

RELIVE THE PAST IN

The gray sky blended into the cold stone of the mission walls and gusts of wind burst through open doorways to send flickers through tiny candles lining the sanctuary's grotto walls.

Mission Espiritu Santo stood mammoth and awe inspiring on the bleak January day. Built in 1749, it carries the spirit of Spanish missionaries, Native Americans, cattle herders and even college students that called the compound home throughout its years of occupation.

The brisk winter day was not the cheeriest of times for a trip to Goliad, but it added a touch of reverence and mystery to our visits to the missions, presidio, battlefield sites and town square that make the small Texas town one of the most revered historical areas in the state.

At other times the sites are bustling and loud with musket fire from military reenactments, or trumpets from mariachis during festivals, but the weekdays of winter offer a more quiet time for solemn reflection on the struggles of Spanish missionaries and Texans fighting for their independence.

Goliad, located southeast of San Antonio on the South Texas coastal plains, has long been a popular tourist attraction for school children, history buffs and "winter Texans." Last year, Goliad recognized its 250th anniversary with fanfare and celebrations centering on the area's ranching and Tejano heritage. But local historians realized that the mark also signaled a time to move ahead, and an ambitious plan by the Goliad Heritage Council promises to make the area a shining example of heritage tourism that ties together a vast span of history.

"We're pulling together all our resources to make it one big story," said Lupita Barrera, the mission's manager for Texas Parks and Wildlife. "So that if you come to Goliad, you

can see a continuum of history."

The plan — *Historic Goliad: An Interpretive Master Plan for the 21st Century* — is a result of collaboration between Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and Goliad area groups. The document outlines a host of ideas for brochures, videos, events and activities that bring history to life, such as cultural and military reenactments.

Espiritu Santo, originally founded near Matagorda Bay in 1722 before moving to the present site southeast of Goliad in 1749, served as the epicenter for a large cattle ranching operation that helped supply Spanish colonial settlements in Texas.

Today, Texas Parks and Wildlife operates a state historic park on the grounds with camping facilities and an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Visitors

From missions to massacre, a city relives its past with an eye to the future —

For example, exhibits might demonstrate how early inhabitants ground corn or made tortillas, Barrera said. "We find that most people learn by actually seeing or doing."

Goliad is also one of the treasured tourist destinations found in the Texas Independence Trail Region, a new travel trail designated by the THC last fall. Ada Sutherland, who grew up in Goliad and now serves on the Goliad County Historical Commission, said the efforts to promote the interpretive plan and trail are an ideal experiment in collaboration that she hopes will serve as a model for other areas of the state. "It's just all coming together in such an amazing way," she said.

Recognition of Tejano heritage is another goal of the plan, said Estella M. Zermeno, a Goliad native whose descendents helped build Presidio La Bahía in 1749. "Our heritage really hasn't been promoted, but I believe this interpretive plan is a new beginning for us."

can take advantage of wildlife trails along the San Antonio River while also learning about mission life at an excellent museum adjoining the church. Although mostly a reconstructed site, it still holds the feeling that you are standing in the shadows of the devoted colonialists of New Spain. Religious statues and painted icons line the walls, and a rope that leads to a tower bell awaits a tug (just "one, please," a sign asks).

Presidio La Bahía, a site located just a short drive to the north and operated by the Catholic Diocese of Victoria, is another outstanding replication, a recreation of the original presidio built in 1749 as a station for Spanish troops to protect the area.

The site contains a chapel where services are still held each Sunday, a museum with hundreds of artifacts from archeological excavations at the

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GOLIAD!

GOLIAD PROMOTES NEW TEXAS TRAVEL TRAIL REGION

Although Goliad takes pride in attracting tourists locally, it also is an active participant in the Texas Independence Trail Region. The trail region follows the paths to Texas independence in South and coastal Texas with hundreds of historical sites and dozens of communities throughout 28 counties.

Last fall, the region became the second area designated by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) as part of its Texas Travel Trails Regional Program. The program provides technical, educational and financial assistance to regions in developing collaborative efforts to strengthen tourism and historic preservation.

