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TRAVELLERS AND SETTLERS IN MEXICAN TEXAS

“On the 18th June 1821 started from New Orleans in the steamboat Beaver for the Province of Texas. ...”¹ This is how Stephen F. Austin began his account of the journey that marked the arrival of Anglo-Americans in Texas. They had already been on their way for at least half a century and many more settled down in the following decades. The purpose of this study is to give an overview of the primary sources that tell us about Texas during the Mexican period of 1821-1836. The focus has been on the Anglo-American immigrants and their correspondence, travel accounts, diaries, memoirs, and newspapers. They can be arranged into five main groups. One of them contains primary sources that were compiled and edited by historians. Another one concerns the accounts of American immigrants who travelled to Texas either in their own interest or were sent there by a company that was involved in land business. What happened in both cases was that the visitors only spent a short period of time in Texas and then left the province. The third type of literature was written by European travellers about their experience among the American settlers. Unfortunately, the smallest number of sources survived of those that were written by Anglo-American immigrants who actually settled down in Texas during the Mexican era. What can come as one more helpful source of contemporary information is the press. There were several newspapers published by and for English speakers and fortunately many issues survived.

The most extensive and most essential source on the beginning of Anglo-American immigration was compiled and edited by Eugene C. Barker. The four volumes of *The Austin Papers* comprise personal and official letters to and from Austin, petitions and memorials to local and superior governments, and other kinds of political documents, contracts as well as observations, and all sorts of communications relating to Texans that came into Austin's hands. They provide indispensable contemporary evidence about the manners and motives of the settlers, and the early history of the colony up to the birth of the Republic of Texas in 1836.²

Stephen F. Austin, as the leader of the first considerable group of settlers, asked for permission from the Mexican authorities in 1821 to recruit three hundred families. By the time he got it in 1823, about three thousand Anglo-Americans lived illegally in Texas. The Mexican guards, who were about two hundred, could not chase them away or prevent the arrival of others. What the Mexican government could hope was that by legalizing their presence, they would make them loyal citizens. So in 1824 the Congress of the new republic passed a quite liberal colonization law. The immigrants were given the right to own land, and were exempt from taxes for four years. The law placed

¹ Stephen F. Austin: “Journal of Stephen F. Austin on His First Trip to Texas, 1821,” *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, VII (1903-04), 286.

² Barker, Eugene C., comp. and ed.: *The Austin Papers*, Four Volumes, Washington and Austin, 1924-1928.

responsibility for colonization programs under the control of the individual Mexican states.³ According to the *State Colonization Law of Coahuila and Texas* “foreigners of any nation, or a native of any of the Mexican states, can project the formation of new towns on any lands entirely vacant.” Although the new settlers had to prove “their christianity, morality, and good habits, by a certificate from the authorities where they formerly resided,” in reality, the government did not have the means to check the newcomers.⁴ There was no practical obstacle in the way of colonization.

The number of Anglo-American settlers during this period is indefinite, partly because they often preferred to remain anonymous and unnumbered. Many of these immigrants were victims of economic depression and left their country in the aftermath of the panic of 1819. In many cases they left only three letters written on the doors of their previous homes: G.T.T. = Gone to Texas. Mexican Texas in particular had a reputation as a destination for those fleeing the law or the debt collector in the United States. For them Texas seemed to be a land of promise, especially because it offered huge parcels of cheap land. Some parts of the region were quite fertile, though in the early period survival proved to be difficult in all parts. The settlers had high expectations. The early difficulties, the changeable, often unpredictable weather, the great distances, the loneliness and isolation seemed to be obstacles that hard work and endurance would overcome in the end.

Whatever reasons they had for moving to Texas, in the beginning the settlers could only count on themselves. Many of them tried to explore the possibilities in advance.

