



The Presidio Gallery | 126 E. Nueva St., San Antonio, TX 78204 | May 4 - Sept. 4, 2016

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Nuestra Historia

Bexar County, UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures focus on origins of Bexar County

SAN ANTONIO – The UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures and Bexar County have collaborated to present a new exhibit detailing the origins of Bexar County. “Nuestra Historia – Our History: Spain in Bexar County” is open through September 4th at the Presidio Gallery at 126 E. Nueva St.

“Some of the materials in this exhibit probably haven’t been in San Antonio in two hundred or more years,” said Sarah Gould, lead curatorial researcher at the institute and curator for Nuestra Historia. “We’ve worked with the General Archive of the Indies in Seville and met stringent criteria to accommodate the travel of these historic documents. This is an opportunity to see the origins of our community.”

Among the artifacts is the “Rebolledo Letter” of 1717, from Juan Manuel de Olivan Rebolledo, a member of the government council in the Spanish colonies. In it, Rebolledo offers commentary on previous correspondence with the Spanish Crown and makes a case for establishing a permanent presence along a river named for St. Anthony. Competition with the French for control of the lands in the West spurred efforts to colonize and establish a presence

in the Spanish Mexican territory of Tejas y Coahuila. The missions, villages and presidios helped that venture succeed.

“There were various expeditions along the Camino Real and other avenues, and these expeditions always had a cartographer,” Gould noted. “We have beautifully drawn maps and presidio plans, including four drawings from the 1721 Aguayo expedition of La Bahia and East Texas.”

While many of the documents are penned in classical Spanish calligraphy, a computer room with electronic versions of the documents will be available for reading and research. Additionally, a selection of artifacts will accompany the documents, placing them in a historical context. As part of the Missions system, many items are from the Catholic faith, including a priest’s vestments, accoutrements for the celebration of the Catholic Mass, and a monstrance for the display of the consecrated Sacrament.

“The artifacts we have collected to display will help visitors understand the Spanish colonial influence and melding of cultures with the indigenous peoples the explorers found here,” said County Judge Nelson Wolff. “It is the perfect exhibit to celebrate the World Heritage designation of our missions and the upcoming celebration of the 300th anniversary of our founding.”

Capturing elements of everyday life, the exhibit includes a De La Garza coin, the only coin Spain ever minted in Texas, and specifically in San Antonio. Other elements show the cultural impact of interactions between Spanish and indigenous peoples, such as arrow heads made of stone before Spanish arrival, and metal after. Pottery reveals San Antonio’s role in a vast trade network, with some attributable to Spain and others to the local indigenous peoples.

“We also start seeing the emergence of a blended culture, a culture that incorporates knowledge and goods from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. This Mestizaje – mixed culture – served as the roots of modern San Antonio life and culture.”

The exhibit includes hands-on elements for younger children, who might not understand what the documents mean. Children will have an opportunity to create their own rubric, a

unique mark or seal used to authenticate a signature and prevent forgery. There will be a quill pen writing and calligraphy station where children can learn the classic art and how to write their names and other messages. Additionally, there is a selfie-station with a copy of the Rose Window at Mission San Jose.

Nuestra Historia, the first official Tricentennial event, is located at the Presidio Gallery, 126 E. Nueva St., across from the Bexar County Courthouse. Regular hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. For more information, call (210) 335-0955 or visit www.bexar.org.

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The Institute of Texan Cultures gives voice to the experiences of people from across the globe who call Texas home, providing insight into our past, present, and future. An agency of the Vice President for Community Services at The University of Texas at San Antonio and a Smithsonian Affiliate, the 182,000 square foot complex, featuring 45,000 square feet of exhibit space and five re-creation Texas Frontier period structures, is located on the UTSA Hemisfair Campus in downtown San Antonio. Resources for multiple audiences are available at TexanCultures.com.