

## **INTRODUCTION—THE WORLD WOULD BE LOST WITHOUT MAPS!**

Ancient cartographers strove to combine art and science to give “graphic illustration” to geography. The exhibition will feature five centuries of different types, subjects, materials and styles of maps. It is interesting to note in how many countries these maps were made.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the initials “G.T.T.” or “Gone To Texas” was the standard farewell given before striking out for Texas. “Going to Texas: Five Centuries of Texas Maps” is on loan from the Museum of the Big Bend at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas. The show takes the beauty of maps and the history that is visually presented by them to all those who want to know more about the discovery, settlement, and development of the great State of Texas.

Surveyors lead a very dangerous life since they worked alone in the open, uninhabited land. The Comanches called their tool the compass “The Thing that Steals the Land. Surveyors were found dead and scalped and it was the introduction of the colt revolver in 1839 that finally gave the surveyor and ranger a chance.

Most surveyors used a compass and a measuring chain to measure the land. They would mark boundaries in trees, rocks and streams or build large mounds of dirt with a marker in them. The instruments, an astrolabe, sextant and a chronometer were used to mark the heavenly bodies to establish longitude and latitude.

The Spanish system of land measure was introduced into the new world. The measurements varied slightly so the King Philip II and Charles IV ordered that their “vara” be 32.9 inches. When France and England started exploring the Americas they used their own measurement systems. The French land grants were made in “arpents” which were slightly different in value than the Vara and the English used the 36 inch yard. As you can imagine this became very confusing! Conversions into the English Standard Field Table was done when England became the dominant colonizer of the United States.

Discussion: What is Cartography? (The art or work of making maps or charts) What are the tools that we use today to measure distances and make maps? (Satellite photographs and lasers.)

Math Question: If you received a land grant from Spain of 300 square varas and later it was converted into 300 square yards, how much land will you gain? (49.44 square yards)

Pre-tour Activity: Using this graph paper make a map of your trip to the Museum today. Scale your map depending on how far you must travel. If you do not have far to go, 3 squares could be one street block, if the Museum is far away you may want to plan to do 1 square is a block. Create symbols for traffic lights, stop signs and types of buildings (grocery, school, factory) and geography (hills, rivers).



