Spanish Colonial Texas
Battle for control

- Throughout the 1600’s and 1700’s four European countries battled each other:
  - France, England, The Netherlands and Spain
- They clashed over religion, property, riches and power.
- The battles started in Europe and extended into the colonies.
Missions in Texas

- The mission-presidio system: used by Spanish to gain control in other parts of the new world.
- A mission was a settlement set up in Indian Territory. Friars, or members of clergy who belong to religious groups, invited Indians to live at the missions.
- The friars taught them about Christianity, the language and customs of Spain, and Spanish farming methods.
- In the 1600’s Spain began building missions in Texas.
- Missions were a standard part of Spain’s colonization process.
  - Were built to establish control over Texas
  - Populate Texas
  - They were used to teach the native the Spanish language and way of life and to convert them to Catholicism
Presidios

• With the discontent, in Europe over control of Texas and the New World, Spain was uneasy to leave their new colonies undefended.

• When La Salle established Fort St. Louis and claimed it for France the Spanish decided it was time to protect their claim.

• They would build missions with military outposts called presidios in towns and lands occupied by Native Americans.
  - A presidio protected a mission and offered protection from unfriendly Indians.
Spanish officials established missions to spread Catholicism and encourage settlement. Missionaries and American Indians built churches, grew crops, and created irrigation systems. This model shows a well-established mission after several years of settlement.
Purpose of Missions

Missions were expected to:

• Be self-supporting (grow and make supplies and food)
• Make a profit for Spain
• Produce goods for export
• Convert Native people to Catholicism
• The more missions Texas would eventually become “Spanish”
Texas Under Spanish Rule, c. 1750
The First Missions in Texas

• In the 1680’s the Spanish tried to settle Texas.
• 1682 they built the missions of Corpus Christi de la Ysleta among the Tigua people near present day El Paso
Mission Corpus Christi De La Isleta 1682

- First permanent European settlement in Texas
- Most Spanish activity in East Texas
- Fear of French settlements lead to an increase in the building of missions, presidios and towns.
- Learned of LaSalle’s fort and sent Alonso de Leon to destroy it.
Spanish Missions in the East

- There were no Spanish settlers in East Texas.
- LaSalle’s arrival turned Spain’s mission efforts to the east.
Mission San Francisco de los Tejas

- In 1690 Father Damian Massanet sought to have the first mission built in East Texas

- Troubles:
  - Drought, disease and rejection of the Catholic faith by Native Texas
  - French were no longer a threat; therefore mission abandoned.

- After the failure of the mission, France’s St. Denis expressed interest in trading with the native Texans, as a result, Spain began building new missions in Texas
France Threatens again

- 1699- French colony established along the mouth of the Mississippi River
- French are not interested in taking Indian Territory or converting them to Catholicism
- Made large profits by exchanging blankets, guns and wine for furs and skins.
- Hoped to trade with Spanish merchants in Mexico, but Spanish law prohibited foreigners from trading in Spanish colonies
- Father Hidalgo (a Spanish priest) asks France to establish a mission among Texas
- French see offer as an opening to trade.
- Louis St. Denis sent to negotiate with Spanish
- Captain Diego Ramon alarmed at unexpected arrival of French at St. Denis arrested but late allowed to escort Spanish to East Texas
Mission San Juan Bautista

- From 1693 to 1714, Spain made no effort to settle Texas, but settlements along the Rio Grande grew quickly.
- Mission San Juan Bautista was built in 1699, five miles from the Rio Grande near several crossings that allowed for easy access to Texas.
- The mission eventually grew into a complex of 3 mission, a presidio and a town.
- The mission was called “the Mother of Texas Missions” because it was the base for many expeditions to establish missions in east Texas.
  - Provided grain, cattle and horses to the missionaries.
Why did the missions in the East fail?

- Natives never took to the Christian teachings
- Spanish soldiers treated them harshly
- Native Texans died from disease
- Flood destroyed Natives crops
- The Natives blamed events on the Spanish and plotted to kill them
- The Spanish abandoned the missions and heads west!
Los Adaes

- Spanish capital of the province of Texas
- Its purpose was to help Spain keep an eye on French activity in the area
  - Only 15 miles from French settlement of Natchitoches
The Chicken War

• In 1719, Spain and France were at war in Europe-tension spread to the New World
• Spanish missions in East Texas had few soldiers to protect them against French soldiers
• French soldiers raided the mission, Los Adaes
Chicken War

- The French only found...... chickens!
- They took them
- The squawking chickens startled the French soldiers horses
- In the confusion, a mission priest escaped and reported the attack
- People referred to it as the Chicken War
- Result was the Spanish panicked, retreated to San Antonio de Valero and abandoned East Texas missions again
San Antonio de Valero (1718)

- The Spanish picked an area on the San Antonio River and built mission San Antonio de Valero as a good halfway point between the Rio Grande and E. Texas to stock and send supplies
- Site offered many benefits: location, scenery, abundance of water and fish
- Built the presidio San Antonio de Bexar nearby

Became known as the…… Alamo!
Missions in Central Texas:

- Spanish missions faced raids by plains tribes
  - Cattle and horses stolen
- In 1749, the Lipan Apache and Spanish made peace
  - The Lipans agreed to convert to Christianity if the Spanish would protect them from the Comanches
  - Spanish built a mission/presidio for the Lipans
    - Mission Santa Cruz de San Saba
Uh...Oh...

