

Duck Diplomacy: How Walt Disney Saved FDR's Good Neighbor Policy

Senior Division

Individual Exhibit

Exhibit: 498 Words

Process Paper: 488 Words

When I first went to Walt Disney World, I was thrilled by the attractions and entertainment but never realized there was more to the Disney company than movies and theme parks. As I matured, I found out more about the inner workings of the company. I also discovered some of their more obscure characters. As a kid, I really liked Jose and Panchito (characters featured in my project that originated as a result of the Goodwill Tour). Through personal research, I found out about the Goodwill Tour. The Goodwill Tour is pure diplomacy. Walt Disney accepted the role of diplomat from a new government agency, the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. Walt Disney employed a unique type of diplomacy in South America where he would interact with locals instead of just nodding and waving. While this was wildly effective, there was also a great deal of debate among the local people whether Disney coming to their country was a good thing, as strong nationalist feelings emerged across South America. Some people viewed the Disney corporation as a corporate capitalistic force trying to spread influence for economic gain.

I started my research by learning about the tour and watched a documentary tracing its steps from beginning to end. After that, I read *South of the Border with Disney* and completed a precis for class. Next, I looked at the historical context to see how WWII factored into the story I was trying to tell in my project. At this stage, I realized I had to go back to U.S. foreign relations before 1930 to see what FDR wanted to correct with the Good Neighbor Policy. Finally, I settled on the idea of Walt Disney's role in getting a foothold in South America as the main subject of the project. Some of the best primary sources were the papers and contracts created by the OCIAA and the Disney Corporation. I also found sources showing varying South American perspectives.

Next, I created an outline, then made a rough version of the exhibit. Finally I created the final version of the project. I chose the exhibit because Disney makes mainly visual media so I figured that would be best.

After analyzing the research, I determined that Walt Disney contributed to the Good Neighbor Policy's success and helped the U.S. gain a foothold in South America. Before Disney arrived in South America, Nazis were creeping into South America, taking crucial territory from the U.S. . When Disney arrived, all attention was focused on him and the Nazis were shoved out of the limelight. The effects of the tour are still felt today as Brazil, Argentina and Chile are still very fond of Disney and America is in good standing with South America. The Goodwill Tour taught the world that debate and diplomacy could be an artistic and personal affair instead of the stuffy boardrooms and suits of the past.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

"Correspondence, 1941 May 1-14." Letter to Will H. Hayes, 7 May 1941. *Indian State Library Digital Collections*, indianamemory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16066coll64/id/95358/. Accessed 13 Feb. 2022.

President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) (1922-1945) Will H. Hays was sent two reviews detailing how *Argentine Nights* was such a poor depiction of Argentina, riots resulted. The press blamed the Nazis for instigating the riots.

"Good Neighbor Policy 1933." *Office of the Historian*, United States Department of State, history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/good-neighbor#:~:text=In%20his%20inaugural%20address%20on,respects%20the%20rights%20of%20others.%E2%80%9D. Accessed 7 Feb. 2022.

I used this source for general knowledge on the Good Neighbor Policy as well as for a picture of FDR. This valuable source comes directly from the Office of the Historian of the U.S. Department of State, which writes the official history of U.S. foreign affairs.

"Has the Good Neighbor Policy Paid Dividends?" *American Historical Association*. *American Historical Association*, www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/gi-roundtable-series/pamphlets/em-14-is-the-good-neighbor-policy-a-success-(1945)/has-the-good-neighbor-policy-paid-dividends. Accessed 27 Feb. 2022. Originally published as "United Front of the Americas" in *Em 14*.

I used this article to prove the lasting impact of the Good Neighbor Policy. It was written in 1945 and reflects the immediate analysis of the success of the Good Neighbor Program.

Hulton Archive. "Monroe Doctrine." *Getty Images*, 1903, www.gettyimages.co.nz/detail/news-photo/caricature-of-england-usa-and-germany-and-the-venezuelan-news-photo/3305761. Accessed 13 Feb. 2022. Cartoon.