Stephen F. Austin received a lot of letters from as far as Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, as well as from Missouri, Tennessee, and Louisiana. Their writers very often told about their failures in business. James Bryan wrote to Austin from Missouri in January, 1822: “I am closing my business here ... a number has failed here and all embarrassed ...”⁵ Charles Douglas in a letter to Austin from Tennessee in February, 1824 complained that “business of every kind is dull and the people are heels over head in debt.”⁶ The letters and newspaper articles about the prospects offered in Texas put many people “in a fever to sell out and move.”⁷ Many of them were farmers, merchants, or owners of small business who were looking for better opportunities. As one of them wrote it in 1822: “an idea struck me a few days since on viewing a statement of the situation and climate of the province of Texas that a man could in short time accumulate considerable wealth by the establishment of a clothers factory in your country.”⁸ Inquiring about the economic situation Samuel Ayers and Others from Lexington, Kentucky wanted to know if “free access through the Country be granted to travellers and traders.”⁹

Stephen F. Austin’s replies were almost always positive and encouraging, so the colony gradually filled up with settlers and became the most populous and most important Anglo-American settlement of Mexican Texas.

³ The National Colonization Law, in Wallace and Vigness, *Documents of Texas History*, 48.

⁴ The Coahuila-Texas State Colonization Law, *ibid.* 48-50.

⁵ James Bryan to Stephen F. Austin, January 15, 1822, *Austin Papers*, I, 465.

⁶ Charles Douglas to Stephen F. Austin, February 26, 1824, *Austin Papers*, I, 745.

⁷ Thomas H. Ficklin to Stephen F. Austin, January 8, 1822, *Austin Papers*, I, 462.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Samuel Ayers and Others to Stephen F. Austin, June 6, *Austin Papers*, I, 522.

Another comprehensive compilation of primary source materials on early Texas has been edited by Malcolm Dallas McLean. So far he has published fifteen volumes of the *Papers Concerning Robertson's Colony*. Each volume contains a detailed calendar, an introduction that provides information about Robertson and his colony. There are also extensive annotations added to the wide range of documents, letters, and numerous other sources.¹⁰

The Colony was granted to a group from Tennessee known as the Texas Association in 1825, and its settlement began in 1830 under the direction of Sterling C. Robertson. In the early 1830's there was a bitter controversy between the Robertson interests and those of Stephen F. Austin. The tensions were also raised by the attempts of the Mexican authorities to stop Anglo-American colonization. While previous historical writings were often biased and emphasized the significance of Austin's activity, the materials presented about Robertson's Colony put the story of Anglo-American colonization in a new and wider dimension.

Ernest Wallace and David M. Vigness compiled and edited a volume, which is an indispensable and valuable source of information. The *Documents of Texas History*¹¹ contains the most important official regulations, laws, treaties and other documents from the Spanish period up to the twentieth century. There is always an introduction to the documents, which gives background information and explains their significance.

Texas also attracted an unusual number of visitors, who usually stayed for a short period of time but who wrote informative descriptions of the province.¹² The writings of many travelers in Texas usually concentrate on the American colonies, because very often they did not get further than the eastern part of the province, which was dominated by Anglo-American population. Such was the case with Stephen F. Austin's cousin, Mary Austin Holley. Her work, *Texas: Observations Historical, Geographical, and Descriptive, in a Series of Letters, Written during a Visit to Austin's Colony with a View to the Permanent Settlement in that Country in the Autumn of 1831*¹³, is the first book on Texas written by an Anglo-American. It consists of twelve chapters and two appendices. The first appendix actually answers "Questions Relative to Texas by the London Geographical Society" regarding immigration, and the second is a set of documents relating to the disturbances in the colony in 1832. The fact that the volume was written by a woman, who was sensitive to a lot of details, yet preserved her objectivity, makes it one of the best descriptive books of Texas, which definitely played an important role in inducing subsequent immigration to the province.

¹⁰ McLean, Malcolm Dallas, comp. *Papers Concerning Robertson's Colony in Texas*, Fifteen Volumes, Texas Christian University Press, Fort Worth 1974-76 (through volume III), and The UTA Press, The University of Texas at Arlington, 1977-1993.

¹¹ Wallace, Ernest and Vigness, David M., eds., *Documents of Texas History*, Steck, Austin, 1963.

