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1820 - 1825.

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The Texas Frontier

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By
LESTER G. BUGBEE

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THE TEXAS FRONTIER—1820-1825.

BY LESTER G. BUGBEE.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the conditions and causes which led to the first serious trouble between the Mexican government and the Anglo-Americans who settled in Texas in the early twenties. The difficulties which proved the ruin of the colonization project of Hayden Edwards and caused the first armed conflict between the American settlers in Texas and their adopted country were the logical, indeed the inevitable, outgrowth of conditions for which Edwards was in no wise responsible and which came into being long before he received permission to colonize the country around Nacogdoches.

In order to arrive at a clear understanding of these difficulties this paper will consider the following topics at some length: (1) The coming of the Americans, (2) The character of the American population on the frontier, (3) The weakness of the local government, (4) Factions, (5) The return of the former Mexican inhabitants, (6) The migration of the Cherokees and allied tribes, (7) Suspicions of the Mexican officials as to the designs of the United States upon Texas, (8) The danger of unrestricted immigration of Americans, and (9) The need of a garrison at Nacogdoches.

The coming of the Americans. Prior to the Mexican Revolution Nacogdoches was a frontier post of considerable importance with a population which varied from 600 to 900.¹ During the Revolution, it fell a victim to its exposed situation and to the lack of a strong garrison; the population

¹ The total population, January 1, 1805, was 810; January 1, 1806, it was 891.—*Archives of Bexar*, census reports. These papers have not yet been classified, hence definite references are impossible.

disappeared and in 1821, and perhaps for a few years immediately preceding, the government recognized no subordinate jurisdiction in that quarter and made no attempt to maintain a garrison or post of any kind. The Mexican population sought safer homes in Louisiana, and, in the eyes of the law, the country around Nacogdoches was deserted.

In fact, however, it had become the home of certain Americans who for one reason or another preferred the solitude and wild freedom of the woods to the society and restraints of civilized life. When Erasmo Seguin escorted the first American colonists into Mexico in July, 1821, he called together these squatters to the number of thirty-six as he passed the old site of Nacogdoches and gave them a provisional organization for the purpose of administering justice,—at the same time frankly telling them that the government did not want them to remain in that locality.² The Americans appeared willing to conform to the wishes of the government, promised obedience to the officer placed over them, and forwarded to the governor of the province a petition asking for an assignment of lands.

The American population now began to increase rapidly. The year 1823 seems to have been marked by one of those floods which so often destroy the crops and threaten the homes of the inhabitants of the Mississippi bottom. The Mexican government by order of August 20th of that year invited those unfortunates who had been driven from home by the flood to take refuge in Texas on the condition that they should either return to the United States as soon as possible or remove to the interior of the province. The Mexican officials believed that this offer brought many

² Erasmo Seguin to Governor Martinez, August 19, 1821.—*Archives of Bexar*. Journal of Stephen F. Austin, entry of July 19, 1821.—*Austin Papers A 9*, in collection of Hon. Guy M. Bryan, Austin, Texas.

Americans into the country, most of whom remained near the border.³

Just at this time, too, it became generally known throughout a large section of the United States that Mexico had opened wide the door and had invited the pioneer to help himself to the rich lands of Texas. The grant, which was made to Moses Austin before the Revolution, was a generous one and succeeding governments proved even more liberal, in fact almost prodigal, in their gifts to individuals and to empresarios. The generous provisions made for intending settlers soon became known throughout the southern United States, and removal to Mexico grew into a theme of absorbing interest in many a southern community. It has been said above that the first settlers of Austin's colony crossed the border in 1821. From that time forward a steady stream of Americans poured into Texas, a large number of whom came by the great thoroughfare which passed through Nacogdoches and which became known to Americans as the San Antonio Road. It was frequently the case that immigrants stopped in Eastern Texas and remained permanently or briefly as necessity or choice directed. As a rule most of those who stopped passed on after having grown and harvested a crop of corn. But in 1822 and 1823 reports of the Revolution in Mexico followed each other into Texas in rapid succession, and disquieting rumors reached the ears of those who were on their way to Austin's grant that he had encountered some unforeseen difficulty in Mexico and that the central government had refused to permit him to go forward with his settlement. These rumors, together with Austin's long absence and a general failure of crops, discouraged his colonists and a large part of even those who had reached the Brazos and Colorado started back to the United States.

