

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

*Interpretive Guide to:*

# GOLIAD

STATE PARK





R.W. FARVIN

GOLIAD STATE PARK IS COMPRISED OF THREE HISTORIC SITES THAT TOGETHER REVEAL 300 YEARS OF TEXAS HISTORY. THESE THREE SITES HARBOR MEMORIES OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, SPANISH, MEXICAN AND ANGLO CULTURES. HERE THESE GROUPS COLLIDED, BUT FRAGMENTS OF THEIR CULTURES ENDURED, CREATING THE TEXAN IDENTITY.



## A RICH HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE

Missions Espíritu Santo and Rosario tell a story of faith, sacrifice and the creation of a distinctive ranching heritage. The missions also reveal the story of the destruction of the Karankawa, Aranama and Tamique Indians' way of life. The birthplace of Ignacio Zaragoza tells of a boy who became a military hero revered by people of two nations.

The story begins with the roving bands of hunter-gatherer Indians known to history as Karankawa, Aranama and Tamique. Their world changed dramatically with the arrival of the French at Matagorda Bay and the thousands of Spaniards who followed. Intent on protecting their land holdings, the Spanish Crown and Roman Catholic Church reasoned that through mission settlements they could populate the land and hold it. They enthusiastically began "civilizing and Christianizing" the often unwilling native people with the intention of making them Spanish citizens.



GILCREASE MUSEUM

*Carancabucses*

Karankawa – Coastal people

## MISSION NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL ESPÍRITU SANTO DE ZÚÑIGA

Franciscan priests established the first Mission Espíritu Santo at Matagorda Bay in 1722, adjacent to Presidio La Bahía. In 1749, after two other moves, both the mission and presidio were strategically relocated to opposite banks of the San Antonio River protecting Camino La Bahía, a major Spanish trade route to the north and east.

Mission life proved destructive to the natives' traditional way of life. In return for food, shelter and protection from more aggressive tribes, they agreed to live in the mission, follow its discipline and receive instruction in the Roman Catholic faith. The result over time was the gradual erosion and eventual destruction of their traditional tribal culture.

Espíritu Santo's chapel and grounds were the center of a busy community. Supervised by the Franciscan fathers, the men branded cattle, tilled the soil, chipped stone and mixed mortar. The women spun wool for clothing, made

clay pots used for storage and cooking, ground corn into meal with stone *manos* and *metates* and harvested crops.

Ranching, however, became the main occupation at Espíritu Santo. Thousands of wild long-horned cattle and horses roamed the mission lands. Mission Indians adapted Spanish riding and roping styles to their own and soon became accomplished *vaqueros*. Renowned for its livestock, the mission regularly traded cattle with other settlements. During the American Revolution mission *vaqueros* herded thousands of beeves to Louisiana in support of the American struggle for independence.

Franciscan efforts at Mission Espíritu Santo continued until 1830 when declining Indian populations, lack of money and political turmoil in Mexico forced it to close.

By 1931 when the fledgling Texas State Park system acquired the site, neglect and the use of stone for other construction projects had left the buildings in ruin. Crews of the Civilian Conservation Corps worked to restore the Mission from 1935 until 1941. During the 1970s, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department rehabilitated the chapel and built exhibits in the restored granary.



## MISSION NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL ROSARIO

(Four miles west of Goliad on U.S. Highway 59)

Walking the grounds of Mission Rosario, visitors see evidence of a vanished people. Situated on a slightly elevated point with a panoramic view of cattle grazing in fields and the San Antonio River, the stabilized ruins of the mission walls are all that remain of one of Texas' last intact Spanish mission archeological sites.

Established in 1754, Mission Rosario served the Karankawa Indians, a tall, robust, nomadic people whose territories stretched among the bays and estuaries of the Gulf coastal bend. The Franciscans were determined to build a mission for the Karankawa, and lured them to Rosario with promises of food and shelter. But regimented agricultural mission life had little permanent appeal to these wanderers; many returned to their traditional ways. Nonetheless, Rosario became the center of a large livestock operation. Ten years after its founding, the mission priests and Indians managed more than 4,000 branded cattle. Mission Rosario was abandoned in 1781, briefly reopened in 1789 and closed for good in 1792.

Goliad County donated the site to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department in 1972. Recent preservation efforts have stabilized the mission walls. Archeological excavations provide important clues that tie construction periods to known periods of occupation. **The site is open to the public by appointment only.**



Vaqueros were the original cow-boys and started herding cattle in northern Mexico in the 1590s.

Artwork by Clemente Guzman III, TPWD.

## ZARAGOZA BIRTHPLACE



(One-quarter mile south of Goliad State Park on U.S. Highway 183, adjacent to Presidio La Bahía)

**T**his austere building tells the story of Ignacio Seguín Zaragoza, a Mexican hero. He was born to a military family at Presidio La Bahía in 1829 only eight years after Mexico won its independence from Spain. Thirty-three years later, Mexico was once again fighting for its independence – this time from France. Zaragoza, now a general in the Mexican army, was at the center of the struggle.

On May 5, 1862, outside the Mexican city of Puebla, Zaragoza led an outnumbered, outgunned volunteer militia of farmers and merchants against a superior French army. He inspired his troops with the words, "Your foes are the first soldiers of the world, but you are the first sons of Mexico." Zaragoza's army was victorious and the victory at the Battle of Puebla is celebrated to this day in Mexico and the American Southwest as *Cinco de Mayo*.

Shortly after the Battle of Puebla, Zaragoza died of typhoid fever. In 1862 Mexican President Benito Juarez proclaimed *Cinco de Mayo* a national holiday. In 1992, the Texas legislature proclaimed Goliad the official site for *Cinco de Mayo*.



Ignacio Seguín Zaragoza

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Presidio  
La Bahía

### FURTHER READING

Hardin, Stephen L. *Texian Iliad: A Military History of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836*. University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas.

Jackson, Jack. *Los Mesteños – Spanish Ranching in Texas, 1721-1821*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, Texas.

O'Connor, Kathryn Stoner. *Presidio La Bahía, 1721-1846, 3rd edition*. Wexford Publishing, Victoria, Texas.

Sánchez Colín, Guillermo. *Ignacio Zaragoza: Evocación de un Héroe*. Editorial Porrúa, México, D.F.

The Texas State Historical Association. *The Handbook of Texas* ([www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/)).

### OTHER HISTORIC SITES IN GOLIAD

Presidio La Bahía, one-quarter mile south of Goliad State Park on U.S. Highway 183

Goliad Courthouse Square Historic District and Market House Museum, one-quarter mile north of Goliad State Park off of U.S. Highway 183

Fannin Battleground, Nine miles east of Goliad off U.S. Highway 59

You may also want to inquire about joining *Amigos of Goliad State Park*, a not-for-profit friends group, to support the preservation of Goliad's rich historical landscape.

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