¹² See Sibley, Marilyn McAdams: *Travelers in Texas, 1761-1860*, University of Texas Press, Austin and London, 1967.

¹³ Holley, Mary Austin: *Texas: Observations Historical, Geographical and Descriptive, in a Series of Letters, Written during a Visit to Austin's Colony, with a View to a Permanent Settlement in That Country in the Autumn of 1831*, Armstrong and Plaskitt, Baltimore, 1833.

Her second book, *Texas*, which was published in 1836, provides even more information on Texas geography, society, and history. It is a basic reference, a fascinating, detailed look on the region. It contains the full text of the Mexican Constitution of 1824 and translations of the colonization laws as well as the first book printing of the Texas Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the Republic of Texas. The volume includes the physical description and natural history of the region, and there are chapters on money, banking, and trade, the inhabitants and their manners. It is a clear analysis of the colonization and land grant system, and has Austin's colony and activities in the focus again, who no doubt gave her a lot of help while she was collecting information for both books.

The writer of one the most important travel accounts of Texas remained anonymous. This "visitor" to Texas arrived from New York in the spring of 1831 to "examine the condition of a large tract of land" he had bought from the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company. He wanted to "ascertain its value to settlers from the United States, by personal information", as well as to "satisfy" himself "concerning the soundness of the title" which he had obtained.¹⁴ He was amazed by "how many attractions does this splendid country appear at first sight to offer to a settler from our cold and Northern States." Taking into consideration the prospects of cattle raising he concluded that Texas was like "the land of Canaan."¹⁵ His "judicious purchase,"¹⁶ however, could not be realized. As it turned out, the Company he contracted with did not own any land in Texas and did not even have the right to sell any. The Mexican authorities did not allow the misled immigrants to locate on any lands or to settle. This is what our "visitor" also found out on the spot. Disappointed as he was, he had to wait for an opportunity to return to the United States. So he decided to "spend some weeks agreeably and with improvement in making observations."¹⁷ He travelled around in the region, wrote a journal, and in the end published a volume about his experiences, which proved to be a valuable guide to prospective emigrants.

The Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company was actually organized in the fall of 1830 to attempt to evade the restrictions of the Mexican Law of April 6, 1830 on American colonization and realize land grants on a large scale. It sublet huge blocks to subordinate contractors, and it sold scrips, representing nearly 7.5 million acres at prices of one to ten cents an acre, to prospective settlers and speculators, many of whom evidently believed that they were buying land. The prohibition, however, was very real and colonists sent to Texas were not allowed to go on the Company's lands, which at that point suspended its activities. As soon as the Law of April 6, 1830 was repealed, however, effective of May, 1834, the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company renewed its business. To promote its activities and counter the previous attacks on the Company – including that of the anonymous "visitor" – they sent David Woodman, Jr. as their agent to Texas. After he returned to Boston, he published his *Guide to Texas Emigrants* in

¹⁴ *A Visit to Texas: being the Journal of a Traveller through Those Parts Most Interesting to American Settlers; with Descriptions of Scenery, Habits, &c. &c.* Goodrich and Wiley, New York, 1834.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

1835.¹⁸ It was basically the condensation of a pamphlet the Company had published in January, 1831 to give an account of Texas and its opportunities for emigrants.¹⁹ What Woodman added were explanatory comments based on his own experiences. In addition, a list of *Empresario* Grants was also included as well as various letters and extracts from newspapers relating to Texas and the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company. The argument he gave in the introduction for writing and publishing the *Guide* spoke for itself: “no one can dissolve his connexion with the place of his nativity, and take up a residence in a new country, without great sacrifices; and it is to enable every one to judge for himself, whether the inducements held out are sufficient to warrant that sacrifice on his part, that this compilation of all the facts which could be collected is presented.”²⁰ At the end of the detailed description of the geographical, economic, social, and political characteristics of Texas he quoted – among other newspapers – the Alabama Montgomery Advertiser. In February, 1835 it stipulated the future of the province in a positive light. “It will probably become either an independent State, or be annexed to the Union. If the former could be peaceably accomplished, all objections would vanish; and if the latter were a certain event, the temptation to the emigrant would be irresistible.”²¹

