

## *Bexar: Profile of a Tejano Community, 1820–1832*

JESÚS F. DE LA TEJA AND JOHN WHEAT\*

MEXICANS SETTLED TEXAS A FULL CENTURY BEFORE THE FIRST Anglo-American colonists arrived. Anglo-American settlement began with the Mexican period of Texas history (1821–1836), a period in which Mexican Texans, or Tejanos, witnessed many significant changes in their region. By 1832, three years before the revolutionary struggle in Texas began, these changes had both fueled the Tejanos' aspirations and frustrated their attempts to realize them. A major statement in 1832 by Tejano leaders, reviewing their experience under the Mexican republic, was a critical event in the history of Mexican Texas. Yet historians have largely neglected the Tejano experience of this period and focused instead on the story of Anglo-American colonization and revolution.<sup>1</sup> In part this neglect stems from the traditional Anglo bias in Texas historical writing, coupled with a language barrier that has prevented many historians from using essential Mexican sources. On the eve of the Texas Sesquicentennial, which commemorates the passing of that era, it is important to understand the world of the native Mexican communities of Texas, their people and institutions, their patterns of community life, and their view of the broader world.

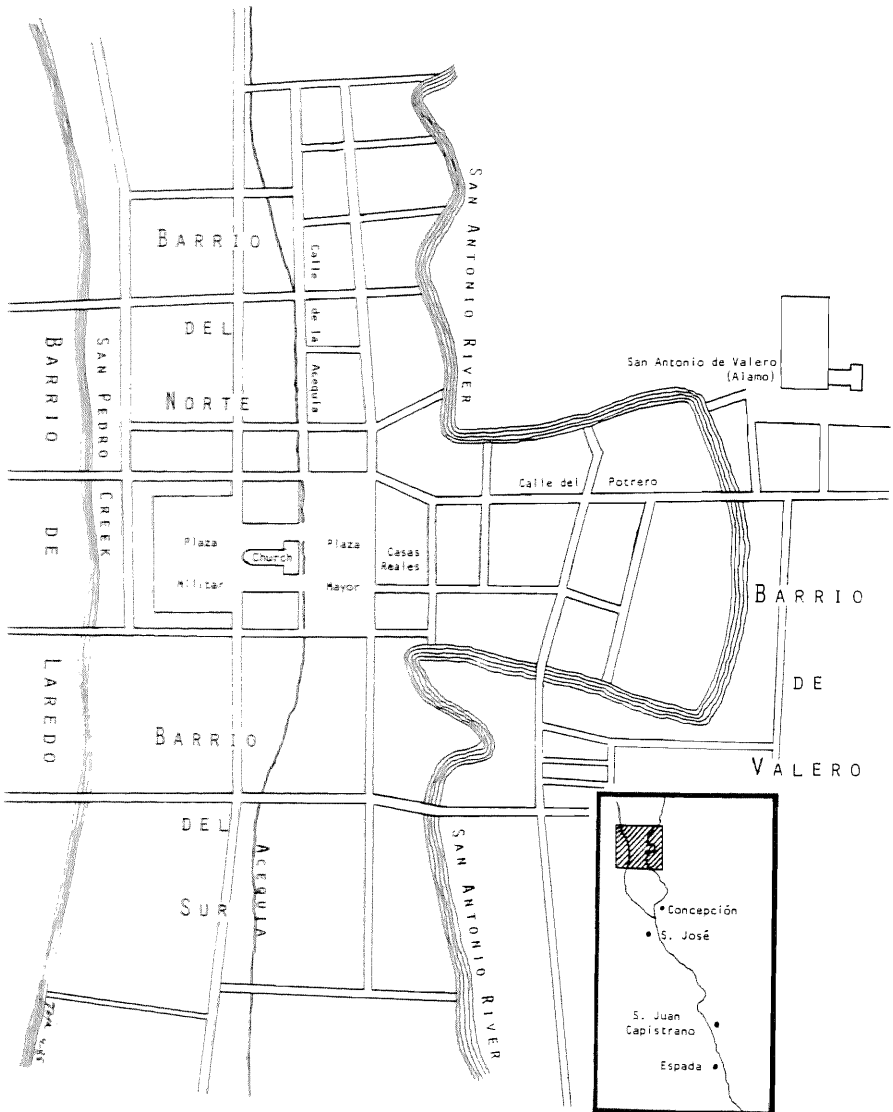
Chief among these communities was the capital, San Antonio de Béxar, commonly known during this period as Bexar. Established by

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\*Jesús F. de la Teja is assistant archivist at the Texas General Land Office, where he is currently working on an inventory and calendar of the Spanish- and Mexican-period records of the agency. He is also conducting research on social structure and land tenure in colonial San Antonio for his Ph.D. dissertation in history at the University of Texas at Austin.

John Wheat has been archives translator at the Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas at Austin since 1978. In that time he has completed twenty-one volumes of Bexar Archives Translations. A professional archivist/librarian, historian, and Latin American area specialist, he has taught in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at UT, Austin, served as a translator and interpreter of Spanish, and produced Spanish-language radio programs and concerts.

<sup>1</sup>Two unpublished works dealing with Tejanos during the Mexican Republic and early statehood years are Andrew A. Tijerina, "Tejanos and Texas: The Native Mexicans of Texas, 1820–1850" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1977); and Fane Downs, "History of Mexicans in Texas, 1820–1845" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1970). See also Arnoldo De León, *The Tejano Community, 1836–1900* (Albuquerque, 1982), 1–22.



San Antonio de Béxar.

the Spanish Crown for military and political purposes and facing a hostile and alien world, Bexar developed in isolation from the mainstream of Mexican life. Indeed, Jean Louis Berlandier, the French naturalist who was also a member of the Mexican Boundary Commission, wrote of Bexar in 1828:

Trade with the Anglo-Americans, and the blending in to some degree of their customs, make the inhabitants of Texas a little different from the Mexicans of the interior, whom those in Texas call foreigners and whom they scarcely like because of the superiority which they recognize in them. In their gatherings, the women prefer to dress in the fashion of Louisiana, and by so doing they participate both in the customs of the neighboring nation and of their own.<sup>2</sup>

San Antonio de Béxar comprised three different communities in 1820: the religious-Indian settlements of the five Franciscan missions, the military presidio of San Antonio, and the civil settlement of San Fernando de Béxar. The missions were, over time, secularized and incorporated into the civil administrative system. Along the entire frontier, missions faced a scarcity of missionaries and a lack of support from the new national government. In Bexar, conversions virtually ceased after the secularization of the missions in 1793–1794. By 1820 the former missions had become satellite civilian communities, Indians had become a minority, and townspeople held large amounts of mission land.<sup>3</sup> Final secularization occurred in 1824, spurred by the efforts of Bexar's political leadership. Although the missions continued to elect their own officials, they were under the authority of the town.<sup>4</sup>

The presidio, which was established in 1718 along with Mission San Antonio de Valero, formed the core of the area's settlement. In 1801 a company of light cavalry was also stationed in Bexar. By 1820 this unit and the original presidial company made up a garrison of 170 men. The 1820s was a decade of poverty and decline for Bexar's military, as it was for the presidial system throughout northern Mexico. The political struggles of central Mexico and the economic disarray following in-

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<sup>2</sup>Jean Louis Berlandier, *Journey to Mexico during the Years 1826 to 1834*, trans. Sheila M. Ohlen-dorf, Josette M. Bigelow, and Mary M. Standifer (Austin, 1980), II, 291.

<sup>3</sup>Census report of La Espada and San Juan Capistrano missions, 1819, Bexar Archives (Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas, Austin; cited hereafter as BTHC).

Unless otherwise noted, all documents cited in this article are from the Bexar Archives (BA). Documents are arranged in the Bexar Archives by date, whether or not that date is correct. Dates of documents in this article indicate, therefore, where the documents are filed in the Archives. If only a year is given, the document is filed after the last day of that year; if only a month and a year are given, the document is found after the last day of that month in that year.

