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THE

ARCHIVES OF BEXAR

When Business of the Texas Government, From 1727 To 1835, Was Centered In San Antonio.

(Note: This is one of a series of articles taken from the 300 special collections of family archives in the University of Texas library. The collections cover all periods of Texas history, from the earliest days of the Spanish missionaries in the province of Texas, through the colonial era, to the present. This series of articles presents interesting excerpts from a number of these family collections; some chosen for their inuristic significance in the development of the empire of Texas, others for their purely human interest in portraying personalities, economic conditions and social intercourse.)

That religion is firmly imbedded in the foundation of every nation, State or colony, and in the hearts and lives of its people, is an accepted truism. The colony of Anglo-Americans who settled the territory of Texas under the leadership of Stephen F. Austin was no exception, it is clearly revealed in some of the letters members of the colony wrote to their relatives "back home," which now are deposited in the family archives collection of the University of Texas library. The fact that Austin was required to promise that his settlers would acceptand support the Roman Catholic faith, and that this record was embodied in the oath that each colonist was required to take, was doubtless regarded with a great deal of dubity by families of other faiths. It remained, however, that this obligation was not enforced; so long as the colonists disported themselves properly their religious liberties were not curtailed in any way.

A letter in the Ingram collection of family correspondence in the University library, written by Ira Ingram to his uncle, Roswell Ingram, Port Covington, Franklin County, New York, from Austin's Colony, May 29, 1830, is devoted in its entirety to a full and well-rounded essay on the religious situation in the colony. For this reason, it is quoted practically in full:

"As Col. Woodbury informs me that you are a zealous professor of the Christian religion, and as that class of citizens are generally very tenacious of privilege of religious liberty, I will here dedicate a line or two, to the statement of facts on this subject," he wrote.

"The Roman Catholic, is the religion, and the established religion of this government—and every settler in the colonies is obliged to take an oath to support the constitution of the country, which protects his life, liberty, and property, and guarantees to him the right of the pursuit of happiness—of course, the oath includes an obligation on the part of the settlers in any part of the Mexican republic, to support the established religion. But the most important enquire is, what are the effects of this provision of the constitution, as developed in American Texas? The answer to this question is that it exempts us entirely from the shameless strifes and animosities, too often the offspring of a well-meant zeal for the cause of true religion, and invariably the handmaid of intolerant fanaticism.

"We hear no ravings, we see no romping, or indecorous and indecent exhibitions under the cloak of a religionus assemblage, either by night or by day; no sanctuarys are polluted by unholy intrusions and desires; for we have no sanctuaries but private ones, and here all are perfectly free to worship as they please.

"This kind of worship is practiced in every family that desires to practice it, and might be common to every one in the country—for there is not a priest in this colony, nor an officer of government civil or military, with one exception, that is not elected, and elective by the people of this municipality. This officer, is the collector of the customs, lately appointed, and now settling among us.

"On the subject of the freedom of religion, and religious worship, there has never yet been any restraint to any settler, either by the government or by officers . . .

"Why, then, it will be natural for you to enquire, have we an established religion? The reply to this enquiry and it is the best of all good reasons because the Mexican nation at the adoption of the constitution of the general government, knew no religion but the one they adopted. I say the nation knew no other nor did they—but there were a few master spirits here, as well as in other countries where liberty has struggled to find a home, a few truly intelligent and liberal minded patriots who knew, and who appreciated too, the satisfactory influence of tolerance. These spirits and these patriots, were obliged to concede something to the physical mass of the nation, to secure their political independence. This something was their religion—Here was the mighty compromise—a nation freed from the bondage of centuries, on the cheap condition of being permitted to retain a name. Where is the patriot-citizen and philanthropist, who does not exclaim, on hearing this, Victory!!

"Unless this point had been conceded to the prejudices of the populace at the adoption of the constitution, the revolution must inevitably have relapsed. To protect the nation against so dreadful a crisis, the convention which adopted the constitution, although as private individuals, they were to a man, in favour of toleration, in its broadest sense, nay, nevertheless honestly thought the happiness of their country required of them the adoption of the Catholic religion, to the exclusion of every other—for this reason it was adopted; for this reason, the Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion was guaranteed to the nation by the fundamental law of the land. And is not this an insurmountable argument? What higher argument could be offered, for what we, and very many others deem a deformity in our political system, then, that the repose and tranquility of seven millions of human beings, required it?

