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IMMIGRATION

FROM

ALSACE AND LORRAINE.

—•••—
A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF

CASTRO'S COLONY

IN

WESTERN TEXAS.

Castro, Sonzogni
—•••—

NEW YORK:

GEO. W. WHEAT & CO., PRINTERS, No. 8 SPRUCE ST.

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IMMIGRATION

FROM

ALSACE AND LORRAINE.

At this time, when the subject of immigration is attracting so much attention, and so many able persons are expressing their views, more or less practicable, on the subject, it has occurred to the undersigned that these few lines would be read by the public with pleasure.

The conclusion of the late war in Europe will now give us a good field from which to procure a class of immigrants much needed in this country. By the late treaty between France and Prussia, parts of the Departments of Moselle, Meurthe, Voges, all Bas Rhin, and most of Haut Rhin are ceded to Prussia, containing, in all, fourteen hundred and twelve Municipalities, and one million six hundred thousand inhabitants—composing an industrious population, among whom are found some of the best Mechanics and Agriculturists of France. For reasons unnecessary to state here, most of them are ready to immigrate, and would, if the State took the proper steps to aid them, come to this country, where many of them have already relations established in the western portion of our State.

Before giving my plan for facilitating this immigration to our State, I will give a short sketch of the History of CASTRO'S COLONY, one of the Colonies that have succeeded in this State,

and the only one composed of immigrants from Alsace and Lorraine. In this case, if the Empresario was not successful for himself, he was the means of securing competence and happiness to thousands, as the Hon. Sam. Houston, Thos. J. Rusk, David Kaufman and Daniel Webster testified in a letter to him, dated January 17, 1851.

The late HENRY CASTRO, having received for service rendered to the Republic of Texas, two grants of land to be colonized under certain conditions, one situated on the Rio Grande commencing at a point nearly opposite Camargo, and running to Salt Lake, (Sal del Rey), thence in a parallel line to a point opposite Dolores below Laredo. It was never settled, on account of the Mexican War. The other, west of San Antonio, including that portion of the country now composing part of Medina, Uvalde, Frio, Atascoso, Bexar, McMullen, Lasalle and Zavala counties, was settled, and the contract with the Government fully complied with, although many difficulties had to be overcome by the Empresario.

When HENRY CASTRO brought his first Colonists to the City of San Antonio, in February, 1843, no settlement existed west of the San Pedro Creek to the Rio Grande.

In order to make Texas known, he published, under the name of others and his own, various pamphlets, giving a sketch of the geography, history, population, and products of our State; among the most interesting are the following:

“Coup d’Oeil Sur le Texas,” with map, published in Paris, in 1841, signed by Henry Fournel; “Documents on Foreign Commerce,” published by the Minister of Commerce in France; “Texas in 1845, by Henry Castro;” “The State of Texas” in 1846, published at Antwerp, and many others, some being translated into German.

In twenty-seven ships Henry Castro imported into this country 5,200 people, a list of the names of the ships, with the name of each immigrant, his age, profession, fortune, place of former residence, was always sent to the Secretary of State’s office, and will be found to this day. I saw many myself in 1856.

Below, I give the names of the ships, taken from the Colony Register, now in my possession. Besides, many contracts were

delivered to people who came to this State at their own expense, with Colony contracts, and remained in other portions of the State:

| NAMES OF SHIPS. | CAPTAINS. | PORT SAILED FROM. | TO WHAT PORT. | YEAR. |
|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------|
| 1 Ebro, | E. Perry, | Havre, | Galveston, | 1842. |
| 2 Lyons, | G. Parker, | " | New Orleans, | 1843. |
| 3 Louis Phillippe, | Laborde, | Dunkerque, | Galveston, | 1843. |
| 4 | | | " | 1843. |
| 5 John Key, | De Paw, | Antwerp, | " | 1843. |
| 6 Henrich, | Andreis, | " | " | 1844. |
| 7 Ocean, | Rochjen, | " | " | 1844. |
| 8 Jennette Marie, | Perischke, | " | " | 1844. |
| 9 Probus, | Deonis, | " | " | 1845. |
| 10 Prince Oscar, | Azoerken, | " | " | 1845. |
| 11 Marcia Claves, | Caiborn, | " | " | 1845. |
| 12 Alberdina, | Matling, | " | " | 1845. |
| 13 Euphrosina, | | Ghent, | " | 1845. |
| 14 Talisman, | Loomis, | " | " | 1846. |
| 15 Diamant, | Baller, | " | " | 1846. |
| 16 Cronstadt, | Hatch, | Antwerp, | " | 1846. |
| 17 Carl Wilhelm, | De Schelling, | Bremen, | " | 1846. |
| 18 Louise Frederich, | Knigge, | " | " | 1846. |
| 19 Neptune, | Starsloppe, | " | " | 1846. |
| 20 Leo, | Goordes, | " | " | 1846. |
| 21 Bangor, | Leighton, | Antwerp, | " | 1846. |
| 22 Feyen, | Kruse, | Bremen, | " | 1846. |
| 23 Duc de Brabant, | | Antwerp, | " | 1846. |
| 24 Schanunga, | Patton, | " | " | 1847. |
| 25 | | Bremen, | " | 1847. |
| 26 Creole, | Wessels, | " | " | 1847. |
| 27 Horatio, | H. Hall, | Antwerp, | " | 1847. |