<sup>4</sup>José Erasmo Seguín to Antonio María Martínez, Dec. 28, 1820; election returns for missions, Dec. 23, 1827. For the secularization of the missions see Carlos E. Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519–1936* (7 vols.; Austin, 1936–1958), V, 35–66, VI, 317–322.

dependence meant long periods without pay or supplies for frontier troops.<sup>5</sup> Soldiers were forced to farm, hunt, round up livestock, and rely on charity to keep themselves and their families alive. Some resorted to theft and the unlicensed slaughter of cattle. Conditions were so poor in late 1822 that Governor José Félix Trespalacios convinced the *ayuntamiento* (town council) to establish a bank of issue in Bexar to cover the salaries of the soldiers until Mexico City sent their wages. In 1825 the citizens, claiming to be superior fighters, threatened to usurp the role of the military in fighting the Indians. Extensive charity had to be provided in 1832 for the desperate soldiers. At the urging of the *jefe político* (political chief), a citizens' board collected corn, beans, flour, sugar, salt, and even young bulls for them. Because they were a major market for the agricultural production of the area, hard times for the soldiers brought economic distress to the rest of the community.<sup>6</sup>

The town of San Fernando de Béxar, founded in 1731 with families from the Canary Islands, had evolved into four neighborhoods or wards (*barrios*): Sur, where most of the long-established families lived; the more prosperous and dynamic Norte; Valero, a military neighborhood, situated across the San Antonio River from these two; and, last, Laredo, on the western edge of town, a section for which little information is thus far available. This overwhelmingly agricultural community, most of whose inhabitants lived in mud and stick shacks (*jacales*), was governed by an elite composed of descendants of the original Canary Islanders and *presidiales*. Controlling the best farmland nearest to the settled areas, these men had sufficient wealth (reflected in their large stone houses near the main plaza), education, and social prestige to also control the *ayuntamiento*.<sup>7</sup>

Bexar's demographic characteristics in 1820 reflected its status as the oldest, largest, and most successful community in the sparsely settled province. Among its almost 2,000 inhabitants, females slightly out-

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<sup>5</sup>Marion A. Habig, *The Alamo Chain of Missions: A History of San Antonio's Five Old Missions* (Chicago, 1968), 70–71; monthly report of the Veteran Cavalry Company of San Carlos de Parras, Nov. 30, 1819; census report of the Presidial Company of Bexar, [Dec. 14, 1819]; David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque, 1982), 107–115.

<sup>6</sup>Ayuntamiento instructions to provincial deputation, in Martínez to Ambrosio Aldasoro, Nov. 15, 1820; José Félix Trespalacios to Gaspar López, Oct. 18, 1822; Juan Castañeda to junta gubernativa, May 21, 1823; provincial deputation to Castañeda, May 23, 1824; Rafael González to Antonio Elozúa, Oct. 22, 1825; Ramón Múzquiz to Elozúa, Nov. 6, 1832.

<sup>7</sup>Edict creating wards in San Fernando de Béxar, Oct. 5, 1809, Nacogdoches Archives Transcripts (BTHC; these transcripts are cited hereafter as NAT); Berlandier, *Journey to Mexico*, II, 289–291. For genealogies of the important San Antonio families see Frederick C. Chabot, *With the Makers of San Antonio* (San Antonio, 1937).

numbered males (1,021 to 973), while 47 percent of the population was under age twenty. By 1830 San Antonio had experienced a mild but balanced population decline: among the 1,750 individuals reported, females still outnumbered males, married couples constituted the most common form of household, and widows remained a significant part of the population. One possible explanation for this population decline is a move by many into the countryside, for in the late 1820s ranches that had been inactive during the previous decade of political turmoil and Indian hostilities were reopened.<sup>8</sup>

A look at the census figures raises a number of questions concerning the situation of women on the frontier. Women who termed themselves widows headed 30 percent of all households. It is possible, however, that a number of these were abandoned women or unwed mothers. Other households were composed of clusters of women, young and old, who probably gathered for welfare and protection. Some of these women were married but without resident husbands; others were single or widowed. The tendency, in San Antonio and elsewhere, seems to have been for these women to remain on the frontier, possibly in hopes of remarriage, but more likely because they lacked sufficient means to resettle in the interior. Under such conditions, women assumed a variety of socio-economic roles, including those of storekeeper and ranch or farm manager.<sup>9</sup>

Although there has been recent debate over the validity of using the racial categories of late colonial censuses as a reflection of contemporary society, thus suggesting caution in generalizing about the ethnic composition of the population, some observations are nevertheless possible. As in Laredo and much of the frontier, a large portion of Bexar's

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<sup>8</sup>Tijerina, "Tejanos and Texas," 29-32; Gilberto M. Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870* (College Station, Tex., 1983), 42.

The census figures, of course, are not exact. The 1820 estimate is based on the following: censuses of Indians for San Juan Capistrano, San Francisco de la Espada, and San José de Aguayo missions, Nov. 12, 1818; list of persons drowned [on July 5, 1819], July 8, 1819; monthly report of the Veteran Cavalry Company of San Carlos de Parras, Nov. 30, 1819; census report of the Presidial Company of Bexar, [Dec. 14, 1819]; census report of La Espada and San Juan Capistrano missions, 1819; census report of Bexar, Jan. 1, 1820; Tomas de León's report of election returns for election of judge at Mission San José, Dec. 20, 1822.

The 1830 estimate is based on the following: census report of Barrio del Norte, July 19, 1829; census reports of the Cuartel del Norte, Cuartel del Sur, Cuartel de Valero, and *jurisdicción de misiones*, Aug. 10, 1829; military report of Texas troops, Aug. 28, 1829; census report of Barrio de Valero, July 7, 1830; census report of Barrio del Sur, July 9, 1830.

<sup>9</sup>List of persons paying taxes on shops during January, 1824, Jan. [31], 1824; census for tax on *dulas* (irrigation water), at the San Antonio missions, [1824]; Hinojosa, *Borderlands Town*, 35; Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 216-217. Widows enjoyed certain legal privileges and a degree of social acceptability not afforded to abandoned women or unwed mothers. See Colin M. McLachlan and Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *The Forging of the Cosmic Race: A Reinterpretation of Colonial Mexico* (Los Angeles, 1980), 237-248.

population claimed Spanish descent. In San Antonio in 1820, *españoles* accounted for 55 percent of the municipality's residents. Indians, on the other hand, made up only 15 percent of the total. Of the mixed bloods, mestizos formed the largest percentage, while mulattoes represented a small but important group. Bexar, like other parts of northern Mexico, was clearly the scene of both widespread miscegenation and a reduction of the hispanicized Indian and mixed populations through racial passing.<sup>10</sup>

By 1832 Bexar's demographic position reflected its diminishing importance. Within the whole of Coahuila y Texas, San Antonio was the thirteenth city in size, with a reported population of 1,634. The municipality of San Felipe de Austin, which had not existed twelve years previously, was already three and one-half times as large as that of Bexar, and was the third largest reporting center in the state. Goliad and Nacogdoches also grew significantly during this period, making Bexar's demographic stagnation all the more striking.<sup>11</sup> Thus, while other areas of Texas entered a boom period, San Antonio remained a frontier outpost, isolated from the progress in the rest of the state.

During the early 1820s, however, Bexar had enjoyed a predominant role in the political affairs of Texas, as befitted the oldest and largest population center. For much of the colonial period, San Antonio was the capital of the province as well as the only entrepôt for supplies headed for Nacogdoches and La Bahia. In 1811–1813 Bexar had been a center of revolutionary activity and the site of a battle between royalist and insurrectionist forces. After Mexico's independence from Spain, Bexareños represented the province of Texas at the national congresses and, with the downfall of Emperor Agustín de Iturbide in 1823, took it upon themselves to establish a provisional governing committee (*junta*) for the province. When Tejanos formed a provincial deputation some months later, Bexareños made up most of the membership.<sup>12</sup>

This brief period of autonomy for Texas gave way in 1824 to union with Coahuila and a reduction in Bexar's influence in the affairs of the

<sup>10</sup>Hinojosa, *Borderlands Town*, 32–33; Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 214–215. For the 1820 population figures, see note 8. The outline of the debate on race and social structure can be found in Patricia Seed, "Social Dimensions of Race: Mexico City, 1753," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, LXII (Nov., 1982), 569–606.

<sup>11</sup>Census summary for reporting municipalities of the state of Coahuila y Texas, Jan. 2, 1832, NAT.

<sup>12</sup>Ayuntamiento minutes of Apr. 15, 1823, in Ayuntamiento Minutes Book (1821–1825), Jan. 17, 1821 (hereafter cited as Minutes Book I); Nettie L. Benson, *La diputación provincial y el federalismo mexicano* (Mexico City, 1955), 82–84. The story of the insurgency in Texas during this period is told in Julia Kathryn Garrett, *Green Flag over Texas: A Story of the Last Years of Spain in Texas* (1939; reprint, Austin, 1969).

newly formed state. In the state constituent assembly, created in 1824, Texas had but one deputy. When the constitution of Coahuila y Texas was adopted in 1827, the department of Texas was granted two representatives to the state legislature. As the population of the area grew, Texas was divided, in 1831, into two districts and, in 1834, into three separate departments.<sup>13</sup> Bexareños came to exercise control over a progressively smaller area, the one with the fewest Anglo-American inhabitants.