"Having taken no part myself in the events which paved the way for the glorious day when the cry of liberty and independence was echoed from every mountain, and along every valley of this extensive republic. I have no pretensions to any experimental knowledge respecting them. But my good or bad fortune, call it which you please, has made me the intimate friend and bosom compation of some who acted a conspicuous and patriot part throughout the great, and I might add, the purifying storm of the revolution. Some of these still hold and occupy high and important trusts.

"From them, I have gleaned from time to time, details of the history of days and hours that tried the head, and tested the heart of every real, and every pretended friend of the cause of freedom . . .

"From them, during the hours of relaxation from business, I have caught some knowledge of men, and of measures, in this new-born world, and have been taught to set an estimate, either just, or unjust, upon the motives which influenced the career of many of the distinguished sons of Mexico.

"And on the subject which I now perceive, is likely to engross your attention to the end of this letter, I have long since been fully persuaded that, had I been a member of the convention which fashioned and adopted the constitution of the Mexican Government, I should have given it my vote, and my hearty support, in and out of doors. Yes—with all my prejudice in favor of religious freedom, about me, and with all its imperfectious clinging to it, I should have voted for the present constitution, persuaded that it was the best, all interests reconciled, and all conflictions surrendered, that the circumstances of the time would permit . . .

"As to the American settlements in Texas, they have never been required to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the Catholic religion, or to those of any other; nor have they been prevented worshiping, in and way they please . . .

"In short, the realization of my dreams even, of a community of his countrymen in bondage, either political or religious, knows but little of their true character. I see, however, we have nothing to complain of, we have nothing to fear—on the contrary, we have, and daily enjoy more to excite our deepest gratitude towards the government of our adopted country, than any other people on earth.

"We have received large donations of the most rich and productive lands on earth, in one of the mildest and most enviable climates of the habitable world, elect all our own officers, civil and military; are exempt from all taxes for the support of government, are eligibly situated for prosecuting a commerce with all nations, of the earth, have live oak enough to rebuild all the shipping in the world, if it were sunk in a moment, and already have the base of an American population planted there which never can be extirpated, to the last day."

There were two rocks—the Scylla and Charybdes—against which the Spanish ship of State shattered, namely, depression and the savage and unconquerable Indian tribes. It is indicated in the official records of that government for the Department of Texas. These records, known as the Bexar Archives, are in possession of the University of Texas library, and are now being translated for the first time.

Poverty was ever present, the fear of Indians ever in the thoughts of the pioneers who formed the little civil settlement at San Antonio de Bexar. When the settlers sought to undertake improvements in their new habitat, depredations were always in the offing. Unfenced corn crops and unherded cattle could not exist at the same time in the same place. The valleys were broad, the plains boundless, but the settlers by circumstances beyond their control were denied their use. They were hemmed up within the town and the open spaces in the immediate vicinity of San Antonio by Indian arrow and tomahawk.

The discouraging conditions are stated succinctly and dramatically in a series of documents dated 1731. A new Spanish governor, Don Joseph Antonio Fernandez de Jauregui Urrutia, has just taken office. He must have been appalled by the discord among the civil and military inhabitants of the settlement. The colonists were complaining that the cattle belonging to the soldiers were eating all their crops; the soldiers in turn complained that the farmers killed their animals, and declared if they wanted their crops protected they could fence them in.

The governor determined to put a stop to such quarrels. He issued an order that the soldiers and other stock owners should keep their animals out of the fields and under guard, and that the citizens should enclose their fields. Any person breaking down the fences were to be penalized. Furthermore, instead of killing any animal found in the fields, the finder was to bring it to the corral and any damage incurred was to be settled for immediately. He urged mutual forbearance, in order to achieve the unity necessary to repel Indian depredations.

