

# WITTE MUSEUM

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## History of San Antonio Parks Featured in New Witte Museum Exhibit

**SAN ANTONIO**—The Witte Museum is proud to present *Breathing Places: History of San Antonio Parks*, on view in the Focus Gallery beginning **January 28, 2006**.

San Antonio, founded by the Spanish in 1718, traces its parks' legacy to the early 1730s when the Spanish government granted public lands to the municipality. Utilizing historical photographs, maps, paintings and original drawings, *Breathing Places* provides an in-depth look at the 280 year legacy and the evolution of San Antonio's parks and recreation system by illustrating the transition of the city's public spaces from Spanish plazas to large, natural areas.

Though San Antonio's parks and plazas were traditional public gathering spaces, municipal funding for park development was virtually non-existent until the 1870s. When the city's economy improved after the Civil War and the railroad system arrived in 1877, businesses and new residential areas began to develop around these "parks," and citizens began petitioning elected officials to clean and improve the public spaces.

In the 1880s the City Council created the Office of Park Commissioner, fulfilling the positions of park commissioner, park inspector and park keeper. By the turn-of-the-century, the City Beautiful movement made citizens more aware of the importance of parks, open spaces and monuments, and San Antonio residents began expressing their desire for more park lands.

San Antonio's park acreage was rapidly growing and by 1952 the Parks and Recreation Department was organized to provide supervised programming. Today, San Antonio's park land inventory includes 193 park sites totaling 15,546 acres.

*Breathing Places: History of San Antonio Parks* is generously supported by the Marcia and Otto Koehler Foundation, San Antonio Conservation Society and Jack Judson, Jr. Free with museum admission. For more information call 210.357.1900 or visit [www.wittemuseum.org](http://www.wittemuseum.org).

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