On the first of September, 1844, Henry Castro left San Antonio at the head of his Colonists, and established his first settlement on the Medina River, twenty-five miles west of San Antonio—the town being named "Castroville" after the founder, by a unanimous vote of the Colonists. It is the County-seat of Medina County.

In 1845, his Agent, Mr. LOUIS HUTH, founded the town of Quihi, distant ten miles from Castroville; and in 1846, Mr. Castro, at the head of his Colonists, founded the town of "Vandenberg," distant seven miles from Quihi.

In 1847, Mr. Theodore Gentil, at the head of Mr. Castro's Colonists, founded the town of "Dhanis," twenty-five miles west from the latter.

These towns are in a prosperous condition, with the exception of Vandenberg. On account of the water having dried up in the Verde Creek, upon which the town was situated, the inhabitants moved two and a half miles below, to New Fountain.

Had Mr. Castro not been prevented by many obstacles, his

plan was to surround his grant with villages; two more were to be located, one on the Seco, below Dhanis, to be called Osy, and one on the Laguna San Miguel, to be named St. Louis.

The greatest difficulty that he encountered was not so much in procuring immigrants (though the Government of Louis Phillippe was trying to turn the tide of immigration toward Algiers), as in providing for them, EVEN when they paid their passage, which was not always the CASE. The cost of transporting the immigrants from the coast of Europe to that of the Gulf of Mexico then averaged thirty dollars for each person, exclusive of provisions, and that on sailing vessels. But, it must be remembered, the coast of Texas was not known then; that Mr. Henry Castro had lithographed, at his expense, and circulated the same in various seaports of Europe, MAPS OF THE COAST OF TEXAS, made by one Capt. Simpson, then Pilot at Galveston; that after the immigrants arrived on the coast, they had to be provided for until transportation could be furnished them to go into the interior. Sheds were constructed for them, and rations furnished. When transportation was had after the year 1844, it was procured at the enormous rate of three dollars and fifty cents per hundred pounds. When the immigrant arrived at the Colony he was generally destitute of means, so that at least meal, salt, bacon and coffee, had to be furnished to him and his family the first year, if the Empresario desired to retain him. And he had to be aided in the way of agricultural implements; seed and animals to work his land, being furnished to him.

This, of course, involved the Empresario in great expenditures, which resulted in a loss to him, but was of great benefit to the country and the people introduced among us.

The contract of Henry Castro with the Republic of Texas, was complied with on his part, but not on the part of the Republic, as will appear by what I shall proceed to state below:

By virtue of the 8th Sec. of an Act passed the 14th of Jan., 1841, entitled "An Act granting Lands to Immigrants," and the contracts made by virtue thereof, which each immigrant signed before his embarkation to this country, in Europe, the Empresario was entitled to retain one-half of the land assigned to each member of the Colony by the Government of Texas. This was

the only benefit, if any, that could be derived from the enterprise.

The Colonists' lands were surveyed as required by the contract, and drawings were made of the surveys by the Colonists publicly, this being the most equitable way of assigning the surveys then made to them.

But, by the Act of 1850, entitled "An Act to perfect Land Titles in Castro's Colony," approved January 22d, 1860, the certificates being issued directly to the Colonists, the Empresario was left in the cold, and Henry Castro, for his services to the Republic, and for colonizing the country west of San Antonio, received from the State of Texas, in all, 38,400 acres of land, and no other indemnity nor relief.

The State of Texas has gathered the fruits of Mr. Henry Castro's enterprise, by obtaining settlers and money at the time of need. Immigrants were introduced, according to incontestible proof, which proof consists in reports or returns of the number of immigrants imported in each ship, the value of its cargo in goods, etc., made by said Castro to the Secretary of State, as above stated. It is immaterial where the immigrants brought to Texas by said Castro fixed their residence (many did in the Colony), but they all settled in the State.

Most of the Colonists brought to Texas by Castro came from the French Departments of High and Low Rhin, Meurthe, Moselle, Doubs and Jura, or from Alsace, Lorraine and Franche Comté—where the name of Henry Castro, in connection with the Colony, is favorably known.

