

**THE TEJANO-ANGLO ALLIANCE: TEJANOS, ETHNICITY, AND
POLITICS IN TEXAS, 1832-1865**

A Thesis

by

RALPH EDWARD MORALES III

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2008

Major Subject: History

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Joseph G. Dawson
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ABSTRACT

The Tejano-Anglo Alliance: Tejanos, Ethnicity, and Politics in Texas, 1832-1865.

(August 2008)

Ralph Edward Morales III, B.A., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Joseph G. Dawson

This thesis discusses the alliance between Tejanos and Anglos in Texas politics in the years before and during the Civil War. To examine this era, original documents and correspondence from prominent Tejano and Anglo politicians are used, as well as military correspondence between Confederate officers during the Civil War. A number of secondary sources dealing with Texas politics, the Civil War, ethnicity, and national identity were also consulted.

This project begins with an examination of the antebellum conditions in Texas, and the political crisis which necessitated the convergence of Tejano and southern Democratic interests. Following this, the Civil War career of Colonel Santos Benavides, the most important Tejano to serve the Confederacy is discussed. Next, the Tejanos are placed in context with German and Irish immigrants during the antebellum and Civil War era.

The major conclusion reached by this thesis is that the Tejanos fought for the Confederacy out of a sense of duty to their home, but also possibly because of patronage and pressure to assimilate into Anglo society.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Rosendo Rafael Morales and Modesta Sosa Morales, as well as to my Grandparents, Amelia and Efrain Sosa and Anastacia and Manuel Morales.

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I would like to thank Dr. Joseph G. Dawson for his guidance and dedication to helping me create the best thesis possible. Also, Dr. Armando Alonzo helped guide the formation of this thesis with his work on Tejano agency in south Texas. Special thanks is owed to Dr. Michelle Taylor-Robinson, who added interesting political perspectives to this thesis.

This project would not have been possible if not for the help of the dedicated archivists at the Texas State Archives, the Center for American History, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library at the Alamo, and the San Antonio Public Library. The map enclosed within was provided by the wonderful staff of the Sterling C. Evans Library Map Room, especially Kathy Wiemer, associate professor and Coordinator of Map and GIS Collections and Service, and Miriam Olivares, GIS Specialist who were kind enough to find a contemporary map of Texas and scan it for inclusion in this thesis.

Special thanks are also due to the staff of the History Department at Texas A&M University, including Barbara Dawson, Mary Johnson, Judy Mattson, and Rita Walker. Likewise, my colleagues in the graduate program deserve my thanks for being there to listen to my ideas.

Last, but certainly not least, my parents and grandparents are my inspiration for this project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the annexation of Texas in 1845, thousands of people of Mexican descent became citizens of the United States of America.¹ Tejanos encountered a number of challenges to their status as citizens in the early years of the American period in Texas.² From then on, and despite assurances given to the Mexican government by American diplomat Nicholas Trist, Mexican Texans faced discrimination and expulsion at the hands of their Texan neighbors hungry for vengeance from the Mexican War.³ Following the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, and the secession of several southern states, the Mexican population was forced to rethink its position relative to that of its Anglo neighbors. While some immigrant groups, notably most of the large German population of Texas, opposed secession and slavery, Mexican communities in Texas showed outward support for the Confederacy and for secession.⁴

Historian Jerry Thompson, in his book *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray*, shows that when the call went out from Texas governor Sam Houston to decide whether or not Texas would secede from the Union, most of the counties of south Texas which had majority Tejano populations favored secession. Two of these counties, Webb and Zapata, did not record a single dissenting vote for the Union. It is true that there were no men of Mexican descent present at the

This thesis follows the style of *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*.

convention to decide on secession that opened on January 22, 1861, but there were representatives present from all of the counties in Texas which held an ethnic Mexican majority population.⁵ This thesis will reevaluate Thompson's approach to examine how the Tejanos supported the Confederacy as the first step towards the foundation of Tejano/Mexican American nationalism and identity.⁶

At the time of secession, approximately 23,200 Texans were of Mexican descent, out of an estimated 604,000 Texans counted by the 1860 U.S. Census.⁷ Mexican Texans turned out to enlist as the state began to prepare for war. As with many Americans, Tejanos were divided amongst themselves, and served on each side during the war.

Among those who volunteered for Confederate service was Santos Benavides. He later rose to the rank of colonel, becoming the highest ranking Confederate of Mexican ethnicity. Santos Benavides answered the call to serve his state on January 16, 1862 as a captain of a Texas state partisan cavalry unit, which was not formally attached to the Confederate Army.⁸ John "Rip" Ford, a Texas Ranger and Confederate officer, said that "The Benavides family did the Confederacy a great favor by declaring for her."⁹ As will be evident in this thesis, Benavides, his family, and his men, while not being a major part of the war, diversified the ethnic composition of the Confederate army and provided a key part to the defense of Texas against Unionists, Indians and outlaws.

