Many communities in the Southwest have tied their fortunes to extractive industries, such as mining and oil production. Breckenridge, a small north central Texas county seat town of about 500 inhabitants in 1900, boomed in population to nearly 30,000 within a year after 200 oil wells were drilled in and around the town in 1920. Events there were recorded by photographer Basil Edwin Clemons (1887-1964).

In June 1985, the University of Texas at Arlington purchased the Basil Clemons Photograph Collection with a generous grant from Vicki Vinson of Fort Worth. In 1986 Shirley Rodnitzky, a Special Collections archivist, was assigned to arrange and house the approximately 20,000 photographs and negatives and compile a collection finding aid. Shirley found many of Clemons’ photos striking, interesting, and unique—especially those from the 1920s. She often mentioned the collection to her husband, Jerry Rodnitzky, a Professor of History at UTA who specializes in interpreting 20th Century American culture.

After viewing the collection, Professor Rodnitzky began planning a photo-essay book about 1920s Breckenridge as a boomtown, based on Clemons’ photographs. He was impressed by how these photographs illustrated the first really national American culture shaped by mass media, how they reflected the transformation of rural to urban values in the early 20th Century, and, of course, how they documented the vivid drama of an oil boomtown.

In their first joint scholarly work, the Rodnitzkys divided the tasks: Jerry searched the Special Collections Division and elsewhere for material and compiled the text. Shirley organized the photographs and identified the collection’s best prints. Together, they narrowed the photo choices for specific chapters and wrote photo captions. Their book is scheduled for publication in June by Texas A&M University Press.

This book is primarily a photographic essay on a West Texas oil boomtown, and also a photographic record of the cultural roots of modern America in the 1920s, which featured such modern cultural fare as widespread auto ownership, bigtime sports, and the first mesmerizing mass media—radio and cinema. Although Basil Clemons never saw himself as the photographer of modern American culture, that is what he has become for the Rodnitzkys.
News About the Region

New Center Exhibit Highlights Southwestern Railroads

Beginning in the 19th Century, the railroad transformed the Southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico. A new exhibit, “The Railroads and the Southwest,” interprets three themes: Immigration, Urbanization, and Commercial/Market Development. As curated by Kit Goodwin, cartographic archivist at UTA’s Special Collections, this exhibit has been installed in the Center’s office, located in room 650, UTA’s Main Library. Anyone with an interest in Southwestern railroads and their role in shaping the region is invited to visit the Center to learn more about the maps, reports, and other materials that were used by railroad developers and promoters of the time. Center office hours are 8:00 a.m.-noon and 1:00-5:00 p.m. weekdays. Please call ahead if possible (817-272-3997).

Book Review

Four Corners: History, Land, and People of the Desert Southwest

Reviewed by Dennis Reinhartz, Center Fellow

The Greater Southwest is widely recognized as one of the most uniquely fascinating regions of North America. Its often harsh climatic extremes, stark and exotic landscapes, strange and abundant geological and archeological sites, and ethnic diversity have attracted and repelled the outsiders to this incomparable territory since long before the European “discovery” of the New World. In his admirable new book, Four Corners, Kenneth A. Brown, a free-lance reporter who has previously written a similar work on the Pacific Basin, concentrates on the desert heart of the American half of the Greater Southwest, the Colorado Plateau where the four states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona come together. It represents the culmination of over a year’s travels, interviews, and research.

Following an introductory section on “Beginnings” of four chapters, Brown divides his work into five other parts—“North,” “South,” “East,” “West,” and “Center”—also of four chapters each. Much of it is based on first-hand accounts skillfully interwoven into the text. There are no notes or bibliography, but sources are mentioned throughout the book.

This book is, however, not for the unsophisticated newcomer to the region. Brown has written more than just another travelogue in the strictest sense, and it is also more than anthropology and history, although it has strong elements of both. It is, for example, very good in presenting the various groups—Ute, Navajo, Spanish, Mormons, and others—that over time have made the four corners their home. But the real strength of this volume is to be found in the extensive detailed and almost lyrical descriptions of the geology and geography of the region. There are a few maps and pictures, but the author readily conjures up engaging Southwestern vistas with his words.
African Slavery in Colonial Mexico, 1519-1810

by Doug Richmond

The borderlands of the American Southwest and northern Mexico have a rich but largely undocumented heritage of peoples originally from Africa. Throughout Mexico, and throughout Mexican history, the African contribution has often gone unnoticed although it was a major factor during the colonial period. Despite forces that sought to break them down, Africans endured. They became part of Mexico’s painful birth when they eventually threw themselves into the melting pot of mestizaje, the mixing of races that characterizes Mexican ethnic interaction since 1519.

The first African slaves in Mexico arrived during the early sixteenth century Hispanic invasion. These Africans arrived from Cuba with Hernán Cortés and Pánfilo de Návarrea. During the sixteenth century, Mexico probably contained more Africans than any other Spanish colony in the New World. During this period, Africans served as personal attendants, burden bearers, and laborers. In addition, several black freedmen from Spain participated notably. Juan Garrido, for example, participated in the siege of the Aztec capital and became the first colonial farmer in the American continent. As one of the relatively few free Africans in Mexico, he enjoyed enough respect to become the doorkeeper to Mexico City’s municipal council from 1524 to 1526.