³ Political chief Saucedo to Minister of Relations, April 15, 1824. —*Archives of Bexar.*

Many of these again lingered around Nacogdoches on their homeward journey. Moreover, new settlers who were just entering Texas were met at this point by such discouraging reports that many halted here and waited for definite news from Mexico and from Stephen Austin. Thus was the movement of colonists in either direction checked on the frontier and the population around Nacogdoches grew rapidly into a restless, turbulent and even dangerous aggregation of many kinds of men.

So rapid was this increase that within three years after Austin's first colonists entered Texas with Seguin the inhabitants of the Nacogdoches district believed that the population of this border community amounted to 1,600 souls. It was to be a matter of grave consequence that more than a thousand of these lived between the boundary of the United States and the Atoyac, a small stream a few miles east of Nacogdoches.⁴

Nacogdoches was only one of the many such settlements that grew up along the border. That on Ayish Bayou may well be thought of as a branch of the Nacogdoches settlement both on account of its proximity and the intimate relations existing between the two communities; by February, 1821, this little settlement contained at least sixteen adult males⁵ and its growth steadily continued in the years

⁴ Petition, signed by 129 Americans, to political chief; this document is undated, but must have been written before the end of 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

An unsigned document, dated Nacogdoches, Jan. 8, 1822, gives the names of 39 heads of families who passed through Nacogdoches on the way to Austin's colony between October 16, 1821, and January 8, 1822. Only sixteen of these are to be found in the list of Austin's first three hundred settlers; the remainder probably were among those who grew discouraged and returned.—*Archives of Bexar*.

A petition with 114 signatures, dated January 16, 1824, asks that James Dill be restored to the office of alcalde; these signers seem to compose one faction, while the opponents to Dill constitute another.—*Archives of Bexar*.

⁵ William English, Nacogdoches, to ———, February 18, 1821.—*Archives of Bexar*.

that followed. There was also a settlement at Pecan Point sufficiently large to address a petition to the governor in May, 1823. Another, known as Jonesborough, and next to Nacogdoches probably the largest on the frontier, was situated some 100 leagues above Natchitoches and contained a population of about eighty families.⁶ Besides these centres of population there were of course many individuals and families who braved the perils of the forest and built their cabins far away from the settlements. By 1825, then, there was a very considerable American population scattered along the entire eastern border of Texas, most of which seems to have collected in or near the settlements of Nacogdoches, Ayish, Pecan Point, and Jonesborough.

Character of the American population. The population of this border country was a varied and motley crowd. There was the rough pioneer surrounded by his hardy family who had been attracted to Texas by reports of the fertility of its soil and by the liberal terms offered to settlers. These were the best people in the community and they were by far the majority of the population.⁷ They brought with them ineradicably fixed in their minds the American ideas of republican government modified by the extreme individualism common to pioneers, and they stood ready to make practical application of those ideas to any conditions, at any time, and under all circumstances. Later when they came in contact with the Mexican authorities, they did not dream that they were in the least at fault when they projected American constitutional ideas into the newly created government of Mexico, and so did not hesitate to upbraid their adopted

⁶ William Rabb to the Governor of the State, undated, but probably written prior to 1825.—*Archives of Bexar*.

There is a copy of a petition in the *Archives of Bexar* from the settlers "south of Red River," which states that eighty-four signatures had been attached to the original. This probably refers to the Jonesborough settlement. It is dated June, 1821.