There are several other descriptions of Texas written during the same period. One of them is by Amos Andrew Parker, who was a New Hampshire lawyer and judge. He travelled eight thousand miles in five months, and spent a little more than a month travelling from the Sabine to the Colorado River in Texas at the turn of 1834-35, then went back home. In the account of his *Trip to the West and Texas*, he devoted almost forty pages to the general view of Texas, which he complemented with “a brief sketch of the Texian War” in the second edition.²² According to the comments in the Streeter bibliography, the former is “a rather pedestrian account of a sightseeing journey,” while the latter “tells the story in a popular form.” Nevertheless, as Parker’s main purpose was to gather information about the regions he visited, I would agree with Streeter’s conclusion that “it has for a little known new country like Texas the interest that is present in early contemporary accounts of travels.”²³ Parker himself suggested in the preface to his work that “although it may not indicate much depth of research, or possess all the greatness of polished diction and charms of novelty,” he hoped that “it may be found to contain information sufficient to repay a perusal.”²⁴ And it did. He was impressed by the inexpensiveness and abundance of land in Texas, which he described in

¹⁸ Woodman, David, Jr.: *A Guide to Texas Emigrants*, M. Hawes, Boston, 1835.

¹⁹ *Address to the reader of the Documents relating to the Galveston Bay and Land Company*, New York, 1831. It was one of the earliest accounts of Texas in English. The Documents were a collection of Mexican laws regulating colonization.

²⁰ Woodman, iv.

²¹ Woodman, 141.

²² Parker, *Trip to the West and Texas. Comprising a Journey of Eight Thousand Miles, through New-York, Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, Louisiana and Texas, in the Autumn and Winter of 1834-5. Interspersed with Anecdotes, Incidents and Observations*, White and Fisher, Concord, New Hampshire, 1835.

2nd ed. *With a brief sketch of the Texian War*, White, Boston, 1836.

²³ Streeter, Thomas W.: *Bibliography of Texas, 1795-1845*, 5 vols., Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955-60, v.1, 166.

²⁴ Parker: *Trip to the West and Texas*, iii.

great details. He also got acquainted with local affairs and predicted that Texans would “become tired of belonging to such a discordant confederacy,” would “throw off the yoke,” and “form a government of their own.”²⁵

The other report was written by the agents of the Wilmington Emigrating Society and printed in North Carolina. *A Journal of a Tour in Texas*²⁶ includes two individual accounts. James Joshua and his companion David Joyner explored the region west of the Sabine River in the summer of 1835. Surveying the territory and collecting information about suitable vacant lands and their price as well as other business opportunities, they encountered hospitable householders and in the end drew an optimistic picture. James reported that the time was probably close when the population of Texas reached the number required in Mexico to establish a separate legislature. “Here will then be a free State, partaking of all the manners, customs, and free institutions of genuine American States; speaking the same language, and contiguous to the United States. What then, should prevent our citizens from embracing the favored opportunity of joining with our brethren in Texas.”²⁷

The other agent of the Company, Alexander Macrae went as far as the Brazos River. His report was much more critical. He outlined the difficulties of Mexican rule as well as the challenges of the environment (for example, the dryness of the land near the Brazos). “To say the least of it, it has all the disadvantages of an unsettled country,” he said. In his conclusion he recommended settlement in the western lands of the United States rather than in Texas. “There are a plenty of good lands in our western States that can be had on reasonable terms, and where the people have the advantage of being subject to laws which they understand, and in which every American ought to have confidence.”²⁸

