Henry George Newsletter

High School Edition | Issue 23, Sept. - Oct. 1994

Land and Freedom Series

Welcome back. As this may be the first time you are receiving our Newsletter, we would like to take this opportunity to review its purpose and tell you more about the free teaching materials available from the Henry George School.

The Henry George Newsletter High School Edition is published four times a year and in each issue you will find reprints of newspaper and magazine articles related to the "infusion lessons" in our Land and Freedom series; these lessons enable teachers and students to connect present day issues with the historical past. In addition, we print study questions and cartoons that help to encourage students' critical thinking skills.

The Land & Freedom series is available in three categories: American History, Economics, and World History.

"American History" consists of twenty lessons, focusing on such issues and events as Indian land ownership, early immigration and settlement, as well as railroad land-grants and the Homestead Act. The Economics series explores 20 basic concepts and is appropriate for most high school instruction. "World History" is suitable for global studies and illustrates the importance of land throughout the world.

In addition, the school offers two videos: American History—The Story of the Land (in four parts) and Understanding Economics, a nine-part series examining major issues in economics. In this issue:

The Alamo's Defenders

Most people have thought that the Battle of the Alamo was a glorious last stand, fought by brave Americans such as Davy Crockett, for principles that they refused to compromise. Not so, according to recent research. The impact of new scholarship has caused controversies that cut across several lines. Who were the real aggressors? Did the Battle of the Alamo have any real lasting significance? Is there more to history than what legend allows? This article can be used in conjunction with the Land and Freedom series *American History # 12 (The Mexican Cessions).*

Property Titles & Salvadoran Women

Ownership of land by male rural peasants in El Salvador has been rare, ownership by women non-existent. But times are changing; the Land Bank, funded in part by the U.S. and the United Nations, is helping women buy their own land. After twelve years of class-warfare, Salvadorans are also receiving better health care and peasants are forming village councils. This article can be used with the Land & Freedom series *World History, #15 (Land Ownership in Latin America).*

Cartoons

There are two cartoons on page three. One is appropriate for the *World History series #13 (Chinese Land Reform Under Communism).* The second can be used with in conjunction with *Economic series #2 (Factors of Production).*

Free Materials for Teachers

Constitutional Roots, Rights and Responsibilities is a summary of a symposium, published by the Smithsonian Institution, that took place in Virginia in 1987. A number of noted panelists gathered to celebrate and exchange ideas about the bi-centennial of our constitution. Some of the topics discussed: The Idea of a Written Constitution; Old Roots of American Constitutionalism; and the Origin and Evolution of Rights. *Les Droits de L'Homme and Scientific Progress* is another symposium summary, this one celebrating the 1989 bi-centennial of the French Revolution. While the conference focused on mainly on themes of scientific progress, it also addressed such social issues as: The Idea of Human Rights; the Enlightenment and Beyond; Human Rights and Slavery; and Educational Heritage and The French Revolution. To order either package, please write to: *Neil Kotler, Smithsonian Institution, OFC OASOA MCR 900, Washington, D.C. 20560*

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For Alamo's Defenders, New Assault to Repel

by Allen R. Myerson

SAN ANTONIO - Before there were oil wells, before Nieman Marcus, Texans built their fierce pride on tales of revolutionary valor at the Alamo. But in recent years, a new generation of writers and politicians has taken another look at the Texas Revolution and called its leaders nuts, scoundrels and Anglo land grabbers.

Davy Crockett, they say, did not wear a coonskin cap, and he tried to surrender at the Alamo rather than fighting to the death. William Barret Travis, the Alamo's commander, crazed from drinking mercury to treat venereal disease, never issued his legendary challenge for the brave to join him across his sword-drawn line in the dirt. Gen. Sam Houston, who was at least wise enough not to send reinforcements to the besieged fort, was a girdle-wearing opium addict.

