geography, for railroads must take into account local conditions and resources as they interconnect places. The goal: To enable teachers—and their students—to better understand the five themes of geography (location, place, human-environment interactions, movement, regions) by studying a fascinating form of technology that is likely to increase in importance. For more information, contact the Center at UTA.

“Southwest Images” Essay Competition Announced

The UTA Department of History has announced the 1993 Webb-Smith Essay Competition in conjunction with the Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures. A $500 prize will be given for the best essay of 10,000 words or less on the topic “Changing Images of the Southwest.” The winning essay will be included in Volume 28 of the Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lecture Series published by Texas A & M University Press. Titled Essays on the Changing Images of the Southwest, this publication will also contain essays by Webb Lecture participants Karl Doerry, Richard Francaviglia, Oakah Jones, and Marta Weigle. The prize will be announced and presented at the 1993 Webb Lectures, March 11, 1993. Manuscripts must be submitted by February 1, 1993. For more information and submission forms, contact the Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures Committee, University of Texas at Arlington, Department of History, Box 19529, Arlington, Texas 76019-0529 (817) 273-2861.

New Book Documents “A Way of Work and a Way of Life” in a Southwestern Coal Mining Town

Thurber, Texas, was one of the classic company coal towns of the American West. Located about 50 miles west of Fort Worth, Thurber thrived from 1888 to the 1920’s when the Texas Pacific Coal & Oil Company closed the mines and developed the nearby Ranger oil field. Although some historic preservation is taking place, Thurber today is mostly known as a “ghost town” whose tall power plant smokestack stands as an eerie sentinel along Interstate 20.

Thurber is often mentioned as one of the strongest of the union towns, and a new book by Marilyn D. Rhinehart documents the life of miners here during nearly half a century. Like many company towns, Thurber was cosmopolitan (a high percentage of its work force consisted of foreign born—especially Eastern and Southern European—miners). Like all company towns, Thurber had a strong management that had to address workers’ demands for better working conditions, benefits, and wages. The story of labor’s relationship to management is told using a wealth of primary source materials from many sources, including UTA’s Special Collections. The social and labor histories of mining communities in our region are interesting and controversial, and Thurber’s history is no exception. Students of Southwestern history will want to read Professor Rhinehart’s book. (A Way of Work and A Way of Life: Coal Mining in Thurber, Texas, 1888-1926, by Marilyn D. Rhinehart, is published by the Texas A&M Press, College Station, Texas.)
Caprock Canyonlands Offers New Vistas on the Southwest

Readers of Fronteras will recall that determining where the Southwest begins has been a perennial problem (see “Defining the Southwest—A Perilous Adventure” in the Spring 1992 issue), but Texas is a good starting point. A recent book by Texas Tech Professor Dan Flores advocates an appreciation for the beauty and significance of a Texas landscape that is often overlooked: the Southwestern Great Plains. By providing us an intimate look at a land of sweeping vistas and rugged, dissected escarpments, Flores calls to our attention a landscape that we might miss by driving on the main highways. This is the Caprock Canyonlands of which Joseph Wood Krutch wrote so memorably in The Desert Year: “On top there is the plain of Texas, dryish and undramatic. Below, the red eroded sandstone and the cactus... declare that this is New Mexico a good many miles before the map makers have recognized the fact.” New Mexico in Texas? Yes, one can see the similarities by getting off the main roads and exploring the Caprock Canyonlands. Flores weaves the cultural and natural history together, telling the story of how perceptions of the Caprock Canyonlands have changed over the years. This, we should recall, is the countryside that artist Georgia O’Keeffe first depicted as she developed her distinctive, sensual “Southwestern Style” while teaching in Canyon, Texas. Caprock Canyonlands is beautifully illustrated with color photographs and landscape paintings; making this a tribute to a unique region. Because he loves this fragile land so much, Flores leaves the reader with a strong conservationist message.
(Caprock Canyonlands was published in 1990 by the University of Texas Press, Austin.)

Center Research Assistant Helps Expand Knowledge of the Region

Visitors to UTA’s Special Collections during Spring and Summer 1992 may have noticed a researcher hard at work day after day. As part of his duties for the Center, Graduate Research Assistant David Filewood has assisted several UTA History professors with a wide range of projects, including Texas labor history, political and social history of 19th century Yucatan, women in Southwestern ranching, and historic maps of Texas. Mr. Filewood, a Master’s Candidate in History at UTA, serves as the Sandra Myres Graduate Research Assistant. David’s knowledge of Spanish—an important skill for those doing serious research on the Southwest—ensures that all original source materials in the collection are researched. Ultimately, the University and community benefit from the GRA’s work as knowledge is increased and shared through classroom teaching, publications, and public lectures.

New Journal Announced

The Colonial Latin American Historical Review (CLAHR), a new journal published by the Spanish Colonial Research Center at the University of New Mexico, promises to be an exciting outlet for manuscripts, book reviews, and announcements about the Colonial era in Luso-Hispanic America. For more information, contact Dr. Joseph P. Sánchez, Editor, CLAHR, Spanish Colonial Research Center, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131, (505)766-8743.