⁷ Petition to political chief (undated but probably written before 1825) states that there are 200 families in Nacogdoches with an average of eight persons in each.—*Archives of Bexar*.

country and condemn the Mexican's ignorance of the fundamental principles of republican government. A brave, rough, honest, hospitable, not too reverent or respectful people, they were as fearless in asserting what they believed to be the rights of the individual as they were confident that they knew what those rights were. This class was, as a rule, poor; a few hogs, a half dozen horses, and a meagre supply of farming tools and household furniture gave a man standing in the community as well-to-do; add two or three slaves and a family of sturdy boys and his neighbors looked upon him as a rich man.

On the other extreme was a class, happily small, composed of escaped criminals and vagabonds of the worst sort;⁸ between these two extremes might be found men of all degrees of morality and of all shades of opinion. Men who had known better days and had moved in cultured society jostled discordantly with the rough hunters whom Bastrop reported as living almost exclusively on the products of the chase. There were men whom business reverses had driven from home; there were those who had fled to gain a respite from the demands of creditors and who sought here an opportunity to recover lost fortunes; and, it must be added, there were also those who came with the less worthy motive of forever repudiating claims against them. The speculator, the merchant, the surveyor, the planter and stockman, with the sprinkling of black-legs and criminals mentioned above,—all aggressive and on the alert, every man a sovereign in his own conception and

⁸ Blotter of political chief,—letter to Santiago Gaines, March 18, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*. In the "cuaderno" or "blotter" were kept copies of official letters.

Blotter of political chief,—letter to Minister of Relations, August 20, 1824. In asking that a military force be stationed on the Nacogdoches frontier, the political chief urged in this letter that one of the services of such a force would be "to secure us from the malignity and perfidy of men nurtured in the bosom of hostility, accustomed to nourish themselves with human blood, and to live by robbery and assassination."

thoroughly able to take care of himself,—these formed a community which can be found only on the western margin of Anglo-Saxon civilization.

Weakness of the local government. In such a community the agents of government are always more or less weak; in the particular one under consideration they were powerless in the extreme. The inhabitants themselves acknowledged in 1824 that many of them had lived in the district for years practically subject to no political authority and even without a knowledge of the requirements demanded of them by the government.⁹ Nacogdoches was not far from the boundary of the United States on the one hand and still nearer the wilds of the uninhabited forest on the other. Evil doers had thus a ready escape from prosecution, and the fear of legal punishment was almost unknown. As should be expected in such a community the reports of the local authorities to the executive during this period abound in complaints against individuals who defied the law and despised its local representatives. Perhaps we shall not err much if we regard a dispute which arose between James Davidson and Thomas Spencer as fairly illustrating the weakness of the government in the administration of justice. The point involved was the possession of a piece of land and the three men to whom the matter was referred by the alcalde decided in favor of Davidson. But Spencer ignored the order to surrender the land and the arm of the law was so weak that the alcalde was forced to report the case to the governor and to content himself with commenting that Spencer “wishes not to comply with none of the rules of government” and with begging the governor to “instruct me how to exempt government and myself of such a violator of the regulations and law of the nation.” Such weakness of the law in such a community could lead to but one result; David-

⁹ Inhabitants of Nacogdoches to political chief,—a petition with 129 signatures; undated, but most probably drawn up in 1824.—*Archives of Bexar.*

son took the matter in his own hands and Spencer was shot while at work on the farm in dispute.¹⁰ So weak, in fact, was the administration of justice, that on at least two occasions the Americans ignored the regular courts and in mass-meeting sat in judgment upon cases which they thought demanded attention. These mass-meetings were not of the character of lynchings, but in a rude way a court was organized on each occasion, the accused was tried before a jury of his fellows, and, in one of the cases, lawyers were brought from Natchitoches to plead the cause of the parties concerned.¹¹

Innumerable evils arose out of this failure on the part of the government to preserve order. One of these which seemed to concern the executive of Texas very much was the illicit trade which was carried on between certain Americans and the tribes of Indians who were regarded by the Mexicans as unfriendly. These traders, with utter indifference to the laws of the country, supplied the Indians with fire-arms and ammunition and in return received horses and mules which had been stolen from the Mexican settlements. A demand was thus created which had the practical effect of encouraging the Indians to make raids upon the helpless people farther west. The government repeatedly made attempts to suppress this illicit trade, but though measures as rigid as were possible were resorted to,¹² such attempts were never more than partially or temporarily successful.