I used this cartoon to show that the U.S. was interested in dominating South America as its guardian. The Monroe Doctrine had been the policy in this area for a hundred years.

IMDB. www.imdb.com/title/tt0036256/.

This film review site was used for a poster of the short *Pedro*, as well as other Disney movies depicting South America. These movies are products of the

Goodwill Tour and the long-term relationship between the United States and South America.

"Map of the Week: Hitler's Map of South America." *Mappenstance*, 12 Nov. 2014, blog.richmond.edu/livesofmaps/2014/11/12/map-of-the-week-hitlers-map-of-south-america/. Accessed 25 Feb. 2022.

I used this website for an image of a map created by Hitler to show places in South America he wanted to take. I used this to establish context for the risks involved after World War Two began, but before the United States became involved.

Monroe, James. "Message of President James Monroe at the commencement of the first session of the 18th Congress (The Monroe Doctrine)." 2 Dec. 1823. *www.ourdocuments.gov*, The National Archives and Records Administration, 1995, www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=23. Accessed 6 Feb. 2022. Speech.

This source was used to showcase what worked prior to the Goodwill Tour. The document reveals the U.S. wanted to be South America's guardian and that they did not trust South America to make their own decisions.

"Project Authorization." 16 June 1941. *The Online Collection and Catalog of Rockefeller Archive Center*, DIMES.ROCKARCH.ORG. Accessed 5 Jan. 2022.

This site contains the papers of the director of the Office of Inter-American Affairs, Nelson Rockefeller. It contains the correspondence between his office and the Disney corporation. The contract for Disney's work explains the stated objectives for the Goodwill Tour. Other papers describe the success of various projects coming out of the tour.

Roosevelt, Franklin. "Address of the President at Chautauqua, N.Y." 14 Aug. 1936. *Gilder Lehrman*, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2014, www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/04599_FPS.pdf. Accessed 1 Dec. 2021. Speech.

This source is a prime example of Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy crucial to understanding the subject of my project. It helped me understand how the president wanted to approach foreign affairs in South America. I used the speech as a starting point to define the Good Neighbor Policy. I also used it to analyze the president's tone and rhetoric.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. "First Inaugural Address." 4 Mar. 1933. *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008, avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/froos1.asp. Accessed 7 Feb. 2022. Speech.

This is the exact text of Roosevelt's inaugural address and it is a primary source. This shows his willingness to change foreign policy. I used this source for excerpts of text in my project.

Rosa, Don, et al. *Uncle \$crooge and Donald Duck: The Three Caballeros Ride Again!* Seattle, Fantagraphics Books, 2018.

This book is a primary source of comics published by Disney as a way to promote goodwill between the U.S. and Mexico. This book was published in the 1990s, but the characters were created in the 1940s. I analyzed the reception of these classic characters as a tool of modern diplomacy. It was important to examine how Mexico is portrayed in these comics.

"Virtual Library of Inter-American Peace Initiatives." *OAS Peace Fund*, Organization of American States, 2009, www.oas.org/sap/peacefund/VirtualLibrary/virtualLibrary.html. Accessed 6 Feb. 2022.

This site supplied the image of the Pan-American Conference. It was used to illustrate a contrast between diplomats being very formal and Walt Disney talking to and engaging with the people of South America.

Secondary Sources

Amidi, Amid. "The Disney Artists' Strike of 1941 Changed Animation Forever — And For The Better." *Cartoon Brew*, 29 May 2016, www.cartoonbrew.com/artist-rights/day-75-years-ago-disney-animation-changed-forever-140103.htm. Accessed 8 Feb. 2022.

This source contains information about the 1941 artist's strike at Walt Disney Studios. I analyzed pictures of the strike as it was a very important event that influenced Walt Disney's decision to go to South America.

Bishop, John. "Walt Disney in WWII." *Blog Mickey*, 25 Nov. 2020, mickeyblog.com/2020/11/25/the-walt-disney-studios-and-world-war-ii/.

I used this source for an image to demonstrate Walt Disney Studios' involvement in WWII.

Dorfman, Ariel, et al. *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*. London, Pluto Press, 2019.

