

Archaeologists Probe Louisiana History At Los Adaes SCA

Los Adaes, the symbol of New Spain in Louisiana, once the capital of Texas, and the scene of a unique cooperation among the French, the Spanish and the Indians, thrives today as an area rich in archaeological finds and as one of Louisiana's most intriguing state commemorative areas.

From Mission To Capital

Los Adaes dates back to the early 1700's when a Franciscan missionary from New Spain (now Mexico), Father Francisco Hidalgo, urged the French Governor of Louisiana to establish a post near East Texas. The missionary's objectives were purely religious, knowing that such an action by the French would alert New Spain and cause the Spanish government to re-establish previously closed Spanish military posts and Franciscan missions. The founding of Natchitoches in 1714 by the Frenchman St. Denis and the subsequent construction of Fort St. Jean Baptiste there had its predictable effect. In 1716 the Spanish established six missions and one fort in east Texas. The eastern-most of the missions, San Miguel, was built among the Adaes Indians, only 15 miles from the French Fort St. Jean Baptiste.

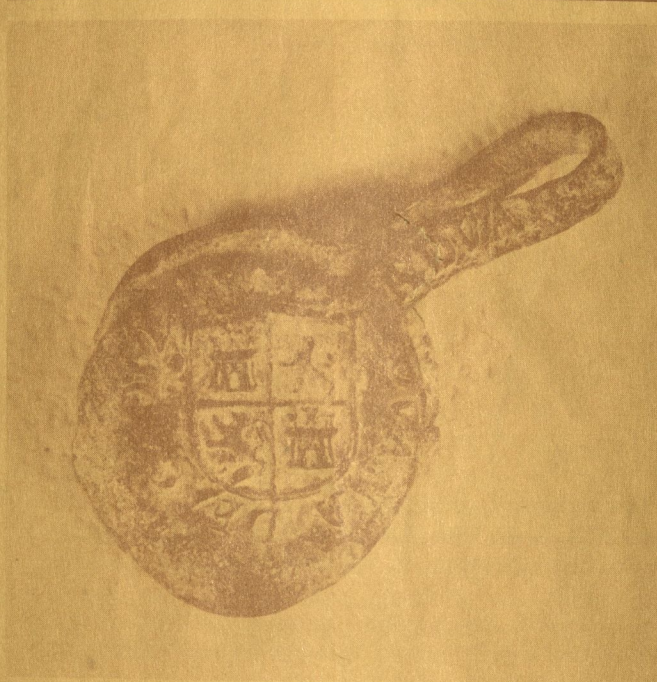
An attack on Mission San Miguel, ordered by Louisiana Governor Bienville during the French/Spanish hostilities in



CLOSE INSPECTION — An archaeological lab is part of the attraction at Los Adaes. Here, archaeologists and historians carefully inspect the tools, weapons and utensils uncovered during annual archaeological digs at Los Adaes.

1719, alarmed the Spanish and they built a new presidio or fort to counter any further French intrusion into Spanish territory. The Presidio Nuestra Senora del Pilar de Los Adaes (fort of Our Lady of Pilar at the Adaes) was surrounded by a hexagonal stockade with three bulwarks. Inside the walls stood a chapel, guard house, barracks, wells, blacksmith shop and powderhouse. Corrals, service buildings, and the dwellings of Indians and the soldiers' families were located outside the palisade.

In 1729 Spain designated Los Adaes the capital of the Province of Texas. This made Los Adaes the official residence of the governor, and a house was constructed for him within the presidio. Los Adaes remained the administrative seat of government for the entire province for the next 44 years.



SHIPPED FROM SPAIN — A symbol of the important trade among the Spanish, Indians, and French, this lead bale seal bears an official emblem. The seal was attached to a bolt of wool or linen shipped from Cadiz, Spain, sometime before 1740.

Frontier Soldier Life

The 100 soldiers stationed at Los Adaes came originally from Mexico and served as cavalymen to defend the San Miguel mission and other missions in east Texas and to escort missionaries and the Governor on their travels throughout the province. As frontier posts were also expected to be self sufficient, the soldiers doubled as farmers and herdsman. Life at Los Adaes was harsh. Poor land and crop failures

meant constant food shortages and rainy weather often spoiled supplies. The nearest Spanish supply post was 800 miles away and that distance, rains, floods, and hostile Indians combined to make chronic shortages of everything. Without the trade of the French at Natchitoches, the inhabitants of Los Adaes would have starved.