African slavery accelerated once the religious order became concerned about the rapid decline of the indigenous population. Soon 2,000 African slaves began arriving each year from 1580 to 1650. Eventually, about 200,000 African slaves entered Mexico during the colonial period. And African immigration was quantitatively greater than whites prior to 1700. Therefore, in Mexico City and seven other areas, blacks outnumbered whites by the year 1580.

As the slave trade progressed, it evolved into an informal and irregular institution. Slavery became less elitist and more common. Private exchanges became more frequent. Spaniards frequently included slaves in the sale of equipment and property—a testament to Hispanic opinion of their bondsmen being nothing more than property. Spaniards treated slaves as most other commercial items. There is little evidence of sales methods such as auctions becoming common in Mexico. Slaves had owners waiting for them when they docked.

Those slaves that survived the cruel voyages from Africa to Mexico helped develop new mining towns. For example, long before the settlement of Zacatecas, Africans played an active role in not only building the city, but in working the silver mines. Black slaves also toiled in the silver mines of Taxco, Guanajuato, and Pachuca. Africans became a reliable work force, proving the greatest cost effectiveness when trained for refining tasks.

Aside from mining, sugar also caused the boom in the slave trade. Both the sugar industry and African slavery peaked in the seventeenth century. From 1610 to 1650, for example, about 4,000 slaves entered Mexico from Africa each year. Other Africans worked in skilled trades or on cattle ranches. Some toiled in the textile factories.

The African desire for intermarriage resulted in greater restrictions than before. Spanish law dictated that children born from an indigenous woman could not be enslaved. Therefore, many African males became motivated to have indigenous wives in order to obtain freedom for their offspring. Such marriages, however, could cost white slaveholders another generation of labor. Freer social relations that troubled royal officials also had fiscal overtones. Authorities would have a difficult time obtaining revenues because many taxes were based on skin color. Finally, growing instances of inter-marriage alarmed colonial officials to fear that a breakdown of the social order could lead to anti-Spanish movements. In 1776, royal authorities promulgated legislation requiring parental consent before marriage.

(cont'd. next page)
Slaves did not accept restrictions passively. Furious uprisings began early in the colonial period. In 1537, a group of African slaves in Mexico City planned to drive all Spaniards out of Mexico. They elected a slave king and the group proceeded to revolt on midnight, September 24, 1537. But another slave reported the conspiracy, enabling Spanish authorities to squash the revolt quickly. The Spaniards hanged and quartered 24 of the ringleaders.

But African defiance continued into the eighteenth century. In Córdoba and neighboring Orizaba, slave insurrections shook the Veracruz region five times between 1725 and 1786. Runaway slaves served as another category of African resistance. Yanga, a runaway who claimed to be a Congolese prince, organized sustained revolts on the road from Puebla to Veracruz. More autonomous communities emerged as a result of four additional runaway uprisings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Gradually, the success of these communities accelerated the end of slavery.

Several factors encouraged the end of African slavery. One was the constant conflict between Spain and Britain which gradually destroyed the Spanish navy. Therefore, transporting slaves across British-infested waters became risky as well as costly. Demographic and economic factors also weakened slavery. The Indian population recovered quickly in Mexico during the eighteenth century. Their emergence gave rise to a local, inexpensive labor pool that eliminated the need to import Africans. Also, when slaveholders could not find buyers for their slaves, they often invited slaves to purchase their freedom. Many slaveowners set slaves free in their wills. The result was that the slave population had diminished greatly by 1715.

No grand celebration of Africans’ legal freedom took place because freeing slaves became inevitable. When Miguel Hidalgo called for an end to Spanish rule in 1810, he and his followers looked to the indigenous groups, mixed bloods, and Africans for support. Hidalgo won approval from the Africans by calling for the abolishment of the hated head tax as well as slavery. Although Hidalgo’s revolution failed, the viceroyalty nevertheless abolished the slave trade on December 19, 1817. In reality, Mexico’s slave traffic had been suspended for several years. After Mexico obtained independence, the regime of Vicente Guerrero (who himself was part African) abolished slavery in 1829 without opposition from traditional pro-slavery groups. The only exception was Texas, where Anglo settlers insisted that slaves be utilized. The Mexican government attempted to mollify Texas by allowing the Anglo majority to obtain additional slaves. Therefore, the first sale of an African slave in Dallas took place in 1845.

