October Lectures to focus on "Mapping and Empire" in the Southwest

Geographic knowledge of the Southwest developed over a period of several centuries. Building first upon information supplied by the original (Native American) inhabitants, the Spanish explorers began actively mapping the northern Frontier of New Spain as early as the 1500s. By the 1700s, after more than two centuries of exploration, Spanish cartographers made elaborate, detailed maps of parts of the region. Resulting in part from extensive efforts by both military and civilian engineers and surveyors, these maps form part of the rich cartographic legacy of the Southwest. The mapping of the region continued under Mexican rule after 1821, but the story does not end there: By the mid-nineteenth-century, civilian and military surveyors from the United States, sometimes working cooperatively with their Mexican counterparts, further helped determine the cartographic character of the Southwest.

The First Biennial Virginia Garrett Lectures on the History of Cartography focuses on the military mapping of the Southwest. The lectures are named in honor of Mrs. Virginia Garrett, whose donated map collection compliments the cartographic collections at the University of Texas at Arlington. Entitled Mapping and Empire: Soldier-Engineers on the Southwestern Frontier, the lectures will be held at the University of Texas at Arlington on Friday, October 2nd. Registration begins at 9 a.m., followed by a formal welcome and introductions at 10 a.m. At 10:15, Dr. David Buisseret (UTA) will present “Spanish Military Engineers in the New World Before 1750.” At 11:15, Dr. W. Michael Mathes (Plainview, Texas) will discuss the “Spanish Maritime Charting of the Gulf of Mexico and the California Coast.” After lunch, which will be provided between 12:15 and 1:30 p.m., Dr. Dennis P. Reinhartz, (UTA) will speak on “Spanish Colonial Mapping in the Northern Borderlands After 1750.” At 2:30, Dr. Paula Rebert (DeKalb, Illinois) will discuss “Trabajos Desconocidos, Ingenieros Olvidados: Unknown Works and Forgotten Engineers of the Mexican Boundary Commission.” After a break, Dr. Gerald Saxon (UTA) will speak from 3:45 to 4:45 on “Henry Washington Benham: A U.S. Army Engineer During the U.S.-Mexican War.”

The lectures reconvene at 6 p.m. for a wine and cheese reception, after which dinner will be served. At 7:45 p.m., Ralph Ehrenberg (Library of Congress) will present the evening lecture entitled “United States Army Military Mapping of the American Southwest During the 19th Century.” The evening concludes with a tour of an exhibition on “Mapping and Empire: Soldier-Engineers on the Southwestern Frontier” in UTA’s Special Collections.

Although the lectures take place on Friday, attendees may wish to stay for the next day’s event: On Saturday, October 3, the Texas Map Society will also meet at UTA for a full day of meetings on a wide range of themes relating to maps. Some of the topics to be presented include historic maps of the Llano Estacado; the use of color in historic European maps; and the ways in which geologists use maps to determine the changing shape of the continents. Registration for Friday’s lectures (including lunch, reception, and dinner) is $30, and Saturday’s Texas Map Society meeting is $20. However, a special rate of just $45 is available for those who attend both Friday and Saturday. Space is limited, so be sure to register as soon as possible. To receive more information, and registration materials, contact the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography, Box 19497, UTA, Arlington Texas 76019-0497 (phone 817-272-3997) or e-mail center@library.uta.edu.
El Llano Estacado tells story of intriguing region

Southwestern historians often describe the Llano Estacado as a dry, nearly featureless plain that has confounded travelers for several centuries. Some contend that the name itself refers to stakes that were placed to help travelers keep their bearings, while others suggest that the stakes were yucca plants that stood like spears in the short grass on the Llano. In El Llano Estacado: Exploration and Imagination on the High Plains of Texas and New Mexico, 1536–1860, geographer John Miller Morris describes and interprets both the landscape and its impact on the peoples who experienced it. To tell this story, Morris consulted a wide range of historic materials, from the accounts of Spanish expeditions to the military survey reports of U.S. troops. This book represents a major accomplishment, bringing together widely-scattered descriptions of the region under one cover.

A native of the Texas Panhandle, Morris observes that the Llano Estacado has assumed many identities over several centuries. The expeditions of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado left an early record (ca. 1540), but historians have proposed a bewildering number of different routes that the renowned expedition may have taken. Using recent archaeological excavations in west Texas, Morris helps to pinpoint the area that they saw. For centuries after O’Keeffe in the 1910s, and that it still awes, inspires, and unsettles people to this day. El Llano Estacado is highly recommended to readers interested in the Southwest and its varied landscapes. To order, contact the publisher: Texas State Historical Association, 2.306 Sid Richardson Hall, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712 (phone 512-471-1525).

