Why It Matters Now
The Spanish missions established permanent Texas settlements that eventually grew into major cities.

Terms & Names
- hacienda
- oppressive
- subject
- El Patronato Real
- compound
- commissary

Objectives
1. Analyze why Spanish colonists came to Texas.
2. Examine important issues related to the establishment of Catholic missions in Texas.
3. Identify important issues affecting Spanish colonists in Texas.

Main Idea
To secure its hold on Texas, Spain sent colonists to the northern frontier of its colonial empire. Many settled in missions and presidios, where they experienced a whole new way of life.

A Real-Life Story
Born in 1905 near Sherman, Texas, O’Neil Ford became a gifted architect, recognized throughout the United States. O’Neil Ford believed the San Antonio missions were irreplaceable snapshots of life in colonial Texas.

The Missions are the most important and most beautiful examples of Spanish Colonial architecture in the United States and though once they were loved and admired and understood by a few thousand persons, now it is probably safe to say that millions of persons from all over the world have come to San Antonio to wonder at them, to study their history and their great significance. Now we know that they are the jewels of our river valley and the greatest documentation of our Eighteenth Century beginning.

O’Neil Ford

The Spanish Texans

In the late 1700s about 3,500 colonists were living in what is now Texas. This population was concentrated in three main areas: the missions in San Antonio (about 2,000), La Bahía (about 1,000), and Nacogdoches (about 500). About 700 more colonists lived in the Spanish province of Nuevo Santander, which included part of what is today South Texas.

Many of the Spanish colonists came to Texas to escape cruel conditions on the haciendas in New Spain. Others were driven to the area by droughts and other natural disasters or by an oppressive tax system. A few colonists hoped to become wealthy by trading with the French—an activity that was illegal in New Spain. Still others hoped to get better jobs on northern ranches.
Four Types of Frontier Settlements

Given the size of Spanish Texas and Nuevo Santander, the colonial population was small—with good reason. Conditions in the northern provinces of New Spain were difficult. Settlers lived in fear of attack by hostile natives. They also faced deadly diseases such as cholera and smallpox. In addition, many hacendado owners would not allow their laborers to leave. The owners sometimes used force to keep their workers from escaping.

Despite the obstacles, a number of brave colonists did build new lives in Texas. Because of the dangers of life on the frontier, the colonists tended to stick together as much as possible. Spanish colonists in Texas established four kinds of frontier settlements: missions, presidios, pueblos, and ranchos. All of these settlements—especially the missions and presidios—strengthened Spain’s claim on Texas.

Missions

The mission was Spain’s main tool for colonizing Texas. One purpose of the mission was to convert Native Texans to the Catholic faith. The Spaniards in the mission also taught the native peoples to be good citizens and loyal subjects of the Spanish crown. Spaniards hoped they would become skilled laborers who could be productive for Spain. If all these goals were met, Spain promised to give control of the missions to local government. Spain also promised to give the native peoples land for farming.

Under the terms of a special agreement known as El Patronato Real (ray-AHL), a group of Franciscan priests was given the task of running the Texas missions. Under this agreement the Catholic Church provided priests for the missions, and the Spanish government provided the funding. The government also owned the mission lands, even though the church owned the buildings, gardens, livestock, and cemetery that were on the lands. In this way Spain secured its northern frontier and the church carried its message to people in a new area.

Spanish missions in Texas were expected to support themselves. That is, they had to provide everything the mission residents needed to survive. Spain hoped that the missions would soon start making money for the crown. This would make them a productive part of New Spain rather than a constant financial drain.

Inside the Missions

Most Texas missions consisted of a square compound enclosed by four walls. Towers often were built on the corners of the walls to serve as lookout points. Inside the compound, most missions had offices for the priests and workshops for spinning or weaving cotton and woolen cloth. Most also had shops for carpentry, ironworking,
Chapter 7

Spain built missions not only in Texas but throughout the northern frontier. Franciscan priests founded 21 missions in California, lending their names to places such as San Francisco, San Diego, and San Jose. In Arizona, Jesuit Padre Kino established Mission San Xavier del Bac, south of present-day Tucson.

Why do you think Spain was so interested in establishing these missions along its northern frontier?

REGION

Mission San José is one of the five missions that make up the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. Why was this mission so large, with so much land within its walls?

TEXAS VOICES

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This mission is so pretty and in such a flourishing condition, both materially and spiritually, that I cannot find words or figures with which to express its beauty. It forms a perfect square, is built of stone, and on each of the four sides, 660 feet in length, there is an entrance. On diagonal corners there are two towers, each of which protects two sides of the building. The living-quarters for the Indians, which form a part of the outer wall, are from fifteen to eighteen feet in length and twelve in width. The mission is provided with a small kitchen twelve feet in length, a fireplace, embrasures for the cannons, a vaulted silo made of stone, and a workshop in which are woven blankets, gunny sacks and some excellent cotton goods. Here the Indians have their carpenter shop, forge and tailor shop, their lime and brick kilns and a well runs into a canal, which contains a great quantity of fish and irrigates many fertile fields. In these fields, that cover more than a league and are fenced in, there are abundant crops of corn, beans, lentils, melons, peaches, potatoes and sugar-cane.

