Former State Historian Speaks at UT Arlington

On September 16, Mexico commemorated the bicentennial of its War for Independence. To mark this event, the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies brought to campus distinguished historian Jesús F. (Frank) de la Teja, who spoke in the Central Library sixth floor parlor on Sept. 20. The title of his presentation was: “The Mexican War of Independence: Roots of the Texas Revolution.”

As chair of the history department at Texas State University-San Marcos, Professor de la Teja has published extensively on Spanish, Mexican, and Republic-era Texas history. He is the author of the award-winning San Antonio de Béxar: A Community on New Spain’s Northern Frontier, widely regarded as the most comprehensive study of San Antonio during the Spanish colonial period. The author of numerous scholarly articles, he has also edited A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín, as well as two collections of essays on eighteenth century Texas. His educational works include a co-authored college-level history textbook, Texas: Crossroads of North America and a co-authored high school U.S. history textbook, American Anthem.

Although de la Teja has taught Texas history at Texas State for almost two decades, he is not a native of the state. Born in Cuba and raised in New Jersey, he earned both his bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from Seton Hall University. His interest in Texas history began at The University of Texas at Austin, where he received his doctorate in colonial Latin American history, working with Nettie Lee Benson. While completing his graduate studies, de la Teja worked for two years as a research assistant for novelist James Michener, who was then writing his epic novel, Texas.

In 2007, Gov. Rick Perry appointed de la Teja to serve the first-ever two-year term as the state historian of Texas. The legislature created the position to enhance Texans’ knowledge about the state’s history and heritage; encourage the teaching of Texas history in public schools; and consult with top government officials on the promotion of Texas history.

In Memoriam: David J. Weber

On August 29, David J. Weber died in Gallup, N.M., at the age of 69 after a three-year battle with multiple myeloma. The Robert and Nancy Dedman Professor of History at Southern Methodist University, Dr. Weber was a preeminent scholar of the American Southwest and colonial Latin America.

During the course of a remarkably productive career, he published more than two dozen books on Spanish and Mexican America, and in the process helped to revitalize the field of borderlands scholarship. His doctoral dissertation, published as The Taos Trappers: The Fur Trade in the Far Southwest, 1540-1846 (1971), was followed by The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846 (1982), which situated Texas and the Southwest in a larger continental narrative in which the United States and Mexico jostled for dominance.

In the decade that followed, Weber shifted his focus to the Spanish colonial period. The result of this research was his monumental The Spanish Frontier in North America (1992), a sweeping synthesis of Spain’s efforts to colonize its northern frontier. His final major work, Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment (2005), proved to be his most ambitious, knitting together the complex and often inconsistent strategies which Spain employed in its quest to subdue the indigenous peoples of its North, Central, and South American possessions.
Gwinnetta Crowell receives Tarrant County Historical Society award

The Tarrant County Historical Society recognized Gwinnetta Crowell in June for her master’s thesis, “To Keep the Red-Lights Burning: The City of Dallas’ Response to Prostitution from 1874 to 1913.” The newly-created award, which carries with it a $1,000 cash prize, is given to a student working on a topic related to the history of North Texas. Completed under the direction of Center Fellow Stephanie Cole, the thesis is the first serious study of prostitution and anti-prostitution reform in Dallas after Reconstruction. During the late nineteenth century, Crowell argues, Dallas witnessed a “Golden Age of the Bordello.” But as the city grew, reform-minded citizens became more vocal in their opposition, and prostitutes found themselves under attack. City officials who sought to protect them (and the revenues that came from their regular payment of court fees) sought to set up a new red-light district at the city’s margins. Immediately, however, a citizen’s group emerged to protest the existence of the district “in their backyard,” and used new state laws to subvert the city’s plan.