Through his actions as a military officer, Benavides earned the respect, and sometimes friendship, of his senior officers, all of whom were Anglos.

This thesis will also look at the implications of Tejano service during the war as a step towards Americanization. Americanization will also be taken to mean Tejano-American nationalism, or identity as American citizens by Tejanos and Mexican Americans. The focus of this argument is that Tejanos saw the Confederacy as “American” since they had little exposure to the “America” that was defined in the East as being the northern states. I argue that Tejanos began to form a new identity that began to detach itself from Mexico and to start identifying the southern concept of what being American meant.

Several historians offer analysis about national identity. In his book *Boundaries*, historian Peter Sahlins examines the shift towards a national identity in the Cerdanya region, which lies across the Franco-Spanish frontier in the Pyrenees Mountains. This thesis draws upon some of Sahlins’ analysis about the formation of a national identity, but will have a much tighter focus: Sahlins examines nearly two centuries of conflict and accommodation across the newly established national border between France and Spain.¹⁰ Sahlins tracks the creation of a national identity from 1659 through 1870 in a part of Europe that traditionally had been part of one country, but was eventually divided into two, much as Texas was divided from Mexico in 1848. One way that Sahlins explains the shift in national identity involves the military service of the men of the Cerdanya to their new nations. This thesis will argue that the foundations for

Tejano-American nationalism had their roots in the era of the American Civil War. In his book *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850*, Andres Resendez links Sahlins' argument with the question of national identity and the division of traditionally unified people by political boundaries. Of particular interest is Resendez's description of Tejano support for the Texan revolutionaries in their struggle against Mexico.¹¹

This thesis concludes that, although there was much conflict between Tejanos and Anglos during the antebellum period in Texas, there were also years in which the two ethnicities accommodated each other. Several works on the early American period in Texas will assist in this examination. One of the most important books is by historians Arnaldo De Leon and Kenneth L. Stewart on the antebellum conditions for Tejanos.¹² For Anglo-Tejano relations in the antebellum period, this thesis draws upon *Not Room Enough: Mexicans Anglos and Socioeconomic Change in Texas, 1850-1900* by Stewart and De Leon. These authors discuss the competition by Tejanos and Anglos in the antebellum period and beyond it. *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* by De Leon is another important work that examines the areas of conflict and accommodation between Anglos and Tejanos in the antebellum period.¹³ Likewise, historian Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa investigates the changes that took place in Laredo and provides helpful background to the place where Benavides and his family were from.¹⁴ Together these historians have added valuable understanding both to the origins

of the Tejano community in Texas and the ways in which Tejanos adapted to their new conditions and nationalities as Americans.

While Jerry Thompson, Ella Lonn, and Ralph Wooster have explored the role of the Benavides Partisan Cavalry Company, and later, the Benavides Cavalry Regiment, this thesis casts fresh light on the motivations of the soldiers. Furthermore, additional analysis produces reassessments about the background and economic standings of the troopers of the Benavides Cavalry Regiment.¹⁵ Out of myriad of reasons why these men decided to serve the Confederacy, this thesis will argue that the primary motivation factor in their service was the defense of their homes. Although many Anglos had treated their Tejano neighbors with disdain by their Anglo neighbors, this thesis will argue that they saw the founding of the Confederacy as a way in which to ally themselves with their fellow Texans and show that they were as “American” as anyone in Texas.

This thesis approaches topics from four perspectives: that of Santos Benavides, his superiors, the officers in his unit and the men serving under them. The lack of primary sources from the Benavides Regiment is a hindrance. But works of scholarship on the behavior and motivation of the average soldier, such as James McPherson's *For Cause and Comrades* and works on Tejano political behavior, will give insights into some of the rank and file of the Benavides Regiment. McPherson argues that many of the men who fought in the Civil War believed that they were carrying on the “Spirit of 1776”, much as their grandfathers did against Britain in the American War for independence. By

comparison, some of the Tejanos who fought for the Confederacy may also have drawn on a revolutionary family history to decide to take up arms. Some of these men doubtless had fathers or grandfathers who fought against Spain for Mexican independence in 1821 and against Mexico for Texan independence in 1836.¹⁶