Other visitors who wrote books about early Texas and the Anglo-Americans who lived in the province came from Europe. George Bernard Erath, for example, was born in Vienna in 1813, moved to Germany at the age of 14 and realized his “bold dream” of going to America in 1832. He settled down in Texas in 1833. A year later he found work as a surveyor in Robertson’s Colony and soon became an Indian fighter in one of the most well-known ranger companies. He dictated his recollections in 1886 to his daughter, Miss Lucy A. Erath. The *Memoirs* she published in 1916 tell about the life of the surveyor, Indian fighter and politician up to the aftermath of the Civil War.²⁹

David B. Edward was from Scotland. First he explored South-America, then travelled to the United States. In 1830 he spent six months in Texas “making one of four who explored it ... from side to side, and from settlement to settlement.” We learn this from the Preface of his book. There he also says that he had lived three years in Texas, and then visited it again in 1835 to examine “the improvements made throughout every locality.” *The History of Texas; or The Emigrant’s, Farmer’s, and Politician’s Guide to*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

²⁶ James, Joshua, and Macrae, Alexander: *A Journal of a Tour in Texas; with Observations on the Laws, Government, State of Society, Soil, &c. by the Agents of the Wilmington Emigrating Society*, T. Loring, Wilmington, North Carolina, 1835.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹ Erath, Lucy, ed.: *Memoirs of Major George Bernard Erath*, Texas State Historical Association, Austin, 1923.

*the Character, Climate, Soil and Production of That Country*³⁰ was meant to be an impartial account. “I have covenanted to steer a neutral course, between the extravagant representations of the monopolizing land speculator, and the unwarrantable scurrility of the viciously prejudiced” – “because they found wanting of capital ... and because hardships were to be endured before idleness could be indulged or luxuries obtained.”³¹ It provided a thorough survey of the peoples and lands of Texas. To illustrate his argument and offer more information, Edward also included a lot of extracts of important documents. Later, however, he was often attacked because of the pro-Mexican tone of his conclusions. For example, he asked the question of “what should be the feelings of the inhabitants of Texas towards the Mexican Republic, whose liberality in lands and otherwise, has been without its parallel in modern days?” The answer he gave was “never ending fidelity to the government of that Constitution under which they became privileged citizens.”³² No doubt, there was some truth to his point, but the Anglo-Americans looked at the question from a different angle.

There are many accounts that were written by Anglo-Americans who actually lived in Texas. One of the most well-known of them is Noah Smithwick’s *Evolution of a State: or Recollections of Old Texas Days*.³³ He departed from the family home in Tennessee in 1827 at the age of 19 and drifted with the tide of emigration to Texas. He travelled widely in the province, had several jobs, and was an active participant of the political and social affairs as well until he decided to move with his family to California. He was 89 years old when he dictated his recollections to his daughter, Nanna Smithwick Donaldson, who published the work in 1900, one year after her father’s death. Obviously, “sixty years was a wide gulf for a single memory to span” and “it is quite possible there may be slight errors” in the book as his daughter put it in the preface. Still, it offers one of the most vivid and most colourful descriptions of Texas, its people and the adventures and events Smithwick experienced there. His account is full of anecdotes and summarizes his reflections on the early days of Texas history.

Unfortunately, the sources that would give contemporary eyewitness testimony and first-hand information about the period are not abundant and are often biased. William B. Dewees for example was one of the Old Three Hundred in Stephen F. Austin’s colony, but his work received heavy criticism because of its inaccuracies and exaggeration. His *Letters from an Early Settler of Texas to a Friend*³⁴ in fact, is not, as it claims to be, a series of letters written between 1819 and 1852, but a collection of reminiscences

³⁰ Edward, David Barnett: *The History of Texas: or, The Emigrant’s, Farmer’s, and Politician’s Guide to the Character, Climate, Soil and Production of That Country, Geographically Arranged from Personal Observation and Experience*, J.A. James and Co., Cincinnati, 1836.

³¹ *Ibid.*, viii.

³² *Ibid.*, xi.

³³ Smithwick, Noah: *The Evolution of a State: or, Recollections of Old Texas Days*, Gammel Book Company, Austin, 1900.

