

Dwight T. Pitcaithley

Your History, My History, Our History

The New Mexican writer Rudolfo Anaya is a teller of stories. For 30 years he has explored his Nuevo Mexicano culture in novels, short stories, essays, plays, and poems. His “cuentos” are filled with respect for elders, for they possess the traditions and the knowledge of the family (of the people) that must be passed down from generation to generation so that traditions will be remembered and respected, and cultural identities enriched by the shared experiences of the past. He probes the human condition, but he also explores the values of places familiar to him, and he plays on the relationships between people of differing backgrounds. Indeed, respect for other cultures is another thread that runs through his works. He accepts, as we all should, that the United States is, and for several centuries has been, a society of diverse peoples. In an insightful and provocative essay titled, “Take the Tortillas out of Your Poetry,” Anaya argues that the more we know about other cultures, the less uncomfortable we will be in their presence. “Books nourish the spirit,” he writes, “bread nourishes our bodies. Our distinct cultures nour-

ish each one of us, and as we know more and more about the art and literature of the different cultures, we become freer and freer...Multi-culturalism is a reality in this country, and we will get beyond fear and censorship only when we know more about each other, not when we know less.”

The history of the Borderlands allows us to understand how different cultures clashed and then accommodated themselves each to the other. As Ramón Gutiérrez observed in his ground-breaking *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*, it is a history of a “complex web of interactions between men and women, young and old, rich and poor, slave and free, Spaniard and Indian, all of whom fundamentally depended on the other for their own self-definition.” With the introduction of Anglo participants during the early decades of the 19th century, the cycle of conquest and accommodation began anew, and, of course, continues today.

Just as Anaya writes and teaches about places that are important to, and have enriched, him as an individual, so do historic places enrich us as a society. Since 1908, the government of this multicultural nation has been setting aside historic places that reflect its Hispanic culture. Beginning with the creation of Tumacácori National Monument, Congress has, over the years, established almost two-dozen sites from California to Puerto Rico that attest to the influence of Spain and Mexico. A quick look at them tells us that they safely reflect historical events long since past. They largely commemorate 16th-, 17th-, and 18th-century events and people, and only in two instances (Palo Alto Battlefield and San Antonio Missions) venture into the 19th century. The little known, but culturally vibrant, Chamizal National Memorial (in El Paso) is the only place

San Estevan del Rey Mission Church, Acoma, New Mexico. Courtesy NPS.



devoted to commemorating contemporary Mexican-American history and culture.

It is the continuity of the Hispanic past that should concern us most. With citizens of Hispanic descent becoming an ever-increasing percentage of American society, it is important that we forego the stereotypes of the past and confront, as Patricia Limerick argues, the legacy of conquest. The geographical and temporal range of historic sites allows us to dig deeper into our Hispanic heritage and get beyond the architecture and the food to a better understanding of the complexities of the past and the consequences of that past.

Ultimately, literature, art, and history all bring us to the same place. They teach us things we did not know and make us look at the world in different ways. They free us from one-dimensional perspectives, from cultural myopia. Our Hispanic and Chicano traditions are especially rich, colorful, and moving and we need to learn to value them. In his essay "La Llorona, El KooKooee, and Sexuality," Rudolfo Anaya challenges us to embrace a multiplicity of traditions, including those from our Hispanic past. "The stories from our tradition," he suggests, "have much to tell us about the knowledge we need in our journey. We need to get our stories into the schools, as we

need the stories of many different ways of life. We need to be more truthful and more sensitive with each other as we learn about the complexity that comes with growth. It is futile and wasteful to depend on only one set of stories to learn the truth. There are many stories, many paths, and they are available to us in our own land."* By taking different paths and learning different truths, we, individually and collectively, de-mystify the differences that separate us and strengthen the ties that bind us together.

This is the first issue of *CRM* devoted to Hispanic traditions in this country. It is designed with the expectation of raising readers' awareness of the diversity of the culture and of the historic properties associated with that diversity. The articles here, while wide ranging in their topics, mark only the beginning of what we hope will be an ongoing exploration of the cultural resources associated with Hispanic landscapes and culture.

Note

* Rudolfo Anaya's essays are compiled in *The Anaya Reader* (New York: Warner Books, 1995).

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United States-Mexico Affairs Office

The mission of the United States-Mexico Affairs Office is to strengthen cooperation between the United States National Park Service and the Republic of Mexico for the design and implementation of strategies for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage shared by both countries.

The United States-Mexico Affairs Office acts as a proactive bridge between two cultures and two great nations to achieve universal conservation goals and generate an educational awareness for a greater understanding of the unique natural and cultural resources shared along the border region.

A principle goal is to forge partnerships with United States and Mexico government agencies, educational institutions, non-governmental groups, and interested individuals in working together for the preservation, management, and interpretation of shared natural and cultural resources.

International Program

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) established with the Mexican Government provides a framework for cooperation between the Secretariat for Urban Development and Ecology (SEDUE) and the National Park Service to collaborate on projects of mutual interest. The original MOU was modified and re-signed by

Antropologo Hector Ruiz Berranco, Director of Biosphere Reserves and National Protected Areas of the Instituto Nacional de Ecologia and John Cook, Director of the NPS Intermountain Field Office, July 1995.

This formal agreement allows for informal and formal exchange of information and cooperation between both countries in the field of natural and cultural resources management. Specialists from both countries manage binational projects and activities that include international forums, human resource development programs, park planning, research, interpretation, specialized training courses for United States government employees, and environmental education.

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