Greg Kosc receives Hall-Kohlfeldt Scholarship while pursuing doctorate

Greg Kosc has been named this year’s recipient of the Ida V. Hall and George Kohlfeldt Scholarship. The scholarship assists students whose work focuses on Native Americans in the Southwest. Kosc holds a B.A. from Gettysburg College and an M.A. from Northeastern University, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in UT-Arlington’s Transatlantic History program. His doctoral dissertation, entitled “Performing Masculinity and Reconciling Class: British Gentleman Hunters and their Travel Accounts in the American West 1865-1914,” examines the ways in which British elites asserted their masculinity and demonstrated their social superiority in their writings about the “egalitarian” American West. A part of his dissertation focuses on the inter-personal relationships between British and Native men and how the hunter-writers used these relationships to confirm their own masculinity and affirm the superiority of British civilization.

Ann Jennings Retires as Office Manager

On August 31 the Center said goodbye to Ann Jennings, who had served for 10 years as administrative assistant. Ann came to us from West Virginia, after retiring as a human resources director at a state mental facility. Over the years Ann worked closely with the Center director, helping to oversee and coordinate the Center’s day-to-day operations. Former Center director Richard Francaviglia called his decision to hire Ann “the best decision I ever made as Center director.” Ann officially retired in 2009, but came back on a part-time basis for the 2009-10 academic year, to help newly-appointed Center Director Sam Haynes with the Mexican Revolution centennial program. She is looking forward to spending more time with her son, a juvenile probation officer in Fort Worth, and her two granddaughters.

Center Fellow Updates

Center Director Sam W. Haynes was promoted to the rank of full professor in 2010. His study of American attitudes toward Great Britain in the early decades of the nineteenth century will be published this fall under the title Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World, by the University of Virginia Press. He is currently starting research on a book-length study of the Texas Republic, and working on a second edition of his Major Problems in Texas History (co-edited with Cary Wintz) for Cengage Publishers.


Center Fellows

Stephanie Cole, Associate Professor of History
Chris Conway, Associate Professor of Modern Languages
Imre Demhardt (Ex-Officio), Professor & Garrett Endowed Chair in the History of Cartography
Robert Fairbanks, Professor of History
George Green, Professor of History
Sonia Kania, Associate Professor of Modern Languages
David Narrett, Associate Professor of History
Douglas Richmond, Professor of History
Ken Roemer, Professor of English
Between 1886 and 1905, The Dallas Morning News published no less than 15 human interest stories covering the romances, weddings, or marriages of white women and Chinese immigrant men. Some were reprints from other cities, but on two occasions, the newspaper printed long stories of Dallas unions, replete with descriptions of blushing brides, caricatures of proud grooms, and a humorous account of a (delayed) nuptial kiss. That editors decided to include such light-hearted stories is particularly intriguing in light of the hostility usually associated with “the yellow menace,” a hostility that had, in 1882, led Congress to bar Chinese immigration and, by the end of the century, prompted a dozen state legislatures to bar marriage between “Mongolians” and whites.

Given both their concerns about an Asian population heavily skewed toward men, and their assumptions about white women’s inherent ability to uphold the purity of the white race, legislators undoubtedly intended anti-miscegenation efforts to stop potential alliances between the two groups. But rather than expressing outrage at the marriages of Ching Coon to Mabel Brown, or Jim Wah to Katherine Bell, the Morning News was amused; indeed when the reporter learned that Ching Coon was about to jilt Mabel Brown due to her tarnished reputation, the reporter actually ensured the marriage took place by retrieving a Justice of the Peace and acting as witness to the ceremony.

Why the Morning News believed its readers welcomed these stories of sex across the color line, even while it regularly warned of the danger black men posed to white women, gets to the heart of the complicated origins of racial segregation. The opinion-makers, legislators, and judges who created the edifice of Jim Crow purported to be doing nothing more than following “natural” or “God-given” law. But across the South and Southwest those men interpreted God’s intentions on just who ought to be separated with great variation, thereby revealing that their own social norms, not the ironclad laws of nature, dictated the structure of segregated society. In part they interpreted segregation laws differently because of variations in local demography or economy.