The land granted by the State to the Colonists was of no value to them, nineteen-twentieths having sold their rights to the same to speculators for a mere trifle; but what was of material use to them was the Town Lots given them by said Castro with a twenty or forty-acre Farm Lot, which arrangement enabled them to settle together in towns or villages and have enough land to cultivate adjoining their homes. This was also indispensable, in order that the immigrants, settled as they were on the extreme frontier, should be able to protect themselves from the wild Indians.

Out of about 550 certificates granted to Colonists, I am of opinion that not twenty are at this day owned by original gran-

tees or their heirs. Castro's Colony must have a population of near six thousand souls at this time.

I have come to the conclusion from the experience I had with the Colony of my father, that—

First: Unconditional grants of land by the State to Colonists are of no use to them; that the best way to give them land, if they want any, is to extend to them the pre-emption law; and

Second: That the class of immigration I propose to bring to this State, having lost their all by the late war between France and Prussia, needs material assistance from the State to immigrate, in the way of getting their passage paid from some European port to this country.

I know well that this system does not meet with the approbation of many of our citizens, because they object that it is not only the cost of bringing the immigrant to this country that our State will have to pay, but that it will have to support a host of employees who would absorb all the appropriation made for that purpose.

To this, I will answer that proper legislation can remedy that evil, and the State should make a trial of it—venturing at first a small appropriation. By thus assisting immigration from Alsace and Lorraine, the State of Texas would not only benefit itself, but be the means of relieving thousands of people who are now in the most destitute condition.

The Colony of Henry Castro, that I have spoken of, is composed of people mostly from Alsace. It may be said that nearly all the population of Castroville and Dhanis are from the Departments of High and Low Rhin. Many had been employed, before coming to this country, in the textile manufactories of Mulhausen and other places, but have made good farmers in this country. In regard to their character, a reference to statistics of the State will show that not ONE OF CASTRO'S COLONISTS has ever been sentenced to the Penitentiary. When the war of the Rebellion broke out, they remained UNION MEN; and the returns of the late election show plainly where they stood in politics. I make this statement here from fear that some persons may not be in favor of this class of immigration, on they ground that they are Frenchmen!

The principal cities where Castro's Colonists emigrated from

were Strasbourg, Mulhouse, Colmar, Soppelebas, Cernai, Wittesheim, Bretten, Oberenzen, Rouffach, and many others, not necessary to mention here.

The town of Castroville, the principal settlement of Castro's Colony, has several schools, and a Catholic college is soon to be erected, while the Catholic, German Lutheran, and Methodists, have Churches in the Colony. Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the Catholic Church for the particular care they have taken in establishing schools for boys and girls, without any assistance from the State. I take the occasion to state that our population is much indebted to Bishops Odin and Dubuis, and now to Rev. Father Richard, for their energy in promoting morality, charity, and education.

I regret that I cannot express myself more at length on the above subject without extending this paper to too great length.

I believe that it would be wise for the State to appoint one or two agents, with a moderate salary, to go to Alsace and Lorraine. The papers of the country would be glad to publish any information that might be given them in regard to our State, and the inducements made to immigrants, free of charge; but what strikes me as indispensable is, that the State pay the passage of the immigrant, at least from some port in Europe to the port of Galveston. Experience proved that the port of Antwerp had many advantages over others at the time our Colonists were brought here; but the best point for embarkation of emigrants from that portion of Europe at present, must be determined by the agents in that country.

I will conclude by saying that what little knowledge I have acquired in colonizing and bringing immigrants to this country, while acting as Secretary of my father, HENRY CASTRO, I will be happy to place at the disposal of my State.

LORENZO CASTRO.

Castroville, 1871.

N O T E .

I recommend to all persons who take an interest in Texas, to read THE TEXAS NEW YORKER, as that paper is devoted to making known the latent wealth of Texas. It is ably conducted by Col. Geo. H. Sweet, who has resided many years in Texas, and is well acquainted with all its advantages.

Good lands can be purchased in the Medina Valley from \$2.50 to \$7.00, with water, and timbered with pecan-trees. Lands on the Hondo, Quihi, and Verde Creek, are worth from \$1.50 to \$5.00 per acre. Lands on Parker's Creek and the Seeco, about the town of Dhanis, from \$2.00 to \$4.00 per acre. Lands on the Atascoso, Chacon, Francisco, Perez Creek, and San Miguel, from \$1.25 to \$2.50 per acre.

The distance from Indianola to Castroville, by the road, is 163 miles, measured by the viameter. The following reliable persons will be glad to give information in regard to that portion of Texas :

Chas. de Montel, Surveyor of the County; Dr. John Hoffman, M. D.; James Paul, Attorney at Law; Wm. Stuckler, Clerk of the Dist. Court; A. Carle, Merchant, etc., all residing in the town of Castroville, Medina Co., Texas.

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