A Shared Experience Focuses on Borderlands Architecture

Historic architecture is one of our region’s most interesting and enduring legacies. Two of the region’s great building traditions—Hispanic and Anglo—are found along the lower Rio Grande. Edited by Mario Sanchez, A Shared Experience: The History, Architecture and Historic Designations of the Lower Rio Grande Corridor is a well-illustrated report that inventories and describes the many buildings of interest (including houses, commercial buildings, public and institutional buildings) along the border between Tamaulipas, Mexico, and Texas. Significant buildings are documented and their preservation needs assessed. Maps of sites and historic communities are also included. Students of the region’s architecture and history will want a copy of this important book, which was published by Los Caminos del Rio Heritage Project and the Texas Historical Commission in 1991. For additional information, write the Texas Historical Commission, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, Texas 78711.
Y.O.U. Makes A Difference

This summer UTA’s campus played host to a very special class of students—the Class of 2000. Fostered by the Job Training Partnership Act and numerous Texas agencies, Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Y.O.U.) provides at-risk students entering high school an opportunity to learn, earn, and, hopefully, yearn for a future college education instead of becoming high school drop-out statistics. These students experience campus housing in dormitories, campus cuisine at the student center, campus classroom work in math to give them advance credits for high school, and the tastes of freedom and responsibility that usually only come with that first away-from-home freshman college year.

According to UTA’s Y.O.U. program director, Richard Massie, the highest percent of high school drop-outs occurs between the ninth and tenth years of secondary education, especially among financially disadvantaged students and those from Hispanic and Afro-American backgrounds. The program attempts to “turn kids on” to the values of higher education and provide them a first-hand opportunity to understand the importance of their high school diploma to their future success.

The Center is proud to have participated in this program by providing work experience and supervision for two Y.O.U. students—Laura Delgado and Annabel Torres. From June through the end of July, Laura and Annabel assisted us with many office administration tasks. And their presence this summer has given us a special perspective on this promising generation of teenagers.

We hope that Laura, Annabel, and all those who called UTA home this summer will take with them memories of a worthwhile summer of fun and learning, and that perhaps we will see them again here on campus—as the Class of the new millennium.

—Kirsten Dennis

Center Fellows Pursue Research and Teaching Goals

The Center’s ten Fellows, who are listed elsewhere in this issue of *Fronteras*, advise the Center Director and help chart the Center’s future directions. In addition to this important role, all ten Center Fellows are scholars who have research and teaching interests in the Southwest. To further enhance their research and teaching here at UTA, Center Fellows traveled to Seattle, Austin, Houston, Chicago, and Massachusetts to attend professional meetings and visit research facilities. These activities were supported in part by research stipends provided by the UTA Graduate School. Future issues of *Fronteras* will feature articles about the research of individual Center Fellows which include topics such as U.S.-Mexico political relations, cartographic history of the Southwest, the development of comparative frontier republics (including Texas), women in the Southwest, and the archaeology of the region.

The Special Collections Division of The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries announces the publication by Somesuch Press, Inc., Dallas, Texas, of *Tabula Terra Nova*. The book, a miniature, presents a unique reprint of a 1525 New World map with an accompanying essay on its origins and significance to both the 1992 Columbian Quincentennial celebration and to Texas. The map is from the holdings of the Cartographic History Library, Special Collections Division, and the essay was written by Center Fellow Dr. Dennis Reinhartz and Special Collections cartographic archivist Katherine Goodwin. The book was designed and printed by Austin printer W. Thomas Taylor, and published by the miniature book publishing firm of Stanley Marcus, Somesuch Press, Inc.
Southwestern Studies Minor Approved

UTA undergraduate students interested in the Southwest will want to take a close look at the University's new minor in Southwestern Studies. The curriculum is based on a group of about thirty courses, plus independent studies and seminars, that focus on the region. In keeping with the interdisciplinary spirit of the program, students minoring in Southwestern Studies select courses from at least three of the following areas: Anthropology; Architecture; Art; English; Geography; History; Spanish; and Political Science. Courses are taught by more than two dozen UTA faculty members who have an interest in the region. Students wishing to learn more about the Southwestern Studies minor should contact Richard Francaviglia, Center Director, (817) 273-3000, Extension 4931.

Meet the Center Faculty

Professor Douglas Richmond has taught at UTA since 1976. Active in many organizations, including the Southwest Council of Latin American Studies, the American Historical Association, and the Economic and Business History Society, Richmond is also a member of the Center's Executive Committee, serves as Chair of the Center Fellows, and chairs the Center's Program and Research Committee. Assisted by the Center Director, Richmond and the Program and Research Committee members are currently developing a March 27-28, 1993, symposium about the history of Arlington. Professor Richmond lectures widely on the history of Mexico, Latin America, Spain, and the borderlands. Currently he is writing a history of Mexico as well as a study of the Mexican state of Yucatan during the mid-19th century. In 1989, Richmond published Carlos Pellegrini and the Crisis of the Argentine Elites, 1880-1916. Another book, México y Los Estados Unidos Durante La Epoca Revolucionaria, 1910-1920, is scheduled for release in Mexico City later this year.

Center Fellows: Bob Fairbanks, Associate Professor of History; George Green, Professor of History; Jeff Hanson, Associate Professor of Anthropology; David Narrett, Associate Professor of History; Dennis Reinhartz, Professor of History; Doug Richmond, Professor of History; Ken Roemer, Professor of English; Charles Smith, Professor of Geology; Dale Story, Professor and Chair of Political Science; Kathleen Underwood, Associate Professor of History.

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