

03-06-17

Russell Contreras

<http://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/2017/06/03/ciudad-juarez-museum-seeks-tell-mexican-revolution-story/360280001/>

**Juárez museum seeks to tell Mexican Revolution story**

JUAREZ — Towns along the U.S.-Mexico border often are stereotyped as enclaves for bar-hoppers, smoky factories, cheap souvenirs and long entry lines for cargo and trucks. They also are known for inexpensive tacos and a plethora of adult entertainment options.

Cultural sites, in particular on the Mexican side, rarely get much attention.

But within a 20-minute walk from the Stanton Street Port of Entry in El Paso, visitors to Juárez can enjoy a different experience and get a better understanding of a moment in history that fundamentally changed Mexico and the United States. (This route also avoids the city's dangerous neighborhoods regularly mentioned in accounts of cartel violence.)

El Museo de la Revolucion en La Frontera, or the Museum of the Revolution in the Border, tells the story of the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath still felt today. The armed struggle, which lasted from 1910 to 1920, transformed Mexican society and sparked a massive migration of Mexicans to the United States that remade the demographics of cities in the American Southwest.

Yes, the conflict gave rise to Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata as revolutionary heroes of the poor. The war also spurred new movements in art, literature, journalism, photography and radical notions of land reform that spread across Latin America.

For those with only a basic knowledge of the Mexican Revolution, the museum guides visitors through the pre-revolutionary Mexico of dictator Porfirio Diaz and the intellectual movements opposing his rule. Exhibits touch upon El Plan of San Luis Potosi — a call to remove Diaz and the re-establishment of democracy — and writers speaking out against what they described as colonial rule at the expense of the poor.

Newspaper accounts in the U.S. talked about the growing unrest south of the border, and the museum explains in an easy-to-understand narrative how elite to middle-class political leaders joined efforts to remove Diaz. Using photographs, old documents and clothing, the museum goes through the short presidency of reformer Francisco Madero, followed by his overthrow and assassination at the hands of Gen. Victoriano Huerta.

Opposition to Huerta led to more violence as Villa in northern Mexico and Zapata in the south took up arms for their causes.

The museum shows how a call for censorship resulted in a boom in journalism, with reporters covering the violence and political unrest of the day. It also led to photojournalists, like British-born Jimmy Hare, coming to Mexico to experiment with the latest camera technology to capture scenes of war. Some of those scenes ended up on postcards that became popular in the United States.

Still, out of the chaos came music — recorded songs depicting the suffering and separations caused by war — and art, including images of revolution that inspired Diego Rivera's later work, as the museum explains.

The exhibits, mostly in Spanish with limited English translations, give visitors enough visuals that most are self-explanatory.

For example, the assassinations of Villa and Zapata are shown though photographs of mourners.

The unrest led many Mexicans to cross into the U.S. New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez, the nation's only Latina governor, for example, can trace her family's roots back to the Mexican Revolution. Her family is descended from Toribio Ortega, a general under Pancho Villa, the governor's brother told the El Paso Times in 2010.

Some Mexican restaurants in the American Southwest display black-and-white photos of the war, with some establishments claiming their original owners are pictured in the images.

But beyond the myths and legends, the Museum of the Revolution in the Border offers a foundation for learning about a turbulent chapter of history that dashed dreams of an egalitarian world across the border.

MAKE PLANS

What: Museum of the Revolution in the Border

Where: 16 de Septiembre Avenue, corner Juárez Avenue, Ciudad Juárez.

When: Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed on Mondays. Free.

Getting there: A 20-minute walk or five-minute cab ride from the Stanton Street Port of Entry in El Paso.