Regional and sub-regional cultural differences over the meanings of race, class, and gender also played a role. Eastern urbanites worried more about the virtues of working-class women than New South elites did, while west coast lawmakers were considerably more certain of the evils of Chinese influence than statesmen further east. Once differences in the social construction of gender (or class) emerged—that is, once elites in Dallas developed a certain acceptance of working-class white women, and came to respect the entrepreneurial accomplishments of a small population of Asian men—local strategies for maintaining racial order altered accordingly. What was unthinkable elsewhere was tolerated in Texas.

The story of early Jim Crow in Texas then provides a particularly good illustration of how local contingencies trumped the supposedly incontrovertible laws of white supremacy. Beginning in the late 1880s, Texas elites followed the lead of their fellow southerners in creating an immutable black-white boundary, not only by passing laws for public segregation, but also by strengthening the state’s opposition to interracial marriages. But Texas’s demographic diversity—including “Russian Jews,” “Mongolians,” Native Americans, and immigrants from China, Japan, Mexico, Germany, Norway, Czechoslovakia, and Poland—made the focus on blackness in this legislation problematic. As one Houston commentator observed in 1891 about the state’s first separate cars bill, “the term ‘negro’ is defined and ‘white’ is not.” The error was an egregious one from his per-
These common tropes within the marriage stories—brides who claimed not to be in love, or wives who ignored husbands’ wishes—did important cultural work.

spective, because it allowed unwarranted elevation: “[A]ny lazy, lousy Indian or rat-devouring Chinaman, any Mexican ‘greaser’ or Italian lazarone must be admitted without question [to the first-class coaches]. Not being ‘negroes,’ they must be ‘white’ people within the meaning of the law.”

As contradictory as it seemed to the Houston commentator, Mexican, Chinese, and Native American residents were an important element in Anglo-white efforts to differentiate white from black. These groups were never formally segregated or disfranchised in Texas and, as in the case of the Chinese grooms, could even be permitted privileges reserved for whites. They could also be excluded from those privileges, relegated to marginal occupations, and marked as non-white themselves. In the context of this uncertain and fluid social environment, common elements within these Chinese-white stories of romance offered reassuring evidence that “rat-devouring Chinamen” were not a real threat, however mysterious their habits. Often within the pages of the Morning News, Chinese men were portrayed as half-men—uninterested in the vote, attached to the opium pipe and bizarre heathen customs, so stoical as to be almost asexual, and possessing a mysterious “cue” [queue] of hair. Chinese men who lacked manly emotions prevailed as a stereotype in the romance articles as well, seldom indulging in a public expression of their own emotions. One report of a “Chinaman’s” unsuccessful pursuit of a “Melican” [American] girl observed that after her final refusal he “show[ed] for the first time some human emotion, [and] left her presence with a face one degree more passionless and solemn. This was the end of a Chinese courtship.” Notwithstanding the implied lack of manly drive, however, anti-Chinese sentiment also invoked the “grossly immoral sexual relations” in Chinese communities. Thus marriage stories, which included by definition a reference to sex in the form of a wedding night, could help assuage fears.

The gist of this reassurance came from clear-eyed (if not particularly beautiful) working-class wives who would restrain giddy Chinese grooms. The 1886 story about Katherine Bell’s marriage to Jim Wah provides a case in point. Initially, the new Mrs. Wah refused to talk to the Dallas reporter who showed up to cover her recent marriage. After the reporter promised that the story would not sensationalize the event, she agreed to talk, but kept a firm hand on Mr. Wah’s inclination to tell too much. Throughout the story, she appears as a woman who had few choices—her first husband had deserted her, her nursing clients had refused to pay, and she had a young son to support—but calmly accepted the rescue Jim Wah (a man “with a snug bank account”) offered. Mr. Wah, in contrast, appeared to be a simple-minded, if blissful, cipher. Similarly, in a story reprinted from Chicago, the new wives—cousins who had married friends, both Chinese men—did almost all the talking, though the men, described as literate in English and financially successful, remained in the room. In a third interview, the Chinese husband, Mr. Yate, vehemently forbade his wife from speaking with the reporter. The reporter noted with opprobrium, “She smiles softly when Lee goes into a tantrum and does as she pleases.”