James McPherson in *For Cause and Comrades* addresses other motivations for soldiers, such as the values of patriotism, economics, opposition to or support for slavery, peer pressure, seeking adventure, and so on.¹⁷ McPherson highlights these valuable concepts, and they can be used to evaluate Tejano wartime efforts, but he does not make mention of Tejanos or other Hispanics fighting during the Civil War. However, only one book has dealt with the Mexican Americans of Santos Benavides and his cavalry unit, Jerry Thompson's *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray*. Thompson also discusses some of the units of Mexican descent that served in the Union army, most notably the 1st and 2nd Texas Cavalry Regiments (Union). Thompson argues that the reason many of these men joined either Confederate or Union units was due to some connection to a rigid socio-economic-political system tied to the Mexican patronage system.¹⁸

It is important to provide additional context and background for Mexican Americans' participation in the war. In his book *Secession and the Union in Texas*, historian Walter Buenger offers a brief discussion on the parts played by prominent and influential Mexican Texans in the secession of Texas. In the

anthology *Mexican Americans in Texas History*, historian Miguel Gonzalez Quiroga examines the new occupational and social opportunities opened up to Tejanos during the Civil War, such as work transporting cotton to Mexico as part of the Matamoros trade to escape the Union naval blockade of southern ports.¹⁹ John Denny Riley's dissertation, "Santos Benavides: His Influence on the Lower Rio Grande, 1823-1891," investigates Santos Benavides both before and after the war, but does not analyze the wider implications of why so many of the Mexican Texan population fought for the Confederacy. Riley argues that the Civil War created a divide between Tejanos of South Texas and Mexicans.²⁰ Riley concludes that Benavides fought for the Confederacy due to his revolutionary background in fighting for the Federalists during the Mexican Civil War from 1838-1840.²¹ Roberto Ramon Calderon's dissertation on the political climate in Laredo from 1846-1900 discusses the political and economic rise of the Benavides family to their position of prominence before the Civil War. Calderon also covers the workings of the Democratic Party in south Texas before and during the war.²² He concludes that, during their period of prominence in Laredo, the Benavides family was able to attach themselves to the Democratic Party and use the tension with other political parties and with factions within the Democratic Party to consolidate their power. Lastly, Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa's work *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870* examines one of the places along the Rio Grande in which Tejano political participation remained high, even continuing past Anglo settlement in the area. Hinojosa shows that

Laredo made the difficult transition from Spanish to Mexico and eventually to American while maintaining some of its own identity. While these works did not intend to address the Tejano military participation during the Civil War, they do provide a necessary context in which to place the men that fought for the Confederacy. These works also show that Tejanos had agency in deciding their allegiance heading into the Civil War, rather than simply being forced by events to pick one side or the other.²³

Aspects of the service of Santos Benavides and other Mexican American Civil War soldiers remain elusive. Benavides and his men have been mentioned in many works, but it is apparent that a synthesis of these works is needed to fully comprehend the war career of Benavides and to better understand the reasons behind Mexican Texans' decision to join one side or the other in the American Civil War. While Thompson's work examines closely the career of Benavides, it is only the first step toward the greater understanding of the Tejano involvement in the war. Since Thompson wrote his book in 1977, a number of other works examining Tejano political culture in the antebellum era have been written.²⁴ These works and other research assist in reaching some new conclusions about the motives of Tejano leadership and their actions behind support of the Confederacy.

Historians have been disappointed by the apparent lack of primary sources about Mexican Americans in the Civil War. This is due in large part to the high level of illiteracy among Mexican American enlisted men. Thompson

tells his readers that illiteracy amongst Tejano soldiers, especially enlistees, approached 95 percent.²⁵ Most primary sources related to the Benavides Cavalry Regiment come from the officers, and most of that is the correspondence between Santos Benavides and his commander in San Antonio, Colonel John Ford. Other valuable sources are the papers of unit quartermaster and Santos Benavides' brother-in-law, Lieutenant John Z. Leyendecker.²⁶

This thesis begins its examination on the Tejanos and the Benavides Regiment's participation in the war in chapter II with the War for Texas Independence from 1835-1838 and the ways in which Tejanos were forced to adapt to the new society being formed around them. That chapter also deals with the necessary political and social adaptations made by Tejanos leading up to the Civil War which led them to cast their lot with Southern secessionists. It will also proceed to examine aspects of the units under Benavides during the war, and trace their remarkable wartime career, with an emphasis on the inner functions of the unit, taken from Leyendecker's records. Lastly, it will argue if there were fundamental differences between Tejanos and other ethnic settlers in Texas and other ethnic regiments during the war. That chapter will also use the U.S. Census records in 1870. Using these records shows that there was little, if any, substantial change in the economic plight of the men who fought for the Confederacy. This thesis concludes that the men of the Benavides Cavalry Regiment fought for the Confederacy for a number of reasons, including loyalty to their homes, a preexisting revolutionary culture from Mexico, and for the hope

that service with their Anglo neighbors would normalize relations with them in Texas.

