

## COLONIZATION PERIOD INTERESTING ON FRONTIER

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*By Miss Retta Murphy, Professor of History, San Marcos Teachers' College, San Marcos, Texas*

Eighty-eight years ago Texas entered the American Union, having been during three centuries a theater of plans and deeds of our other nations, Hapsburg Spain, Bourbon France, Bourbon Spain, the Republic of Mexico and the Republic of Texas were in turn the sovereignties claiming authority over that mighty expanse.

Pioneers strove and wrought there under each of these governments and at last in each case knew that their flag had yielded place to another. The knowledge of that story in its richness of hopes and heroism, visions and villainies, aspirations and achievements, is now an American heritage.

The first European eyes to see Texas were Spanish, from a ship off the coast, early in the Sixteenth century. A few Spanish explorers entered the region from the east, but more came from the west. Slowly, through two centuries they traveled between the Rio Grande and the Arkansas, seeking gold and expanding New Spain. The names of these adventurers are imperishably associated with the mountains, rivers, and plains.

While Spaniards were leisurely investigating the country above the Rio Grande late in the Seventeenth century, trespassers arrived on the coast. These were the French, attempting under the luckless LaSalle to make the Mississippi Valley French, and accidentally beginning their work too far west. The destruction of this forlorn group occurred faster from natural causes than the Spanish were able to inflict it, they being delayed while searching for their rivals.

Assuring themselves that this French menace no longer existed, Spanish soldiers and missionaries proceeded, under vice-regal orders from Mexico City, to traversing the country again. A short distance west of the Sabine River they built the first Spanish fort and missions in the land of the Tejas Indians, in order to Christianize the Indians, keep the French from extending Louisiana westward, and organize a new Spanish province. Its governor, Teran, was officially instructed to call it Nuevas Filipinas; but the Spanish usually called it the Tejas country, and Texas it has remained.

Reassured by this establishment, the Spanish relaxed their vigilance, and later ventured to abandon their settlements. But not for long. French commercialists in Louisiana had only to look westward and make one westward investigation to arouse the Spanish into new efforts. Within the first quarter of the eighteenth century new Spanish forts and missions appeared in East Texas, and others at San Antonio and on the coast, where the earlier French aggression had occurred.

This time the French menace did not disappear promptly. For another generation French Louisiana threatened Spanish Texas from the east, while the Apaches tormented it in the west. The harassed Spanish were compelled to move some of their settlements and build several new ones, in the double effort to Christianize the Apaches and paralyze the French.

Reassurance came again to the Spaniards in 1762, when France, involved in disastrous European policies, ceded Louisiana to Spain, ending the Spanish necessity for curbing that province. The lack of this necessity, together with misfortunes elsewhere, caused the Spanish, a generation later, to abandon their work and nearly all of their settlements in Texas.

By the end of that century Spain had only such villages as San Antonio and Nacogdoches, a few secularized missions, and a road across the almost vacant province to show for, a whole century of colonization. Nevertheless, Texas retains indelible marks of that Spanish century.

But the Spaniards soon had to worry again about Texas. They yielded Louisiana back to France, and the enterprising United States soon bought it, becoming a more dangerous neighbor to Spanish Texas than the French had ever been, and even claiming Texas as a part of Louisiana. To Spanish dislike of Americans were now added suspicion and fear.

Soon there was border friction again between Texas and Louisiana. Confronted with American filibustering expeditions into Texas, American interventions in the Spanish Florida's and Spanish-American revolutions, Spain found some consolation in a treaty of 1819 with the United States, by which Spain retained exclusive title to Texas. The consolation was short-lived. Within three years after saving Texas from the United States, Spain lost the province to Mexico, which had won independence by revolution from Spain.

Regardless of whether Spain or Mexico owned Texas, immigrants already were entering the country, mostly from the United States. Some came to acquire good land at less cost than was possible in the United States because of financial troubles and agrarian policies prevailing there. Some came to promote American westward expansion. Many came to secure in Texas the economic independence that they either had lost or never won in

the United States. Others came for sheer adventure, or else to escape said memories and social or legal embarrassments in the homeland.

During the 15 years of Mexican ownership of Texas this flow of immigration never ceased. Mexico permitted it, most of the time, on attractive terms. Promoters, called empresarios, directed a great deal of it. Their names live today on the map of Texas. The most famous of these empresarios was Stephen F. Austin, who was in some respects the greatest colonizer in the history of the American continent. The migration of thousands of Americans to Texas a century ago was truly a magnificent part of the national westward movement. These pioneers were, in general, good material for the development of a country which, though old in nominal ownerships, was almost new in real use.

But it was a foreign country. The new-comers must become citizens of the Republic of Mexico and members of its state church. Their land titles and the formalities obtaining them were registered in Mexican records. At times the Mexican government prohibited further immigration into Texas from the United States, and consistently forbade the introduction of any religious organizations other than the Catholic Church. Mexican tariffs, varying from time to time, measured the legal importation of goods.

It must be admitted that some illegal entries of American citizens, churches, and commodities continued throughout these prohibitions. Considerable friction and dislike developed between Mexico and her new citizens. On the whole, however, colonial life in Texas had, along with its physical hardship and governmental unpleasantness, about as much of economic satisfaction, social amenities and individual pleasures as pioneers in any new country could expect.

Both in comforts and in ownerships most Texans were in better condition by the close of the colonial period than they had been as American citizens.

Separation of Texas from Mexico was nevertheless inevitable. The American nationalism of the Texans, the inability of Mexico to satisfy them, and the differences in social, economic and political standards made Mexico and her immigrant citizenry unable truly to unite. Local disturbances grew into regional discontent and events usually into provincial resentment felt somewhat by the spirit of the Jacksonian democracy then ruling the United States. The opposite spirit prevailed in Mexico, led by the ambitious Santa Anna.

It was as Mexican citizens defending the Mexican constitution from his attacks rather than as ex-Americans seeking independence from Mexico, that the Texans, after some hesitation, began in 1835 the Texas revolution. As the revolt continued its

motive changed from that of securing constitutional rights for Mexican citizens into that of securing the independence of Texas from Mexico.

A convention therefore declared the independence of the Republic of Texas, March 2, 1836. The winning of this independence required the sacrifice of lives in war, the organization of a national government, the leadership of a scattered populace, and the confident appeals for help from friends in the United States. The force of all this, encountering even a heavy Mexican resistance, soon made Texas a free republic. Texans are planning to celebrate in 1936 the centennial of this achievement.

The Republic of Texas lived a decade. Sam Houston, the hero of San Jacinto, was the first president. Despite poverty, debts, and dangers, the new nation behaved with dignity and honor.

Recognized by the United States and European governments, the young republic nevertheless was thrice refused admission to the American Union. Presidents Jackson and Van Buren declined to commit the United States to the annexation of Texas, and President Tyler, who negotiated an annexation treaty, failed to secure its ratification by the United States senate.

Meanwhile, Texas, under the nationalist leadership of President Lamar, had already begun plans for her own development which had they been carried out, would have made the Republic of Texas the equal of her northern neighbor. Among the plans were those of a system of education, expansion of territory to the Pacific, and reciprocal commercial relationships with England.

But the American people, in their presidential election of 1844, expressed the desire to annex Texas. President Tyler therefore was able, on the eve of retirement, to induce congress to extend the invitation to the southern republic. This invitation the Texans accepted, by congress, convention, and plebiscite. The convention also drafted a constitution for the State of Texas, and this document the United States congress approved.

Early in 1845 President Jones of Texas lowered the Lone Star, raised the Stars and Stripes, and declared. "The Republic of Texas is no more."