From the perspective of Morning News reports, these dispassionate white working-class wives would rule the roost. Rather than being hopelessly without virtue and thus imperiling white respectability, the women had emotional reserves that would serve them, and by extension, a white society threatened by Chinese immigrants. A final story from the marriage of Ching Coon and Mabel Brown—a Frogtown denizen who was “neither a matron nor a maid” and had a child out of wedlock—suggests both the depth of that restraint, and how it contrasted with loose-living African Americans. During Ching’s and Mabel’s ceremony, the justice of the peace invited the new husband to kiss the bride. Ching Coon approached her with open arms, but she retreated. As he pursued her around the room, the JP and the reporter encouraged his pursuit, and the witnesses, African American neighbors, rolled with laughter. Eventually “Mrs. Coon had to finally shove him away,” and issued a stern remand (and a promise for the future): “We’ll dispense with that for the present.” In later interviews, Mrs. Coon explicitly denied any true love for her husband, but portrayed the marriage as a logical move for woman such as herself with few alternatives. He was stable, he accepted her child, and in his delight in securing a wife was unlikely to stray. “Chinamen, when they marry American women, are always kind to them,” she noted, and she “wanted a husband . . . who would forgive and forget my misfortune.”

These common tropes within the marriage stories—brides who claimed not to be in love, or wives who ignored husbands’ wishes—did important cultural work. They reassured southwestern readers that white women would contain and therefore defuse the potential damage of John Chinaman’s released sexuality. In every case, the white wives, retaining their hold on moral rectitude despite their marriages outside the normal boundaries, seemed capable of keeping Chinese husbands in line. The African Americans who loom only on the margins of such stories—or were invoked only in their absence—suggest a different story. Try to imagine, for example, a Dallas reporter in 1893 working to keep a black man from jilting his white fiancée, or that reporter and a local justice of the peace laughing as a black man chased his new white bride around, attempting to give her a kiss. While blacks in Dallas could be amused by-standers alongside whites during such marriages, they could not participate. If Chinese men were safe—in small numbers, and when economically successful—black men never were. Thus the re-galing of the public with stories of Chinese romance, while denying any similar privileges to black men, underscored the absolute difference of blackness.
El Paso became a center of intrigue, international intelligence operations, and border violence during the first decade of the twentieth century. When one considers the current violence in Mexico and the migration of its people into the Southwest, history seems to be repeating itself. The U.S.-Mexico border is often a frontier that neither government can control effectively. In their new book, *The Secret War in El Paso: Mexican Revolutionary Intrigue, 1906-1920*, published last year by the University of New Mexico Press, historians Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler have written the latest and best account of how El Paso became involved in the epic revolution that swept through Mexico from 1910 to 1920.

The authors begin by describing how Mexican president Porfirio Diaz initiated a plan to meet with his U.S. counterpart William Howard Taft. Diaz hoped to gain Taft’s backing so that he could impose himself as dictator for another term. After an enormous amount of security preparations in order to prevent assassins from murdering both rulers, excited residents of El Paso welcomed Diaz on October 16, 1909, after he crossed the Rio Grande. This turned out to be the last period of tranquility that El Paso would enjoy for many years.

The Mexican Revolution began in November 1910 and soon engulfed El Paso partially because of the turmoil that broke out in sister city Ciudad Juarez. Revolutionary Mexican factions captured the city no less than seven times during the Revolution. President Woodrow Wilson immediately strengthened the garrison at Fort Bliss as he became increasingly involved with the conflict. El Paso quickly began selling large amounts of weapons and munitions eagerly sought by the Mexican government, various insurgents, and frustrated exiles. Much depended on the attitude of Wilson, who lifted the arms embargo on February 3, 1914, in order to hasten the downfall of the repressive Victoriano Huerta regime, which Wilson detested.

