

# NARRATIVE TEXTS

## Irish Texans

The Irish have early connections with Texas and a long history filled with oppression, violence, individual ingenuity, faith, and exciting stories.

Long under English domination, the Irish have always left their homeland, in numbers large and small, to find fortune elsewhere. Irish families settled in small groups in many areas of Texas but made up the greatest percentage of the San Patricio and Refugio colonial populations before the Texas Revolution. Here, McMullen and McGloin as well as Power and Hewetson in 1828 were allowed to set up colonial areas north and west of modern Corpus Christi and bring in Irish families. Rumor, and some fact, attest that the Catholic Irish were seen by the Mexican government as good, loyal buffer colonies between themselves and the troublesome Anglos. Even so, many Irish were members of Stephen F. Austin's colony to the east, and after the start of the revolution, the Mexican army became well aware on which side the Irish stood. The Irish colonists near present Corpus Christi lived in one of the lines of march for the Mexican army. So, in today's terms, the Irish became excellent guerrilla soldiers.

Texas Irish, during the revolution, did not spend all their time singing. Some 25 Irishmen signed the early Goliad Declaration of Independence, 11 died at the Alamo, 14 were with Fannin at Goliad, and about 100 fought at San Jacinto—a seventh of Sam Houston's army. Texas became a defended home.

In the next 50 years, Ireland was wracked by economic oppression and famine. The old country sent many settlers to Texas.

Some of the newcomers' work was stereotypical. The later 19th century Irish, arriving in substantial numbers after other established groups—as well as being Catholic, strange talkers, and considered



*The Shamrock Hose Company, fire-fighting unit for “Irishtown” in Corpus Christi*



*Margaret Mary Healy Murphy, c. 1870, who founded the first religious order in Texas to educate black children—Today the Sisters of the Holy Spirit work out of about 40 missions in three states, and their multifaceted program is nondenominational and multiethnic. The original school opened by Mother Margaret Mary in San Antonio is now the Healy-Murphy Center for educating school dropouts.*

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“dumb” in the prejudice of the day—received the worst jobs: day labor. In Texas Irish crews worked east to west on the Southern Pacific railway. This route, the second transcontinental link in the U.S., was finished near Langtry. Even the railroad handcar, the velocipede car, became the “Irish Mail.”

The Irish, in fact, entered most lines of work. Today, more than a half million Texans identify themselves as Irish—direct descendants or recent arrivals. A number of Irish fraternal and social organizations exist in Texas, including the Irish Cultural Society of San Antonio; the Harp and Shamrock Society of Texas, a division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians; and a chapter of the Friendly Sons and Daughters of St. Patrick.