Until 1820, when La Bahia was allowed to establish an ayuntamiento, Bexar was the only Spanish community in Texas with a town council. Nacogdoches subsequently established one in 1825, and the Austin colony held its first municipal election in 1828.<sup>14</sup> The ayuntamiento was the arena in which the local elite consolidated its full leadership role, for electoral laws limited the franchise to only a small portion of the adult male population. The Bexar ayuntamiento of 1820 consisted of an *alcalde*, functioning both as mayor and judge of first instance; four *regidores*, or aldermen, who served as public inspectors and revenue collectors; and a *síndico procurador*, functioning as the city's attorney. The members of the ayuntamiento were aided by other prominent citizens, since no lawyers, scribes, or other officials of municipal bureaucracy were available. The size of the ayuntamiento fluctuated dramatically during the decade after 1820, expanding or contracting according to changes in national and state law.<sup>15</sup>

The principal concern of Bexar's city fathers was raising enough revenue to meet community needs. Bexar's sources of income were limited to rents from city-owned farmland, fines, proceeds from the sale of livestock with unknown brands, and taxes on unbranded livestock that was rounded up and on animals that were slaughtered within the city.<sup>16</sup> In the course of the decade the ayuntamiento seized every opportunity to expand the revenue base. Taking advantage of the political uncertainties of the early 1820s, the city completely reformed its finances and empowered itself to tax the export and import of horses, mules, wagon and mule loads, dances and serenades, and shops and market

<sup>13</sup>Tijerina, "Tejanos and Texas," 227-240; Charles A. Bacarrise, "The Union of Coahuila and Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXI (Jan., 1958), 341-349 (the *Quarterly* is cited hereafter as *SHQ*).

<sup>14</sup>José Ramírez to Martínez, Aug. 30, 1820; James McReynolds, "Mexican Nacogdoches," *Nacogdoches: Wilderness Outpost to Modern City, 1779-1979* (Nacogdoches, n.d.), 30; Eugene C. Barker, "The Government of Austin's Colony, 1821-1831," *SHQ*, XXI (Jan., 1918), 244-245.

<sup>15</sup>Selection of constitutional ayuntamiento, July 25, 1820; Martínez to ayuntamiento, Dec. 16, 1821; election returns for Bexar ayuntamiento (1822-1826), Dec. 21, 1822; election returns for Bexar ayuntamiento, Dec. 9, 1827, Dec. 21, 1828.

<sup>16</sup>See, for instance, ayuntamiento to Martínez, Nov. 15, 1821; municipal revenues and expenditures, Dec. 24, 1821; ayuntamiento to Agustín de Iturbide, June 24, 1822.

stalls. By January of 1826 further revenues came from a tax on irrigation water used on farmlands of the former missions. In 1830 the city began collecting rent on gaming and food stalls set up in the plazas during Christmas holidays.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, however, the revenue-raising powers of the municipal government continued to be controlled by state and national authorities and remained inadequate for the city's needs.

Bexar's dependence on the garrison for its livelihood is nowhere more clearly indicated than in the attempt to establish the National Bank of Texas. With the troops having gone unpaid for months, Governor Trespalcacios formulated a plan establishing a bank of issue to pay the soldiers in paper money until their salaries (paid in silver) arrived. Holders could redeem the scrip then, or, if they wished, they could pay their taxes and buy land using the paper currency. The bank issued notes in November and December of 1822, at which time a payroll arrived for Texas troops and bank operations were suspended. Negotiations with the federal government for the redemption of 2,000 paper pesos held by the city dragged on until 1829, and the silver was not received until a year later.<sup>18</sup>

Isolation also forced Bexareños to rely on their own limited resources for the administration of law and order, and they found it difficult to enforce dictates issued from remote centers of power. For several years after independence, Tejanos adhered to traditional legal procedures held over from the colonial period. Not until 1826–1827 did the state set up a formal system of courts, but enforcement of its provisions proved impossible. Bexar continued to administer local justice without trained lawyers, as it had since colonial days. Legal review and final adjudication of serious cases were matters for distant higher courts, and the resulting delays and complications plagued the justice system throughout the period.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Plans for funds formed by the ayuntamiento, Oct. 20, 1823; account book of municipal funds (1826–1827), Jan. 1, 1826; ordinance issued by Múzquiz, Dec. 7, 1830.

<sup>18</sup>Baron de Bastrop to Juan Martín de Veramendi, Mar. 12, 1825; José Antonio Saucedo to ayuntamiento, May 22, 1826; Múzquiz to José María Viesca, May 9, 1830; Elozúa to Rudencindo Barragán and Francisco Padilla, Sept. 9, 1830; Nicolás Flores, request for loan, Apr. 14, 1831; Law no. 634, May 8, 1829, Manuel Dublán and José María Lozano, *Legislación mexicana; ó, colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república* (19 vols.; Mexico City, 1876–1890), II, 106. For the establishment of the bank see Carlos E. Castañeda, "The First Chartered Bank West of the Mississippi: *Banco Nacional de Texas*," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society*, XXV (Dec., 1951), 242–256.

<sup>19</sup>State law no. 37 (June 15, 1827) redefined the jurisdiction and powers of Texas municipalities, while state law no. 39 (June 21, 1827) set forth the bases of a code for the administration of justice in Coahuila y Texas. Law no. 37, June 15, 1827, Coahuila y Texas, General Printed Series, BA (hereafter cited as GPS). For law no. 39 see Clarence R. Wharton, *The Jurisdiction of the Alcalde Courts in Texas Prior to the Revolution* (n.p., 1921), 5–6, 26–57.



The ayuntamiento assumed direct responsibility for maintaining public order. The city fathers themselves policed the city, acted as public inspectors, ordered arrests, and ran the city jail. Each barrio was headed by a regidor, who chose a barrio commissioner to assist him in reporting violations, resolving disputes, and making arrests. Later ordinances expanded these efforts, requiring the alcalde or the regidor on duty to lead eight armed citizens on nightly rounds between 9 P.M. and 3 A.M. Outside the city, law enforcement likely fell to the mission alcaldes and designated commissioners. In the fields beyond the settlements, rural judges (*jueces de campo*), chosen by the farmers and ranchers, preserved order and enforced agricultural regulations.<sup>20</sup>

The formal police apparatus could accomplish little without the aid and cooperation of the community. The law required, and city leaders expected, that citizens report violations and turn in offenders engaged in contraband trade, theft, or the pollution of streets and canals. Jail receipts show that community elites sometimes turned in their own household servants as punishment for thefts or other offenses.<sup>21</sup> The large military community, which was supposed to police itself, often ran afoul of civilian authorities. Chronic poverty often led soldiers to criminal activity and left them unprepared to meet their military responsibilities, with a resulting strain in civilian-military relations.<sup>22</sup>

Civil and criminal cases streamed steadily through the alcalde's court. In both types of cases the alcalde relied on a citizen fact-finding process, formalized by state decree in 1827. In this system, worthy citizens, called *hombres buenos* or *conjueces* (assistant judges), were chosen by the accused and the plaintiff to represent their cases. Responsible for examining witnesses, gathering pertinent information, and making recommendations to the court on how to proceed, the citizen *conjueces* functioned as grand juries, investigators, and counsels. Given the amount of legal detail and sheer paperwork and the lack of trained lawyers, it is little wonder that by 1829 community leaders were expressing the need for an additional alcalde to help handle the judicial burden.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>*Bando de buen gobierno*, Feb. 1, 1824, articles 12–14; *Ordnanzas [sic] municipales para el gobierno y manejo interior del ayuntamiento de la ciudad de San Antonio de Bexar* (Leona Vicario, 1829), articles 28–32 (hereafter cited as *Ord[e]nanzas* (1829).

<sup>21</sup>Múzquiz to citizens, Feb. 26, 1830; prison reports of Bexar jail (1826–1830), Jan. 1, 1826.

<sup>22</sup>José Salinas to Martínez, June 28, 1822; Martínez to Salinas, June 30, 1822; theft trials (1829–1831), Feb. 28, 1829.

<sup>23</sup>Records of conciliatory judgments, June 4, 1822, Mar. 21, 1825, Jan. 18, 1829, Jan. 14, 1831; state decree no. 25, in Saucedo to Salinas, Dec. 11, 1827; Juan N. Seguín and Luciano Navarro to ayuntamiento, Nov. 18, 1829. By a state decree of August 27, 1827, the alcalde had to prove the theft charge against the defendant at a hearing with two *conjueces* (one chosen by each party) in order to impose a sentence. State decree no. 7, H. P. N. Gammel (comp.), *The Laws of Texas, 1822–1897* . . . (10 vols.; Austin, 1898), I, 176–178.

An 1824 trial for the murder of a woman's husband by her reputed lover illustrates the delays created by requiring serious cases to be sent to distant courts for review. After taking a host of depositions in August, the *alcalde* forwarded the proceedings to the governor in Saltillo, because there was no local authority competent to conclude them. Since the new state of Coahuila y Texas still lacked a tribunal of justice, the governor returned the proceedings to Bexar, where the new *alcalde* had to forward them for review at the higher court (*audiencia*) of Guadalajara. That court ruled that Bexar's investigation had been deficient and returned the proceedings for further action. Apparently little more was done, however, perhaps because by that time—December of 1825—the prisoner had escaped (no great feat) and fled to Louisiana. This complicated case resurfaced in 1828, when the fugitive's father-in-law asked for his pardon and return from exile. Unable to locate the records on the case, the then current *alcalde* took more depositions. When one of the victim's own relatives urged that the fugitive be set free, the court concluded four years of proceedings by dropping the charges.<sup>24</sup>

Bexar's frontier position and need for manpower probably mitigated the sentences handed out to offenders. Although robbery was the most common crime on the books and was perceived as a serious threat to community stability, trial records show that sentences generally were not severe. One month in jail was a frequent penalty; six months was imposed for more serious cases; rarely was a longer sentence applied. Major and minor violations often drew fines ranging from four reales to two pesos, or the equivalent of a day's income for an artisan or four days' income for a field hand. Municipal ordinances set heavier fines for illegal fires and public intoxication, the former as a threat to life and property, the latter as an offense to public order and moral propriety. A state decree set still heavier fines of up to five hundred pesos for judges who failed their public duty.<sup>25</sup> Since most prisoners were subsistence farmers and manual laborers who lacked the money to pay fines, they were often sentenced to perform public work, such as cleaning streets and canals and constructing or repairing bridges and public buildings. The prisoners also spent many of their days working

<sup>24</sup>Criminal proceedings against Agapito A. (1824–1825), Aug. 5, 1824, Oct. 22, 1828.