And the major reason 189 Texans defended the Alamo against thousands of Mexicans in 1836, one researcher even says, was that Jim Bowie, who shared the Alamo command until falling ill, stole a hoard of silver and gold from Apaches he had butchered and hid it in a well on Alamo grounds. In Texas, this is no mere academic argument. All San Antonio, from Mayor Nelson Wolff to the owner of Uncle Hoppy's Plaza barbecue shack, has been swept up in a feud about who were the Alamo's true aggressors. By late March, city officials were making plans to rip up the street and plaza in front of the building to dig for the reputed treasure and Indian graves.

Things have gone so far that many Hispanic residents and several politicians want to wrest control of the site from the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, who have managed the building since the State Legislator entrusted it to them in 1905. The opponents, who include the leading candidate for mayor in next Spring's election, accuse the Daughters, a group whose more than 6,000 members are descendants of Texans before statehood, of perpetuating myths that support white supremacy.

Historians have long raised questions about some parts of the Alamo legend. But the latest generation of writers has challenged its very significance. For them, the Alamo symbolizes the not the American settlers' struggle against tyranny but United States imperialism and racism triumphant over Mexicans and Indians.

Many of the Alamo's defenders, some current scholars say, were outlaws and mercenaries, hungry for land.

"The Alamo is part of an Anglo-American creation myth," said Cynthia Orozco, who teaches an updated version of Texas history at the University of Texas at San Antonio. "The Euro-Americans wanted to distinguish themselves from people who were here before them."

In part, this fresh look at Texas history reflects attempts across the country to think anew about the United States' past. From Columbus to frontier virtues, many a verity has been challenged.

"When I was young, you could never have this kind of discussion about Texas history," said 47-year old Lawrence Wright, who led a Texas writers forum called "Dibs on the Alamo." "There was an orthodoxy of belief, and nothing was more orthodox than the story of where we came from."

Closer ties with Mexico and the growing influence of the state's Hispanic residents are also factors in the raising of issues that many Texans had long thought settled. "The doors have been opened," said City Councilman William Thornton, the candidate for mayor. "Places have been made at the table for people whose voices have not been heard before."

Mr. Thornton is leading a campaign to restore the Alamo and adjacent grounds as the Franciscan mission founded by Spaniards from Mexico in 1718 instead of leaving the current building, which was the missions chapel, as a shrine to Crockett, Bowie and other interlopers.

Texas history has in recent years become the passion of dogged amateurs, who sometimes beat the professionals to new theories or new evidence.

Elizabeth Crook, an Austin writer, has concentrated not on Houston's triumph over the Mexican forces but on his first marriage, which fell apart in disgrace after 11 weeks. Houston, who later became President of the Republic of Texas, never explained what happened.

At the "Dibs on the Alamo" forum, in the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, even Ms. Crook said she was taken aback by how much further another writer, Jeff Long, had gone in portraying Houston in *Duel of Eagles* (Morrow, 1990). "I did not care if you made Houston look bad," she said, "but I did care if you made him look silly. I did not think anyone would want to read a romantic novel about someone who wears a girdle."

If the latest Alamo battle can at times seem like refined academic discourse, in San Antonio it can quickly turn as stagey as pro wrestling. On St. Patrick's Day, several Daughters, dressed in green, joined the Harp and Shamrock Society of Texas in a wreath-laying ceremony in which they portrayed the Alamo defenders, who included several Irish and Mexicans and at least one black, as the first rainbow coalition.

"Today, the Daughters are being told that they are ignoring or downplaying the role of certain ethnic groups in the fight against tyranny that took place on these hallowed grounds," said Anna Hartman, a Daughter who heads the group's Alamo Committee. "Today's ceremony is clear evidence of how wrong these detractors are."

Shortly after, Gary Gabehart, the president of the Inter-Tribal Council of American Indians in San Antonio, showed up at the monument, brandishing an arrow. "This," Mr. Gabehart said "is the arrow of truth, justice and historical fact." Sweeping his arm and arrow toward the street and plaza in front of the Alamo, he said, "And this is campo santo," sacred ground.