This book sparked controversy after it was first published in Chile and reflects how capitalist ideology was present in Disney comics. This book was first published in 1971 and many copies were destroyed by the Chilean army and impounded on the way to the US. It was republished in 2020. This book can be used as an example of South America's response to American imperialist

ideology. The book also helped me analyze other primary sources such as cartoons and movies by learning what symbols to look for. This book helped me understand the relationship between developed countries and undeveloped countries during the period of study.

Green, David. *The Containment of Latin America: A History of the Myths and Realities of the Good Neighbor Policy*. Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1971.

This source details Roosevelt's foreign affairs legacy. Specifically, the source covered the Good Neighbor Policy, as well as Roosevelt's success and what the following president had to do after Roosevelt died. This helped me examine the long-term successes and failures of the Good Neighbor Policy.

Hirsch, Paul S. *Pulp Empire: The Secret History of Comic Book Imperialism*. Chicago, U of Chicago P, 2021.

This book shows how American imperialism is incorporated into many comic books. The author explains how people may be influenced by subtle themes and this helped my understanding of propaganda in popular media. I can use the contents of this book to provide context for all my other sources to show how the U.S. government involved themselves with the comic book industry.

IMBD. Amazon, www.imbd.com. Accessed 13 Feb. 2022.

I used this site for movie posters. This website also has reliable reviews.

Kaufman, J. B. *South of the Border with Disney: Walt Disney and the Good Neighbor Program, 1941-1948*. New York City, Disney Editions, 2009.

This book helped me understand the production of the films *Saludos Amigos* and *The Three Caballeros* which were produced to help promote The Good Neighbor Policy in South America. This book focuses on my topic directly and is written by a film historian. The book also contains lots of images I used in my exhibit.

Kothenschulte, Daniel, et al. *The Walt Disney Film Archives: The Animated Movies 1921-1968*. Köln, Taschen, 2020.

This book was used as a reference for previous movies and how they compare to the movies represented in my project. This book helped me understand Disney's film making technique. This book also shows the company's creative process.

Linn, Sarah. "'How to Read El Pato Pascual': Latin America's Dialogue with Disney." *KCET*, Public Media Group of Southern California, 25 Sept. 2017, www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/how-to-read-el-pato-pascual-latin-americas-dialogue-with-disney. Accessed 3 Jan. 2022.

This article previewed an upcoming art exhibit featuring 150 works by 48 Latino artists, "How to Read El Pato Pascual" opened Sept. 11 and ran through Jan. 4, 2018, at the MAK Center for Art and Architecture at the Schindler House and the Luckman Fine Arts Complex at CSU Los Angeles. I used this article to learn how some people feel about Disney's involvement in Latin America. It's important because the response comes through art and represents multiple perspectives. The images are very powerful and convey strong messages. I included three images of the works in my exhibit.

McConahay, Mary Jo. *The Tango War: The Struggle for the Hearts, Minds and Riches of Latin America during World War II*. New York City, St. Martin's Press, 2018.

This book helped me understand the struggle to win over South America for resources during WWII and the efforts both sides took to do so. I used this book to set the stakes during the period and show the context for my topic. This source helped me understand why the United States was so desperate to win over Latin America.

Miller, Andrew C. "Saludos Amigos and the Three Caballeros." *Le Cinema Paradiso*, 26 Feb. 2019, lecinemaparadiso.co.uk/review/saludos-amigos-and-the-three-caballeros. Accessed 13 Feb. 2022.

I used this movie review for an image of Walt Disney and various characters he created.

Ratzlaf, Adam. "Donald Duck Diplomacy." *The Geopolitics*, 21 Dec. 2019, thegeopolitics.com/donald-duck-diplomacy/.

I used this source to highlight the successes and failures of Walt Disney in South America.

Spiegel, Josh. "Revisiting 'The Three Caballeros', One of The Strangest Films Classic Disney Animation Ever Produced." *Film Slash*, Static Media, 26 Dec. 2019, www.slashfilm.com/571213/revisiting-the-three-caballeros-one-of-the-strangest-films-classic-disney-animation-ever-produced/. Accessed 29 Nov. 2021.