The second chapter of this thesis also will discuss Tejano-Anglo relations from the time of the Texas Revolution from 1832 until 1845 and the early American period in Texas from 1845 until 1861. This chapter will argue that Tejanos and Anglos were forced into roles of accommodation in certain areas, such as Laredo, while in other areas, Tejanos were subjected to harsh exclusionary methods. It will show that on the road to Texas secession, Tejano political culture led many of them to support the Confederate States. They made this choice during the antebellum period, and in particular, the decade of the 1850's, despite an increasing amount of political and ethnic tension between Tejanos and their Anglo neighbors. Chapter II also views the events leading to an alliance of expediency between Tejanos and Anglos which would ultimately lead them to an alliance during the American Civil War. It also discusses the reasons why Tejanos decided to serve for the Confederacy. Chapter II serves to introduce and discusses important figures in the road toward Americanization, such as Jose Antonio Navarro, Juan Cortina, and Santos Benavides.

Chapter II also analyzes the antebellum Tejano political culture, the various ways of accommodation to Anglo settlement, and the treatments of Tejanos by their Anglo neighbors.²⁷ For example, a General Order distributed in 1838 by Sam Houston dealt with the treatment of Tejanos then under the jurisdiction and control of Texas troops. Houston's order and various sources

left from this time beg certain questions about both Santos Benavides and his soldiers. This thesis will ask the question of why would Tejanos be so eager to serve a state which had done little but persecute them since their annexation in the Union in 1845 and before. The conclusion that it reaches is that they did so for a variety of reasons, which will be discussed further in chapter III.

Chapter III of this thesis focuses on the military career of the Benavides Cavalry Regiment from its roots as a Texas Partisan Cavalry Company organized by Captain Santos Benavides. This chapter asserts that the Tejano contribution, while small in comparison to other Texas units, was nonetheless vital to the Confederate cause *within the state*. It will also seek to challenge certain findings of other historians in regards to Tejano participation in the war. Chapter III shows that a patronage system, which has been supposed by some historians to explain the number of Tejano soldiers, cannot explain the large geographical area from which these men were drawn. It also contends that the Tejano soldiers had multiple motivations, such as a revolutionary background and willingness to defend their homes, which resulted in their decisions to fight for the Confederate States. Using the Compiled Service Records of the Santos Benavides Regiment, the soldiers came from a wide area of South and Central Texas. This will help dispute the claim by Thompson that men were drawn to the Benavides Regiment out of duty to a patron, as not all of the men, certainly not those from as far away as San Antonio, could have known Benavides.²⁸

Chapter IV discusses aspects of ethnicity among settlers in Texas from the Texas Revolution to the end of the American Civil War. This chapter will demonstrate how Tejanos compare, and are in contrast to, other ethnic settlers in Texas. It will analyze why Tejanos, as opposed to some Germans, were willing to fight for the Confederacy.²⁹ Chapter IV will also compare the conditions under which both ethnic groups were treated. This chapter will place the Benavides Cavalry Regiment within the larger context of other ethnic regiments to serve with both Union and Confederate armies, most notably those regiments drawn from Irish communities in both the North and South.³⁰ This chapter argues that many of the misgivings that Anglo Americans in the mid-nineteenth century had in regards to the Irish were also applicable to Tejanos. Finally, this thesis will assert that the Civil War era was the beginning of an American national identity within the Tejano community in South and Central Texas.

This thesis will contend that Tejano service to the Confederacy during the American Civil War was among the first steps to the creation of a Mexican American identity. It also draws a contrast with the conclusions by historian Jerry Thompson that indicate that Tejanos served out of a perception of economic gain and subservience to a *Patron* class. It will conclude that Tejanos service in the American Civil War was done out of loyalty to their new nation and to their homes. Lastly, it will establish that the misgivings that Anglos had towards Tejanos, both ethnically and militarily, were also exhibited towards Irish and German immigrants.

Endnotes

¹ Robert A. Calvert, et al., *The History of Texas* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2002), 117, 126.

² In this thesis, I use the word Tejano to describe a person of Mexican heritage who was born or had permanent residence in Texas. The term is used primarily because that is how a Mexican-American resident of Texas in 1832 and on would identify themselves. Mexicano will be used to describe someone of Mexican birth and citizenship.

³ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁴ Anne Bailey discusses German anti-slavery sentiment in *Invisible Southerners: Ethnicity in the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006). There, She mentions that the German populace itself was divided on the slavery issue, with many of the Forty-Eighters, or those who participated in the abortive 1848 revolution in Germany, being decidedly against it, while Germans who had immigrated before 1848 were at the very least indifferent towards it.

⁵ Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue & Gray* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1977; reprint, Austin: State House Press, 2000), 11.

⁶ Tejano-American nationalism, or identity as American citizens by Tejanos and Mexican Americans will also be taken to mean “Americanization.”

⁷ Calvert, et al., *History of Texas*, 117, 120.

⁸ “Compiled Service Record of Santos Benavides” in *Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers who Served in Organizations From the State of Texas*,

Microfilm from Texana Collection, San Antonio Public Library. Hereafter referred to as *C.S.R.*

⁹ John S. Ford as quoted in Walter Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 90.

¹⁰ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). On 267, Sahlins states that ethnically similar people in the French and Spanish Cerdanya identified themselves by the political boundary in the Pyrenees Mountains as either French or Spanish. This thesis argues that the same process begins in south Texas during the American Civil War. The process, as Sahlins argues, was an ongoing and gradual one. The same claim is made by Riley.

¹¹ Andres Resendez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹² Arnaldo De Leon and Kenneth L. Stewart, *Not Room Enough: Mexicans, Anglos and Socioeconomic Change in Texas, 1850-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993). See also: De Leon and Stewart, *Tejanos and the Numbers Game: A Socio-Historical Interpretation from the Federal Censuses, 1850-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

¹³ Arnaldo De Leon, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982). See chapters on "Politics and Tejanos," "The Rural Scene" and "Ordinary People."

¹⁴ Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983).

¹⁵ For other mentions of the Benavides Cavalry Company and Regiment, see Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948, 2002) and Ralph Wooster, *Texas and Texans in the Civil War* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1995).

¹⁶ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 104.

¹⁷ For references on soldiers and motivation in the American Civil War, see McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*. See also Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

¹⁸ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 7.

¹⁹ Emilio Zamora, et al., eds., *Mexican Americans in Texas History* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1999).

²⁰ John Denny Riley, "Santos Benavides: His Influence on the Lower Rio Grande, 1823-1891" (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Christian University, 1976), 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

²² Roberto Ramon Calderon, "Mexican Politics in the American Era, 1846-1900: Laredo, Texas" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1993).

²³ Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870*, 84-85. The concept of "agency" has been used by historians to describe independence of

action by those in a system of oppression or restriction by a different race or class. Chief amongst these historians is Eugene D. Genovese. In *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World The Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974; New York: Vintage Books, 1976), Genovese contends that “Slaves had achieved a degree of psychological and cultural autonomy and therefore had successfully resisted becoming extensions of their masters’ wills” (148). As such, Tejanos carved out their niche in a system where they were subjected to the whims of their Anglo neighbors. Their support for the Confederacy should be taken to mean that they made a conscious decision to try and escape the status quo that had been forced upon them since Texas was annexed to the United States. Tejanos became more than just a subjugated class by becoming more like their Anglo neighbors. See also E. P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963). Thompson looks at class awareness and the ability of lower classes to see that they are aware of their surroundings and are not simply instruments of the upper propertied classes.

²⁴ For works on Tejano political culture, please see works cited by De Leon, Riley, Hinojosa and Calderon in note 8.

²⁵ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 7.

²⁶ See correspondence between John Ford and Santos Benavides in the John S. Ford Papers at the Texas State Archives and the John Z. Leyendecker Papers at the University of Texas Center for American History, Austin.

²⁷ Materials from the Rabia Santiago Collection at the Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library in San Antonio, Texas, assisted this part of the evaluation.

²⁸ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 7. In her book *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, Ella Lonon also agrees that the main impetus for Tejano service was monetary gain or to curry favor with landed elites.

²⁹ For discussions of Germans in Texas, and their feelings on slavery and the Civil War, see Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York: Edward Dix, 1857; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), Walter Kamphoefner, *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), and Bailey, *Invisible Southerners: Ethnicity in the Civil War*. The latter work includes a chapter discussing the participation of German Texans in the war and the reasons for and against serving in the Confederate Army.

³⁰ For discussions on Irish regiments for both the Union and Confederacy, see Patrick R. Guiney, *Commanding Boston's Irish Ninth: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Patrick R. Guiney, Ninth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry*, Christian G. Samito, ed., (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), Susannah Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle : Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), and Ed Gleeson *Rebel Sons of Erin: A Civil War Unit History of the Tenth Tennessee Regiment (Irish), Confederate States Volunteers* (Indianapolis: Guild Press of Indiana, 1993).