[Editor’s note: Author John Miller Morris is scheduled to make a presentation on maps of the Llano Estacado at the October 3rd meeting of the Texas Map Society in Arlington; see page one for details]

Texas Map Society Update

When creating the Texas Map Society in 1996, the organization’s founders speculated that about one hundred people might ultimately join. They also thought that about fifty people might attend the Society’s meetings. Happily, time has shown that they underestimated on both counts: The Texas Map Society now has almost 130 members, and continues to grow as word spreads. Attendance at meetings has reached more than eighty. TMS brings together a surprisingly diverse group of people with interests in a wide range of areas, from historic Texas maps to high-tech cartography. Members share an interest in maps of all kinds, and the meetings reflect this breadth of interest. The best way to learn about the society is to attend a meeting, such as the one that will be held on October 3rd in conjunction with the October 2nd Virginia Garrett Lectures in Arlington (see page one for details). For more information, contact David Buisseret, Secretary, TMS, Department of History, Box 19529, UTA, Arlington, Texas 76019 (phone 817-272-2898).
A REVELATION IN ARAVAIPA CANYON:
Some Words of Advice to New Historians
by Richard Francaviglia

While conducting research last summer on the early history of the Texas and Pacific Railway, I met a library patron who was learning how to use UTA's large research collection. Noticing me poring over a pile of materials, she stated, "You seem to be finding what you are looking for, but I haven't a clue as to where to start." This visitor to UTA was typical of all researchers starting out in Southwestern Studies. She had a general idea of what she wanted to find, but was not sure how and where to begin to find it. I reminded her that the UTA Special Collections staff can offer some very good guidance to all new users. However, as a professor of history with years of experience, I was glad to take a few moments to share some anecdotes on conducting research that would help her get started....

ASK THE QUESTION: "The first thing that I do," I noted, "is to write out a sentence that clearly states what I am looking for." In my case, the statement I had jotted down was "determine the reasons why the Texas and Pacific Railway was not successful in its goal of becoming the first southern transcontinental railroad." I could have made the statement into a question ("why did the Southern Pacific railroad, rather than the Texas and Pacific, win the battle to become the first railroad to cross the lower Southwest?") but she got the idea: "The question will help keep you focused," she quickly observed.

LOCATE THE RESOURCES. "But..." she then asked me, "after you've asked the question, where do you begin looking for answers?" Without thinking, I responded: "I normally begin by looking at the secondary sources first..." However, before I completed my sentence, she interrupted with a perfectly reasonable question: "What do you mean by secondary sources?" I explained that these are books and articles about the subject, usually written by someone interpreting what

pointed to one of them, an original 1854 report by the U.S. topographical engineers, of a route for a Pacific Railroad that would run close to the 32nd Parallel. "That's great," she noted, "but how did you find this original report when it doesn't even have the name 'Texas and Pacific' in the title?" Her question made me realize that finding primary sources is like sleuthing a mystery: To solve the case, you have to be aware that seemingly unconnected things may be important. Like a detective, the historical researcher needs to stay on the trail when it is yielding information, and to change course when the trail becomes cold.

INVESTIGATE OTHER RESOURCES. I tell students to never lose sight of the target (the question they want to answer), but to also realize that many paths can lead to it. The best advice in following the right leads is to identify key words associated with the topic. In the case of the Texas and Pacific Railway, for example, these include not only the railroad's name, but reference to activities and events in a number of related areas, such as surveys and surveying, right of way acquisition and disputes, construction activities, and even land promotion schemes. As primary sources, the political speeches of the time often offer a window into what was occurring—or what people thought was occurring. They suggest that many viewed the competition between the T & P and the S P as a battle of titans—a black and white issue with heroes and villains on either side. In a printed speech subtitled "A National Highway Along the Path of Empire" (1878), L. U. Reavis observed that the Texas and Pacific route would link the United States with the Orient and the rest of the world, "...and establish between the nations of the earth a commercial channel girdling the globe in harmony with nature itself." The S P was trying to stop the T & P (and vice versa), and Reavis's words reveal that he had taken sides in the issue: In one especially revealing quote, Reavis lauded the virtues of T & P President Thomas Scott, while observing that S P President Collis P. Huntington "rises as he rots." In promoting the T & P's cause, Reavis added the

Map of the Texas & Pacific Railway. Courtesy UTA Special Collections

had happened at an earlier date. Pointing to a pile of fairly new books on the table, I told her that "these works on the railroads of the Southwest all contain some information on the surveying and building of the Texas and Pacific." The books were well-indexed, so finding material on the Texas and Pacific was easy. "However," I told her, "because all the books and articles that I've consulted do not completely answer my question, I have to look through my favorite material—primary sources—for the answers." These, she gathered correctly, are the actual documents from the time in question. I

interesting comment "thus it will be seen upon the map, that the chartered line of the Texas and Pacific road lies along the path of empire." What map, I wondered, was Reavis referring to?