This source is an overview of the movie *The Three Caballeros* as well as a review and summary of the history of the movie. This source shows domestic audience reception in the past as well as current times. It helped me understand the audience's reception to the movie. I used the blog to contrast with South American views of the movie.

"U.S. Mexico Relations." *US Mexico Relations*, www.cfr.org/timeline/us-mexico-relations. Accessed 22 Nov. 2021.

This source is an illustrated timeline of foreign relations between The U.S. and Mexico from 1810 to 2010. I used it to get a sense of the full scope of how America tried to win over Mexico for resources and to stop the Nazis from gaining a foothold near the US. This source helped me understand the feelings Mexico had toward America and their attempts at imperialism and at other times, friendship.

"Map of South America" Vector Stock.

www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/political-map-of-south-america-vector-20473674. Accessed 26 Feb. 2022.

I used this source for a political map of South America.

Walt and El Grupo. Directed by Theodore Thomas, Disney, 2008.

This movie was used for getting a general understanding of the subject as well as first party accounts of events that occurred on the trip. This documentary shaped the direction of my project to focus more on the politics surrounding the Goodwill Tour.

Winters, Jordan M. *Send in the Mouse: How American Politicians Used Walt Disney Productions to Safeguard the American Home Front in WWII*. 2014. U of Washington Tacoma, MA thesis. *UW Tacoma Digital Commons*, U of Washington Tacoma, digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=history_theses. Accessed 23 Jan. 2022.

This paper helped me identify some of the outcomes of Walt Disney's trip to South America. I also used the bibliography to find additional sources.

Full Exhibit



Left Top Panel Photo



The Monroe Doctrine, 1823

...It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference...

("Monroe Doctrine circa 1903: A caricature of England, USA and Germany and the Venezuelan Blockade." Original Publication: La Silhouette - pub. 1903 (Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images)

("The First International Conference, held in Washington DC, from October 2nd 1889 - April 19th 1890" The Virtual Library of Inter-American Peace Initiatives)

("The Monroe Doctrine" Transcription courtesy of [the Avalon Project](https://avalonproject.org/) at Yale Law School.)

Left Top Panel Text

Duck Diplomacy

How Walt Disney Saved FDR's Good Neighbor Policy

Thesis: The diplomatic tactic of sending Walt Disney to South America contributed to the success of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and secured crucial allies on the cusp of WWII.

DIPLOMACY IN SOUTH AMERICA BEFORE 1930

What worked? The United States took the role of South America's guardian.

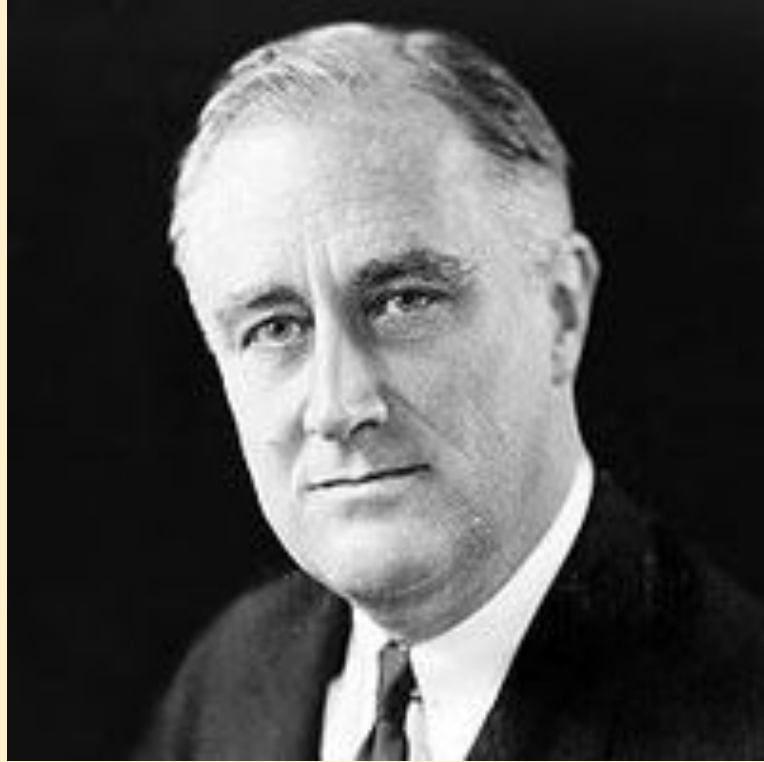
- Monroe Doctrine (1823)
- Pan-American Conference, Washington, D.C. (1889)