Father Gaspar José de Solís, diary

The mission chapel was important for both the mission residents and the surrounding community. Colonists had their children baptized there, and marriage and funeral services were held in the chapel. Although formal Sunday services were not common, they also were held in the mission chapel.
Daily Life in the Missions

The daily routine in the missions began with morning prayers followed by 30 minutes to an hour of instruction in the Catholic faith. The mission residents also recited the rosary, a series of Catholic prayers counted on a string of beads. After breakfast the natives worked all day in the fields or workshops. Most of the time women worked in the kitchen or operated spinning wheels while children attended school. After the evening meal, everyone in the mission gathered for more religious instruction and prayers before going to sleep.

Daily life in the missions was not like anything the Native Texans had experienced. Most had routine jobs to perform every day, and the mission priests introduced them to new ways of life and ideas.

The priests supervised all activities in the mission. They would often physically punish uncooperative natives. For the most part, Native Texans did not care for mission life. In fact, few were ever converted to the Catholic faith. Those who came into the mission often stayed for only a few months. Many ran away only to be captured again by presidio soldiers and punished by the priests. Some returned on their own to escape hunger and the cold winters. Those Native Texans who did adopt the Spanish way of life usually remained at the mission. Most married and raised families on small plots of land near the mission.

Hard Times in the Missions

Spanish missions in Texas were not as successful as Spain had hoped. Although they had a strong start, the native population within the Spanish missions were expected to support themselves by growing their own crops and raising livestock. One of the first crops grown in the missions was cotton. In fact, the Spanish missionaries are credited with introducing cotton to Texas. By 1745 the missionaries were producing thousands of pounds of cotton each year. After harvesting the cotton, mission workers wove it into cloth.

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Some Native Texans fully adapted to life in the missions. Many others ran away from the missions or went back and forth between their native way of life and the missions. What are some of the reasons Native Texans might have found it difficult to adapt to mission life?

Missions began to shrink. Many of the native women in the missions died giving birth, perhaps because of the hard work of their daily lives. And while the mission provided food and shelter for many natives, it also exposed them to deadly European diseases. Native Texans also had a hard time adjusting to their new diet. They were used to eating a variety of roots, fish, fruits, nuts, and wild game. In the mission they were served only red meat and starches, such as corn.

By the late 1770s the Spanish crown had begun to view the missions as a drain on Spanish finances. The missions had not grown enough to give money back to Spain. Also, maintaining presidios to protect the missions became too expensive. Still, by the end of the 1700s, Spaniards had managed to build 26 missions in Texas.

Presidios

Presidios were essential to the colonization of Texas. Their purpose was to provide military support for missions, and later settlements, until these communities could support themselves. The main purpose of a presidio was to protect the colonists from attacks by Native Texans. Presidio soldiers were also expected to bring back any natives who ran away from the mission. In addition, they protected groups bringing supplies from the Rio Grande. Soldiers also guarded herds of cattle and horses to keep them from being stolen by native raiders.

Presidios were built from local materials, such as logs, adobe, or stone. Most presidio compounds were rectangular with four tall walls and lookout points on each corner. Within the presidio were barracks for the soldiers, separate sleeping quarters for officers, a chapel, and storage rooms. The only entrance was a huge main gate.
Presidio Life

Most presidio soldiers enlisted for ten years. Military life could be unpleasant, dull, and harsh. Soldiers faced years of hard work and constant danger from hostile native groups. The soldiers often did not get along with the priests they were ordered to protect. Many conflicts arose over how to deal with the Native Texans in and around the settlement. These disagreements sometimes led to long-term distrust and resentment between the mission residents and the soldiers who were supposed to protect them.

Presidio soldiers were not paid a great deal. They had to use much of their pay to buy their own uniforms, weapons, and other equipment at the commissary. Since local commanders ran the commissary, prices were very high. Outside the presidio compound, local merchants, craftspeople, farmers, and livestock owners saw the soldiers as customers for their goods. Many soldiers had to take extra jobs in the community to be able to buy food, clothing, and supplies for themselves and their families.

Some soldiers brought their wives and families with them to the outpost. Others married women from the local community. After soldiers completed their tour of duty, they often made their homes nearby. Some soldiers obtained land grants near the presidios and built homesteads.

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<th>LIFE AS A COLONIST</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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Do you think the advantages of living in a colonial outpost in Texas outweighed the disadvantages, or vice versa? Support your answer with logical reasons.

Critical Thinking
1. Not all colonists came to Texas to be missionaries. Generally speaking, what was the main goal of many of the colonists who came to Texas and Nuevo Santander in the 1700s?
2. Spain hoped to profit from its missions one day. How do you think a mission might make money for the crown?
3. How do you think living conditions in the presidios affected the soldiers’ work? Explain.

A Real-Life Story
Review A Real-Life Story on page 142. O’Neil Ford felt that the Spanish missions’ design and architecture were very important to the study of Texas history. What do you think historians can learn from the architecture of the missions?

ACTIVITY
History
Research and create a layout of a Spanish mission or presidio in Texas. What do you think these layouts reveal about the people who lived in the missions?