¹⁰ Decision of referees, November 24, 1821; order of alcalde, November 28, 1821; Dill to Governor of Texas, January 10, 1822, and January 31, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

¹¹ Blotter of political chief,—letter to Governor Gonzalez, June 10, 1825.—*Archives of Bexar*.

¹² Erasmo Seguin to Governor Martinez (copy), August 19, 1821, reports the capture of a caballada and the men in charge of it near Nacogdoches.—*Archives of Bexar*. Stephen Austin, who was with Seguin, also records this in his journal.

Santiago Dill (alcalde) to the Governor, August 27, 1822, complains of this trade.—*Archives of Bexar*.

Governor Trespacios to Alcalde Dill, September 11, 1822, prom-

Other evils arising out of the weakness of the government might be mentioned in this connection; a few of the gravest of them will be considered more at length a little later. It is sufficient to point out here that the failure of the government to make itself respected was responsible for most of the trouble that followed,—was responsible for the irregular and illegal immigration and settlement of the Americans and for the disputes which arose between Mexicans and Americans over land titles,—in short, was responsible for that first serious difficulty between the new settlers and their adopted country which has become known in Texas history as the Fredonian War.

Factions. A further complication arose from the fact that political factions developed on the border and thus added a new element of disorder. Just what the difficulty was is not clear and from the documents at hand it is impossible to say to what extent the race question entered into the matter. It is certain, however, that in 1824 complaints were made against the alcalde, James Dill, and that he was either deposed by the executive or his term opportunely expired. His place was then filled by the election of Juan Seguin, a Mexican. That Dill had a large following is clearly shown by a petition bearing 114 signatures, which was addressed to the executive, and which commended Dill's administration, affirmed that complaints had been made against him through prejudice, and asked that he be reinstated.¹³ The signers of this petition were all Americans, but there is no intimation that the opposing

ises to put a stop to the passage of stolen horses to the United States.—*Archives of Bexar.*

Political chief to alcalde of Nacogdoches, July 20, 1824, instructs him to allow no caballada to pass Nacogdoches unless those in charge exhibited passports from Bexar or La Bahia.—*Archives of Bexar.*

Blotter of political chief,—letter to Minister of State and Relations, September 2, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar.*

¹³ Petition to José Antonio Saucedo, January 16, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar.*

party was made up of Mexicans. Dill seems to have been quite active in the matter¹⁴ and of course aroused bitter opposition. His enemies even went so far as to destroy property belonging to him and he believed that they were attempting by this means to drive him from the country.¹⁵

About this time the political chief emphatically declined to grant a number of petitions which had been filed with him by Americans asking for allotment of land and at the same time ordered the petitioners out of the country.¹⁶ But the political chief had no means of expelling the Americans and they flatly refused to move; they even went so far as to convene meetings, the whole spirit of which was hostile to the government.¹⁷ It is not possible to say whether or not there was any connection between this incident and the Dill affair, but it can be affirmed with certainty that the two incidents combined served to open a wide gap between the new settlers and the government. The break thus made was very much widened the following year when alcalde Louis Procena, a Mexican, was forcibly deposed and Dill again invested with the authority of that office.¹⁸

Return of the former Mexican inhabitants. As has been said above Nacogdoches had once contained a Mexican population of from 600 to 900 souls, which had entirely disappeared by mid-summer of 1821. But when the Revolution in Mexico was over, these former inhabitants, who had taken refuge in Louisiana and elsewhere, began to evince a desire to return to their old homes. As early as April, 1822, Don Pedro Procena appeared before the ayuntamiento

¹⁴ Juan Seguin to political chief, February 24, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

¹⁵ Political chief Saucedo to Alcalde Juan Seguin, April 6, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

¹⁶ Blotter of political chief,—letter to Minister of Relations, April 15, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