What failed? Policies result in increased U.S. military presence and growing anti-imperialist sentiment.

- Big Stick Diplomacy -The Roosevelt Corollary (1904)
- Taft's Dollar Diplomacy (1909)

Left Center Panel Photo

“...In the field of world policy I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor - The neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others- the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in an with a world of neighbors...”



(Roosevelt's Inaugural Address, Office of the Historian, 1933)
(Franklin D. Roosevelt, Office of the Historian)

Left Center Panel Text

FDR's Good Neighbor Policy

Roosevelt announced in his 1933 Inaugural Address the U.S. would employ a more friendly foreign policy focused on cooperation and trade without military intervention.

A new government agency, The OCIAA, led by Nelson Rockefeller, focused on gaining allies in Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

Left Bottom Panel Photo



Riots broke out after the premier. Argentinians opposed the inaccurate depictions. Early Good Neighbor attempts failed.

(Hitler's Map of South America, Map of the Week, date unknown)

(Argentine Nights Movie Advertisement, IMDB, 1940)

(Press Summary, Correspondence, 1941 May 1-14. Will H. Hays, Indiana State Library)

May 13 1941

PRESS SUMMARY

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SPECIFIC CRITICISM

"Argentine Nights"

Miami Fla Herald May 7 1941 Ed

A riot greeted the first showing in Buenos Aires of the United States movie, "Argentine Nights."

The Argentinians did not like Hollywood's interpretation of what goes on down Argentine way.

Who can blame them? The movie moguls have a lot to learn about portraying life and manners of our neighbors. Because the American people stand for pictures of the worst side of our national life -- from gangsters to hillbilly degenerates -- is no basis for belief that another country will accept with complaisance a foreign-made film which makes its citizens look ridiculous in their own eyes.

While it is conceivable that Nazi groups helped along the rioting in Buenos Aires, the fact remains that the picture of Argentine life was far from a pleasing treatment...

By the same token, films depicting the American way of living would explain us better to Latin America if we stopped exporting the sort of productions which depict us as a lecherous, dishonest, grafting, murderous people.

Hollywood Attacks Neighbors

Louisville Ky Times May 5 1941 Ed

Hollywood, which has never told the truth, or liked it; which is devoted to artificiality, superficiality and promotion of folly and could not be expected to reveal horse sense at such a time as this, joins our oratorical columnists and other public speakers in promoting dislike of U.S.A. in Latin America.

If, as Buenos Aires holds, the movie "Argentine Nights" deserves a riot rather than patronage, the fact is not surprising.

If it is found that Hollywood expected that and counted upon the value of such publicity to swell receipts from the film in the United States, that will not be surprising.

"La Nacion" is a competently edited newspaper. Its movie editor says Hollywood depicts Argentina as a ridiculous tropical country, and that no amount of good-willing by travelers will bring about Pan-American understanding while such performances by North Americans occur. That seems reasonable...

Left Bottom Panel Text

Historical Context

Revolutionary nationalism resulted from the instability of the Great Depression. Nazis saw this power vacuum in South America as an opportunity. FDR knew he had limited time to gain a foothold before the Nazis.

