

NARRATIVE TEXTS

French Texans

France never—in any sense of political control—flew a flag over Texas and never gave her own citizens strong reasons for emigration.

However, René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, *did* make one foray west of the drainage of the Mississippi, and General Charles Lallemand *did* lead a short-lived military colony into East Texas.

France, in the New World, was more interested in trade than settlement and was often distracted by continental European problems. The nation was neither equipped for colonial ventures nor had that much interest in the western Gulf of Mexico.

Some years later the Republic of Texas was faced with the problems of a population too small for a nation, so in 1841 laws were established allowing for colonization efforts. This was the empresario system, begun for Texas by Spain, under which a grant was made to an organizer, the empresario, who would bring in colonists for a large land bonus.

In 1847 Henri Castro was one of several who took advantage of the law. Castro was a fairly wealthy French banker who had a taste for adventure. In two years his efforts resulted in the founding of Castroville west of San Antonio, and in three years more than 2,000 French Alsatians had made it their home.

Castroville, unlike other French efforts, remains.

Also after 1841 French missionaries were directly responsible for the revitalization of the Catholic Church in Texas, which had been virtually rejected after the Texas Revolution as being simply a part of Mexican rule. This effort established schools and hospitals across the state.

A good number of French Acadians also made Texas their home but only after a couple of moves. A settlement of Canadian French, living in a Nova Scotia colony named Acadia, were expelled by the British



Benjamin Foulois with the No. 1 Wright Pusher airplane, Eagle Pass, 1911—He soloed in a Wright Type B at Ft. Sam Houston in 1910 and by 1915 commanded the newly formed First Aero Squadron, which was to develop into the world's greatest air force. He was the first American to fly in combat (during Pershing's expedition against Pancho Villa in Mexico) and was chief of the Army Air Corps from 1931 to 1935.

NARRATIVE TEXTS

in 1775. Many came to French Louisiana and became U.S. citizens when the young country bought Louisiana. They were known as Acadians, or “Cadians,” then “Cajuns.”

Generations later, especially during and between the two world wars of the 20th century, many came to Texas on the wave of wartime prosperity. The war years were, in general, boom years for Texas rice production, oil refining, explosives manufacturing, and ship building in the Houston-Golden Triangle part of the state.

In particular, the Golden Triangle (Orange, Port Arthur, and Beaumont) is a modern home for the Cajun language, a French-based creole laced with idioms from English, German, Spanish, American Indian, and black dialects and languages. Cajun cuisine is likewise extraordinary.

Today, Texas organizations such as the Alliance Française celebrate Bastille Day, preserve spoken French and French foods, and serve as reminders of the French influence in Texas as well.