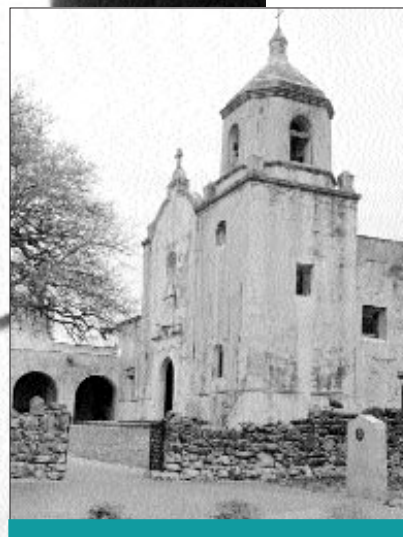
A travel guide outlining the Texas Independence Trail Region will be available from the THC this summer. To order a free travel guide on the Texas Forts Trail Region, see the THC web site at www.thc.state.tx.us or call 512/463-6255.

This article was written by Rob D'Amico, Medallion managing editor.

Photos by Jim Bonar.



A HERITAGE TOURISM PARTNERSHIP OF
THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION



Left: Espiritu Santo, a mission built in 1749, also served as a center of cattle herding in New Spain.

site, and a massive courtyard and barracks surrounded by fortified walls and cannons.

It is here that Texans can get a true grasp of the tragedy that occurred in 1836 when Col. James Walker Fannin's men surrendered to Mexican forces in a nearby battle and were marched to the presidio, executed and burned by the orders of Mexican Gen. Santa Anna. A memorial within walking distance of the presidio lists the names of each of the men massacred. And the site of the actual battle between Fannin's men and Mexican troops — the Battle of Coletto Creek — is marked with a memorial at **Fannin Battleground State Historical Park** nine miles east of Goliad.

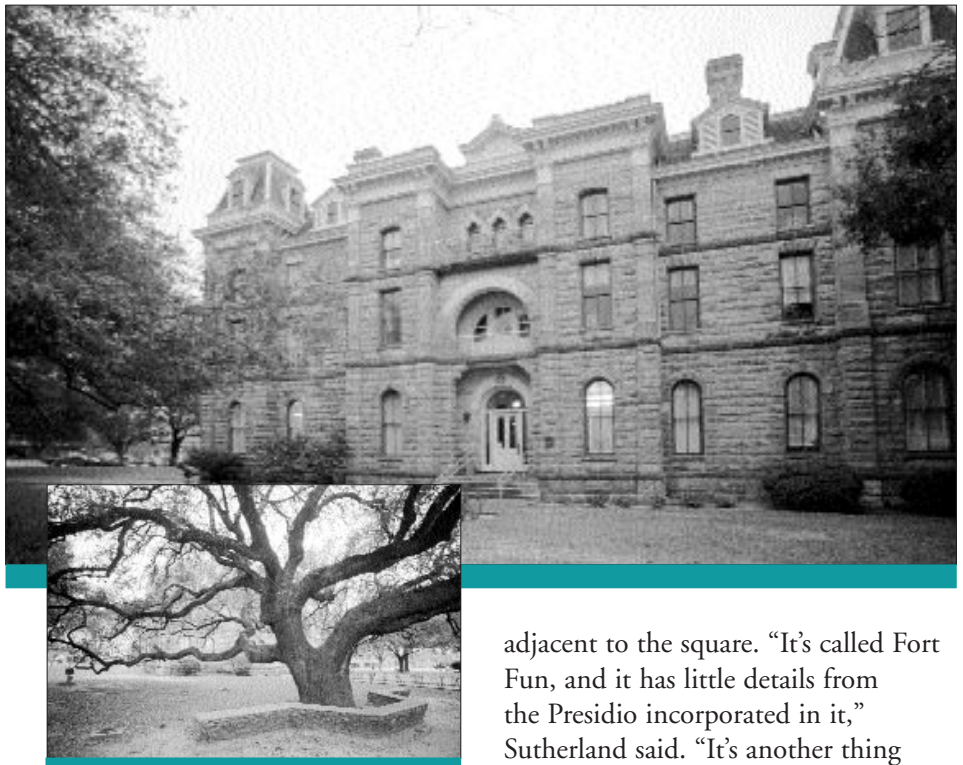
Also near the Presidio La Bahía site is the reconstructed **birthplace of Mexican Gen. Ignacio Zaragoza**, who is most remembered for defeating French invasion forces in Puebla, Mexico, on Cinco de Mayo (May 5, 1862). The city of Puebla donated a statue of Zaragoza erected at the site.