Instead of being satisfied and obeying orders, the farmers filed a piteous plea with the governor, claiming that his ultimatum was bringing disaster upon their heads and seeking immediate redress:

"The members of the municipal council and other citizens of the Villa of San Fernando, who, by order of His Majesty, came to settle this province, appear before me in the best form known to us and declare that:

"In as much as, on the 29th day of the month of September last, 1737, an order was published by the secretary of this said cabildo in the royal presidio of San Antonio de Bexar by order of your Excellency, requiring us to fence our fields, to keep our cattle herded and not to spear stock that are continually causing damage to our crops; and

"Whereas, up to the present time, we have not been able to stop this nuisance, to carry the said animals to their owners, to keep them penned up for three or four days in the corrals or to go in person almost every evening to give them notice thereof, no remedy has been found.

"Therefore, since, as we have pointed out, your purpose is to avoid grave damages such as we have been suffering we can not fail to bring to your Excellency's attention the fact that it is impossible for us to fence our fields now because the time for gathering the corn is near and there is a great deal of fence to be built. Your Excellency must remember that the soldiers of this presidio keep their stock in our territory without any herdsman at all, for one would cost them 360 pesos, the price fixed by the King, our Lord. We must live on the scant crops our fields produce. If we still permit them to keep their stock in our territory as we have been doing, then it seems that everything will fall on us. If we have to fence our land, the burden will be greater than we can bear in our poverty. If the soldiers had no stock, then we would be excused from building the fences. As to the orders you issued forbidding us to spear the stock, it is an impossible thing to get them out of the corn without using a goad. That is why we have to keep our spears when in the fields. It has happened that when we have succeeded in getting one out even when armed with a spear we have killed our horses. It is almost impossible to get them out of the corn. We therefore beg Your Excellency to be good enough to order the soldiers not to let their stock come to our land because of the damage to our fields they cause. We are really in danger of losing our lands, our irrigating ditches as well as our levees. During the six years we have worked on our farm lands, we have not been able to keep the stock out; for, in spite of the fact that they claim there is nothing for their horses to eat in this vicinity but that they can get something in the fields, we wish to say with all due respect that the statement that there is nothing to eat but the corn is false. We are herefore impelled to beg you to issue orders forbidding any person have the owners, under any pretext whatsoever, to enter our cornfields either by day or by night, for they rob us, and we assure you that we will try to find means to defend our personal work. We have to live, and when they lay it on the corners we are so outraged that we almost forget ourselves.

"We likewise beg of you to be good enough to order all the owners of stock to guarantee that they will pay us for the corn their stock has eaten, for up to this time they have eaten more than 400 bushels of corn. This deprives us of food and makes it impossible for us to pay the tithes we owe to the church. We therefore can not be excused from begging you to be good enough to order the soldiers of this presidio not to ride the horses we have in the herd, for we assure your Excellency that they do so so often that when we send for one it is useless when we get it, even though it has been left in the herd four or five month. Even now when they bring our horses to us, they are riding them. Therefore we beg that you will do as we have petitioned you to do. If you do not we will be forced to abandon our corn and even the settlement because we will not be able to live and will perish in this remote region. We beg you to furnish us with a copy of this petition for such use as we may need to make of it. Please disregard the charge made against us that we have killed the stock belonging to the soldiers of the presidio, for we assure you Excellency that when these soldiers say that we have killed any stock, they fail to state the truth, because we cannot prove that during the six years, now almost seven years we have been in the place, we have killed one single head.

"We, therefore, beg and plead with you to be good enough to grant our petition. In so doing you will render justice and kindness. We do take oath that this petition is in due legal form and is a necessary action. Again we beg you to accept this our petition on ordinary paper since there is no stamped paper in this province."

Certain discrepancies in the situation as presented by the farmers and as interpreted by the soldiers caused the governor to take steps to ascertain the real truth of the situation. Pinning the colonists down to cold facts, he ascertained that they, contrary to their original story, had killed some of the animals, that the greater portion of the 400 bushels of corn eaten by the stock had been destroyed during the regime of his predecessor, in fact, that only some fifteen or twenty bushels had been destroyed after his pronouncemento had gone into effect; and, finally, that the farmers had not made written protest to the governor for aid prior to the issuing of his initial order. Incensed at their inaccuracies and grieved at their untaristic threats to desert the colony should they not obtain relief, he issued a final order reminding them to be less hasty in the future.

