

State and Local

Spanish heritage in Texas explored

Historian: State development aided by settlers

By Carolyn Garcia
Reporter

Texans have a saying that if you lead a good life and say your prayers when you die you can go to Texas.

But historian Robert S. Weddle said Texas was anything but heavily populated for Spanish conquistadors.

Weddle spoke at a symposium Saturday in Rudder Tower exploring the Spanish heritage in Texas.

He pointed out that until La Salle's voyage, Spanish expeditions met with disaster, especially on the coast.

The 1554 fleet went down while coming back to Spain, he said. Three of the four ships sank, sending more than 800 men plunging into the Gulf with only one man surviving.

Despite the seafaring disasters, the quest for economic enrichment and territorial advancement spurred Spain on, Weddle said.

"There is a saying that the French explored for trade, the Spanish for gold and the English for colonization," he said. "This is just not true. The French had landed in Mexico and found what the Spanish did, they would hardly have walked away."

The conquistadors found Texas because they went looking for another Mexico.

He said that when no second Mexico was found, Texas became a low priority until the French showed an interest in it.

Weddle said Texas emerged through four stages of development: exploration, cultural absorption, defensive occupation, and decline and revolution.

Felix D. Almaraz, a historian from San Antonio, said this development was advanced by offers of land and prizes brought to Texas by Spanish messengers.

Almaraz said the Spanish citizens were not happy with the missions and presidios. He said the citizens wanted a real town.

In August 1781 the first municipal settlement in Texas was established, Almaraz said.

"The Spanish settlers were very litigious," he said. "They always wanted to go to court over every little grievance. They had cases by the handfuls, which turned out lucky for historians because now we have all these records to work with."

David E. Vassberg of Pan American University said Spanish culture in Texas may be stronger now than it was in the 1800s.

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San Antonio's Misión de Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, which was built in

1731, stands as a reminder of early Spanish influence in Texas.

Photo courtesy of Chester C. Christian Jr.

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Vassberg said. "And this interest in Spanish things is spreading."

Topics discussed in the symposium included the linguistic roots of Texas Spanish, literature and folklore, the Spanish missions as anthropological sites, and a look into ranching practices and their history.

This event and a photographic exhibit titled "The Spanish Heritage in Texas" are being presented as part of the 1986 Texas Sesquicentennial celebration.

The exhibit includes 52 large black and white photographs, maps and illustrations with texts in both English and Spanish.

The exhibit is sponsored by Texas

A&M, the U.S.-Spain Joint Committee for Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Texas Committee for the Humanities and the Comisión Nacional para la Conmemoración del V Centenario del Descubrimiento de América.

A second exhibit, "Centuries of Architecture in Spain," has been loaned to the University by the government of Spain.

This exhibit includes 30 color photographs with texts in both English and Spanish.

The exhibits will be on display through October 29.

A&M prof says U.S. needs awareness of Soviets, culture

By Fawn Haynes
Reporter

It is vital that every U.S. citizen be aware of conditions within the Soviet Union, a teaching assistant from the Department of Interdisciplinary Education said Saturday.

Hugh H. Hughes gave his views on Soviet people and culture during a seminar held in Rudder Tower.

"I think it is time for us to pull our heads out of the sand and wake up to the reality that the Soviet Union does exist," Hughes said. "The Soviet Union is a power that we need to understand in order to play our international game of chess with them and come out equal and not on the short end."

Hughes cited several negative impressions Americans have formed about Soviet people:

- Soviets torture people.
- Soviet cities have walls.
- The weather is bitterly cold.
- All Russians are short, fat and grumpy.

He added that because of the American press or propaganda, U.S. citizens get the impression that the Soviet people are unemotional.

Hughes, who escorts Russian Language Seminar students to the Soviet Union, said in the past the country was a forbidden place to go, but now tourists are welcome.

Hughes coordinated the A&M Russian language trip to the Soviet Union, which ran from May 20 to July 6 this year. The program is sponsored by the University of Texas at El Paso and has existed for about 12 years, he said.

The group included students from Texas A&M, UTEP, the University of Colorado and Pur-

due University. It spent four weeks in Moscow and two weeks in Leningrad, Hughes said.

Moscow is the center of Russian culture and is a spectacular and exciting place to visit, he said.

He said the massive and majestic subway system always impresses the group.

Another Moscow sight is the blocks and blocks of apartments divided by miles of woods, he said.

"It's a city that doesn't make you feel like you're in a city," Hughes said. "It looks like a country in itself."

Hughes said the group saw people relaxing in parks, mothers walking with their children and men sitting together drinking beer.

"We didn't see anybody in chains," he said. "We didn't see anybody being whipped by police. In fact, we didn't see any police at all except those directing traffic."

Hughes said he found out that in some ways the Soviet people know more about the Americans than the Americans know about them. He said he believes this is because they are looking for knowledge.

"If you're a tourist, they will ask you questions and pump you dry of information," he said.

He said this is odd because Americans have free press, and the Soviets' press is entirely anti-American. Everything evil that has ever happened is the Americans' fault according to the Soviet press, he said.

"You'll see that (anti-American propaganda) on TV, hear it on the radio and read it in the press," Hughes said.

But Hughes said the Soviets like Americans even though everything they read in their press is anti-American.

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