Pancho Villa dominated the Wilson administration’s concerns more than any other Mexican rebel. Although Villa lost out to Venustiano Carranza by October 1915, the villistas also kidnapped and ransomed U.S. mining executives. Villa’s forces raised concerns because they attacked rail traffic, slaughtered prisoners, and hauled off unfortunate females. The climax of problems with Villa took place when he attacked Juarez in June 1919 and fought his way into the business district. Once there, looting began and many juarenses fled into El Paso, which augmented its increasingly prominent Mexican population. Under orders to disperse the villistas, but not to formally invade Mexico, 3600 U.S. troops crossed into Juarez after too many villista bullets slammed into El Paso.

The Mexican civil war affected El Paso very tangibly. Then as now, fierce firefight erupted in Juarez. On Christmas Eve 1916, a dangerous battle erupted when the carrancista garrison in Juarez shot at a detachment of Kentucky national guardsmen who responded with 200 well aimed shots. An investigation revealed that the trouble began when exploding slags at a local smelter made the Mexican soldiers assume that U.S. forces shot at them. Another problem with the Mexican military units in Juarez is that they cooperated with smugglers moving embargoed foodstuffs into Mexico and sniped at U.S. soldiers to provide covering fire.

This is a thoroughly enjoyable and well-researched history that is jargon free and very readable. Several wonderful photos and maps revive a long ago era of border history. The book also contains amazing details, such as actual addresses of buildings where critical events took place. There are also humorous tidbits that bring the personalities to life. This study breaks new ground because the authors sifted through sources rarely utilized by other researchers. Harris and Sadler analyzed 80,000 pages of previously classified FBI, Naval Intelligence, and Department of Justice files. They also scrutinized hundreds Servicio Confidencial documents as well as other Mexican archival sources.

My reservations are few. Nomenclature is bungled when the authors forget that Hispanics are Spanish people and America is a geographical entity. The bias against Carranza and his regime becomes apparent when the authors refer to Carranza as a racist. As Gerald Horne’s *African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (2005) makes abundantly clear, just the opposite is true. Although the authors discuss German agents at times, their overall analysis of other European intelligence operations in the Southwest is weak and Japan is not even mentioned. This critique, however, does not distract from the outstanding contribution that *The Secret War in El Paso* provides for the history of the Southwest.

-Douglas W. Richmond
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UT Arlington to Host Three Cartographic Conferences

The UT Arlington Library will be the focus of all things cartographic this fall as three major map events convene October 8-12: the Seventh Biennial Virginia Garrett Lectures on the History of Cartography, the fall meeting of the Texas Map Society, and the International Cartographic Association’s Commission on the History of Cartography.

The theme of the Garrett Lectures on October 8 is “Charting the Cartography of Companies: Company Mapping, 1600-1900.” The Garrett lecture series and accompanying exhibit in the UT Arlington Library’s Special Collections will focus on maps and how they reflected and shaped the histories of chartered companies.

The event will be followed by the Texas Map Society’s regular fall meeting October 9. The International Cartographic Association’s Commission on the History of Cartography officially holds its third International Symposium on the History of Cartography with a series of lectures October 11-12. The conferences are open to all cartographers, geographers, historians, map collectors, academicians, and lay persons interested in the history of cartography.

In Memoriam continued from cover

During a career spanning 40 years, Weber won numerous book prizes and other awards. A past president of the Western Historical Association and a member of the Texas Institute of Letters, he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2007. His work was recognized by the governments of Spain and Mexico, both of which awarded him the highest honor their nations can bestow on foreigners.

But David Weber was more than an internationally-recognized scholar. He was a mentor and a friend to countless undergraduates and graduate students at SMU, and to all historians engaged in the study of the Latin America and the American Southwest.

“When I first came to UT Arlington 17 years ago,” history professor Sam Haynes recalled, “I didn’t know anyone in the Metroplex. On the day I arrived, I was surprised to find a single letter in my mailbox—from David welcoming me to North Texas and inviting me to lunch. Everyone who knew David experienced similar acts of kindness. Many historians are admired for their professional contributions, but David was genuinely beloved.”

A native of Buffalo, N.Y., Weber attended SUNY Fredonia before earning an M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico. He taught at San Diego State University before joining the history faculty at SMU in 1976. Professor Weber is survived by his wife Carol, and two children.