



CAVE History Update

A Newsletter from CAVE Cultural Resources in the Resources Stewardship and Science Division

CHU #6 — September 16, 2003

September 16th – Mexican Independence Day!



September 16th commemorates the beginning of colonial Mexico's battle for independence from Spain on September 16, 1810. Some historians believe that the example of our American Revolution, as well as the French Revolution, helped to shape the battle for social, religious and political reforms. Before the revolution was declared, Mexicans in possession of political tracts by writers such as Tom Paine (author of *Common Sense*) and some other publications associated with the American Revolution were seen as criminals breaking the law. Mexico won its independence in 1821, but suffered through more political and international turmoil into the next century. For more information on September 16th, see endnote.¹

Sometimes people mistake Cinco de Mayo for Mexican Independence Day. On May 5, 1862, a Mexican army beat a larger and more militarily sophisticated French army at Puebla, Mexico. In this case, Mexico was defending itself from an invasion from France. For more information, on Cinco de Mayo, see endnote.²

Both holidays are celebrated in Mexico and in the United States. This year, **Hispanic Heritage Month** is September 15 to October 15. Between September 16, 1810 and May 5, 1862, Mexico faced yet another challenge in its war with the United States. Hispanic influence in New Mexico began in the early 1500s. Many Hispanics share with their neighbors a rich and diverse culture that highlights intelligent, moving, useful, generous, philosophical, and thought-provoking perspectives. New Mexico benefits vastly from one of this state's major resources: Hispanic people—their cultural traditions and short-term and long-term contributions. Happy September 16th to everyone!

A Visit to the Cemetery on Boyd Avenue

If you visit the cemetery on Boyd Avenue, there are a couple of gravestones you might find of interest. First, the picture to the right is the tombstone that belongs to Jim and Fanny White. Since the last time I visited it, someone has planted some thorny bushes, presumably to discourage vandals. Unfortunately, the pictures of Jim and his wife on the stone have already been destroyed.





Did you know that late in life Fanny married a man named Frank Barron, but still stipulated that upon her death she wanted to be laid to rest next to Jim? She died in October 1964 at the age of 70.

Thanks to David Wyrick giving us copies of some historical pictures that belonged to his mother, we now can see what Mrs. White and her husband looked like in later years. That is Fanny to Jim's immediate left.

Another park-related gravestone at the Boyd Avenue cemetery belongs to Mr. Tom Boles and his wife "Jimmie." Like Fanny White, Mrs. Boles also died at the age of 70. Jim White was 63 at his time of death, and Tom Boles was 90 when he passed away.

Notice the formation on the Boles gravestone. Even in death, in a way, Superintendent Boles is still "interpreting" the caverns where he lived 19 years of his life.



1 Events connected with September 16, 1810:

Hidalgo's Rebellion: The struggle for power between various political factions eventually set off a rebellion that led to civil war. In 1810 Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a priest who was familiar with the ideas of the Enlightenment, launched a revolt that aimed to free Mexico from the oppression of the Spanish colonial government and the peninsulares. Hidalgo called for the immediate abolition of slavery and an end to taxes imposed upon Native Americans.

The effort to overthrow the colonial government soon turned into a social rebellion.

The effort to overthrow the colonial government soon turned into a social rebellion as tens of thousands of Native Americans near Mexico City—suffering from the effects of rising food prices and declining wages—joined thousands of mestizos in the uprising. Hidalgo recruited an army of at about 80,000 troops and enjoyed some initial military success. When they encountered armed resistance in the city of Guanajuato, the rebels massacred loyalist forces and looted the city. The extreme violence and destruction of the revolt appalled many criollos, and few of them joined the rebellion; many sided instead with the peninsulares, who offered stability.

The rebels marched south toward Mexico City, fighting royalist forces near the capital on October 30, 1810. The royalists retreated from the battle, opening the way for Hidalgo's troops to march on the city. Hidalgo's force had suffered heavy casualties, however, and many of his inexperienced soldiers deserted. Aware that a large royalist force was approaching, and fearing that his army would turn into an unruly mob if it entered the capital, Hidalgo abandoned his plans to occupy the city. As the rebels withdrew to the northwest, many of Hidalgo's followers drifted away. In January 1811, the remains of Hidalgo's army were soundly defeated

near Guadalajara by a smaller group of Spanish soldiers. Hidalgo fled to the north but was captured in March and executed on July 30, 1811.

Morelos Introduces Mexican Constitution: The leadership of the popular insurgency next fell to another priest, José María Morelos y Pavón. Like Hidalgo, he called for racial and social equality in Mexico, in addition to independence, but he was a better military leader. Under Morelos, the rebel forces captured considerable territory, including the city of Acapulco, and declared Mexican independence at the Congress of Chilpancingo in 1813. Royalist forces, however, still controlled Mexico City and most of the viceroyalty. Morelos's army suffered a major defeat in December 1813 at the hands of royalist forces under Agustín de Iturbide, a criollo general. Morelos was captured by royalist forces in 1815 and executed. After Morelos was killed, the revolution continued under Vicente Guerrero, who headed a comparatively small army. The rebels fragmented into small groups, however, often mixing banditry with politics.