³⁴ Dewees, William B.: *Letters from and Early Settler of Texas to a Friend*, Cara Cardell, comp. (pseud. Emeretta C. Kimball), Morton and Griswold, Louisville, Kentucky, 1852.

probably put together in the early 1850's.³⁵ In spite of its deficiencies, Dewees' work is still a valuable piece of literature about the period. He witnessed many events he wrote about and his personal observations are reliable as well as telling. He also included quite a few early documents and they are - no doubt about it - accurate.

One of the few female accounts of Texas in the 1830's is Mary Sherwood Helm's *Scraps of Early Texas History*.³⁶ Her first husband was Elias R. Wightman, a surveyor and the founder of Matagorda in 1829. She was from New York and her book describes the couple's journey to Texas as well as the foundation of the new town. "It was voted that I should have the honour of being the first white woman to ascend the mouth of the Colorado river."³⁷ She often accompanied her husband on "long journeys through unsettled regions to reach those sites [to be surveyed] for future cities."³⁸ She also taught "both week-day and Sunday school."³⁹ Her description and comparison of Americans and Mexicans, however, reveals that she had the same kind of prejudices as many of her contemporaries. "The instinct of races never dies out any more than individuals. The Anglo-Americans are hardy and enduring beyond all other races. Endowed with an incredible and inexhaustible energy, they never turn back or yield to reverses however severe or crushing. On the other hand, the modern Mexicans are, as it were, the debris of several inferior and degraded races; African and Indian crossed and mixed, even the old Spanish blood was mixed with the Moorish and demoralized by a long course of indolence and political corruption; both physically and mentally they are the very antithesis of the Anglo-Americans."⁴⁰

*The Diary of William Barret Travis*⁴¹ was written between August 30, 1833 and June 26, 1834. However short period of time it covers and however much its writer was saving with his words, it is still a telling account of the routine of daily life in Texas before the war of independence. Robert E. Davis, who has done a thorough job as the editor of the diary, summarized its value in the foreword. "You [the reader] will come to know that Travis the young man (he was only twenty-six years old when he died at the Alamo) was on his way up in the new world of Anglo-American Texas, that he pursued the full experience of youth with characteristic determination. He gambled, he loved, he meant to get the most out of his years on earth."⁴²

William Fairfax Gray wrote a diary during his journeys from Virginia to Texas in 1835-36 and in 1837.⁴³ It is a detailed account not only of his trip and adventures from Fredericksburg, Virginia through stops in Ohio and Louisiana to his arrival in Texas, but

³⁵ For debates concerning the work see the Introduction to the *Letters of an Early Settler*, v. as well as Andrew Forest Muir, (ed.) *Texas in 1837: An Anonymous, Contemporary Narrative*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1958. 206-207, and Sibley: *Travelers in Texas*, 6.

³⁶ Helm, Mary Sherwood: *Scraps of Early Texas History*, the author, Austin, Texas, 1884.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴¹ *The Diary of William Barret Travis, August 30, 1833 to June 26, 1834* ed. by Robert E. Davis, Texian Press, Waco 1966

⁴² *Ibid.*, v.

⁴³ Gray, Allan Charles, ed.: *From Virginia to Texas, 1835-36, Diary of Col. William Fairfax Gray*, Gray, Dillaye and Co., Houston, 1909.

also of the people and experiences he encountered. He was originally the agent of Thomas Green and Albert T. Burley of Washington D.C. On his way to Texas he gathered a lot of information about the situation there from various people who were tied to the region in one way or another. There were times when he was allured by the prospects and wrote: "I think better of Texas than I did before."⁴⁴ On another occasion, learning about the details of land business he commented that "I do not think quite so well of Texas speculations as I did. Still I will go and look at it."⁴⁵ In the end, he decided to settle down in Houston and moved his family there, too. He held several public offices and practised law until his death in 1841.