WELCOME THE UNEXPECTED. Reavis's words reminded me that I had glimpsed, quite by accident about two years ago, a map of the T & P. A search through a couple of map drawers with UTA's cartographic archivist Kit Goodwin yielded what I had spied earlier. This beautiful map is not dated, but it certainly personifies the ambition of the times: More than seven
feet across, it boldly shows the T & P route in bright red. This map represents a vision rather than reality: Its maker identified the route of the T & P across the entire region, even though the railroad never laid track west of Sierra Blanca, Texas. Did, as Reavis claimed, the proposed T & P route really follow the "path of empire?"

INTERPRET, THEN RE-INTERPRET. To answer this question, I compared the T & P route map with maps of the S P line as projected and built through the region in the 1877-1881. I also consulted David F. Myrick’s informative book Railroads of Arizona: Volume One, the Southern Roads (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1975), which discusses the T & P’s plans in relation to those of the S P. Consulting these primary and secondary sources helped me formulate other, but related, questions about the T & P’s strategy. I wondered why, for example, the T & P favored a route that would bypass a rather important southern Arizona community—Tucson—as it traversed a route closer to the Gila River. This route selected had been explored by Lt. John G. Parke and published in the Pacific Railroad Surveys in 1853-56, and recommended by T & P engineer George Wolcott in 1872. But was it really the best route?

TRAVEL, IF POSSIBLE. I had the Texas & Pacific map photocopied so that I could compare it to current day topographic maps. Then it occurred to me: Since I was headed to Arizona on business, why not use the T & P map to follow the proposed route in the field? Armed with the maps, I traced the railroad’s would-be route west of El Paso and into southern New Mexico. For much of the route here, the T & P would have paralleled or duplicated the route proposed by arch-rival S P. However, in eastern Arizona, the lines diverged. As I followed the proposed T & P line northward into the isolated Aravaipa Valley, I began to seriously question the surveyors’ wisdom. Enchanted by the realization that I was traversing the same topography that greeted the railroad surveyors, I nevertheless found myself asking a logical question as the Aravaipa Canyon deepened into a gorge: Why build a railroad through such formidable topography? Staring up at the steep walls of volcanic rock that defined the narrow, flood-prone canyon, I realized that the T & P would have made a strategic mistake building here: Aravaipa Canyon is so rugged and steep that constructing and operating a railroad line through it would have been very costly. Despite the fact that other railroad surveyors would later eye it as a possible route in the early 20th century, Aravaipa Canyon remains a magnificent wilderness to this day. A look at the S P line confirms that Huntington’s team made the best choice, even though their route was a few miles longer. In a way, the landscape of Aravaipa Canyon remains a primary source document: By "reading" it, one can see that the T & P’s selection of an initial route was flawed.

LISTEN TO NEW—AND OLD—VOICES. Although combining actual field work and library research is quite rewarding, historians can’t always travel in search of answers. This is where establishing a network of sources pays dividends. Successful historians will make connections to other secondary and primary sources, some of them remote. This includes using the internet and inter-library loan. It should also include establishing contacts with scholars who are researching similar projects. Given the improvements in technology today, a phone call, FAX, or e-mail connection can result in some very significant finds. Scholars are often willing to recommend leads to follow, and sources to consult. Consider conducting interviews with knowledgeable people: Such oral histories can shed light on information that is otherwise “lost,” and can help collaborate (or call into question) your other sources. By consulting other sources, I confirmed that several factors—including the setbacks suffered by the T & P in the financial panic of 1873, the S P’s greater political clout, and its shrewd use of a Texas affiliate that ran through San Antonio and Houston—helped scuttle the T & P’s dream of reaching the West Coast. When all these factors are considered, Aravaipa Canyon emerges as a symbol of the odds that faced the T & P.