<sup>25</sup>The state decree of August 27, 1827, formalized penalties for various degrees of theft. Gammel (comp.), *Laws of Texas*, I, 176–178. See also Víctor Blanco to tobacco administrator for Bexar, Aug. 28, 1827; theft trials (1829–1831), Feb. 28, 1829; report of contributors according to state decree no. 90, 1829 (State decree no. 90 provided for a graduated income tax. Gammel [comp.], *Laws of Texas*, I, 123–126.); *Bando de buen gobierno*, Feb. 1, 1824; record of fines and imprisonments (1832–1833), Jan. 14, 1832; *Ord[e]nanzas* (1829), articles 52–56.

on the houses or property of the city's elite. Private labor by each convict generated two reales a day, which the city could apply to prisoner upkeep.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to fighting crime, the ayuntamiento promoted public sanitation and community health. Repeated directives against dumping trash or washing clothes in the irrigation ditches (*acequias*), littering the streets, uncontrolled animals, and the sale of spoiled or unclean foodstuffs all attest to the city's awareness of the close connection between filth and disease. The city subjected violators to fines or to cleaning and construction work.<sup>27</sup>

In its efforts against filth and disease the community could rarely rely on professional medical services. For most of the period 1820–1832, no hospital or doctor existed in Bexar. The army assigned a physician to Bexar in 1820, but his fees and medicines proved too costly for most citizens. After his departure in 1822 the records mention only an occasional soldier or civilian attempting to provide some form of medical treatment as the need arose, especially during epidemics.<sup>28</sup> For the majority of everyday ailments, Bexareños probably relied on *curanderismo*, or folk medicine. Still practiced today in the Spanish Southwest, *curanderismo* combined European traditions, Amerindian practices, and a knowledge of the medicinal value of herbs to offer cures for a whole range of natural disorders, as well as for those thought to be induced by evil or sorcery.<sup>29</sup>

Recurrent epidemics of yellow fever, smallpox, and later cholera galvanized the Tejano settlements into systematic community-wide efforts. Perhaps because of the efficacy of measures adopted in Bexar or be-

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<sup>26</sup>Prison report of Bexar jail (1826–1830), Jan. 1, 1826; lists of tools bought by the ayuntamiento for the use of convicts (1828–1829), Nov. 27, 1828; account of days worked by prisoners on private houses and the church (1829–1831), Apr. 8, 1829; theft trials (1829–1831), Feb. 28, 1829. One female repeat offender was sentenced to two years at public works and was also subjected to public exhibition with a card reading *ladrona* (thief) stuck to her forehead. See theft trials for Sept., 1829 (filed under Feb. 28, 1829).

<sup>27</sup>*Bando de buen gobierno*, Feb. 1, 1824; *Ord[e]nanzas* (1829), articles 19–21.

<sup>28</sup>Ayuntamiento to Martínez, May 2, 18, 1820; López to Trespalacios, Nov. 11, 1822; Mateo Ahumada to J. E. Seguín, Nov. 30, 1825; Lucas de Palacio to J. E. Seguín, Jan. 21, 1827; José Flores to Saucedo, Feb. 8, 1827. Although these documents use such terms as *facultativo* (physician or surgeon) and *cirujano* (surgeon), it is clear from their contexts that these all refer either to soldiers or civilians performing simple medical services but not formally trained or permanently employed as physicians. The best summary of medical efforts in this period is Patrick I. Nixon, *The Medical Story of Early Texas, 1528–1853* (Lancaster, Penn., 1946).

<sup>29</sup>Nixon, *Medical Story*, 126, offers contemporary evidence of a native *curandera* giving medical testimony in a Laredo trial in 1824. *Curanderismo* was probably also practiced in San Antonio at that time, as indeed it still is all over South Texas and northern Mexico. A good modern discussion is Isabel Kelly, *Folk Practices in North Mexico: Birth Customs, Folk Medicine, and Spiritualism in the Laguna Zone* (Austin, 1965), which emphasizes the continuing role of home remedies and folk healers, most of whom are women. For further readings on the subject, consult Pat Ellis Taylor's excellent bibliography in Jewel Babb, *Border Healing Woman* (Austin, 1981).

cause of its relative isolation, San Antonio was spared the full force of the epidemics that ravaged Goliad and other centers to the east during this period.<sup>30</sup> Bexareños looked to the state government in Coahuila for instructions and medical supplies during these epidemic emergencies. The instructions came, but often the community had to improvise its own medications when supplies failed to arrive. In the smallpox epidemic of 1831 Bexar citizens not only found local substitutes for the medical supplies that never arrived from Coahuila, but also managed to inoculate children throughout the city with a vaccine extracted from an infected cow udder. That epidemic led to the establishment of Bexar's first community health commission (*junta de sanidad*), as had been called for in the municipal ordinances of 1829.<sup>31</sup>

The city played a limited role in providing for the welfare of its needy citizens. Bexar, like other cities of Spanish America, cared for its homeless and destitute through private charity, often in association with the Church. Although municipal ordinances reiterated the city's responsibilities in helping orphans, widows, the poor, the aged, and the infirm, no formal delivery apparatus existed. Private charity carried most of the burden of providing for the needy or unprotected, who were simply taken into the homes of those who could afford to receive them. The city's main burden was the care of prisoners, who were most likely from the poorest levels of society.<sup>32</sup>

Local revenues were inadequate not only for meeting the common welfare needs of poorer citizens and for carrying out the basic functions of municipal government, but even more so for funding the emergency programs needed from time to time. When the local corn supply gave out in 1823, the ayuntamiento was forced to borrow heavily from the fund for Indian gifts in order to buy supplies in Coahuila. In 1825 the city petitioned the state legislature for funds to repair its own jail and council chamber. For common emergencies the ayuntamiento and jefe político acted as coordinators of fund drives. In 1831 they managed to raise a respectable 316 pesos in anticipation of the smallpox epidemic that had already hit Goliad. When the epidemic

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<sup>30</sup>Nixon, *Medical Story*, 130, 138. San Antonio was ravaged, however, by a resurgence of cholera in 1834.

<sup>31</sup>Martínez to ayuntamiento, May 4, 1820; reports of smallpox cases by barrio, Mar. 6, 1831; establishment of the junta de sanidad, Jan. 22, 1831; junta de sanidad minutes, Jan. 23 [to Mar. 13], 1831; list of persons vaccinated, Feb. 20 [to Mar. 18], 1831.

<sup>32</sup>Woodrow Borah, "Social Welfare and Social Obligation in New Spain: A Tentative Assessment," *Actas y memorias*, Thirty-sixth International Congress of Americanists, Spain, 1964 (Seville, 1966), IV, 45-57; census report of Bexar, Jan. 1, 1820; jail regulations, article 10 [June 30, 1828]; *Ord[e]nanzas* (1829), article 40.

struck, private citizens provided more supplies for treatment and relief of the sick. In 1832, at the urging of the jefe político, a citizens' board collected supplies for relief of the destitute troops.<sup>33</sup>

The disastrous flood of July, 1819, strained the community's resources beyond capacity. Floodwaters swept away fifty-five dwellings, hitting especially hard in the Barrio del Norte, and claimed nineteen lives, most of them women and children. Unable to deal with a disaster of such proportions, the authorities of Bexar appealed to the citizens of Coahuila for relief. Though the aid was generous, it was a long time in coming. Local authorities were still distributing relief funds on Christmas Eve of 1821. In the meantime, many of the homeless found shelter with other families in the city.<sup>34</sup>

Education was also severely affected by the scarcity of public funds. Although Mexican authorities at all levels recognized the need for education, bankrupt treasuries and widespread poverty kept a coherent school system from emerging. The constitution of Coahuila y Texas, for instance, called for the establishment of "a suitable number of primary schools" in all the towns of the state. Throughout the northern frontier, schools sprang up in response to new aspirations for progress and autonomy, but many soon closed because they lacked funds for attracting qualified teachers. In San Antonio, Bexar's leaders continually voiced their commitment to public schooling during the decade, while practical considerations made a school a luxury they often could not afford.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the 1820s San Antonio managed to have a functioning school only sporadically. When one did exist, the burden of maintaining the school and teacher fell mainly on the community. In the early years of the decade the school depended solely on contributions from the parents of school-age children in Bexar. By 1827, after efforts to

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<sup>33</sup>Minutes Book I, Feb. 6, 1823; ayuntamiento to Trespacios, Feb. 6, 1823; Saucedo to ayuntamiento, Jan. 23, 1825; ayuntamiento to Múzquiz, June 18, 1830, and Múzquiz's statement of smallpox relief expenses, July 15, 1831; Múzquiz to Elozúa, Nov. 6, 1832; ayuntamiento minutes, Apr. 1, 1830, Spanish Minutes Book II, 1830-1835, San Antonio City Records Transcripts (BTHC; hereafter cited as Minutes Book II [SACRT]).