Freedom of the press was a very important principle the Anglo-Americans believed in and took with them to their new country. In many cases, however, the early products of the press would not have qualified as newspapers in the modern sense. They often served a special purpose of the printer who had a monopoly on the distribution of news. Politics, personal or party, and propaganda stood behind the founding of many papers in Texas at the end of the 1820's and beginning of 1830's. When somebody wanted to communicate with the public, promote a cause or protest it, he started a newspaper. Very often, when the cause succeeded or failed, he closed the paper. One of the most thorough studies on the history of newspapers in Texas has been written by Marilyn McAdams Sibley.⁴⁶ In her book she gives insight into the earliest attempts of establishing and publishing a paper as well as an analysis of the successful papers. The period she investigates stretches from the end of the Spanish colonial times to the Civil War. Unfortunately, many of the early newspapers she describes did not survive.

The first permanent newspaper published in Texas, which is luckily still available in microfilm form, was the *Texas Gazette*. It was founded in September, 1829, printed and published by Godwin Brown Cotten, under the patronage of Stephen F. Austin. Its first issue appeared on September 25th, 1829 stating in the prospectus that it would be "dedicated to political and miscellaneous intelligence. It will chronicle events as they transpire within our own country, or may come to us from foreign parts." Setting down the guidelines and values for surviving and hopefully thriving in Texas the *Texas Gazette* emphasized the need to stick together. "This paper will be the advocate of the National and State Constitutions, and of harmony and union. No communications or paragraphs containing personalities of any description whatever, will ever be admitted into its columns, neither will they be open to the virulent or abusive effusions of party spirit."⁴⁷

The paper consisted of four pages, each measuring nine and one-half by twelve inches and each divided into three columns. Subscriptions cost six dollars per annum in cash or produce. Advertisements were one dollar for ten lines for the first insertion and fifty cents for each subsequent insertion.⁴⁸ Like other newspapers of the time, the first page of the *Texas Gazette* usually carried an essay or article borrowed from an exchange

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 22.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 63.

⁴⁶ Sibley, Marilyn McAdams: *Lone Stars and State Gazettes, Texas Newspapers before the Civil War*, Texas A M University Press, College Station, 1983.

⁴⁷ *Texas Gazette*, September 25, 1829, 1.

⁴⁸ Terms, *ibid.*

paper. The second page contained editorials and news, the third, official ordinances, laws and regulations of the municipal government and the Congress of Coahuila and Texas, as well as advertisements, and the last, poetry, anecdotes, and more advertisements. Cotten, Austin, and later Robert M. Williamson, who took over the paper for a while, wrote the editorials.

The *Texas Gazette* was an important source of information for its readers within the province as well as outside it. Up to the point when the Mexican Congress passed a law on April 6, 1830 to stop American immigration, Austin used the newspaper in his colony to advertise its loyalty to the Mexican government. Making use of the fact that he could manipulate the press, he could try to keep matters under control and delayed to inform the public even about this important issue until July, 1830.⁴⁹ Austin's careful strategy could decrease the damage that the law might have resulted in. He was hoping that once it would even be repealed. Until then, he tried every possible way to defend the reputation of his colony and to keep promoting it to would-be newcomers.

The events however, that followed the Law of April 6, 1830, the arrival of Mexican troops and customs officials in Texas set things into motion. There was also a growing population, which was more and more difficult to control. Austin's influence and popularity declined. Gradually, Texas was divided into two factions, one labelled the War Party, under the leadership of the Wharton brothers, William and John, the other the Peace Party, led by Austin.

The ambivalent and turbulent period was marked by the ambivalence and turbulence of the Texas press. Having published the fifty-two issues he promised to the subscribers, William Brown Cotten sold the paper to Robert M. Williamson. He changed the name of the paper to *Mexican Citizen*, which pleased Austin and was to please the Mexican government, too. Unfortunately, very few issues of the paper survived, but from those it seems that the tone of the newspaper gradually shifted towards reflecting the ideas of malcontents. Late in 1831 Cotten reacquired it, and published it under the old name until the spring of 1832, when he moved the press to Brazoria. It was a hotbed of the War Party, so the new paper, the *Texas Gazette and Brazoria Commercial Advertiser*, supported them. Only as long, though, as Cotten did not sell it again – now for the last time. Daniel W. Anthony published an Extra on July 23, 1832, in which he announced the change in ownership and in name of the paper. The *Constitutional Advocate and Texas Public Advertiser* was supported by Austin for a while and could again serve his propaganda. Unfortunately, Daniel W. Anthony's journalistic career was cut short by the cholera epidemic in the summer of 1833. In the end, the press was acquired by John A. Wharton and started to advocate the interests of the War Party and express anti-Austin opinions. *The Advocate of the People's Rights* was published from November, 1833 to the end of March, 1834. It was short-lived, because "the public ... have refused that support necessary to secure the existence of this paper."⁵⁰