A "Spirit" Of Cooperation

Except for the one raid by the French upon Los Adaes, relations between the Spanish and French in the frontier outposts were, as a matter of necessity, friendly. Although Spain strictly prohibited trade with the French, the latter eagerly sought it. The French took advantage of supply shortages at Los Adaes and an illicit trade soon flourished between the two posts. Even the governors at Los Adaes took part. The Indians traded with both sides and this commerce became so important that Natchitoches suffered a recession when Los Adaes closed in 1773.

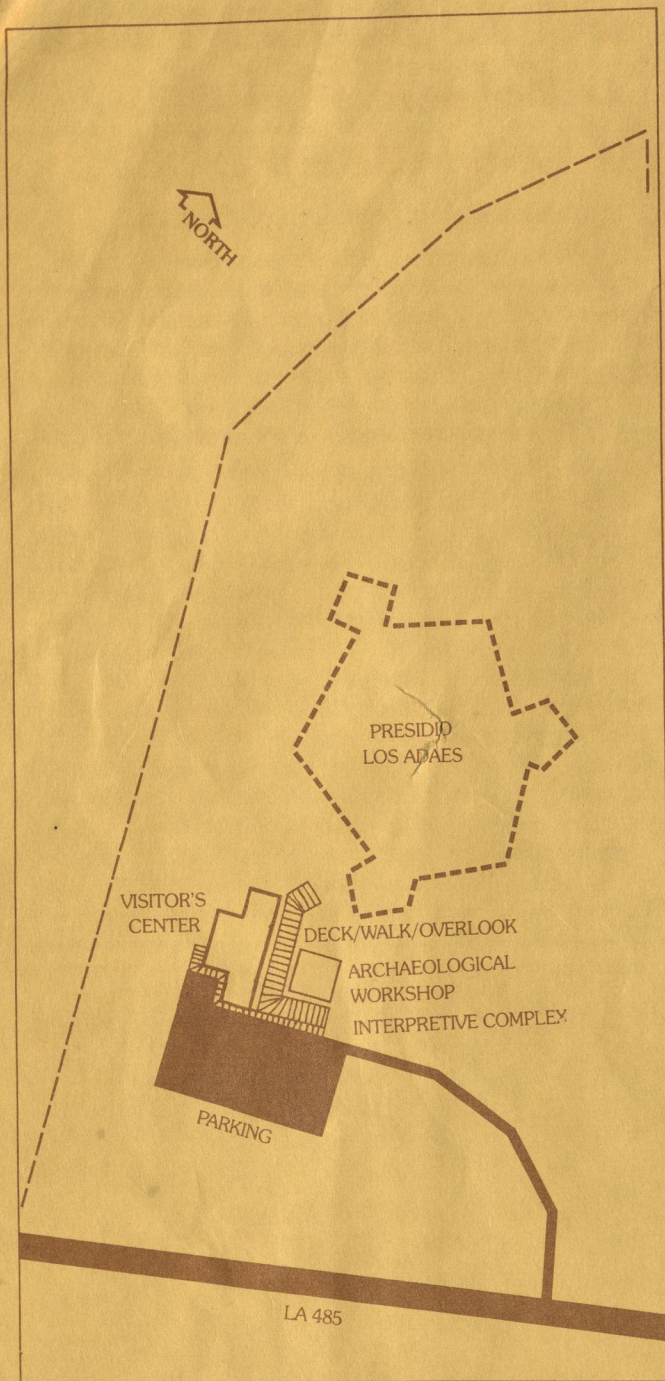
Louisiana was transferred to Spain in 1762, and in the Royal Regulations of 1772, Spain ordered Los Adaes to be closed and the inhabitants moved to San Antonio. Nearly 500 soldiers and family members endured the hardships of this relocation and many soon left San Antonio to found the present city of Nacogdoches, Texas. Others eventually returned to Louisiana where their descendants live today.

In 1978 Los Adaes State Commemorative Area was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, an honorary designation for significant historic sites.

