

Articles with Franciscan Content in *The Americas*, 1944–2023

The year 2024 marks an important double anniversary for the journal *The Americas*. On the one hand, it marks 80 years of publication, with the first issue dated July 1944. On the other, it marks the quincentenary of the arrival of the first Franciscans to North America, when the first group of missionary friars landed in what is now Mexico. The history of the journal is rooted in the Franciscan Order. In April 1944 Franciscan historians from throughout North America met in Washington, DC, and founded the Academy of American Franciscan History. The goal of the Academy, as articulated in the records of that inaugural meeting is to “discover and assemble documents and books of Franciscan interest, to compile a complete bibliographical index of American Franciscana, to edit and publish documents, and to issue original historical works.”¹ The Academy additionally pledged to publish a journal, a quarterly review of inter-American cultural history: *The Americas*.

The first issue of the journal also contained a description of its goals. In recent years, *The Americas* incorporated those goals into its charter. The original statement of purpose noted that the journal “aims to provide a medium of expression for authoritative contributions by outstanding scholars of all the Americas . . . In addition to contributions by authorities of the United States and Canada, there will be presented works by specialists of the various countries of Latin America, whose articles appear in competent English translation.”² The mission of the journal was to showcase cultural history, which it defined as “history, economics, sociology, ethnology, literature, and folk-lore.”³ Today, 80 years later, the mission has changed only slightly:

The mission of *The Americas* is to publish the highest quality research on the history of Latin America. In keeping with the original founding vision of the Academy of American Franciscan History (hereafter referred to as the Academy), the journal strives to make Latin American history accessible to the

1. “Inter-American Notes,” *The Americas*, 1:1 (July 1944), 112.

2. “Inter-American Notes,” *The Americas*, 1:1 (July 1944), 111.

3. *Ibid.*

English-speaking world. Guided by these principles, the journal seeks to publish significant works in English based in whole or in part on archival research.⁴

While the Academy has focused on the publication of works dealing with the Franciscan Order in the New World, the journal has never been exclusively Franciscan in its orientation, and the scope of the research has been very wide-ranging. Nonetheless, as this bibliography will demonstrate, a large proportion of early articles and Research Notes have focused on the Franciscans in the New World. For example, of the eight articles published in the first issue of the journal, half dealt with topics related to the Franciscans, while an additional two focused on the Catholic Church more generally. The first two articles, however, discussed slightly more secular topics. One focused on Spain's contributions to the culture of New Mexico, which also included Franciscan missionaries, although they were not the main focus of the piece. The other concerned the career of André Thevet (*c.* 1516–92), the French royal cosmographer, who happened to be a Franciscan, but was known as an avid collector for the monarch of manuscripts that described early Latin America. As a result, all of the articles had some connection with Christian missionary activity in the Americas, with six that dealt with themes that revolved around Franciscans, and two that were presented as more general studies.

The remainder of the first volume continues in a similar manner. The second issue contains an address made by Howard Mumford Jones, then-dean of Harvard College, on the occasion of the formation of the Academy of American Franciscan History, outlining the need for such a body to encourage the study of the Order. There was one article on Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz, an Augustinian, which explored the beginnings of the study of philosophy in the Americas, while John Tate Lanning considered the development of Spanish colonial culture.

Over time, the journal began to embrace a broader approach to the history of Latin America. The third issue featured a piece of literary analysis focusing on the novel *Sab* by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. This was accompanied by the publication of an order of the Spanish government in Cuba banning the book. While two articles in the issue focused on the Franciscans, specifically on the provinces of North America and the Franciscans in Texas, Robert Barlow wrote a short essay on the term “Aztec,” which is still very valuable today. The fourth issue contained only one article about the Franciscans. Interestingly enough, while the piece focused on the Franciscan missionary college in Ocopa, Peru, it was written by an Augustinian, Rudolph Arbesman.