¹⁷ Norriss to political chief, June 12, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

¹⁸ Blotter of political chief,—letter to Governor Gonzalez, November 27, 1825.—*Archives of Bexar*.

of Bexar and in behalf of himself and others gave expression to such a desire,¹⁹ and from this time forward there was a steady flow of the former Mexican population back to Nacogdoches and the surrounding district. It is not possible to state definitely how many of these families returned; nineteen of them were again in Nacogdoches by the last of August, 1822,²⁰ and by June, 1823, there had been an increase to at least twenty-six families consisting of 136 souls.²¹ Much of the trouble on the frontier in the years following 1825 grew out of the friction between these returning Mexican families and their new and too energetic neighbors. The cause of this trouble is not far to seek. When the Americans first entered Texas they occupied the farms and houses of the Mexicans who had fled from revolutionary fury, and showed little intention of surrendering the property thus acquired when the former owners returned and demanded possession. In the above mentioned petition of Don Pedro Procela to the ayuntamiento, of Bexar, he represented that the Americans had thus seized upon the lands of the former inhabitants and he begged that a detachment of troops be stationed on the border to compel restitution and to prevent further aggression. The ayuntamiento was convinced, endorsed the petition and urged the governor to grant it in every particular; but nothing was done.

In the spring of 1824 the political chief ordered the Americans, who held lands of the former inhabitants, to restore them to their rightful owners²² and again in July of the same year he instructed the alcalde of Nacogdoches to drive out of the country those who refused to give up such lands.

¹⁹ Blotter of ayuntamiento,—letter to Governor Martinez, April 11, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

²⁰ Dill to Governor of Texas, August 27, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

²¹ José Antonio Chireño to D. Dario Sambrano, June 20, 1823. (Copy.)—*Archives of Bexar*.

²² Blotter of political chief,—letter to Minister of Relations, April 15, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

"It is very necessary," he said, "that all the former citizens of that post who now live scattered to various places may return without fear and that they may receive their old establishments from which the intruders who have occupied them without any right shall be ejected."²³ But it was difficult to draw the line where rights of the Mexican ended and those of the intending settler began. If the Mexican held a grant from the government to land occupied by some intruder, the case was, of course, a clear one; but in many instances the Mexican had not perfected titles and so had little better legal claim to the disputed property than the intruding American.²⁴ This gave opportunity for fraud, and the Americans asserted that claims were set up by the Mexicans to desirable lands and supported by documents which were forged for the purpose. An examination of the evidence on this point, however, and further consideration of this subject do not fall within the scope of the present paper; it is sufficient here to say that the trouble which ruined the colonial enterprise of Hayden Edwards and precipitated the Fredonian War grew largely out of this matter.

Migration of the Cherokees and allied tribes. An event in which there lurked the possibility of trouble for the Mexican government, but which excited no great alarm at the time, was the migration of the Cherokees to Mexico during the early twenties or just prior to the twenties. These Indians, as well known, had reached a stage of considerable advancement and led a more or less settled and agricultural life. They understood the advantages which a grant of land by Mexico, and of sovereignty if this could be obtained, would confer upon them; accordingly a delegation of their chiefs under the leadership of the celebrated Richard Fields made

²³ recibiran sus antiguas propiedades repeliendo de ellas á los intrusos que arbitrariamente las ocupan sin ningun derecho."—Blotter of political chief,—letter to Juan Seguín, alcalde of Nacogdoches, July 20, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

²⁴ Blotter of political chief,—letter to Governor Gonzalez, August 21, 1825.—*Archives of Bexar*.

the long journey to the Mexican capital in the winter of 1822 and asked for lands.²⁵ Fields afterwards believed or pretended to believe that his petition was favorably received and that in addition to the grant made to his people, he was given a commission as chief over all the Indian tribes of the four eastern provinces.²⁶ This is not the place to discuss the dissatisfaction that followed when the Indians learned definitely that they must accept lands under the provisions of the colonization laws; it need only be added that, when this fact was brought home to them, smarting as they were under disappointment, they had the power and developed the inclination to make themselves troublesome and even dangerous to the Mexican government; it was to secure the lands which the government had denied them that they cast in their fortunes with the discontented Americans when the revolutionary flag of Fredonia was raised over Nacogdoches.