<sup>34</sup>List of persons drowned [on July 5, 1819], July 18, 1819; ayuntamiento report on distribution of relief funds, Mar. 10, 1820; Fr. Miguel Muro to Martínez, Mar. 13, 1820; Martínez's report on distribution of relief funds, May 14, 1820; ayuntamiento reports on distribution of relief funds, Dec. 24, 1821. The flood is described in detail in Martínez to Joaquín de Arredondo, July 8, 1819, Nacogdoches Archives (Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin); a copy of the letter appears in *The Letters of Antonio Martínez, Last Spanish Governor of Texas, 1817-1822*, trans. and ed. Virginia H. Taylor (Austin, 1957), 241-243.

<sup>35</sup>Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 232-233; constitution of Coahuila y Texas, Title 6, article 215, Gammel (comp.), *Laws of Texas*, I, 451. The story of educational efforts in Bexar, from colonial times to 1834, is told by I. J. Cox, "Educational Efforts in San Fernando de Bexar," *SHQ*, VI (July, 1902), 27-63.

have the state assume some of the education costs had failed, the city decided to devote the revenues collected on the slaughter of cattle, goats, and sheep to the maintenance of a school. Since these funds were not very plentiful, however, parents continued to carry most of the load. In order for this system to work, the wealthier parents had to make up for the small contributions of the poorer. Having the options of sending their children to school away from Bexar or of providing for their education in their homes, the wealthy of Bexar had little incentive to take up a disproportionate share of the cost.<sup>36</sup>

Under such fiscal constraints, keeping a school operating properly was virtually impossible. Teachers were apt to leave or abandon teaching if their wages fell too far in arrears (a frequent occurrence).<sup>37</sup> When open, the school operated on the Lancasterian system, which was popular in Mexico at the time because it allowed teachers to handle large classes by using advanced students as tutors. The curriculum was basic: the fundamentals of arithmetic, reading, and writing; the Catholic catechism; some lessons in civics; and, for the more advanced, some knowledge of grammar. Although absenteeism was a chronic problem, approximately one hundred students attended the Bexar school in 1832. The teacher that year reported that forty-four students were learning to read and that fifty-six could read books. Twenty-nine were beginning to write, fifteen could write adequately, and twelve could write well. Progress in mathematics, however, lagged; only eleven students were able to add fractions, and only three could divide them.<sup>38</sup>

Such school supplies as slates, paper, catechisms, and books were always dear because they had to be ordered from Mexico City or New Orleans. The state ordered the ayuntamiento to provide supplies free to many of the needy children who could not afford to buy them. In these circumstances, the donation of copies of *The Life of Saint Peter*, the gift of one hundred pesos in memory of a deceased wife, or the exchange of one of the school's Spanish-English dictionaries for a proper Spanish one, represented monumental strides.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Minutes Book I, Mar. 15, Aug. 4, 1822, June 8, 1823; minutes of the ayuntamiento, May 25, 1820; ayuntamiento to Saucedo, Apr. 14, 1825; ayuntamiento to José Ignacio de Arispe, Apr. 14, 1826; ayuntamiento to Arispe, Mar. 15, 1827, draft enclosed in Arispe to ayuntamiento, Feb. 10, 1827; school fund ledger (1828-1835), Jan. 1, 1828; Chabot, *With the Makers of San Antonio*, 34, 199, 203.

<sup>37</sup>Minutes Book II (SACRT), Jan. 7, 28, July 1, 1830, Apr. 14, July 28, 1831; J. N. Seguin to Múzquiz, June 7, 1829; Múzquiz to ayuntamiento, Nov. 18, 1829; contract for teacher, July 28, 1831; Cox, "Educational Efforts," 46-47.

<sup>38</sup>Writing exercises, Mar. 13, 1832; report on school, Dec. 31, 1832; school regulations, Mar. 13, 1828.

<sup>39</sup>Múzquiz to ayuntamiento, Feb. 12, 1828; José María Letona to Múzquiz, Oct. 12, 1831; Minutes Book II (SACRT), Jan. 26, Feb. 6, 1832.

The desire to obtain knowledge went beyond efforts at establishing a school, though the scantness of the record on the reading material available in Bexar makes analysis difficult. On the frontier, practical knowledge was of primary consideration. In addition to the ayuntamiento's file on remedies for epidemic diseases, printed by the state and national governments for use by such isolated communities as Bexar, instructional materials on the development of agriculture and industry were sent to Bexar in 1830 by the governor of Coahuila y Texas. Books on the wool and silkworm industries and on apiculture also apparently made the rounds.<sup>40</sup>

Practical knowledge also included keeping up to date on political developments. Contact with the outside world not only consisted of the movement of merchants and soldiers through Bexar, but also included a regular weekly mail service within and outside Texas. The available pamphlets, broadsides, pronouncements, newspapers, and other printed documents in the Bexar Archives show that Bexareños had the opportunity to be well informed on political developments throughout Mexico.<sup>41</sup> Governor Trespalcacios even brought a printing press to Bexar in April, 1823, with the hope of better integrating Texas into the nation, but the *Correo de Texas*, the newspaper Trespalcacios hoped to found, apparently never saw print. After a few months in San Antonio the press was sold to the provincial deputation at Monterrey, and all that remains of its work in Bexar are a bill for the printing of some government decrees and some examples of published documents.<sup>42</sup>

Bexar also participated in the greater Mexican society through the celebration of various secular and religious feasts. For the entire Bexar community, these holidays were a source of diversion and conviviality

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<sup>40</sup>Saucedo to Veramendi, Oct. 21, 1825; minutes of meeting at Jefatura, Jan. 22, 1831; "Receta para la cólera morbo, dada por d. Pascual de Aranda, profesor de medicina," reimpresso en Monclova, GPS, governmental undated; Múzquiz to Miguel Arcinega, Dec. 29, 1830.

<sup>41</sup>GPS, governmental and nongovernmental documents. The mail carrier between San Felipe de Austin and Bexar earned 740 pesos per annum in 1826, not an insubstantial amount. Agricultural workers, by comparison, earned only half that sum. Post office account ledger, Apr. 4, 1826; report of contributors according to state decree no. 90, 1829. The shortest possible amount of time for round-trip correspondence with Mexico City was approximately two months (see, e.g., Arredondo to Martínez, June 13, 1820).

<sup>42</sup>Eugene C. Barker, "Notes on Early Texas Newspapers, 1819-1836," *SHQ*, XXI (Oct., 1917), 127; Lota M. Spell, *Pioneer Printer: Samuel Bangs in Mexico and Texas* (Austin, 1963), 69; Marilyn McAdams Sibley, *Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers before the Civil War* (College Station, Tex., 1983), 40-42; ayuntamiento of Monclova to Trespalcacios, May 10, 1823; José Angel Benavides to publisher of the *Correo de Texas*, May 21, 1823; ayuntamiento of Sombrerete to governor of Texas, May 26, 1823; bill for printing services, July 10, 1823; Luciano García to Felipe de la Garza, July 17, 22, 1823. For examples of the documents printed in Bexar see "Noticias del gobierno de Texas," June 11, 1823, and "Junta gubernativa de la provincia de Texas," July 8, 1823, GPS, governmental.

in an otherwise harsh and dangerous world. Public feasts and ceremonies also helped to focus community feelings on the symbols of religion and patriotism and on the leadership of the elite. On the holidays, mass was sung, the ayuntamiento held no meetings, prisoners were spared from public work, and all other work ceased.<sup>43</sup>

The city's elite was responsible for organizing public feasts. In the early 1820s the city still followed the Spanish custom of designating prominent citizens to assume responsibility for the expenses and preparations of religious celebrations. Sometimes those honored had to request relief from this obligation because they lacked the necessary money. Preparations for celebrating the day of Mexican independence, September 16, were different. Overall control rested with a patriotic committee (*junta patriótica*), which appointed subcommittees to organize the festivities and collect donations.<sup>44</sup>

Fortunately, we can get some idea of how these independence day celebrations were prepared and carried out from the records of the one held in 1829. On the eve of the holiday the citizens gathered for a procession through the streets, announcing the coming festivities with the pealing of bells, gun salutes, and the playing of music. Early the next morning the authorities and citizens attended mass and a Te Deum, followed by another procession in the afternoon and then a speech on the meaning of the day.<sup>45</sup> The biggest celebration came that evening:

On the night of the 16th a great ball will be held at the town hall, for which a committee will be made responsible. . . . The committee will also be responsible for holding a minor dance at another place for the entertainment of the public.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, on the morning of the 17th, the town would again gather at the church, where a mass for the dead would be sung.<sup>47</sup>

Clearly, the establishment of a republican form of government had not greatly altered social relations as they were manifested in public

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<sup>43</sup>A number of financial and administrative documents shed some light on the quantity, if not the quality, of the social life of Bexar. Travelers' accounts also describe some of the social events. A good bibliography of these works may be found in Marilyn McAdams Sibley, *Travelers in Texas, 1761-1860* (Austin, 1967), 201-223.