Center Top Panel Photo



("Walt Disney wearing Gaucho clothes" NPR" 1941)

("Walt Disney on the Beach" Walt Disney Family Museum, 1941)

("Walt Disney learning local dances" The Walt Disney Family Museum, 1941)

("Walt Disney in local dress" Walt Disney Family Museum, 1941)

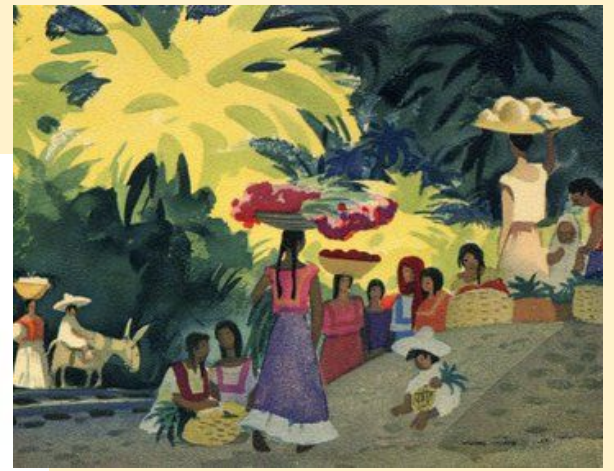
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Goodwill Tour

DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGE

Disney traveled with a group of artists to observe the culture. They engaged the local people and studied locations for upcoming movies.

