

FOR RELEASE AFTER 11:00 A.M., CST
TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 1968

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
PRESIDIO LA BAHIA, GOLIAD, TEXAS

Friends:

It would take a very hardened, insensitive traveler indeed to drive past La Bahia without a stop!

For it lifts your eyes and your spirit to see this weathered old presidio silhouetted against the sky and to hear the mission bells.

I have been hearing about it from friends like Jane and John Young and Chick Kazen. The restoration here is as thrilling as they said.

To think that five years ago, La Bahia was a rubble of stones, a famous hill, without its crown. It took faith to pick up the stones, and artistry to cast them with all the grandeur that once had been. It took generosity on the part of a lady who loves the history of Texas and knew how to breathe life into the old legends. Mrs. O'Conner, I salute you for your insight and concern, and I salute the historians and architects and craftsmen whose skills and devotion have made every detail of this work such a visible example of excellence.

Children who grow up in Goliad and the towns nearby, grow up learning the tales of La Bahia. They know of the trying and uncertain years when church fathers tried to pacify the Indians. They know of Colonel Fannin and his band who were murdered here -- deaths that became a rallying cry for Texan independence. They know that the Mexican hero and patriot, General Zaragoza, was born on this hill. Now that the mission and presidio have been restored, these tales can come to life.

Not only will children and townspeople nearby be able to visit this place remembered by their grandparents and great-grandparents, but from now on, visitors in increasing numbers will seek the trails to La Bahia. Already

improvement is leading to another, and I am glad you are thinking about an appropriate memorial to General Zaragoza. For this mission -- with its trials and triumphs, and great beauty -- has a stirring allure.

Travel is a major habit in America, and it is one of our foremost businesses. Americans are out on the highways and airways, at all seasons, not only heading for the showy places: Manhattan, Grand Canyon, or San Francisco, but also seeking out-of-the-way places to discover and savor.

La Bahia is such a place!

Visitors from afar will come here, not just to reminisce over old deeds (they can do that in their libraries at home), but because it is a faithful and stirring restoration of the southwest.

Who could resist driving up this hill, for a closer look, or walking through these handsome portals?

It is an honor for me to take part in the ceremonies conferring Registered National Historic Landmark status upon the mission and presidio of La Bahia. There are now over 600 similar landmark plaques, gracing sites of noble memory all over the United States. I hope this number will double and double again in the next few years. America is a young nation, and we are just beginning to realize how much we cherish the events that have shaped our history.

One individual who cares, one community proud of its heritage, can assure that these sites are not wiped off the map -- but become highlights on the map -- the destination of travelers for generations to come -- the mark of character and destination for a town.

I have come here with visitors from afar -- journalists from 13 European nations, as well as many American correspondents, and I know they join me in applauding this historic Goliad!

#