4. Academy of American Franciscan History, *The Americas*, Mission and Charter (revised March 2023), Paragraph 1.

From its beginnings, the journal has also devoted pages to Research Notes and the publication of previously inedited documents, such as the decree mentioned above that banned the novel *Sab* (see above). The very first issue published letters from the first bishops of Mexico and Oaxaca from 1537. Documents published by the journal have traditionally appeared in their original language, not in translation. The second issue contained a decree from Charles III of Spain regarding the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Americas. In the wake of that action, the monarch then ceded the Jesuit missionary territory in Lower California to the Dominicans and in Upper California to the Franciscans. This decree, however, was issued to the Carmelites in Mexico, informing them that their wish to gain the California mission field was not granted. In the fourth issue, the journal included two letters from John Rosati, CM, dated 1842. Rosati was Apostolic Delegate to Haiti. The letters were sent to Bishop John Hughes, who was Administrator of the Diocese of New York. Looking at this diverse group of documents, in the first volume of the journal there was no clear effort to focus on Franciscan topics, even while the articles did have a notable Franciscan emphasis.

In the first 80 volumes of the journal, there were 124 articles that focused principally on the Franciscan Order or individual Franciscans. Some appeared spread over different issues but are counted only once. For example, Marion Habig, OFM, discussed the Franciscan Provinces of North America and of South America in four different issues (two on the north and two on the south), but nonetheless in this inventory, he is only counted as contributing two articles on the Order. The most prolific contributor to the journal was Maynard Geiger, OFM, who was the author of eight articles from 1944 to 1951. The next most prolific authors include Antonine Tibesar, OFM, long-time editor of the journal, and Alberto María Carreño, a Mexican academic and sometime government official. These two scholars each contributed four articles.

Reviewing journal's early volumes, it is also clear that several of the contributors were themselves brothers in the Franciscan Order. Until the late 1980s, a majority of the members of the editorial board were Franciscans. As the number of vocations to the Order decreased, and the number of friars decreased, members of the editorial board increasingly came from the ranks of the professoriate and were not affiliated with the Order. For the last 30 years, nearly all contributions have come from individuals outside of the Franciscan family.

Over the years, 57 documents or Research Notes have focused on the Franciscan Order. Again, several longer pieces have appeared in different issues but are counted as a single contribution. For example, Maximin Charles Piette, OFM, published the diary of Fray Juan Crespi, OFM, over three different issues

(1946–47). Similarly, Lazaro Lamadrid, OFM, published documents from the province of St. George in Nicaragua in three issues in 1948. Two authors provided five distinct contributions each: Lino Gómez Canedo, OFM, and Maynard Geiger, OFM, a prolific contributor. Most Franciscan documents (all but seven) were published in the 1940s and 1950s. No Franciscan documents have been published in the last quarter-century. The journal still actively published both Research Notes and documents focusing on other aspects of the history of Latin America.

The list of articles, documents, and Research Notes presented here is based on the subjective criteria of the degree to which the piece focuses on Franciscans and the Franciscan Order. Some articles included here might have less Franciscan content than others that are omitted, but the general thrust of the list is that these pieces largely focus on the Franciscans. Regardless of the inclusion or omission of a specific article, the trend from this list is quite clear. In the beginning, the journal included many pieces with a Franciscan focus. That trend continued into the 1960s and 1970s. By the mid-1990s, the nature of the journal had changed to address issues of interest to professional historians of Latin America.

Over many decades now, the journal has welcomed pieces from a wide variety of methodological orientations. Its unique editorial process has proven especially welcoming to new scholars and those intent on launching new areas of research. The editor sends each newly submitted article for consultation with all the members of the editorial board, which includes the assistant and associate editors. The full Board reaches consensus to either reject the submission or send it out to external readers. Upon receipt of the external readers' reports, the editorial board again considers the piece in light of the reports. In this way, an article that is eventually published in the journal will have been considered by upwards of 15 readers, between the editorial board and the external readers. All these comments are shared with the author for the improvement of the piece. Despite this, the journal has a relatively quick process. It is possible to have a submission approved within 6 months, and potentially in print within 18 months, of submission.

Since its beginnings as a journal established by the Franciscans and with an editorial board made up largely of Franciscans, *The Americas* has become one of the leading journals of Latin American history. While we are faithful to the vision of the founding friars, the journal has moved well beyond its early scope and now covers all aspects of Latin American history, focusing on quality work, drawn from primary sources, preferably archival ones.

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