In 1822 the ayuntamiento failed to meet, or met only to attend public ceremonies, on five occasions in order to celebrate feast days. The council did meet once a week the rest of the year.

<sup>44</sup>Minutes Book I, Aug. 23, 1821, Nov. 7, 14, 1822; junta patriótica program for celebration of independence day, Sept. 12, 1829, Sept. 10, 1830.

<sup>45</sup>Celebration of independence, Sept. 12, 1829. See also celebration of independence, Sept. 10, 1830.

<sup>46</sup>Celebration of independence, Sept. 12, 1829.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.



ceremony. Separate dances segregated the elite from the rest of the community, and the formalism of the processions and speeches and the release of prisoners held on minor charges reinforced the elite's leadership of the community. To celebrate the victory of Mexican troops over the Spanish at Tampico in 1829, no fewer than five dances and balls were held, including two public dances on September 27. The list of contributors to the festival fund reveals total pledges of more than 326 pesos.<sup>48</sup>

Celebrations were not the only opportunities for dancing in Bexar. Several contemporary reports of San Antonio emphasize the Bexareños' love of dancing and gambling.<sup>49</sup> Though the moralistic tone of some of these accounts betrays their writers' biases, the revenue documents from Bexar indicate that these Tejanos did greatly enjoy dancing. The fact that the ayuntamiento in 1823 decided to tax dances and serenades (*gallos*) suggests the popularity of these forms of entertainment, a popularity stemming from the limited number of alternative forms of diversion available. In 1827, for example, the city collected thirty-six pesos from licensing dances at the rate of four reales a dance. Thus, at least seventy-two dances were held in private residences that year, in addition to the untaxed public or official balls. In other words, Bexareños could attend more than one dance a week. Dances were held only on weekends or on the evenings before feast days.<sup>50</sup>

The other major diversion, gambling, was also widespread. It involved cockfights, horse races, and card games throughout the year, and other games of chance during the Christmas festival. The custom in Bexar was to hold feasts from the first week of December through the beginning of the new year. During this time the plazas were turned over to vendors and game operators, who paid rental fees to the municipality for their stalls or concessions.<sup>51</sup>

Solemnizing these religious and secular celebrations was apparently the major role of the Church, except for dispensing the sacraments. Refugio de la Garza, the parish priest of Bexar throughout the Mexican period, had a worldly bent. He was deeply involved in politics and

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<sup>48</sup>While 326 pesos was collected for celebrating the Mexican victory, the town raised only 195 pesos for the actual military effort. Junta patriótica program of celebration of Mexican victory, Sept. 11, 1829; contributions for war effort, Aug. 14, 1829; celebration of independence, Sept. 10, 1830.

<sup>49</sup>José María Sánchez, *Viaje a Texas en 1828-1829* (Mexico City, 1939), 30; David Woodman, Jr., *Guide to Texas Emigrants* (1835; reprint, Waco, 1974), 35. See also Downs, "Mexicans in Texas," 74-79.

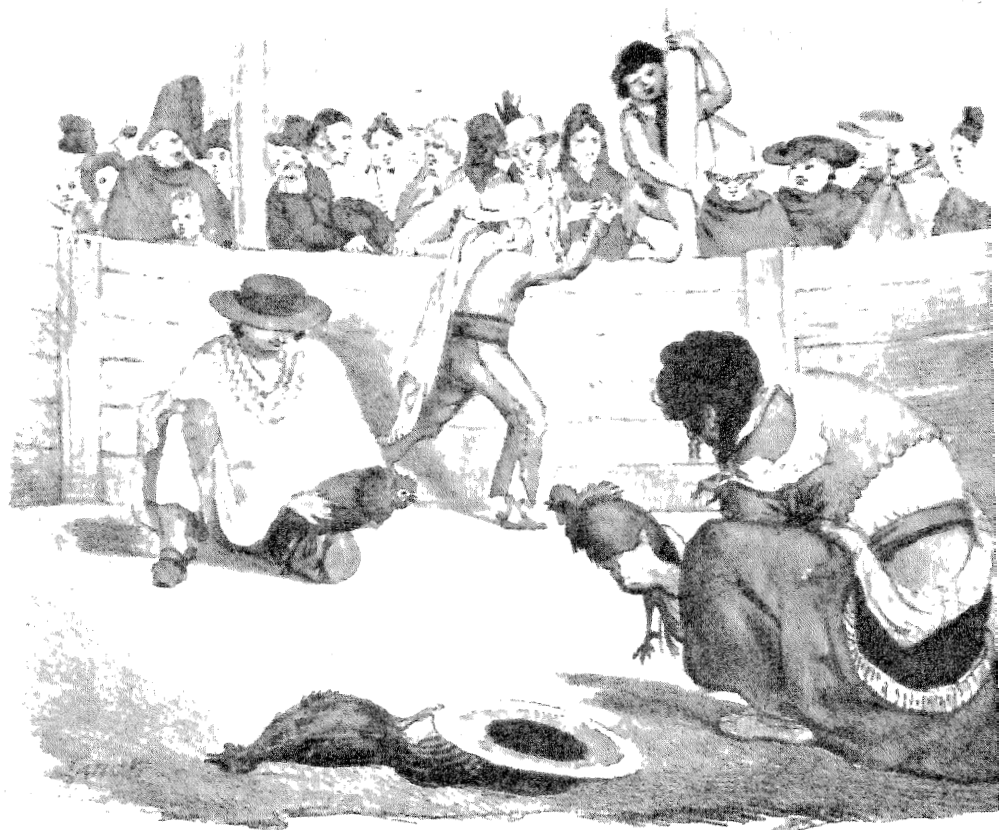
<sup>50</sup>Municipal funds account book (1826-1827), Jan. 1, 1826; plan for funds formed by the ayuntamiento, Oct. 20, 1823.

<sup>51</sup>Minutes Book I, Nov. 21, 1822, July 1, 1824; ordinance issued by Múzquiz, Dec. 7, 1830.



### HERDER MEXICAN

Claudio Linati, an Italian-born artist, lived and traveled in Mexico in 1825–1826. His lithographs of typical Mexican figures, such as this herder, were printed in *Trajes civiles, militares y religiosos de México* [Civil, Military and Religious Costumes of Mexico] (Brussels, 1828). The plates reproduced here are from a facsimile edition published by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in 1956. Courtesy Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin.



Pelea de gallos.  
*en el año de 1880*

The cockfight. Linati noted that people from all social levels attended cockfights and participated in the betting.

was one of the wealthiest men in the community. While representing Texas at the national Congress in 1822 he lobbied for the final secularization of the Texas missions; he was later to have considerable holdings of former mission lands. He was also one of the largest owners of livestock in Bexar. An inspection of parish records and finances in early 1825 showed carelessness and negligence in the running of the parish and considerable impropriety in the handling of its funds by lay administrators. As one prominent historian has noted, Father de la Garza "and his equally worldly assistant, José Darío Zambrano, both sadly neglected their spiritual duties—Saying Mass only occasionally, never preaching, and seldom, if ever, visiting the sick or comforting the afflicted."<sup>52</sup>

While the Church might have neglected the spiritual life of the community, the San Antonio River Valley was blessed by nature with a mild climate, fertile soil, and abundant water. Its economic horizon, however, was seriously limited by physical isolation, sparse population, Indian hostilities, and chronic lack of specie. Poverty and exposure to frontier dangers were constant themes of Bexar memorials and petitions throughout the 1820s. Tejano leaders understood that in order for the region to prosper it must be populated, linked with other centers in the region, and freed from heavy government controls of its economy.

By the 1820s San Antonio had developed only a modest agrarian economy that centered on subsistence farming, with few profits and little surplus for export. Most cultivators worked small family plots, while many others worked as tenant farmers or day laborers. The wealthier farmed enough land to provide a small surplus for the local market, which consisted largely of the impoverished military sector. These wealthier landowners gradually increased their holdings during this period, especially in the lands of the former missions. Many Bexareños also participated to some degree in the cattle industry, already a century old. Ranching at this time consisted less of cattle raising than of cattle chasing, since large herds of branded and unbranded cattle and horses, dispersed by storms, Indian raids, and other agents, ran wild through the brush country around Bexar. The elite landowners supplied beef to the local market and occasionally exported cows or horses to Coahuila or Louisiana. The livestock export business, how-

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<sup>52</sup>Census for tax on *dulas* at the San Antonio missions, [1824]; census of Barrio del Norte, July 19, 1829; Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage*, VI, 307 (quotation), 314-316, 319-321.



CORTINA'S AMERICANS.