Based on documents translated from Spanish by a retired Bexar County

archivist, Mr. Gabehart has concluded that the site has a graveyard, dating from 1724 to 1793, holding 921 Indians, 39 Spaniards, 4 mulattoes and 1 Canary Islander.

At Mr. Gabehart's side that day was Frank Buschbacher, who has surveyed the plaza with divining rods, radar and electromagnetic sensors. "Here," Mr. Buschbacher said, pointing to the street in front of the Alamo, "is the gold and silver buried by Jim Bowie and his gang."

Over loud objections from the Daughters, the City Council closed the street late last year, at least temporarily, to allow a dig and to keep tour buses from running over possible graves. Mayor Wolff appointed a committee to figure out what to do next.

The state owns the Alamo itself, but the surrounding land is in city and private hands.

Councilman Thornton's plans for restoring the mission would require clearing the plaza, knocking down Uncle Hoppy's barbecue, a Hyatt hotel parking garage and a towering monument to the Texas Revolution. The cost would be more than $30 million.

Well worth it, say some of the city's Hispanic residents. "Here's a mission that existed for 120 years and the only people you hear about had been in Texas for two months," said Carlos Guerra, a columnist for the San Antonio Express-News.

-Reprinted from the New York Times

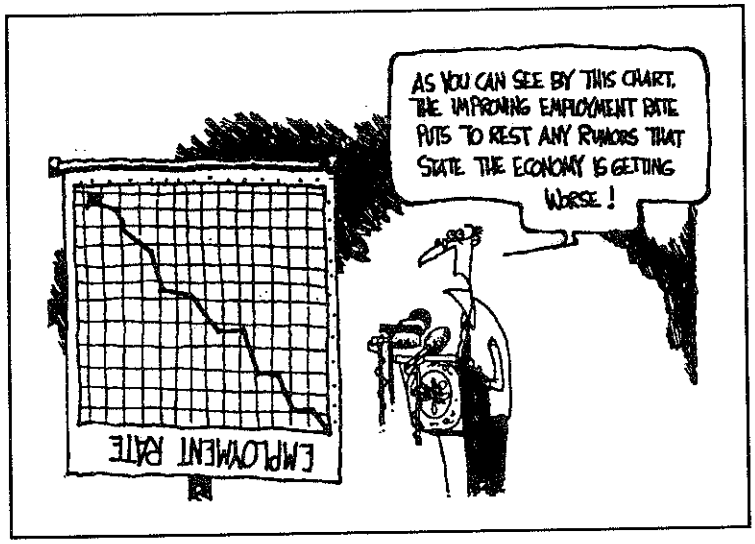
Questions

1. What are some of the myths about the Alamo according to recent historians?
2. What accounts for the change of perspective for many Texans?
3. What do the two opposing sides argue about the street and monument?
4. Name some other areas of research that historical revisionists have addressed.

Cartoons

Questions

1. Give a good title for this cartoon.
2. Who was Karl Marx?
3. Where is the contradiction in this cartoon?
4. What is the meaning of this cartoon?
5. Give some examples of China's changing economy.



Questions

1. Why is this cartoon funny?
2. What does it imply about charts and statistics?
3. What is meant by 'employment rate'?
4. Name some other factors used to measure the economy.
5. In your opinion, what are the most important ways to measure the health of the economy?

Property Titles Empower Rural Salvadoran Women

by Claudia Kolker

SAN SALVADOR - Except for its mountain view, Lilian Arriola's place is a bit grim. Two hours from Santa Ana, El Salvador's second largest city, the tiny plot of land is accessible only by a four-wheel-drive vehicle. In front of the stick-and-mud house, a man stands in a bit of black muck, mixing plaster to fill in the walls. Inside, Ms. Arriola pats tortillas made of home-grown maize.