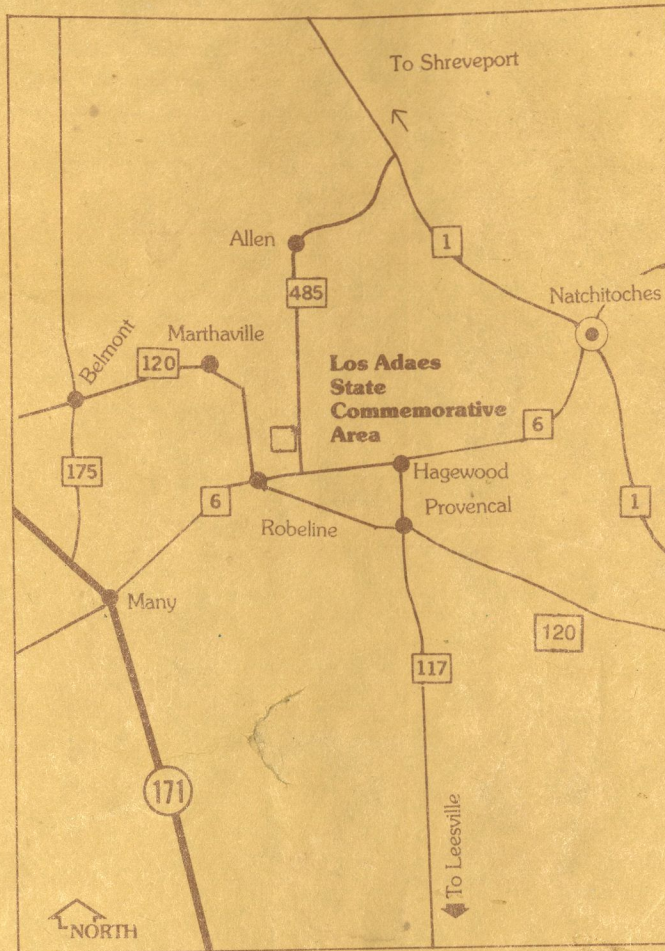
Today, Los Adaes remains as a tribute to and reflection of the unique blend of French, Spanish and Indian influences in Louisiana. A museum, exhibits, historical trail and an archaeological laboratory introduce visitors to a fascinating era of Louisiana history.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL ADVENTURES — Students from nearby Northwestern State University excavate a house outside the presidio at Los Adaes State Commemorative Area.



COVER: This 1722 plan of the presidio shows a hexagonal arrangement of buildings surrounded by a palisade of upright posts. The three bulwarks each held two bronze four-pounder cannons, and a moat ran alongside each section of the palisade. The soldiers built barracks and horse pens, a blacksmith shop, chapel, and other structures inside the walls.



Los Adaes State Commemorative Area (P. O. Box 248, Robeline, LA 71469, 318-472-6582) is located one mile northeast of Robeline, Louisiana, on LA Highway 485, just off LA Highway 6. This 14 acre site is the location of a Spanish fort, garrisoned in the 1700's. Significant archaeological findings have been a tremendous aid in interpreting the fort and its occupants.



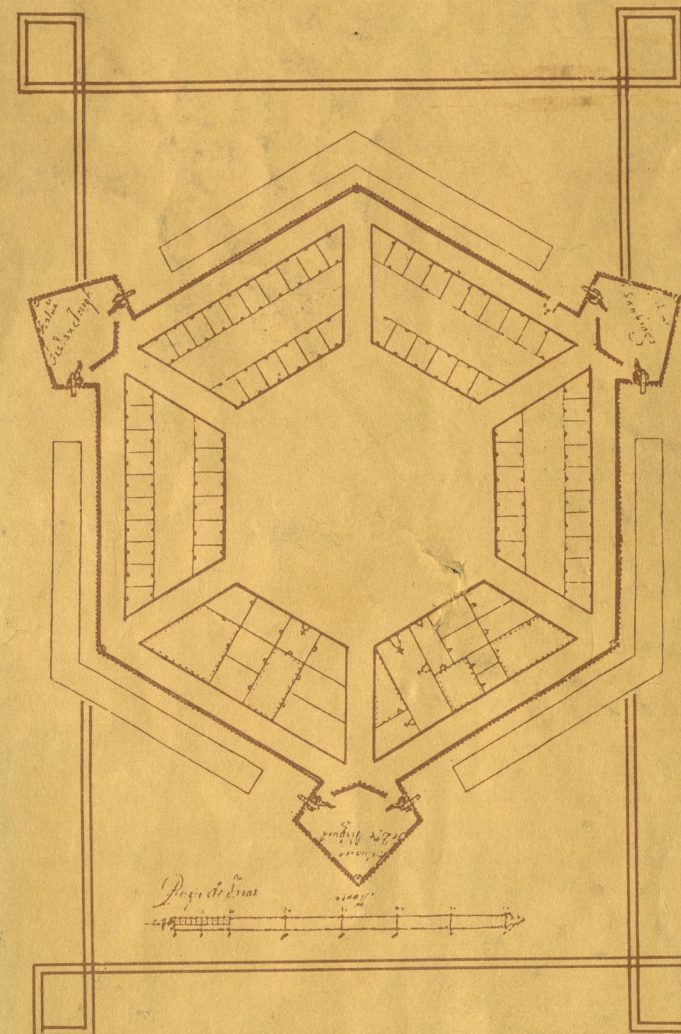
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LOS ADAES

Louisiana State
Commemorative Area