Suspensions of the Mexican officials as to the designs of the United States upon Texas. During the early twenties the Mexican officials in Texas looked upon the government of the United States with distrust and viewed with suspicion often amounting to alarm certain movements in the neighboring republic, which they regarded as verging on hostility. The boundary between the United States and Mexico had never been definitely settled, and as delay after delay postponed the final adjustment, the conviction sank deeper and deeper into the Mexican mind that the United States intended in the end to occupy Texas. As we are not accustomed to ascribe such fears and suspicions to the Mexicans until a later date, it may be well to mention in detail a few instances about which there can be no doubt. On the fifth of September, 1822, Bernardo Gutierrez, of

²⁵ Passport, dated San Antonio, November 10, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*. Gaspar Lopez to Governor of Texas, December 11, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

²⁶ Richard Fields to the Governor or the commandant at San Antonio, March 6, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

revolutionary fame, wrote to the governor of Texas from Natchitoches that it was believed and reported there by certain soldiers in the army of the United States that the American forces had orders to advance to Nacogdoches in the following spring and to build a fort on the banks of the Angelina for the purpose of holding the country. During a residence there of eleven years, says Gutierrez, "I have not seen such preparations on this frontier."²⁷ These fears of Gutierrez were reported to the emperor and produced such an effect that he authorized the appointment of an "emisario secreto" to proceed to the border for the purpose of ascertaining the true intentions of the United States.²⁸ The report of this secret emissary would no doubt be of interest, but as it was made directly to the higher authorities, there is no known copy of it in Texas; it probably now lies buried in the archives of Mexico.

Again, in 1824, the political chief of Texas went so far as to say that he was "certain" that the United States "is trying to annul or at least has the idea of annulling"²⁹ the treaty of 1819, and he believed that the American government would then assert its claim to the banks of the Rio Grande; a few months later he forwarded to the Minister of Relations a newspaper from the United States which he believed sufficient to justify the gravest suspicions and called attention to maps published in the United States which presented the Rio Grande from its mouth to its source as the boundary between the two countries. "The

²⁷ José Bernardo Gutierrez to Governor Trespalcacios, September 5, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

²⁸ Gaspar Lopez to the Governor of Texas, enclosing orders, November 2, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

Lopez to the Governor of Texas, November 19, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

Lopez to the Governor of Texas, very confidential, November 19, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

²⁹ trabaja ò por lo menos tiene la idea de anular." José Antonio Saucedo to Minister of Relations, April 15, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

Anglo-American government counts this province as its own," he wrote, "and includes it in its maps, tracing its boundaries from the sources of the Rio Grande to its mouth on the coast of Tamaulipas."³⁰

Before 1825, then, we find an element among the Mexican inhabitants of Texas who believed that the United States coveted the fertile region of Texas and who feared that their aggressive neighbor would not be over scrupulous as to the means of acquiring the desired territory. But this was a period of revolution in Mexico, and it is evident that the high officials did not all so believe and fear, or, if they did, they were so occupied with other affairs that the possible loss of Texas did not concern them. No measures were taken to thwart the supposed designs of the United States; the frontier remained unguarded; colonists were given splendid estates in Texas for the mere asking; and no measures were taken to control the squatters on the border.