Le Monte

1898

Group of gamblers.

ever, was saddled with government restrictions and beset by Indian raids and a shortage of capital and manpower.<sup>53</sup>

The skilled trade and commercial sectors of the Bexar economy grew more in size than in importance in the decade after 1820. The twenty-five artisans and nine merchants in 1820 had increased to forty-five artisans and seventeen merchants ten years later. Though both sectors nearly doubled during this period, their economic significance was less impressive. The artisans still had little work, a fact which suggests that their listed skills were not necessarily the reason for their presence in Bexar.<sup>54</sup> Nor had the manufacture of such basic items as blankets, hats, and shoes yet developed to any extent in Texas.<sup>55</sup> The need to import these and other necessities gave some impetus to Bexar merchants. While a few of them owned stores, others merely engaged in the occasional importing and sale of Mexican and foreign goods. The nascent merchant sector included a handful of foreigners, but consisted mostly of the native Tejanos who held the land, livestock, political power, and social prestige.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, merchants' inventories for the period list not only food staples and basic manufactures, but also the wines, liquors, and fine fabrics that only the more prosperous could afford.<sup>57</sup> Freightage also played a role in this sector, though its full significance will require further study. Ox carts and mule teams from Bexar plied trade routes east to La Bahía (Goliad) and Nacogdoches and south to Laredo, Monclova, and Saltillo. Though undertaken on an occasional

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<sup>53</sup>Census for tax on *dulas* at the San Antonio missions, [1824]. A detailed narrative of the first seventy years of the cattle industry in Texas is provided in the representation of the San Fernando cabildo to Martínez Pacheco, 1787. A translation of the document by John Wheat is available in Bexar Archives Translations, Series I, volume 150, in the Bexar Archives. For roundup rules and problems see Navarro to Martínez, Aug. 20, 21, 24, 1821; Navarro to López, Aug. 22, 1821; ayuntamiento statement on roundup, Aug. 23, 1821. For stock exports see Martínez to Veramendi, Jan. 17, 1822, and ayuntamiento to Saucedo, May 28, 1825.

<sup>54</sup>Census of Bexar, Jan. 1, 1820; census reports for barrios Norte, Sur, and Valero, and for *jurisdicción de misiones*, Aug. 10, 1829; report of contributors according to state decree no. 90, 1829. Since both the census reports and the contributors' list give an individual's barrio of residence, the relative amount of economic activity by neighborhood can be determined. During the entire period under study, the Barrio del Norte was the most economically diversified part of the city. More research is required to determine the amount, value, and causes of this economic growth.

<sup>55</sup>Ayuntamiento report, May 1, 1821, typescript, Robert Blake Research Collection, X, 232 (BTHC); ayuntamiento to state congress, Dec. 19, 1832.

<sup>56</sup>Bexar censuses for 1820 and 1829; register of foreigners residing in Bexar (1826–1830), Nov. 2, 1826; list of foreigners residing in Bexar, Apr. 20, 1828.

<sup>57</sup>List of persons paying taxes on shops during January, 1824, Jan. [31], 1824; merchant invoices for J. Ollie, July 5, 1828, George H. Robb, Sept. 13, 1828; Francisco Ruiz, Apr. 6, 1829, D. Mills and C. Stinnell, May 22, 1830, Ignacio Herrera, Oct. 21, 1830, and various merchants, Oct. 4 [to Nov. 29], 1831.

basis only, freighting required a city license and thus provided another source of much needed municipal revenue.<sup>58</sup>

Mexican trade laws for frontier Texas perpetuated the old Spanish colonial aim of protecting the native economy from smuggling and foreign intrusion. Among their strict controls on the importation of merchandise, the laws gave special emphasis to tobacco, a major source of tax revenue for the national treasury. Foreign tobacco was kept out in order to protect Mexican tobacco, over which the government held a monopoly.<sup>59</sup> To enforce these controls, the Mexican government attempted to restrict the importation of goods to a single port of entry (Galveston) and required a passport or customs permit for transport and travel.<sup>60</sup>

Tejanos continually sidestepped these laws, however, and a growing contraband trade involved many Bexar citizens. The chronic protests of exasperated military and treasury officials, the high level of illicit trade that persisted in the area throughout this period, and the relative wealth of some citizens would suggest that Bexareños were in the thick of the smuggling business.<sup>61</sup> The Bexar ayuntamiento admitted as much in 1820, in instructions to its provincial deputy. The ayuntamiento offered, however, the following justification:

We repeat the request for the opening of the said port [of Matagorda] in order to destroy, at its roots, the odious contraband trade across the frontier of which some of the citizens of this place are accused. Yet, if some practice it, it is not from ambition to accumulate riches, but because of the miseries they suffer and the ease with which they can relieve their sufferings. And, if this is the only relief which these inhabitants receive, there is no reason for depriving them of it by seizing upon the contraband goods which they accumulate.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Dr. John Beales's journal, 1833, in William Kennedy, *Texas: The Rise, Progress, and Prospects of the Republic of Texas* (1841; reprint, Fort Worth, 1925), 396. Further details on carts and freighting can be pieced together from the following documents: record of municipal taxes from Bexar merchants (1827–1831), Jan. 31, 1827; invoices of goods to be brought from La Bahía by Ignacio Herrera, Oct. 21, 1830; lists of subscriptions to the fund for rebuilding the parish church, Dec. 31, 1828; invoice and petition for customs permit from Juan Vilars, Jan. 21, 1831; Luciano Navarro's list of goods for sale in Santa Rosa by Juan Martín de Veramendi, Feb. 10, 1831; invoice for the sale of goods in Goliad by Eugenio Navarro, July 9, 1831; and permits issued to Bexar merchants to bring goods from Leona Vicario, Oct. 4 [to Nov. 29], 1831.

<sup>59</sup>Anastasio Bustamante to Elozúa, Nov. 4, 1827; Saucedo to department of Texas, Aug. 13, 1826; Bustamante to Saucedo, Oct. 16, 1827.

<sup>60</sup>Ayuntamiento to Bustamante, Oct. 25, 1827; Bustamante to ayuntamiento, Oct., 1827; Veramendi to alcalde, Sept. 11, 1828.

<sup>61</sup>López to Martínez, Oct. 8, 1821.

<sup>62</sup>Instructions to Aldasoro, in Mattie Austin Hatcher (trans.), "Texas in 1820," *SHQ*, XXIII (July, 1919), 67 (quotation), 68.

The persistence of contraband trade in Texas reflected the desire of Tejano merchants to free up the flow of goods throughout northern Mexico. While land, cattle, and family might bring them power and social prestige, commerce held the key to prosperity. Tejanos envisioned themselves as the center of an extensive commercial system linking Bexar with Louisiana, Coahuila, Chihuahua, and New Mexico.<sup>63</sup> Aspiring to be the agents as well as the beneficiaries of Texas's economic development, Bexar's leaders pushed for colonization, the opening of Gulf ports, and exemption from taxes, embargoes, and other burdens.

The promotion of agriculture, trade, and industry depended on a sufficient population and labor force. Texas was supposed to be colonized by other Mexicans, but the region never could draw enough settlers from the interior. Anglos and other foreigners, on the other hand, were pouring into Texas in ever greater numbers under the liberal provisions of the March 24, 1824, colonization law. With their industry, skills, and families, the new settlers seemed to guarantee achievement of the long-sought goal of regional development. Consequently, Tejano leaders pinned their hopes on Anglo colonization and made every effort to protect foreign immigration from the Mexican government's attempts to restrict it. They faced their greatest challenge in the Law of April 6, 1830, which sought to halt further North American immigration. Tejano spokesmen came to the defense of Anglo-American interests, even where this involved an accommodation to the practice of slavery, by now outlawed in Mexico.<sup>64</sup>

The promotion of trade also depended on adequate port facilities. The port of San Bernardo, on Matagorda Bay, was the closest Gulf Coast landing for Bexar's seaborne trade. Nevertheless, the Mexican government closed that port in 1827 and decreed that all shipments must enter Texas at Stephen F. Austin's newly requested port at Galveston. Bexar merchants, protesting the extra distance and bad roads to which the Galveston route would subject them, responded by continuing to use San Bernardo illegally. Although the hard times facing Bexar led the authorities to tolerate this defiance for a while, the commandant general reiterated the ban in October of 1827 in order to curtail rampant smuggling. When the military turned a deaf ear to their

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<sup>63</sup>Ayuntamiento instructions to provincial deputation, in Martínez to Aldasoro, Nov. 15, 1820; ayuntamiento to state congress, Dec. 19, 1832.