The importation of Africans into colonial Mexico helped create a new society. The fusion of three distinct ethnic groups became mestizaje, and colonial micnegation should not be forgotten. All parts should be appreciated. All are important ingredients that make up modern Mexicans. Now that their identity is Mexican and African-Mexicans share much with other members of their nation, historical perspectives must be retained. From their extensive labor, intermarriage, and membership in the armed forces, black slaves gave much to the colony. Slave labor enabled Mexico to lead the world in the commercial trade of sugar, silver, dyes, and gold in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Editor’s Note: Doug Richmond is Professor of History and Chair of the Center Fellows. He has written numerous books and articles on the History of Mexico, including La Frontera México- Estados Unidos Durante la Época Revolucionaria, 1910-1920 (1996) and La Lucha Nacionalista de Venustiano Carranza, 1893-1920 (1986).
Revised Book
Interprets Peyote’s Significance to the Southwest

Since its original publication in 1980, Edward F. Anderson’s *Peyote: The Divine Cactus* has been recognized as a definitive work on the Peyote cactus (*genus Lophophora*) and its uses. The hallucinogenic Peyote is found in Texas and a few other parts of the Southwest, and is used by Native Americans as a way of enhancing their vision and bringing them closer in touch with the spiritual realm. Few other substances have evoked more controversy than Peyote, which was recently recognized as legal by the U.S. Supreme Court for certain Native American ceremonies, as documented in this revised version available from the University of Arizona Press, 1230 North Park Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85719; (520) 621-1441.

Chihuahua
Portrayed on the Brink...

The borderlands lends itself well to photographic treatment as evidenced by this book, in which author Charles Bowden interprets the varied landscapes of the state using stunning color photographs by Virgil Hancock. These photos offer Bowden evidence that the culture and economy of this tumultuous Mexican state are not faring well in the face of sweeping technological and social changes wrought by commerce and industry. *Chihuahua: Pictures from the Edge* is published by the University of New Mexico Press in cooperation with the University of Arizona Southwest Center, 1720 Lomas Blvd., N.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-1591. Call Toll Free: 1-800-249-7737.

The March to Monterrey is Vivid Account of the U.S. Mexican War

The U.S. Mexican War of 1846-1848 witnessed thousands of American soldiers marching into Mexico. This diary of Lt. Rankin Dilworth entitled *The March to Monterrey* is edited by Lawrence Clayton and Joseph Chance and supplemented with beautiful illustrations by Wil Martin. Although many soldiers left their accounts in the form of diaries, few are as vivid as Dilworth’s. Dilworth daily recorded encounters with the Mexican landscape and people, and his perceptive accounts show what life was like for American soldiers. Covering only 3 months, the diary concludes abruptly on September 19, 1846 when Dilworth was mortally wounded by a cannonball. *The March to Monterrey* is Southwestern Studies Publication No. 102 of the Texas Western Press at the University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas 79968; telephone (915) 747-5688.

Quest for Empire
Interprets Spanish Settlement

In recent years, historians have focussed on settlement and environment in order to better tell the story of how people occupied the Southwest. This comprehensive new book retells the story of Spanish settlement using original sources, including graphics, maps, recollections, and reports. *Quest for Empire* is well-researched and well written, but, in keeping with some limited definitions of the region, scarcely mentions the former Spanish/Mexican province of Texas—thus omitting important communities like San Antonio, landscapes like the sweeping llanos, and institutions like the Texas Missions, that share much with the rest of the region. *Quest for Empire* is available from Fulcrum Publishing, 350 Indiana Street, Suite 350, Golden, CO 80401; (800) 992-2908.
Meet the Faculty

Professor Lenard Studerus (Ph.D., University of Colorado) came to UTA in 1974 after having taught at the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, Missouri Southern State College and Regis College in Denver. His teaching and research efforts have been in Spanish linguistics. He has published two books and 15 articles, several appearing in journals such as Hispania and The Bilingual Review. Among his research articles on Southwest Spanish syntax, two deal with Southwest Spanish in general and two are border studies relating to the Laredo, Texas/Nuevo Laredo, Mexico area. His latest and most ambitious project is now in its final stages; it is a thematic dictionary of the Spanish of New Mexico and southern Colorado. Dr. Studerus has served as a Center faculty member since 1991.

“Creolization” is Theme of 1997 Webb Lectures

Creolization—the process by which indigenous and foreign cultures share traits to become, in effect, new cultures in the Americas—is the subject of the 1997 Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures, to be held at UTA on Thursday, March 13th. “Creolization in the Americas: Cultural Adaptations in the New World” will address a variety of topics, including language, architecture, landscapes, and agriculture. Speakers include professors David Buisseret (UT-Arlington), Karl Butzer (UT-Austin), J. L. Dillard (retired, Northwestern State University) and Daniel H. Usner, Jr. (Cornell University).

For more information, contact: The Webb Memorial Lectures Committee, Department of History, Box 19529, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, Texas 76019-0529, or call (817) 272-2861.

Center Fellows: Evan Anders, Associate Professor of History; Brooks Ellwood, Professor of Geology; Bob Fairbanks, Associate Professor of History; George Green, Professor of History; Sam Haynes, Assistant Professor of History; David Narrett, Associate Professor of History; Elizabeth Ordóñez, Professor of Foreign Languages; Dennis Reinhardt, Associate Professor of History; Doug Richmond, Professor of History; and Ken Roemer, Professor of English. Associate Center Fellows: David Buisseret, Endowed Chair for Southwestern Studies; Jeff Hanson, Associate Professor of Anthropology; and Jay Henry, Professor of Architecture.