

Emeritus College Presentation, Fall 2011, Lecture Notes

This Side of the Border: The Mexican Revolution through the Lens of American Photographer Otis Aultman

Slide #1 Welcome, Today I'm going to give you a virtual tour of El Paso Public Library's Otis Aultman Photograph Collection that is available through the Portal to Texas History.

Slide #2 Before I begin, some information about The Portal to Texas History. Established in 2002 UNT Libraries has a digital lab where archival materials are scanned to create digital reproductions... wonderful team of developers....

Slide #53 One of the Portal's collections: El Paso Public Library, contacted us about their **Otis Aultman collection** of photographs, some of which have not been viewed since the day they were taken one hundred years ago. El Paso Public Library's **Archivist Marta Estrada** turned to UNT Libraries, they sent the collection, and UNT Libraries digitized and added to Portal.

The collection consists of over 500 glass negative photographs and documents the Mexican Revolution through the eyes of Mr. Aultman, many of which haven't been seen for a century. The story begins ... Otis Aultman, a photographer born in Holden Missouri in 1874 and raised in Trinidad Colorado learned photography from his brother. Married, had 2 children and divorced.

Slide #6 - A year later in 1909 Aultman moved to El Paso –El Paso was the main route between Mexico and the U.S. and its main industry was mining and trade. 1st assignment was photographing historic meeting between president William Howard Taft and President Porfirio Diaz in 1909 in Juarez. First time Mexican and American presidents meet.

Only one year later, Aultman would be in the throes of a revolution, documenting significant battles with his camera.

Slide #6 Mexican Revolution and some background

Mexican Revolution, 1910 - 1920

Slide #7 Porfirio Diaz – dictator 34 years, modernized Mexico, railways, American and European investors 15,000 miles of rail network by 1910. But built on backs of Mexican and Indian peasants, 7 in 10 were farmers but only 2% population owned land.

Slide #10 Francisco Madero –from a prominent family, educated in Europe, business man who took care of employees, believed in democratic system of elections, mobilized country

1910 Madero drafts his treatise in San Antonio Plan of San Luis Potosi, sets up camp Ciudad Juarez became provisional capital of rebels

1913 Madero is assassinated and Huerta took over. Huerta's mother was a Huichol Indian and father a mestizo, but then he's killed because he becomes a dictator. Subsequently, a number of opposing factions continued to struggle for control. Obregon, Zapata, Cardenas, Carranza, Villa were key figures.

Slide #11 **Commanders** during the Revolution

Slide #12“The array of personalities and shifts of power in Mexico is dizzyingly intricate. Yet the individuals and their causes – or lack of them – are well known to every Mexican school child. Madero is the symbol of democracy; Zapata the symbol of peasants’ land rights. Pancho Villa is the fearless leader of the cavalry charge.”

Slide #13 Map

Slide #14 Newsmen (6 slides)

1910 El Paso - gathering place for newsmen, military leaders and soldiers of fortune. Otis Aultman and a number of other photographers in El Paso were commissioned to document the battles taking place. This was an unintended but fruitful training ground before World War I in Europe.

Slide #19 Pancho Villa after Huerta was exiled in 1914, Americans became involved

Slide #23 The Generals are meeting at the international bridge after the overthrow of Mexican President Victoriano Huerta. The general on the right is **John J. Pershing** and the two standing next to him are the **Mexican Generals Francisco Villa** and Alvaro Obregon. There are several officers standing behind the generals. Standing behind Pershing is Lieutenant **George S. Patton**.

Pershing would later lead the **Punitive Expedition in search of Villa**, who was never caught.

Slide #24 W.F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) posing with Colonel Charles Taylor

Slide #25 The Battles near the Border - 1911 Casa Grande, 1911 Siege of Ciudad Juarez, 1913 Ciudad Juarez, Agua Prieta, 1915, Columbus, New Mexico 1916

Slide #24 Photo Analysis of Soldiers

Slide # 32 Women accompanied soldiers

Slide #34 Zapatistas

Slide # 35 Soledera

Slide #36 photo analysis of rebel soldiers

Slide #40 41 photo analysis of refugees

Slide #47 American Soldiers and Yaqui Native Americans

Slide#48 Yaqui Scouts

Slide #40 IN CLOSING – By 1923 Aultman became a commercial photographer, photographing events at the Juarez race track, construction of the Kress building in El Paso buildings designed by famous architect Henry Trost. He visited archeological sites, deserts mountains, his photographs appeared in many issues of the El Paso newspapers. He died in the studio that was also his home in 1943.

Slide #52 - Endnotes