The danger of unrestricted immigration of Americans. Along with the doubts entertained by some as to the intentions of the United States we must notice the fears of certain officials that Mexico was deliberately running into the gravest danger by inviting the Americans into Texas and at the same time neglecting to provide the means for restricting them to the lands intended for their settlement and for compelling them to submit to Mexican laws. In the spring of 1822 the ayuntamiento of Bexar viewed with much concern the seemingly irresponsible manner in which each immigrant appropriated the land which his fancy selected without even so much as informing the government of his arrival; it appreciated the danger in thus surrendering the province to the invader and asked the governor to interfere and properly regulate the settlement of the incoming colonists. The governor referred the matter to the commandant general of the East-

³⁰ Blotter of political chief,—letter to Minister of Relations, September 19, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

ern Internal Provinces and the ayuntamiento addressed itself to that official, begging that he instruct the governor to restrict the Americans to the lands allotted them.³¹

It was not the ayuntamiento alone that scented danger in this irregular and uncontrolled immigration of Americans. José Antonio Saucedo, for a long time the executive of Texas, repeatedly begged the prompt interference of the government for the purpose of regulating the frontier. In March, 1824, many Americans who had decided to settle in the neighborhood of Nacogdoches, laid their petitions before Saucedo asking for titles to the lands occupied by them. In his refusal to grant these petitions the political chief laid down maxims which six years later were to make Bustamante's decree of April 6, 1830, a land-mark in the history of America. "It is not good policy," he wrote to the Minister of Relations, "to allow colonies of foreigners to establish themselves on the frontier next their own country."³² Not only did he refuse to make the concession desired, but he went so far as to order the Americans to vacate their lands or at least certain lands, at the same time instructing them how they might obtain grants in accordance with the laws³³ Yet he sadly confessed to the Minister of Relations that he knew his demands would be disregarded by the Americans and realized that he was powerless to enforce them; he explained that he had refused to grant lands to the applicants because such were his orders and because "I am persuaded that the Supreme Executive power will never permit foreigners to establish themselves according to their own fancy in the territory of the Mexican Federation, especially upon the frontier of the country from which they came."

³¹ Blotter of the ayuntamiento of Bexar,—letter to the commandant general, April 2, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

³² no es bien recivida politica qe las Colonias Extrangeras se establescan en la raya de su pays." Blotter of political chief,—letter to Minister of Relations, April 15, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

³³ Blotter of political chief,—letter to Juan Seguin, alcalde of Nacogdoches, April 6, 1824.—*Archives of Bexar*.

It should be carefully noted here that these expressions of the political chief were not applied to all Americans settling in Texas. While he was thus denouncing the disorders of the frontier Austin's settlement of Americans was gathering strength in the valleys of the Colorado and Brazos under the protection of the Mexican government and with the favor of both local and national officials. His denunciation was directed against those foreigners who showed a disposition to consult their own pleasure in the selection of lands rather than the positive rules laid down by the colonization laws, and against those who had occupied lands to which former Mexican citizens still had a claim; and hence he insisted that the government should exercise general supervision and control over the immigration of the Americans and compel their respect and obedience by sending a sufficient force to the frontier.

It is thus clear that the Mexican government was well informed as to the condition of the Nacogdoches frontier. The ayuntamiento of Bexar and the political chief had again and again made known the dangers that threatened and had as often begged for immediate help. The central government seemed to realize that the condition was a menace to the state and even made promises, but nothing was actually done and the political chief was forced to content himself with issuing orders which he knew would be disregarded for want of the means of enforcing them.

Necd of a garrison at Nacogdoches. The most serious mistake made by the Mexican government in its management of Texas affairs was probably the failure to provide an adequate military force for the protection of the inhabitants against the Indians and for the proper regulation and government of its frontier posts. Appeals for such aid continually poured into the executive office at Bexar and were promptly sent up to the higher officials with the endorsement of the chief. These appeals are to be counted by the score, and one wonders at the blindness,

the stupidity almost, of the general government in answering such appeals only with empty promises. Even the Indians laughed at the inefficient soldiery of Texas and frequently made raids to the very limits of Bexar; more than that, sometimes their insolence carried them under the guise of peace into the very heart of the city and into private houses where they helped themselves to whatever they could carry away.³⁴ The records of these years are full of stories of cattle raids, of attacks on outlying districts, and of the death or captivity of the inhabitants.³⁵ Such stories usually conclude with an account of the chase by the few soldiers fit for service, an excuse for their failure to come up with the Indians, and a pathetic appeal to the higher authorities for more troops. The number of soldiers in Texas varied,³⁶ but the efficiency of the whole up to 1827 was almost a constant. "I have not a single soldier to-day," wrote Governor Martinez in August,