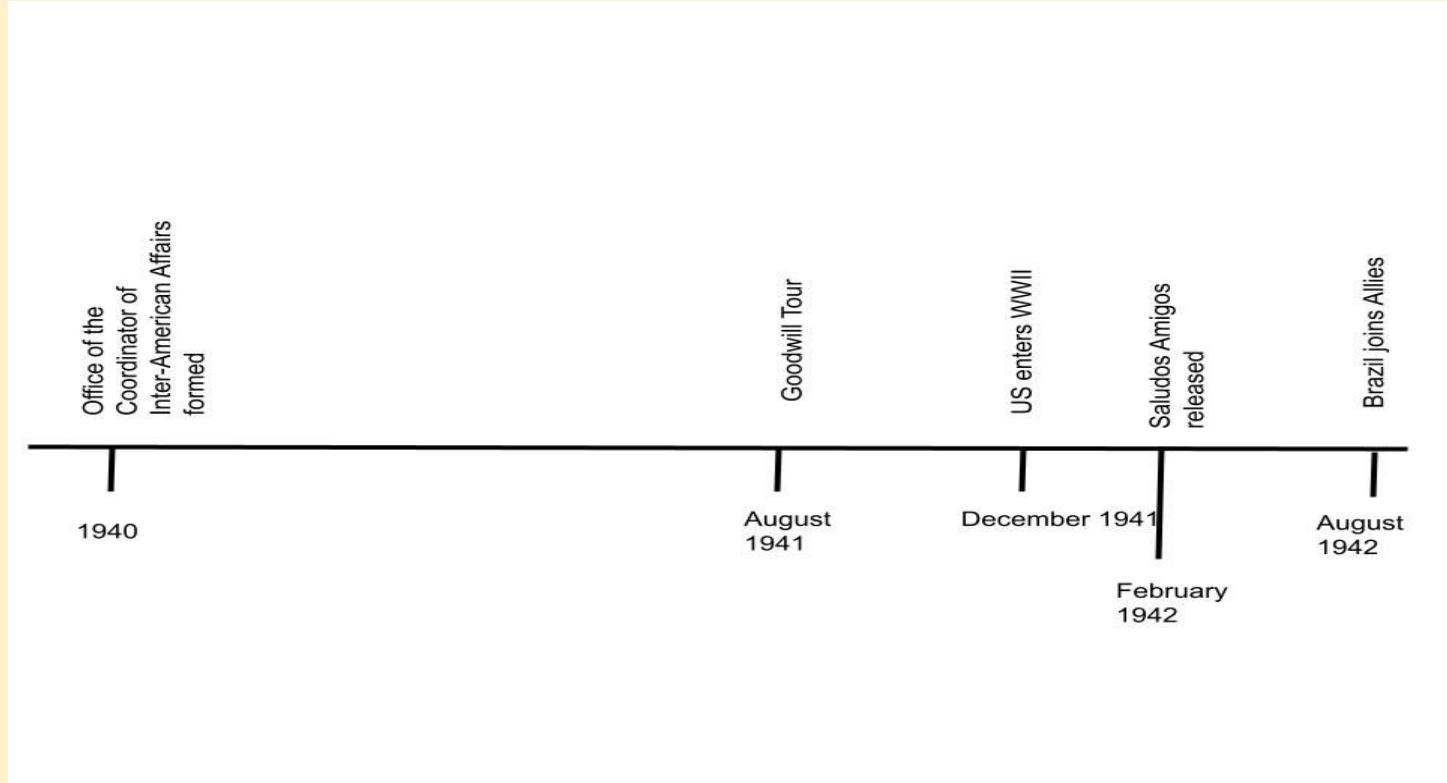
Center Center Panel Photo



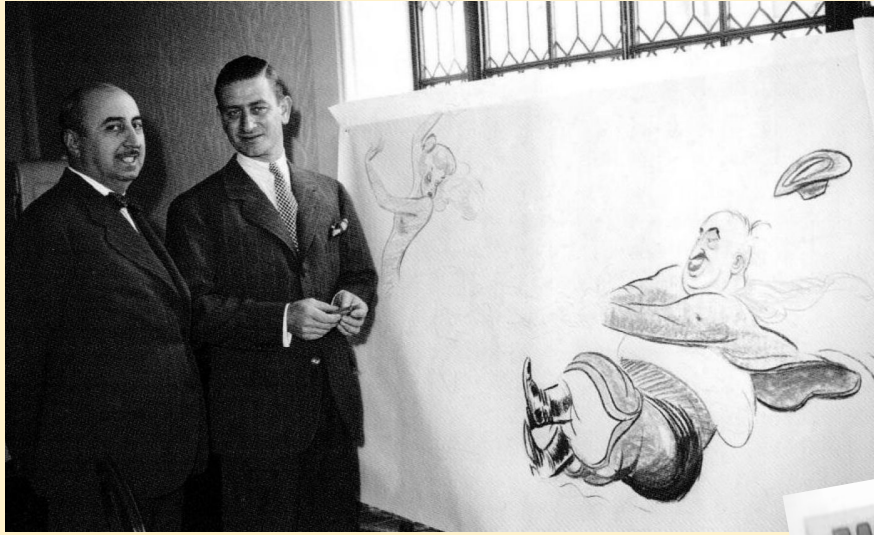
(Mary Blair, artist, The Walt Disney Family Museum- all three images, 1941)

(South America, Vector Stock)

Center Center Panel Text

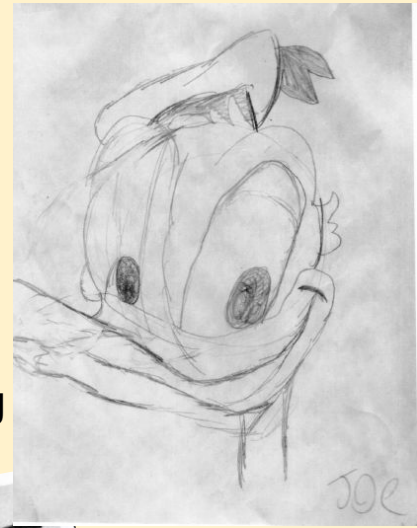


Center Bottom Panel Photo



Argentina

Ramon Columba (left) welcomed the tour. The Dibujante were cartoonists closely connected to leading Argentine statesmen.



German ambassador expelled

("Ramon Columbo, Visiting the Alvear Palace studio" Kaufman, 1941)

("Welcome Walt" Headline from *Montevideo Illustrador*" Kaufman), 1941

("Donald Duck" Joe Cook, 2022)

Center Bottom Panel Text

“PROJECT AUTHORIZATION...