"I the Governor and Captain General have decided that in view of the fact that the Illustrious cabildo of the Villa de San Fernando show the inadequate foundation they had for their complaint and that I have issued orders calculated to remedy the trouble, it is necessary for me to remind them that, in the future, they must proceed with the care and caution demanded by justice and are not to threaten to leave their homes, crops, and this city. They must be sure that what they ask is just, and in order that they may be convinced that I have proceeded with justice and to furnish them with a safeguard against repetition of their mistakes, I do hereby furnish them with the copy of the letter I have sent the alcalde.

Thus, though the land stretched for hundreds of miles around them, the early Texans found that land and grazing rights for their cattle was to be one of the major grounds for civil dissention.

Tax And Assessments

SHOULD be paid by check on your account at the First National Bank. Occounts of public office frequently change—mistakes occur over which they have no control.

WE recall the case of a gentleman who paid his $200 jax bill. The collector at the time was a very sick man—forgot to mail receipt, or enter payment on his books—died shortly thereafter. The new collector billed these taxes again and it that gentleman had not been able to produce a cancelled check we fear he would have been compelled to pay them again.

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Sign on a music store window: "Kiss the Girl you Love and many others just as good."

Hap: "The geologist thinks nothing of a thousand years."

Sap: "Gosh! I lent one ten dollars last night."

Jack: "Could I borrow your tuxedo tonight, old man?"

Ed: "Sure, if you'll return it to Tom and tell him to be sure to give it to Bill."

Neighbor—Say, have you folks got a bottle opener around here?

Parent—Yeah, but he's away at college.

Kjerulf—They say that when people live together they get to look like each other.

Lisa—In that case you can consider my refusal final.

Ginko—Money, after all, is nothing but trouble.

Gumbo—Yes! maybe that's why so many people have a habit of borrowing trouble.

Friend—"What's this I hear about your graduating? I thought you had two more years in school?"

Football Player—"I had, but the coach won't renew my contract."

Bassler—They claim that when women adopted shorter skirts it reduced the number of street-car accidents 50 per cent.

Rhodes—Wouldn't it be fine if such accidents could be prevented entirely?

"Your Honor," said the attorney, "your bull pup has chewed up the Bible."

"Make the witness kiss the dog," grumbled the judge. "We can't adjourn to get a new Bible."

Teacher—Now, Tommy, take the globe and point out Australia.

Tommy does so.

Teacher—Now, Calvin, who discovered Australia?

Calvin—Tommy did.

Father—Vicky, I see just a kicked that young fellow of yours into the middle of next week.

Vicky—Oh, that's too bad, Daddy; we had arranged to get married on Monday.

Willie, having gotten a gun and diary for Christmas, wrote in his diary:

"December 26. Snowin' can't go huntin'."

"December 27 Snowin' yet, can't go huntin'."

"December 28 Still snowin 'bout Grammaw."

"Time brings great changes," said the philosophical grocer, squinting at the scales as he removed some sugar from the sack. "For instance, only a few years ago I was a prize-fighter."

"But the past leaves its mark," said the customer. "I see you were a lightweight champion."

"Here's a letter from Dunleigh asking that we send him a part of what's due him, and inclosing a stamp for reply. What shall I do about it?" asked one of the two impecunious partners.

"Send him back the stamp on account," replied the side-kick.

Government Examiner—How did you come to mark this man's paper 101 per cent? Don't you know that nothing can be more perfect than 100 per cent?

New Assistant—Yes, but this man answered one question we didn't ask.

A schoolboy's essay went like this: There was a man named Elisha. He lived in a cave and had some bears. Some boys tormented him. He said: "If you keep on throwing stones at me I'll turn the bears on you and they'll eat you up." And they did and he did and the bears did.

A girl from the city was visiting on the farm and was watching with great interest a six-weeks-old calf that was nibbling the grass on the lawn.

"Tell me," she said, as she turned to the farmer's wife, "does it pay to keep such a small cow as that?"

Assistant: "No, madam, we haven't had any for a long time."

Manager (overhearing): "Oh, yes, we have it, madam; I will just send to the warehouse and have some brought in for you." Aside to assistant: "Never refuse anything, send out for it."

As the lady went out laughing the manager demanded:

"What did she say?"

Assistant: "She said we haven't had any rain lately."

"Judge," explained the arrested motorist, "I tried to warn the woman but my horn wouldn't work."

