

Audio 4: Spanish Colonists and Conquistadors

Becoming Texas Audio Guides

Alicia F.R.: Conquistadors were people who came from Spain and traveled by boat to the Americas in the late 1400s. They were searching for gold because they wanted to take the valuable material back to Spain to grow their empire. They were also explorers and were some of the first men to travel to the New World. Some of the famous Conquistadors were Francisco Pizarro, Juan Ponce de Leon, and Hernán Cortés.

The conquistadors arrived in what is now known as Texas in 1519. They did not find the gold they were hoping for. However, the explorer Alonso Álvarez de Piñeda became the first European to map the Texas Gulf Coast. The conquistadors were particularly violent towards the Native Americans of Texas. For example, explorer Luis de Moscoso Alvarado became frustrated not finding gold in what is now Florida so decided to head to Mexico. In the process, he crossed Ais and Caddo territory in East Texas where the Spanish attacked these tribes and stole their food stores to feed themselves. When the Caddo chief tried to guide the Spaniards to a less-stocked food cache, Moscoso discovered the trick and had the guides hanged.

In addition to violence, the Spaniards brought diseases that greatly impacted the Native Americans. Diseases such as smallpox, typhus, measles, influenza, and diphtheria are estimated to have killed over 90% of the Native Americans within the first 130 years of the arrival of Europeans. In addition to diseases, the Europeans brought over new plants and animals and took new items back with them to Europe. The horse was reintroduced to the United States by Europeans. It made a significant impact on the Americas.

Ben H.: Horses were very important to the start of Texas. Horses originally came to North America forty million years ago. They were all killed for meat and hide. Then Spanish explorers brought them back to America in the late 1400s. At first, some Native Americans were fearful of horses but soon they realized they were valuable.

The Spanish did not want the Native Americans to have horses because it would put them on an equal footing. Then in 1690, the Pueblo tribe grew tired of the Spanish's harsh treatment, drove them out of New Mexico and kept their horses.

The horse greatly affected Native American culture because it transformed warfare by starting conflicts between tribes. Tribes that had less horses raided their neighbors' herds to increase their own. The horse also made hunting easier and more productive. However, all tribes were distinct so the horse had varying impact on each unique group.

Many Native American groups originally had dogs as their tribe animal. With the dog as their closest reference, Native Americans gave the horse names like "elk dog," "sky dog" and "holy dog."

Bullock Texas State History Museum

It wasn't long before horses repopulated and thrived throughout America.

At this point in your tour, you will begin to learn about the French colonists. Proceed to the case next to the illustration of LaSalle just before the ramp begins.