These cartoons will be developed in part around some of the already known Disney characters, but will include primarily, material, backgrounds, characters and themes directly related and of interest to the American Republics. The project is divided into two parts:

- (1) A survey trip in South America for the purpose of obtaining and bringing to the United States Latin American artists, musicians, technicians, and background material based upon local folk-lore characters and themes, and exploring the possibility of establishing a branch organization in one of the other American Republics:*
- (2) The production in South America and the United States of a series of twelve one-reel cartoons in color with soundtrack based upon the material acquired and developed as a result of such field survey, and utilizing to the current extent possible and practicable the services of artists, musicians and technicians from other American Republics...*

(“Contract between Walt Disney Corporation and OCIAA”, The Nelson Rockefeller Papers)

Right Top Panel Photo



("Various posters for *Saludos Amigos*" Good Wolf Media, 1942)

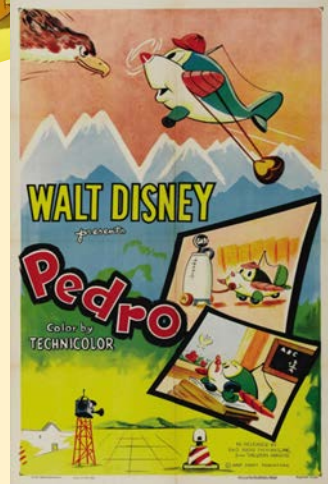
("Brazil Short Movie Poster" IMBD, 1942)

("A screen shot from *The Three Caballeros*" TVTropes, 1944)

("Movie poster, *Pedro*," IMBD, 1942)



The beautiful depiction of Rio de Janeiro made *Brazil* a box office success on two continents.



Pedro was an enjoyable cartoon. Chileans were disappointed by its lack of depth and limited use of Chile as a backdrop.

Right Top Panel Text

Disney Studios produced shorts and movies highlighting South America.

Short-Term Outcomes

Successes

- The films were well received in South America, especially Brazil, and boosted American influence.
- They succeeded in preventing Nazi spread of power
- Disney used Donald in wartime propaganda cartoons/shorts.

Failures

- Many people in Chile and Argentina were unhappy with their representation in the films. They thought their characters were caricatures used in the background for gags.

Right Center Panel Photo

United Front of the Americas

All of our Latin-American neighbors have mobilized their resources to defend the continent against Axis aggression. All declared war or broke diplomatic relations with the Axis powers. Axis propaganda agencies were banned and military cooperation was extended practically whenever and wherever requested by the United States. This collaboration included permitting considerable bodies of United States armed forces to be established on Latin-American soil for the protection of the hemisphere.

Communications were completely broken off with the Axis countries. Economic programs were developed in Latin America to increase the production of strategic materials for the United States and other United Nations and to cooperate in economic warfare against Axis commercial and financial interests. In a variety of ways, all Latin-American nations have made positive contributions to the winning of the war...

(“Is the Good Neighbor Policy a Success?” **Lewis Hanke** Director, Hispanic Foundation, Library of Congress
(Published March 1945)

Right Center Panel Text

Long-term impact

- The relationship between Latin America and Disney remains strong.
- Disney Incorporated more culture into future movies.
- The Good Neighbor Policy died with FDR and Nazis moved to Argentina following the war.
- Some still view Disney as capitalistic imperialists.



“Encanto Movie Poster,” IMDB

Right Bottom Panel Photo



A 2018 art show revealed opposition to Disney's influence.



("The Governor's Nightmare" by Enrique Chagoya is featured in the group exhibition "How to Read El Pato Pascual: Disney's Latin America and Latin America's Disney," | Enrique Chagoya)

("Donald Duck" by Sergio Allevato (Courtesy of Collection Gilberto Chateaubriand MAM RJ)

("FIn" by Jaime "Flan" Muñoz is featured in the show "How to Read El Pato Pascual: Disney's Latin America and Latin America's Disney" at the MAK Center for Art & Architecture at the Schindler House in Los Angeles. | Courtesy of Elliot Sabag / © Jamie Muñoz)

("Saludos Amigos and The Three Caballeros" Cinema Paradiso)



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Conclusion

Walt Disney spread goodwill to South America in support of the struggling Good Neighbor Policy. His success slowed the spread of Nazi power. Disney did not just shake hands, he learned the culture and talked to everyday citizens, not just people in suits and black ties. The tour was significant because beyond securing resources and allies he made a real connection with the people and redefined diplomacy.