"Then why didn't you slow down instead of running over this woman?" inquired the judge.

A light seemed to dawn on the motorist and he said: "That's one on me. I never though of that."

The Public Works headquarters at Washington had just received from a man in the field the following letter, which explains itself: "I am sending you the accident report on when Mike Casey hurt his foot when he hit it with his pick. The blank has a place for 'Remarks' but what I wish you would explain is whether you want mine or Casey's."

An American business man who has become quite a figure in the movie producing world was recently selecting a chief for his scenario staff. The producer insisted that the successful applicant must be a college graduate. He looked with favor upon one applicant, and asked if he had had a college education. He received an infirmative reply.

"Show your diplomas," demanded the producer.

The applicant tried to explain that it was not customary for college graduates to carry diplomas around with them.

"Well then," demanded the producer, "say me a big word."

The teacher was explaining to the class the meaning of the word "recuperate." "Now, Tommy," she said to a small boy, "when your father has worked hard all day, he is tired and worn out, isn't he?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then when night comes, and his work is over for the day, what does he do?"

"That's what mother wants to know," Tommy explained.

The late Channing Clapp of Boston was for some years after the Civil War a cotton planter in the South.

Mr. Clapp had on his plantation a little boy in buttons called Sam. Sam one afternoon pointed to a bottle on his master's bureau, and said:

"Mars Channing, am dat hair oil?"

"Mercy, no, Sam; that ... ," said Mr. Clapp.

"I guess dat's why I can't git my cap off," said Sam thoughtfully.

The tenderfoot in the Western town asked for coffee and rolls at the lunch counter. He was served by the waitress, and there was no saucer for the cup.

"What about the saucer?" he asked.

The girl explained:

"We don't hand out saucers no more. We found, if we did, lik's not, some low-brow would drift in an' drink out of the saucer, and that ain't good fer trade. This here is a swell dump.

A miserly man was approached by a friend who did his best to persuade him to dress more in accordance with his station in life. "I'm surprised," said the friend, "that a wealthy silver king ... to become so shabby."

"But I'm not shabby," said the miser.

"Oh, but you are," said his friend. "Remember your father. He was always neatly dressed. His clothes were always well tailored and of the best material."

"Why," shouted the other, triumphantly, "these clothes I'm wearing were father's!"

A stranger was talking to a farmer and said to him "This seems to be a healthy country. You say you are nearly 70 and can still do a full day's work. That's pretty good."

"Yes, but my old dad, who is 97, is even a harder worker than I am," said the farmer.

"His health must be wonderfully good," remarked the stranger.

"No, it ain't," replied the farmer. "For the last several years he ain't had quite his old-time pep. Sometimes I kinda think farmin' don't agree with him."

"I'm sorry to say it, Henry," said the teacher, "but your composition on the depression is very poor. The statements are not based on the facts, the style is very crude and even the grammar is bad."

"Dad'll be mad when I tell him what you said," replied Henry.

"But you can tell him you will do better next time," responded the teacher.

"Do better!" the boy exclaimed; "why, it was dad who wrote the whole composition and that's the best he can do."

A weather-beaten damsel somewhat over six feet in height, and with a pair of shoulders proportionately abroad, appeared at the back door of the Frozen Dog Ranch and asked for light housework. She said her name was Lizzie and explained that she had been ill with typhoid and was convalescing.

"Where did you come from, Lizzie?" inquired the woman of the house. "Where have you been?"

"I've been working out on Holwell's ranch," replied Lizzie, "diggin' post holes while I was gettin' my strength back."

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TREASURE BRAND MACKEREL, 2 No. 1 cans . 15c
IGA CORNED BEEF, 12 oz. can . . . 15c

IGA Fancy Hominy, 2 No 2½ Can 19c
IGA Sliced or Halves Yellow Cling Peaches, No 2½ Can 18c

Lipton's Tea 4 oz. can 21c
IGA Pad ¼ Jar Mustard 16 oz. jar 10c
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IGA Salad Dressing, Pint jar . . 17c
Pinto Beans, 3 lbs 23c

UNDERWOOD'S DEVILED HAM, ¼s cans . . . 11c
CAMPBELL'S TOMATO SOUP, 2 cans . . . 15c
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Large pkg. Rinso 22c
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