CHAPTER II

TEJANO AND ANGLO SETTLEMENT: CONFLICT AND COLLABORATION ALONG THE RIO GRANDE, 1836-1865

Beginning in the 1820's, Americans traveling west and seeking new lands to farm and settle encountered the farthest outposts of Spanish settlement in Texas. Following Mexico's independence from Spain, the Mexican government began to encourage settlement of Texas, in order to stimulate economic growth of the border region, and to encourage political cooperation between Americans and Mexicans.¹ When the descendant cultures of Spain and England met in Texas, conflict inevitably ensued. The two parent nations had been enemies for centuries. Although Mexico and the United States both revolted to rid themselves of the rule of their colonial parents, prejudices and perceptions that these two cultures brought with them into Texas contributed to conflict between Tejanos and American Anglo settlers.

Both Tejano and Anglo settlers in Texas made concerted efforts to reconcile their differences. While the antebellum and Civil War alliance between Tejanos and Anglos was often tenuous at best, it did allow for a unique example of the steps undertaken by two different peoples to bridge the gap between their cultures and nations. Although the end results may have been disappointing to both Anglos and Tejanos, the brief alliance showed that, under certain

circumstances, Tejanos could form an important part of Texan, and American, life.

When Anglo settlers began arriving in Texas during the 1820's, they found the frontier between the United States and Mexico devoid of any kind of governmental control. Therefore, the new Anglo settlers rarely had to accommodate to Mexican life. Rather, they retained their Anglo-American identity as English speaking Protestants. Despite strong efforts by the Mexican government to absorb Anglo settlers into Mexico's culture, such as making Spanish the official language of Texas, making the settlers Mexican citizens, and requiring Texans to convert to Roman Catholicism, Anglos retained their identity as Americans.² Since many of the American settlers came from the southern portion of the United States, the Mexican ban on slavery was a concern to those Mexican authorities that administered the American colonization of Texas. Stephen F. Austin, like his father Moses Austin, sought to obtain rights for Americans to colonize the northern territories held by first Spain then Mexico following their war for independence. When negotiating settlement rights in 1823, Stephen Austin ensured that African slaves could be brought into Texas.³

A major part of the settlement rights was the Mexican Constitution of 1824, in which the Federalist government of Mexico allowed for provincial freedom, and gave some autonomy to the local governments, rather than have power vested exclusively in the central government in Mexico City. The roots of the Texas Revolution lay in the repudiation of this constitution by Mexican

President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna in 1835.⁴ Historian Andres Resendez argues that regardless of the victor of the Federalist-Centralist conflict, Texan slaveowners came to the realization that neither side would be committed to the preservation of slavery in Texas.⁵

Directly following the Texas Revolution in 1838, Tejanos found themselves in a difficult situation. They could either leave Texas as Mexicans or create a new Texan and American identity for themselves. Since the Texans had been successful in their bid for independence from Mexico, this ushered in a new government, and despite some Tejano support for the Texas separatists, especially from those who lived in Bexar County, negative Anglo perceptions still prevailed.⁶ The Texas Revolution had been brutal for both Anglos and Tejanos, but many Tejanos found themselves victimized by both sides, regardless of their affiliation. Anglos distrusted Tejanos, and suspected them of continued allegiance to Mexico. Mexican authorities considered all settlers in Texas who did not show outright support for Santa Anna and the Centralists in Mexico to be in league with the rebellious Texans. Many Tejanos, most notably Juan Seguin, supported the move for Texas independence, and served in several engagements, including San Jacinto.⁷ Andres Resendez has a unique theory as to why these men sided as they did. According to him, Tejanos, while having a deep personal commitment to the state of Mexico, made the choices necessary for survival.⁸ Furthermore, Resendez asserts that the people of Texas had considerable room in which to maneuver politically. He contends that

all people in Texas had choices and exercised their ability to make them in a very confined political arena.⁹ These two assertions, taken together can be used to prove that, although their choices were limited, Tejanos did have a choice in deciding their loyalties. As important as this was during the Texas Revolution, Tejanos again exercised their choice by siding with the Confederacy in 1860-1861.