- The Spanish did not know that the mission they created was in Comanche Territory.
- The Lipans hoped to start a war between the Spanish and the Comanche
- The Lipan Apache never really lived at the mission

It's easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled.
-Mark Twain
Mission Failure

- In 1758, about 2,000 Comanches, Wichitas and Tonkawas burned down the mission and killed most of the missionaries.
- The mission failed and all sides remained hostile
- Missionaries had less success with the plains tribes.
Life in Missions
Native Americans

- Native Americans were kept busy from sun up to sun down.
  - Each day started with prayers
  - Children attended school
  - Women wove clothes, molded pottery and cooked
  - Men farmed, learned carpentry, or blacksmithing
  - After dinner were more religion classes, followed by prayer
  - Food was plentiful with herds of cattle, sheep and goats guaranteeing a regular supply of meat and milk
  - Farming was popular, including corn, beans, cantaloupes, cucumbers, watermelons, peppers, peaches, and sweet potatoes
  - Although some Native Americans adapted to mission life, most refused to stay at the missions
Soldiers

• Soldiers duties included protecting the mission and nearby settlements, maintaining control over the Native Americans in the missions, and scouting the land for intruders.

• Most of the soldiers were also settlers who had brought their families to the military towns and farmed and soldiered for a living.

• Military men were poorly equipped and lived in poor conditions

• They sometimes traded with the Native Americans living in the missions (usually unfairly)
Living in Spanish Texas

- Mainly farmers- irrigated fields through an elaborate system of canals
- Ranchers
- Shopkeepers, barbers, tax collectors, servants, tailors, blacksmiths
- Population- Spaniards, Native Americans, Mestizos (a mixture of Spanish and Native Americans)
Tejano Heritage

• How did Spanish Settlement effect Texas today?
• Tejano- a person of Mexican heritage who considers Texas his/her home
  • Population
  • Religion
  • Language
  • Customs
Significant Individuals to colonization and the mission systems
Fray Damian Massanet

- A Catholic church official
- Convinced the viceroy of New Spain to colonize East Texas and convert the Caddo's to Catholicism
- Founder of the first Spanish mission in East Texas
  - Mission San Francisco de los Tejas
  - Due to lack of interest by the Native Americans to convert and many dying of disease the mission was abandoned.
- Helped colonize the “Land of Tejas” along the Neches River
  - Mission Santa Maria
Jose de Escandon

- Jose de Escandon is known as the colonizer and first governor of the colony of Nuevo Santander (Laredo)
- By 1748 he was made governor and captain General of Nuevo Santander, and began establishing settlements along the Rio Grande River
- In 1755 he granted permission to Tomas Sanchez de la Barrera y Garza to found Laredo, the largest and most successful permanent Spanish settlement in Southwest Texas.
During the “Chicken War” of 1719, a war fought between Spain and France, the six missions and presidios in East Texas were all abandoned. The entire Spanish population withdrew to San Antonio.

The following February, Margil decided to rebuild and founded San Jose y San Miguel de Aguayo, which became the most successful of all Spanish missions.
In 1711, Spanish missionary, Father Francisco Hidalgo wanted to build more missions in East Texas among the Caddo Indians. He begged the Spanish officials to rebuild the mission for the Tejas people he had known for over 10 years. Desperate, Hidalgo wrote a letter to the French governor in Louisiana, asking the French to help build a mission among the Tejas. The letter was sent in secret, without the Spanish officials permission. The French governor liked Hidalgo’s proposal, as it offered an opportunity to open trade with Native American people and the Spanish settlements. He appointed Louis de St. Denis to negotiate with Spanish officials.
Louis de St. Denis

- Experienced explorer sent to find Father Hidalgo
- On the way to the Rio Grande, he built a trading post, Natchitoches, on the Red River.
- Traveled to a Spanish mission along the Rio Grande to trade goods
- Arrested by Spanish commander
- Enjoyed his stay and later married the commanders step-granddaughter
- Released to lead an expedition into East Texas to establish a bunch of missions
Alonso De Leon

- Sent to explore the Rio Grande and the Neches Rivers
- 3 years and 4 expeditions later... he found Fort St. Louis in ruins
- Continued into East Texas and found the Caddos, which he named the “Tejas”
  - Leon liked their fertile soil, good climate and friendly people