³⁴ On July 5, 1825, a band of Comanches consisting of 226 men, 104 women, and 44 children rode into San Antonio; they remained six days and in that time committed many depredations; they entered private houses, "insulting and threatening the owners with arms if they did not acquiesce or if they did not permit the Indians to take away whatever was desired." Blotter of political chief, letter to Governor Gonzalez, July 24, 1825.—*Archives of Bexar*.

³⁵ A treaty with the Lipans made in 1822 provided, among other things, for the delivery of 34 persons held in captivity by the Lipans, besides 14 others which these Indians had bought from other tribes.—Gaspar Lopez to the Governor, September 18, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

Cabello, a Comanche chief, claimed that he had 39 captives in 1822.—Gaspar Lopez to the Governor of Coahuila, copied to the Governor of Texas, January 16, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

³⁶ In 1820, there were 501 soldiers in Texas, including officers; in 1821, the number was 251.—Unsigned table showing military strength of Texas from 1817 to 1821, dated February 21, 1821.—*Archives of Bexar*.

In 1822, there seems to have been only three companies in Texas comprising a total of 186 men and officers. Two companies were stationed at San Antonio and the third at La Bahia. These troops were entirely without clothing ("en una total desnuda").—Report of military force, February 6, 1822. (Copy).—*Archives of Bexar*.

In 1825, the military force in Texas consisted of the same three companies, but now reduced to 59 men and officers, of whom only 33 were privates.—Juan de Castañeda, commandant, to Governor Gonzalez, March 15, 1825.—*Archives of Bexar*.

1822;³⁷ supplies for the garrison had failed and he had found it necessary to let the troops earn their living by work and they had left the city. On other occasions, want of equipment or mounts rendered them next to useless.³⁸ It is small wonder, then, that the fearless American on the border felt that he was master of the situation, and built his cabin and planted his corn in careless indifference to the laws of Mexico.

The officials of Texas realized their weakness and begged for troops. The ayuntamiento of Bexar believed a force of 4,000 or 5,000 necessary to restrain the Indians and regulate the Americans.³⁹ Saucedo's letters to the Minister of Relations, especially those mentioned above and another of August 20, 1824, dwelt at length upon the helpless condition of Texas and begged immediate relief. But all in vain; some attempt was made to reform the military administration, but no troops were sent to Texas and Nacogdoches remained without a garrison.

Such was the condition of the Texas frontier when Hayden Edwards entered into contract with the Mexican government to plant a colony of foreigners along the border. The country was already occupied by a considerable population of Americans who felt that they were masters of the situation, and who virtually ignored the regular authorities; there was also a respectable number of Mexicans who had returned to the Nacogdoches country after the Revolution; trouble about land titles was already threatening between Americans and Mexicans; those in power had refused to concede certain lands to the newcomers; factions had developed; and the breach between the foreign-

³⁷ Governor Martinez to ———, August 16, 1822. (Copy.)—*Archives of Bexar*.

³⁸ Most of the soldiers in 1824 were "desmontados, desarmados, desnudos....." and discipline was "scarcely known."—Luciano Garcia to "Gefe del Estado Mayor General," January 21, 1824. (Copy.)—*Archives of Bexar*.

³⁹ Blotter of ayuntamiento of Bexar,—letter to ——— (probably the Governor), June 24, 1822.—*Archives of Bexar*.

ers and the government was widening daily. Suspensions as to the designs of the United States were entertained by some Mexicans who thus became doubly suspicious of the American intruder and viewed with alarm the irregular and uncontrolled immigration to certain portions of Texas. Thus was the mine prepared and the train laid. In such a community clashing interests and ungoverned passions were sure to supply the spark. The wonder was that the catastrophe did not involve all American Texas in total ruin.

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