Iturbide: The Spanish revolution of 1820 altered the rebellion in Mexico. This revolution restored the liberal Spanish constitution of 1812 and emphasized representative government and individual liberty. These liberal political tendencies in Spain dismayed some Mexican leaders, but of more concern to Mexico's elite was the instability in Spain. Reflecting elite consensus, Iturbide met Guerrero in 1821 and signed a compromise agreement in which the two agreed to combine their forces to bring about independence. Their plan, known as the Plan of Iguala, set forth three mutual guarantees: Mexico would become an independent country, ruled as a limited monarchy; the Roman Catholic Church would be the state church; and criollos would be given the same rights and privileges as peninsulares. The viceroy took no active measures against Iturbide and was forced to resign. The last viceroy of New Spain arrived in Mexico in July 1821 and was forced to accept the Treaty of Córdoba, marking the formal beginning of Mexican independence. See also Latin American Independence.

The hero of the moment, Iturbide, proclaimed himself emperor of Mexico in May 1822. He held the position with some difficulty until March 1823, when the military forced him to abdicate. A republic was proclaimed, and Guadalupe Victoria became the first president. With the end of the Mexican Empire, Central America broke away from Mexico to become the United Provinces of Central America.

Microsoft® Encarta® Reference Library 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

² Events connected with May 5, 1862

The 1855 takeover of the government by the liberals began a period known as La Reforma, in which liberal leaders sought to reduce the power of the church and the military in Mexican politics and society. Later that year President Álvarez was replaced by Ignacio Comonfort, a liberal who sought a more gradual pace of reform. In 1857 the liberals enacted a new constitution, which reestablished a federal form of government. It provided for individual rights, universal male suffrage, freedom of speech, and other civil liberties. The constitution also abolished special courts for members of the military or clergy, and ordered the church and other institutions to auction off any land or buildings not absolutely necessary for their operation.

Conservative groups bitterly opposed the new constitution. With Spain supporting the conservatives and the United States supporting the liberals, a bitterly divided Mexico sank into a period of civil strife known as the War of the Reform (1858-1860). This violent struggle between conservative and liberal groups devastated Mexico.

The great leader to emerge from the liberal faction during this period was Benito Pablo Juárez, a Native American who became famous for his integrity. Juárez served as the minister of justice in President Álvarez's cabinet, and for the next 15 years he would be the principal influence in Mexican politics.

In 1858 a political revolt overthrew President Comonfort and Juárez became provisional president. Soon afterward conservatives who had participated in the revolt forced Juárez to flee Mexico City; he established a new seat of government in Veracruz. Mexico now had two competing governments: one led by conservatives based in Mexico City, and one led by liberals based in Veracruz. Conservative forces controlled much of central Mexico, but they were unable to drive the Juárez forces from Veracruz. As provisional president, Juárez issued a decree nationalizing church property, separating church and state, and suppressing religious orders. The Juárez government gradually gained the upper hand, and by 1861 the liberal armies had decisively defeated the conservative forces.

Juárez moved his government to Mexico City, was elected president in 1861, and set about trying to establish order in the troubled country. He attempted to ease the financial chaos caused by the civil war by suspending interest payments on foreign loans incurred by preceding governments. Angered by his decree, France, Britain, and Spain decided to intervene jointly to protect their investments in Mexico.

The prime mover in this decision was Napoleon III of France, who believed that Mexico would welcome the creation of a monarchy. He hoped that a Mexican monarchy would protect Latin America from the Anglo-Saxon republicanism of the United States. A joint expedition occupied Veracruz in 1861, but when Napoleon's colonial ambitions became evident, the British and Spanish withdrew in 1862.

The French encountered unexpected resistance at Puebla, as General Ignacio Zaragoza repulsed the invaders on May 5, 1862. That date, known as Cinco de Mayo in Spanish, henceforth became a popular national holiday. A shocked and angered Napoleon III dispatched another 30,000 troops, who spent two months capturing Puebla before sweeping into Mexico City in June 1863. A provisional conservative government proclaimed a Mexican empire and offered the monarchy, at Napoleon's request, to Austrian archduke Maximilian.

Meanwhile, Juárez and his cabinet had fled northward with a small force. By early 1865 only the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, and part of Michoacán—in southern Mexico—and Chihuahua and Sonora—in northern Mexico—remained under liberal control. While the United States continued to recognize the Juárez regime, it could offer little help because of its own civil war. Just as Maximilian hovered on the verge of establishing control over the entire country, events in Europe prompted the French to withdraw their troops in 1867. The Juárez forces reconquered the country, and troops under General Porfirio Díaz occupied Mexico City. Maximilian was besieged at Querétaro and forced to surrender. He was executed by a Mexican firing squad in 1867.

Microsoft® Encarta® Reference Library 2002. © 1993-2001 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.