

FREE ADMISSION!**OLD SCHOOL MUSEUM & LOG CABIN****111 West Houston Street - Dayton**

The Old School Museum & Log Cabin are located at 111 West Houston St. across from post office

Dayton Historical Society members serve as hosts for visitors.

For more history/information, visit:

- Website: daytontxhistory.com
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DaytonTxHistory>

**Dayton Historical Society Meetings**

6 P.M. on last Monday of month
at Parker Hall (behind Old School Museum)
Guest speaker program is preceded by a short
business meeting and followed by refreshments.
Public is welcome!

To Rent Parker Hall

call Aline 713-927-1629 or Josh 832-233-3894

Website & Newsletter Contact/Author

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Dayton History News

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**Hold The**

France

Those familiar with football have probably heard the phrase 'hold the line' which directs players to prevent opponents from taking the ball further. A much older application of the phrase was used in military situations in which a line of troops was directed to keep the advancing enemy from breaking through the line.

Back in the late 1600s, Spanish soldiers of Texas experienced the equivalent of a call to 'hold the line'.

The trigger was learning about a French settlement called Old Fort Saint Louis that had been built near what is now Victoria, Texas – located within Spanish Texas territory.

A group of 200 Europeans led by a French explorer named Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle were intent on establishing a settlement at the mouth of the Mississippi River within Louisiana territory.

However, serious miscalculations resulted in the group landing in Matagorda Bay.

Although they manage to build a fort and apparently survived for several years (1684-1689), encounters with a southeast Texas Indian tribe known as the Karankawa resulted in the deaths of most of the French settlers.

Apparently, the Karankawa were cannibalistic and believed that consuming the flesh of enemies was a magical means of capturing the enemy's courage or was simply an expression of revenge.

The leader of the expedition to find the location of the French settlement and destroy it was a renowned Spanish explorer named Alonso de Leon.

Having located the destroyed fort and found that there were no survivors, de Leon's new imperative became "hold the line" between French Louisiana and Spanish Texas.

Within the next year (1690), de Leon led an effort to establish Mission San Francisco de Los Tejas that was located among friendly Caddo Indians in what is now the town of Weches near the Neches River.

A follow-up trip 3 years later (1693) revealed the San Francisco de Los Tejas mission had been abandoned.

Among his travels in 1690, de Leon traveled through what is now Dayton where he crossed an uncharted river.

He chose to call the river Rio de la Santissima Trinidad which translates to River of the most Holy Trinity.

It was named in honor of the forthcoming Catholic holy day called Sunday of the Holy Trinity which was to occur two days later on Sunday, 21 May 1690.

Atascocito Outpost

After the failure of the San Francisco de Los Tejas mission, a new location for the 'line' of defense against the French was needed.

As the widest and longest river in Texas that was also illegally frequented by the French, the Trinity River was deemed the perfect location to 'hold the line'.

The first Spanish structure along the Trinity was an outpost/settlement named Atascosito.

In Spanish, the word "Atascoso" is derived from the noun "atasco" which means an obstruction or obstacle. When "ito" is added to the end, the word become "little obstruction".

An historical marker located at the intersection of FM-1011 and Hwy 146 in the town of Liberty states:

A Spanish settlement on the Atascosito road was established here in 1757 to prevent French trade with the Indians. Four and one-half miles west of here, the road crossed the Trinity. There Alonso de Leon, Spanish explorer, crossed in 1690. The road from Goliad to Opelousas, Louisiana, known as the Lower Road, extensively traveled from 1750 to 1850 also crossed there.



El Orcoquisac Outpost

In the early 1720s, rumors of the French operating out of the lower Trinity alarmed the responsible Spanish governor, Jacinto de Barrios y Jauregui who dispatched a force of 25 soldiers who arrested the Frenchmen.

A Spanish outpost named San Augustin de Ahumada presidio/fort at the site of the French trading post was built in May 1756. An historical marker located at the Wallisville Heritage Park Museum on I-10 states:

Two of the most misfortune-ridden outposts of Spain in Texas, "Our Lady of the Light" mission and its auxiliary fort, were founded near here in 1756 to guard against French encroachment from the east. The two friars who were to minister to members of the Orcoquisac tribe arrived shortly after the 30 soldiers who were to man the fort. ... In 1767, an official inspector reported that due to the terrain, discord among the staff, and failure to convert the Indians, the presidio and mission should be closed. In 1771, fearing an invasion of Apaches, the authorities withdrew the personnel, and these outposts of Spain were totally abandoned.



Champ d'Asile Settlement

A short-lived settlement founded along the Trinity River in January 1818 was by 20 French Bonapartist veterans of the Napoleonic Wars who received the offer by vote of the United States Congress. This occurred while Texas was still part of Spain.

It was 17 December 1817 when the would-be-settlers sailed from Philadelphia for Galveston arriving on January 14. They sailed up the Trinity River to Atascosito where they built two small forts.

Although their claimed objective was farming of grapes and olives, they were considered a threat to the Mexican government. Not surprising, considering that pirate Jean Laffite and other mercenaries were among the colonists.

To: Generals Charles Lallemand, Antoine Rigaud, the veterans of the Napoleonic Wars and other French settlers, who, after many trials and adventures, came to Texas in the spring of 1818 to found on the banks of the Trinity River the Champ D'Asile: a last refuge for peace and liberty "Nous voulons vivre libres, laborieux et paisables" (We want to live as free men through our labor, and in peace)



Camp Liberty

In 1943, Liberty County Agricultural Agent Gordon Hart and a rice farm labor committee consisting of J. M. Rich, Jimmy Trousdale, M. E. Peterson, Pat Boyt and J.F. Clark negotiated an agreement with the U.S. Army to deliver German prisoners of war, members of Rommel's Afrika Korps, to Liberty.

Up to 800 prisoners were housed at the Trinity Valley Exposition during the peak of the rice harvest in 1943 under local contracts with the area farmers.

Prisoners were paid \$2.15 a day and allowed to keep 80-cents for use at the camp PX and the remainder went to the federal treasury.

Liberty citizens and farmers interacted with the prisoners by dining at the camp and attending skits and performances including a Christmas Show.

After the war ended in 1945, 100,000 German prisoners in Texas were repatriated and the Liberty Camp left the Trinity Valley Exposition with improved grounds and a cash surplus.