Hopefully, some of the lessons I’ve shared about researching the Texas and Pacific’s never-built railway line through part of the Southwest will serve as inspiration for newcomers to the field of history. These lessons demonstrate that we build our histories out of the many opportunities we encounter as researchers. Some come to us like blessings out of the blue, others only after long periods of toil, but all are essential if we are to make sense out of what happened in the past. 

Editor’s note: Professor Richard Francaviglia serves as Director of UTA’s Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography, and is writing a history of the early railroads of the Southwest.
New Books

Anasazi Architecture and American Design

The Anasazi peoples built numerous communities, such as the pueblos in Chaco Canyon (see Fronteras, Spring 1998) and Mesa Verde, before mysteriously abandoning their homes in the upland Southwest about 700 years ago. This book consists of sixteen essays by a diverse group of scholars and practitioners, including archaeologists and urban planners. Edited by Baker H. Morrow and V. B. Price, Anasazi Architecture and American Design is the outcome of an interdisciplinary conference that was held at Mesa Verde in 1991. It offers fascinating insights into the design of the Anasazi pueblos, especially their relationship to cultural, environmental, and astronomical factors. Additionally, several essays emphasize the lessons that contemporary planners can learn from these enigmatic sites. Anasazi Architecture and American Design is available from the University of New Mexico Press, 1720 Lomas Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-1591 (phone toll free 1-800-249-7737).

Wisdom Sits in Places

If we pause long enough to study them, place names (or toponyms) can tell fascinating short stories about peoples’ relationship to place. In Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache, anthropologist Keith Basso offers a perceptive interpretation of how one cultural group in eastern Arizona constructs places based on events or activities that have occurred in the past. Building on the author’s thirty years’ experience with the Western Apache, this remarkable book does more than just shed new light on the elaborate role that language serves in a people’s sense of place (or as Basso puts it, “sensing of a place”). Wisdom Sits in Places suggests that the relationship between people and place is often overlooked in most anthropological, historical, and cultural studies—and that place names are a key to understanding it. That being the case, the potential for applying Basso’s approach to the study of other cultures and locales is enormous. Winner of the Western States Book Award for Creative Nonfiction, Wisdom Sits in Places is available from the University of New Mexico Press, 1720 Lomas Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-1591 (phone toll free 1-800-249-7737).

UTA to offer Doctoral Program in Transatlantic History

The UTA History Department reached another milestone in its development on July 17, 1998, when the Texas Coordinating Board of Higher Education approved its new doctoral program in Transatlantic History. According to History Chair Ken Philip, the program is unique in our region, and represents trends in history — transnationalism, globalization, and multicultural studies — that are revolutionizing the discipline. UTA’s Special Collections are considered one of the program’s distinctive assets. The program has a strong connection with UTA’s Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography in that it builds upon cartographic history and the related fields of exploration, discovery, settlement, and migration between the new and old worlds. One example of doctoral level research in this area is Spain’s relationship to the Native peoples of the Southwest; another the role of Spanish (or French) cartographers in mapping southwestern North America. For more information, contact Dr. Stanley Palmer, Graduate Programs Advisor, History Department, Box 19529, UTA, Arlington, TX 76019, 817/272-2861.
Meet the Center Faculty

As Chair of the UTA History Department, Dr. Kenneth Philp played a major role in initiating and developing the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography in 1990. In addition to his administrative responsibilities, Dr. Philp is an active teacher and researcher whose interests include Native American and twentieth-century United States history. He has authored numerous articles and books, including John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform: 1920-1934 (1977), and Indian Self-Rule: First-Hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan (1986). Dr. Philp’s latest book, Termination Revisited: American Indians on the Trail to Self-Determination, 1933-1953, is scheduled for publication in early 1999 by the University of Nebraska Press.

Center Fellows Appointed, Re-appointed

The Center is pleased to announce the appointment of ten Center Fellows for three year terms (1998-2001). Two are new appointments — Stacy Alaimo (Assistant Professor of English), and Chris Conway (Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages-Spanish). The remaining eight Center Fellows have served previously: Bob Fairbanks (Professor of History); George Green (Professor of History); Sam Haynes (Associate Professor of History); David Narrett (Associate Professor of History); Elizabeth Ordóñez (Professor of Foreign Languages-Spanish); Dennis Reinhartz (Professor of History); Doug Richmond (Professor of History); and Ken Roemer (Professor of English). Future issues of the newsletter will contain updates on the Center Fellows’ research activities.

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Associate Center Fellows: David Buisseret, Endowed Chair for Southwestern Studies; Brooks Elwood, Professor of Geology; Jeff Hanson, Associate Professor of Anthropology; and Jay Henry, Professor of Architecture.