Juan Seguin, descendant of Mexican elites who helped settle Texas, was one of many Tejanos to serve during the Texas Revolution.¹⁰ Seguin's father, Erasmo Seguin, had aided Moses and Stephen Austin in their efforts to bring Anglo settlers from the United States in an effort to help modernize northern Mexico.¹¹ Seguin came to prominence during the Texas War for Independence against Mexico as the captain of a small company of mounted volunteers.¹² Seguin was even present at the Alamo, but escaped as a messenger to warn Colonel James Fannin of Santa Anna's advance into Bexar and San Antonio.¹³ Seguin and his men were well renowned for their hatred of Santa Anna. Houston initially sought to protect them from their bloodthirsty compatriots during the battle of San Jacinto. Seguin protested this and was eventually allowed to join the attack on Santa Anna's position.¹⁴ Houston wrote Seguin in 1837 assuring him of the high esteem in which he was held by his President.¹⁵ After San Jacinto, Seguin was cited for his bravery by Sam Houston, and it is clear some social interaction occurred between the two veterans in the years following the war.¹⁶ The actions of Juan Seguin during the Texas war for independence,

coupled with those of the men who fought in the Federalist-Centralist wars in Mexico, served to establish the basis for Texan nationalism for some Tejanos, as these men were indeed fighting against their former countrymen. Likewise, the Texas Revolution and the Federalist-Centralist wars created a distinctly Tejano revolutionary tradition that may have inspired those men who served in the American Civil War.

A large number of non-combatants decided to flee contested areas during the Revolution. Those who supported the Revolution and doubted its success followed the Texan Army on its flight towards American Louisiana. Likewise, Tejanos who supported Santa Anna or simply did not wish to engage themselves in the conflict fled towards Mexico. This movement did not stop with the surrender of Santa Anna after San Jacinto. Many Tejanos fled towards Mexico after Santa Anna's surrender to escape the hands of Anglos seeking revenge on Mexican civilians for the recent war. Among those exiles was none other than Colonel Juan Seguin, one of the major heroes of the Texas Revolution.¹⁷

Those that stayed in the new Texas Republic found themselves the targets of vengeful Anglos who did not wish to share their nation with Tejanos. Despite official orders to the contrary, Tejanos had their property seized and had to leave towns now controlled by Anglo settlers. Many Tejanos were forced from their homes by recent arrivals from the United States, and the situation was not helped by the indifference of Texan commanders such as Thomas J. Rusk.¹⁸

None other than Sam Houston, commander of the Texas Army during the Revolution, urged the soldiers of the Texas Republic to treat Tejano settlers with “all moderation and humanity that is possible.”¹⁹ It is worth noting that the orders to the Texan Army for dealing with Tejano settlers were made out not in English, but in Spanish. Whether the order was meant to be distributed to Tejano soldiers or whether it was meant to reassure Tejano settlers is uncertain. Judging from the general behavior of the Texan army, it is likely that Houston intended the order to be read or distributed to the local inhabitants of areas through which the army was moving. Houston seemed to imply that good treatment of Tejano settlers was a point of honor to the Texas Army. But the fact that Sam Houston demonstrated concerns of how Tejanos would be treated by his men is especially telling of the adversarial relationship between Tejanos and the new Texas Republic. That Houston needed to involve the sensibilities of the men as soldiers also gives evidence to how vital he thought Tejano-Anglo relations were.²⁰

Sam Houston was certainly a controversial figure to many of his contemporaries for his friendship with what many Anglos considered were the undesirable portions of society, such as Indians and rowdy whites.²¹ This reputation was probably not enhanced by Houston’s familiarity with some of the more prominent Tejanos of the early Texas Republic. As hostilities once again rose with Mexico in 1844, Houston wrote President Santa Anna of Mexico asking for the release of Jose Antonio Navarro, then a prisoner of Mexico from

the abortive Santa Fe Expedition.²² Houston appeared to be close to the Navarro family, as when word reached him of the plight of Jose Antonio Navarro, Houston visited Navarro's family near Seguin, Texas, in order to give assurances of aid to secure his release.²³

While not mentioning the Tejano question overtly in his writings, Sam Houston was still open in his dealings and affections for Tejanos. Among these were Juan Seguin and his wife, Gertrudis Flores Seguin, with whom he hoped to make a social call sometime in 1842.²⁴ This connection with the Seguins does not necessarily translate into Anglo acceptance of Tejanos as a whole, but it does show that high-ranking Anglo officials, like Sam Houston, were socially active with influential Tejanos in the community, such as the Seguin family.²⁵

Jose Antonio Navarro was another influential figure in the movement towards both Americanization and Tejano support of the Confederacy. Prior to the Texas Revolution, Navarro had been a mid-level Mexican politician, who lent his voice to Stephen Austin's call for slavery in Texas. At the onset of the Texas Revolution, Navarro, whose family lived in Bexar County, served on the constitutional committee to formulate the creation of a Texas Republic. Navarro stayed active in Texas politics and his family sent several sons to serve under the Confederate banner in Texas. One of them served under Santos Benavides as a captain.²⁶

