This multi-media resource list, compiled by Shaun Briley of the San Diego Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the upcoming P.O.V. documentary “The Last Conquistador” that premieres July 15, 2008 at 10 PM (check local listings at www.pbs.org/pov/).

Renowned sculptor John Houser has a dream: to build the world’s tallest bronze equestrian statue for the city of El Paso, Texas. He envisions a stunning monument to the Spanish conquistador Juan de Oñate that will pay tribute to the contributions Hispanic people made to building the American West. But as the project nears completion troubles arise. Native Americans are outraged — they remember Oñate as the man who brought genocide to their land and sold their children into slavery. As El Paso divides along lines of race and class in “The Last Conquistador,” the artist must face the moral implications of his work. A co-production of Independent Television Service (ITVS). A co-presentation of Latino Public Broadcasting, Native American Public Telecommunications and KERA Dallas/Fort Worth.

ADULT NONFICTION


Powell, Philip Wayne. Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World. Vallejo, CA: Ross House Books, 1985. An examination of “the Black Legend” – the belief that the Spanish conquistadors were the most brutal of the European colonizers in their conquest of the Americas.


Simmons, Marc. The Last Conquistador, Juan de Oñate and the Settlement of the Far Southwest, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991. The most authoritative work on Oñate.


Perez de Villagra, Gaspar. History of New Mexico. Alcala, 1610. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004. This epic poem was written by one of Oñate’s senior captains during the conquest of New Mexico. Considered one of the New World’s first major works of literature, it includes an account on the revolt and the punishment of Acoma. It also describes the hopes and fears...
of the other Spaniards on the expedition.

Simmons, Marc. New Mexico: An Interpretive History. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977. The cultural mosaic of New Mexico is historically contextualized into a nuanced look at America’s 47th state. Spanning pre-Columbian times up to the modern day, Simmons sets out to arrive at an understanding of the state’s character. His is an interpretive, sensitive, individual—even personal—account. He shows that across the centuries the collision and mingling of cultures dominates New Mexico’s history.

Out of this complex interplay of human and natural forces he selects his examples of Pueblo life ways, Spanish domination, and Anglo control to make immediate and memorable the state’s rich history.

Jaramillo, Nash. The Conquest of New Mexico: Don Juan de Oñate, 1595-1608. N. Jaramillo, 1983. Important resource that describes Oñate’s time as governor of New Mexico. Includes the Acoma Tribe’s 1598 revolt, Oñate’s retaliatory response and his ultimate recall to Mexico City in 1606, where he was called to answer for his actions. Addresses specifically the different strains of collective memory and its impact on present day New Mexico.

McGeagh, Robert. Juan De Oñate’s Colony in the Wilderness: An Early History of the American Southwest. Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 1990. By 1598, Juan de Oñate had established the first permanent settlement in the American Southwest, twenty-two years before the Pilgrims founded Plymouth Colony. The story of this first colony, the explorations, the defeats and successes, the hopes blighted and the hopes fulfilled are told in this concise history of the era.

ADULT FICTION

Encinas, Miguel. Two Lives for Oñate. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997. A fictionalized historical account of the life of Juan de Oñate (1549 to 1624), the founding of Spanish New Mexico, and Oñate’s relationship with his son Cristóbal.


NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS


FILMS/DOCUMENTARIES


“Simon Schama’s Power of Art.” BBC Warner, 2007. (400 minutes). The film is narrated by the author Schama and explores eight artists’ creations using biography and historical context to understand their works.

ARTICLES

Thompson, Ginger. “As A Sculptor Takes Shape In Mexico, Opposition Takes Shape In The U.S.” The New York Times. 17 January 2002. The plans to erect a statue in honor of Don Juan de Oñate were met with opposition from the very beginning. John Houser said he was “thunderstruck” by the protests against the colossal statue of one of New Mexico’s most controversial historical figures. The choice of Oñate was a divisive issue in New Mexico and polarized much of El Paso along largely ethnic lines; Hispanics seeing him as an early figure in what would become a Hispanized region. Many Indian tribes however, view Oñate as a conqueror guilty of genocide, and liken him to a Nazi exterminating Jews. This article chronicles the first stirrings of an angry opposition to Houser’s vision and puts Oñate, once again, in the spotlight.


In an 11-hour effort to reconcile opposing views related to statue of Don Juan de Oñate, the City Council of El Paso acted in posthaste to alter the final impact of what many believed to be the largest equestrian statue in the world and its corresponding controversy. This article highlights the final battles before the completion, placement and official title of the Oñate Statue.