<sup>64</sup>Blanco to Saucedo, Sept. 9, 1826. The standard treatment of this collaboration between Tejano leaders and Anglo colonizers is Eugene C. Barker, "Native Latin American Contribution to the Colonization and Independence of Texas," *SHQ*, XLVI (Apr., 1943), 317-335. See also Eugene C. Barker, "The Influence of Slavery in the Colonization of Texas," *SHQ*, XXVIII (July, 1924), 1-33.



renewed protests, the Tejanos took their case to the national Congress, where they finally achieved their goal. In October of 1828 the government of Coahuila y Texas was authorized to reopen San Bernardo, with a customs house at La Bahia.<sup>65</sup>

Tejano leaders complained repeatedly to the central government that their hard and dangerous existence on Mexico's northern frontier entitled them to certain privileges and exemptions. Though they never overcame the poverty and neglect that plagued the region, Tejanos won some occasional concessions. Their most important victory was a September 1823 decree that all effects of any category, national or foreign, introduced into Texas for the direct consumption of its inhabitants were to be free of duty for seven years. In 1827 the state legislature also decreed that in Texas such staples as corn, beans, and chili were to be free from the *alcabala*, or excise tax. In 1831 the legislature declared a six-year exemption from all duties for growers of cotton and livestock in Monclova and Bexar, as well as a twelve-year exemption for sugarcane and grapes and their products.<sup>66</sup>

Bexar gave eloquent voice to its needs in a petition to the national government in 1829, as the seven-year grace period on imports was about to expire. Bexareños argued that the same conditions that had justified the original concession still applied. In mother-child imagery they emphasized that, since the social body of the department was still in its infancy, Texas was not robust enough to sustain itself and therefore needed the care and nurturing of the mother. In more practical terms, they pointed out that new import duties would require salaries and enforcement machinery that would themselves cost money and would force the price of goods upward, thus reducing the ability of merchants to sell and of consumers to buy. Eventually public revenues would decline, and any new duties imposed to offset this decline would only encourage more contraband. Therefore, Bexareños argued, Texas needed this exemption for at least twelve more years. A short extension was apparently granted.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Bustamante to ayuntamiento, Oct., 1827; ayuntamiento to Bustamante, Oct. 25, 1827; Múzquiz to ayuntamiento, May 9, 1828; Veramendi to ayuntamiento, Oct. 16, 1828 (published as a decree on Oct. 19, 1828).

<sup>66</sup>State decree no. 176, Apr. 29, 1831, Gammel (comp.), *Laws of Texas*, I, 291. The congressional decree of Sept. 29, 1823, was discussed locally in provincial deputation to E. Navarro, May 31, 1824. For other exemptions see Blanco to Saucedo, Sept. 14, 1827, published by Saucedo on Oct. 21, 1827, and Múzquiz to Bexar administrator of revenue, Aug. 2, 1831.

<sup>67</sup>J. N. Seguín and L. Navarro to ayuntamiento, Nov. 18, 1829; Gaspar Flores to Múzquiz, Dec. 3, 1829. Bexar Archives documentation on the final results of the petition is lacking, but a similar petition was made in the memorial of 1832.

The achievement of occasional victories and concessions, coupled with the great promise of immigration for future development, raised Tejano expectations to new levels. Bexar leaders understood that their local progress depended on the development of the entire region. Most significantly, in the early 1830s they still considered themselves to be the principal spokesmen for all of Texas. For those in other settlements as well as for themselves, Bexareños yearned for greater participation in national life and greater control over local destinies. Tejano leaders sought both political and economic integration in order to increase their roles in domestic and international trade and in the representation of their interests in the legislature. They sought to improve municipal and departmental government through adequate staffing and administrative reforms. Their continual, though frustrated, efforts at public education reflected their hope of overcoming Bexar's cultural isolation.<sup>68</sup>

The Tejanos' high expectations foundered on the realities of life in Texas. Bexareños lived in geographical, economic, and social isolation. Unlike Santa Fe, for instance, which opened direct economic links to the United States and consequently overcame much of its physical isolation, Bexar had yet to establish economic ties or to improve communications with other regions. Both Santa Fe and Bexar failed to attract substantial numbers of immigrants, who tended to settle in new communities. In Texas, Bexar stood in painful contrast to the thriving Anglo settlements growing up to the east. Political initiative shifted away from Bexar to the more dynamic Anglo-dominated areas. In the distant state government, Bexareños suffered chronic neglect, while the new colonies grew in influence and representation.<sup>69</sup>

Lacking sufficient local self-government, the Tejanos were never able to solve their greatest problems. Sources of revenue were largely controlled by state and national authorities, and the sources available to the ayuntamiento never generated the funds needed for carrying out

<sup>68</sup>Martínez to Aldasoro, Nov. 15, 1820; ayuntamiento to state congress, Dec. 19, 1832.

<sup>69</sup>Weber, *The Mexican Frontier*, 125–130, 179–183, 228; Tijerina, "Tejanos and Texas," 239–242, 261–271, 276, 279–281, 295–296.

Because community studies are only now beginning to be done for the colonial and Mexican periods, comparisons of San Antonio with other Mexican frontier settlements are of limited value. Besides some of the works cited in the course of this article, the following studies provide some insight into conditions in various towns during the Mexican period: Henry F. Dobyns, *Spanish Colonial Tucson: A Demographic History* (Tucson, 1976); Frances Leon Swadesh, *Los Primeros Pobladores: Hispanic Americans of the Ute Frontier* (Notre Dame, 1974). Four very helpful dissertations are LeRoy P. Graf, "The Economic History of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1820–1875" (Harvard University, 1942); Ramon Arturo Gutiérrez, "Marriage, Sex and the Family: Social Change in Colonial New Mexico, 1690–1846" (University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1980); James Michael McReynolds, "Family Life in a Borderland Community: Nacogdoches, Texas, 1779–1861" (Texas Tech University, 1978); Jessie Davies Francis, "An Economic

municipal programs in education, public works, and welfare. Bexar also failed to achieve the local administrative development it so badly needed; thus the community was forced to struggle on without trained judges, notaries, or a municipal bureaucracy. The money-poor and underpopulated community was still unable to sustain vital professional services in law, medicine, and education. During this period Bexar's economy could never provide enough work for its modest number of skilled artisans, nor did it even develop basic manufactures.

The accumulation of Tejano grievances—administrative, political, military, and economic—culminated in 1832 in a bold declaration from the Bexar ayuntamiento to the state legislature. In its review of the Tejano experience under the Mexican republic, this Bexar Memorial surveyed the desolate condition of Texas settlements and reiterated the constant themes of hardship and danger. For the first time in public, however, the Bexareños blamed most of the troubles in Texas on its union with Coahuila. They scored the state legislature for its continual neglect of the Texas judicial system, military defense, and public education. The Law of April 6, 1830, which sought to halt further North American immigration, struck even deeper at Tejano interests: by barring industrious and law-abiding North American settlers but failing to stop illegal adventurers and vagabonds, the new law seriously hindered the development of Texas.<sup>70</sup>

The ayuntamiento concluded its declaration with a series of urgent demands, including the passage of a new colonization law favorable to both Mexicans and North Americans, the establishment of an effective civil militia for frontier defense, the creation of an adequate judicial system, state support for public education, a ten-year extension of the exemption from import duties on items for local consumption, and increased Texas representation in the legislature. The Bexareños warned the legislature to act quickly before these conditions led to the total ruin of Texas, and closed with the ominous suggestion that the desperate inhabitants might be forced to take matters into their own hands.<sup>71</sup>

The frank declarations of the ayuntamiento were significant for several reasons. Motivated by the Tejanos' new level of expectation and

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and Social History of Mexican California (1822–1846): Volume I: Chiefly Economic" (University of California, 1935), available in a facsimile edition published by Arno Press under the same title in 1976.

<sup>70</sup> Ayuntamiento to state congress, Dec. 19, 1832. Reaction to the stopping of immigration is discussed in Alleine Howrene, "Causes and Origin of the Decree of April 6, 1830," *SHQ*, XVI (Apr., 1913), 378–422, and Barker, "Native Latin American Contribution."

<sup>71</sup> Ayuntamiento to state congress, Dec. 19, 1832. For an excellent translation, see David J. Weber (ed.), *Troubles in Texas, 1832: A Tejano Viewpoint from San Antonio*, trans. Conchita Hassell Winn and David J. Weber (Dallas, 1983).

frustration regarding the role of Texas in the Mexican republic, the memorial signaled a departure from the more conservative behavior of the Bexar leadership in the 1820s. The fact that the grievances were penned at the direct urging of Austin and other Anglo leaders reflected the consonance of Tejano concerns with those of the Anglos at this stage of the Texas drama. The tenor of the memorial evinced a strong desire for local autonomy, with the implied goal of eventual independent statehood. Finally, the Bexar Memorial represented the high-water mark in Texas's attempt to remain loyal to the Mexican nation.

After 1832, relations between the Mexican government and the Anglo-American colonists deteriorated in an atmosphere of alleged despotism, mutual suspicion, and deepening hostility. The Tejanos of Bexar were caught in the middle of a crisis that they had not created and could not control. The rush of events of the mid-1830s further isolated the Bexareños from Mexico and Anglo Texas alike. Finally, the great hopes that Bexareños had nurtured for so long went up in the smoke of the Texas Revolution. Though many Tejanos ultimately sided with the revolutionaries against Santa Anna, the independence movement not only wrested fortune from their hands but also left them outsiders in their own land. Thus the Tejanos of San Antonio de Béxar were forced to seek their destiny on the margin of a new Texas society.