But there is something extraordinary about this home: It is owned by a woman.

In the last year, 42 women squatters in Pinalon - a community of 1,500 people scattered over several square miles - have bought their own land. Benefiting both from El Salvador's violent past and the peace-minded present, each woman contracted to buy two to three manzanas (one manzana is about 1.5 acres) of land on the plantation where they have lived for years. The terms: 6 percent interest, 5 percent down payment, and up to 3,000 Colones ($350) per manzana, payable over three decades.

Traditionally, peasants could not dream of owning land; the countryside belonged almost entirely to the wealthy, with many campesinos exchanging crops or farm labor for homesteads.

Under this system, living space and work possibilities shrink with each generation, and children often leave the crowded family plot for precarious squatters' lives elsewhere on the same plantation. And those campesinos who own land are male; the mostly house-bound women earn little cash and do not inherit land.

Twelve years of war did little to change the rules. But indirectly, El Salvador's civil crisis produced the key players in Pinalon's land deal: a female doctor, a group of rural women, and a land bank.

When Vicky Guzman left her middle-class medical practice to teach health care to El Salvador's rural poor 20 years ago, the Army accused her of subversion. Dr. Guzman insisted she was simply fighting a war that both guerrillas and the government ignored.

In this "other war"—against rural disease and poverty—Guzman applied her energies in 1986 to Pinalon. The Salvadoran Association for Rural Health she founded, started a clinic, a village council, a woman's group in Pinalon, as it had in numerous communities before.

In 1990, a new government entity called the Land Bank was formed, funded by the United States, the United Nations, and El Salvador's government. Its $3.5 million budget was meant to finance market-rate, long term land purchases for campesinos.

When Guzman learned that an absentee landlord in Pinalon had forfeited 105 parcels of land in a bank loan, she helped convince the Land Bank to buy the land and sell to Pinalon's women.

Soon after agreeing, the Land Bank was tapped for a role in the 1992 peace accords. Now the banks exclusive task is to finance land sales to 7,500 former guerrillas, 15,000 former soldiers, and 25,000 peasants who seized land during the war. Located in a non-combative western province, Pinalon rode on the peace accords' coattails: The Pinalon women will pay the same low interest rate as the guerrillas.

All is not verdant for the new landowners, however. Much of their new property is of low quality. And during the 1992 ceremony, the Land Bank distributed seal-less, unsigned computer printouts instead of formal contracts. Land Bank president Rafael Montalvo, a prominent member of the ruling right-wing ARENA party argued that these documents were temporary, the result of constraints on the bank's time and money.

But the real triumphs in Pinalon may be social and psychological. Arriloa says she felt desperate in the squatter community where she had lived illegally. Owning land gives her and her neighbors a new confidence, she says, because they cannot be evicted; it sparks incentive to cultivate their land and to improve their homes.

The Pinalon sale also marks a new aperture in politics here. Since the formal end of the war, both sides of former combatants are eager to join flattering community development projects.

But the women of Pinalon may benefit most. In a country where ownership is perhaps unprecedented, Guzman and the Land Bank agreed in advance that only members of Pinalon's women's groups could buy the land.

"In the countryside, men fear marriage - they say they'll lose their freedom," says a social worker who helped with the sale. "They have common-law wives, who have lots of children, and the men often just kick them out. Because women aren't married they have no rights."

Most of the common-law husbands —who usually earn more money than their wives—balked at investing in a land title in someone else's name. But by design, the Land Bank's terms require a two-income investment, and almost all men agreed to take advantage of this rare opportunity for credit.

-Reprinted from the Christian Science Monitor

Questions

1. How have the women of Pinalon been able to purchase land?
2. Traditionally, who owned the land?
3. What role did Dr. Guzman play in making things happen?
4. What is the role of the Land Bank?
5. Was this a real victory? Explain.

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