For a deeper look into mission life, visitors can also see the ruins of **Mission Rosario**, founded in 1754 by Franciscans from the College of Zacatecas in Mexico to convert Karankawa Indians. The mission, a unit of Goliad State Historical Park, is about four miles west of Goliad.

A thriving Main Street

After a good tour of the missions and battle sites, the city of Goliad and its downtown square — a National Register Historic District — is a perfect stopping place for rest, relaxation and then more sightseeing. The district is also a Texas Main Street City. Since 1981, the THC's Texas Main Street Program has assisted more than 125 communities throughout the state in revitalizing their central business districts and preserving their historic buildings.

"We're very lucky to have about three-fourths of the brick buildings built here still here on our courthouse square," said Doris Freer, Goliad



County Historical Commission chair. Many of the structures, which date throughout the 1800s, now house shops and restaurants and are highlighted in a walking tour brochure available at the Goliad County Chamber of Commerce office located on the square.

At the center is the **Goliad County Courthouse**, built in 1894, and currently slated for renovation. Freer said the county plans to outfit the courthouse with a new tower and turrets after the originals were destroyed in a 1942 hurricane.

Surrounding the structure stand massive oak trees with gnarled branches that dip and curl, nearly touching the ground, toward the courthouse. One has the dubious distinction of being the **Hanging Tree**, a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark that bore the weight of unfortunate victims of illegal lynchings during the Cart Wars and other vigilante actions from 1846-70.

The **Markethouse** (c.a. 1853) on the square was once a gathering place for people to peddle their produce and wares. It now houses the city's museum and Chamber of Commerce office. Recent efforts include the addition of a special playground built by residents

adjacent to the square. "It's called Fort Fun, and it has little details from the Presidio incorporated in it," Sutherland said. "It's another thing that is unique and gives families something to do together."

The walking tour extends beyond the square to several more historic structures, all of which tell a tale of Goliad as a community that made several transitions, from mission and village life, to cradle of Texas independence to a city that now cherishes its past.

Freer, who was born and raised in Goliad but left the town for 27 years, is especially appreciative of its heritage. "When I came back, it was like a whole new world...the history," she said.

Zermeno, who moved away to Houston for 43 years but returned along with her sisters to retire in Goliad, said that history is once again rejuvenating her hometown and their family's heritage.

"I think the history means a lot to everyone," she said. "But it especially gives us pride, that it was our people, the Tejanos that were here 250 years ago, and we're still trying to keep on celebrating and bringing it to life."★

Above: The Hanging Tree on the grounds of the Goliad County Courthouse was used for several illegal lynchings.

GOLIAD AREA EVENTS

SPRING/SUMMER 2000

■ March 11: Market Days, area vendors sell crafts and goods (361/645-3563)

■ March 16 - 19: Goliad County Fair & Rodeo (361/645-2492)



■ March 18: Battle Reenactment at Coleto Creek Battleground stages the battle between Fannin's troops and Mexican forces (361/645-3563)

■ March 25 - 26: The 15th Annual Goliad Massacre Living History Program, reenactments of the massacre of Fannin and his troops (361/645-3752)

■ April 8: Market Days

■ May 5 - 6: Cinco de Mayo festivities and parade (361/645-3663)

■ May 13: Market Days

■ June 10: Market Days

Goliad County Chamber of Commerce
361/645-3563, www.tisd.net/~goliadcc

Goliad County Development/
Main Street Office
361/645-3540, www.goliad.org

Goliad State Historical Park
361/645-3405, www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Fannin Battleground State Historical Park
361/645-2020, www.tpwd.state.tx.us

DID YOU KNOW...

■ The name "Goliad" developed from an anagram of "Hidalgo," after Father Hidalgo, a priest who spurred the movement to Mexican independence. The name Goliad started being used for the settlements near La Bahía around 1829.

■ At its height as a center of cattle herding, Mission Espiritu Santo had about 40,000 head of cattle in the surrounding area.

■ The first Declaration of Independence for a Republic of Texas was actually signed in Goliad on Dec. 20, 1835, after a group of Texans took the garrison at La Bahía and drew up the document.

■ The Aranama Indians occupied the area around present day Goliad when the missionaries arrived in the early 1700s. ★

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For more information or to receive a brochure, contact:
Marketing Communications Division
Texas Historical Commission
512/463-6255 or visit the web site at www.thc.state.tx.us.



TEXAS
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1835 - 1935