The first "real" newspaper in Texas, *The Telegraph and Texas Register*, was published from October 10, 1835. As Marilyn McAdams Sibley described it, "it appeared in the worst of time and the best – the worst in that war plus the natural hazards of the pioneer press made its survival improbable, and the best in that the same war gave

⁴⁹ *Texas Gazette*, July 3, 1830, 2.

⁵⁰ *The Advocate of the People's Rights*, March 27, 1834.

it, if it did survive, a rare opportunity for immortality. ... It not only endured but became a part of the drama of the revolution and the birth of a new nation. Indeed, the *Telegraph* outlasted by three decades the republic whose birth coincided with its own.⁵¹

The Telegraph and Texas Register would already take us to new chapters in Texas history. Having reviewed the primary sources of the Mexican period we can conclude that there is a wide range of literature that provide the readers and researchers with abundant information about the beginnings of Anglo-American immigration and settlements in Texas. The letters, journals, diaries, travel accounts, and memoirs of the visitors and settlers, as well as the contemporary documents and newspapers are indispensable sources of the history of Mexican Texas. They tell us about the motivations and expectations of the immigrants as well as the way they related to the new land, the new country, and to each other. They are based on descriptions about the physical and geographical characteristics of the region as well as observations of the economic, social, cultural, and political life during the Mexican era. Scholars working on early Texas history cannot avoid consulting them.

⁵¹ Sibley: *Lone Stars and State Gazettes*, 65.

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UTAZÓK ÉS TELEPESEK TEXASBAN A MEXIKÓI IDŐSZAKBAN

A tanulmány célja a Texas korai történetével kapcsolatos elsődleges források áttekintése. Elsősorban az az időszak áll a vizsgálódásának középpontjában, amikor a régió hivatalosan még az éppen csak függetlenné vált Mexikó része volt, de egyre több angol-amerikai telepes érkezett a területre. Az általuk, illetve az európai utazók és telepesek által róluk készített írások segítségével betekintést nyerhetünk Mexikó északnyugati határvidékének életébe. Legfontosabb forrásként a levelek, naplók, útleírások, visszaemlékezések, valamint a korabeli dokumentumok és sajtótermékek szolgálnak. A Texasba érkező bevándorlók és családjaik többségét leginkább az olcsó földszerzés lehetősége vonzotta. Sokakat csak a kalandvágy űzött, s nem kevesen voltak azok sem, akik a törvény elől menekültek. Az Egyesült Államokat elhagyók körében a kivándorlás leggyakoribb oka – főleg az 1819-es súlyos gazdasági válság után – a felgyülemlett hatalmas mennyiségű adósság volt. Számukra Texas volt az ígéret földje, ahol reményeik szerint mindent tiszta lappal kezdhettek. A hitelüket jogi segítséggel behajtani kívánók nem egyszer találtak egy három betűs jelzést adósuk ajtaján: *G.T.T.* = *Gone to Texas*, vagyis *Texasba mentem*. A forrásokból információt szerezhetünk a bevándorlás okairól és feltételeiről, a telepesek elvárásairól, reményeiről és félelmeiről. Megragadhatóvá válik, hogyan is viszonyultak új otthonukhoz, az eltérő természeti és politikai körülményekhez, egymáshoz. Szemléletes leírásokat találunk a vidék földrajzi adottságairól csakúgy, mint a gazdasági feltételekről, a társadalmi és kulturális életéről.