Tejanos living north of the Nueces Strip became more accommodating of Anglos following Texas independence from Mexico. During the period from

1836 to 1845 most border contact between Anglo Texans and Tejanos was limited to this area north of the Nueces River, as the boundary between Mexico and Texas had not been solidified. Following Santa Anna's defeat, the Mexican government did not recognize the creation of the Texas Republic and asserted that if it did exist, the border was located at the Nueces River in South Texas (see figure 1).²⁷ Texas, however, considered the Rio Grande the dividing line between Texas and Mexico. Therefore, people in the Rio Grande valley, where few Anglos had settled during early colonization, became isolated from Anglo encroachment.²⁸ The Rio Grande valley became a staging area for frequent military incursions into Texas by Mexicans eager to reclaim it as part of their nation.²⁹ These forays into central Texas made life considerably more difficult for Tejanos seeking to accommodate to Anglo control. Incidents of ethnic violence spread in the years leading to the U.S-Mexican War, with vigilante groups running Tejanos off of their land.³⁰

Lamar, then governor of Texas, annexed it as part of the United States.³¹ With the border pushing further south, into areas more densely populated by Tejanos, Anglos encountered more resistance to Americanization. In Laredo, instances of Tejano/Anglo violence rarely occurred, and Anglos in an area demographically dominated by Tejanos began to acculturate and accommodate to Tejano ways of life. In this area, it was important that Tejano landowning families intermarried with Anglo elites to solidify their political hold on South Texas and to ensure that they retained possession of their land.³² Many Tejano families in South Texas maintained their political dominance of the region. One of the best examples of this was the Benavides family of Laredo.

The Benavides family had longstanding ties to the northern bank of the Rio Grande and had a revolutionary tradition well in place before Santos Benavides sided with the Confederacy. This family was descended from Tomas Sanchez, one of the original founders of the town of Laredo.³³ The patriarch of the family in the years before the Civil War was Bacilio Benavides, uncle to Santos and a prominent merchant and political leader along the Rio Grande. Basilio Benavides was involved in the abortive attempt to separate northern Mexico from the control of its national government in the late 1830's and was deeply involved in the Centralist-Federalist war as a guerrilla for the Federalist cause.³⁴

Following the annexation of Texas and the Southwest, incidents of violence occurred along the border as Anglos came to dominate political life.

The most notorious of these incidents was the Cortina War of 1859. Juan N. Cortina was the son of wealthy landholding elites in Brownsville who was angered by the blatant land seizures by Anglo Texans.³⁵ The Cortina War began when Juan Cortina attacked a city marshal in Brownsville, Texas while the marshal was attempting to arrest a drunken Tejano.³⁶ Following this incident, Cortina founded a bandit group that attacked American Anglos and wealthy Tejanos from south of the river. Sam Houston, then governor of Texas, asked that the people of Mexico, and by extension, Tejanos, not be blamed for the actions of a few rogues. Rather, Houston concluded that “Mexicans are a mild, pastoral and gentle people” and that “demagogues and lawless chieftains” were those responsible for outrages against Texas.³⁷

According to historian Arnaldo De Leon, Cortina’s acts of violence could be interpreted in different ways. Although some historians hold that Cortina sought to avenge the Tejano loss of power in south Texas, others argue that he acted out only in the spirit of banditry.³⁸ These perceptions of Cortina’s intentions were also present at the time. Many Anglos saw Cortina as a brigand, but many Tejanos saw his actions as someone who was standing up for their traditional rights and as one who stood firm against blatant Anglo land seizures. Cortina himself wrote that he sought vengeance for the outrages committed upon Tejanos. “Many of you have been robbed of your property, incarcerated, chased, murdered and hunted like wild beasts,” wrote Cortina in one of his “Pronunciamientos,” or proclamations that he wrote trying to inflame Tejano

sentiment against Anglos in Texas.³⁹ Cortina took such provocative steps as engaging Anglo forces and flying a Mexican flag in Texas to show that some loyalty to the old country still existed.⁴⁰ In essence, Cortina's approach toward rebellion to Anglo hegemony in South Texas allowed for further discussion of identity. It showed that violence constituted a necessary or reasonable alternative to powerlessness in the eyes of some Tejanos. Ethnic violence continued along the border for many years, but the American Civil War shifted the forms of violence from ethnic lines to the greater conflict between Yankee and Confederate, and between soldiers and outlaws from both sides of the border.

At this point, it is important to note that while negative perceptions of Tejanos still abounded, these perceptions were not shared by all of those in political power. Even as Cortina's actions inflamed ethnic tensions between Anglos and Tejanos along the Rio Grande, Governor Sam Houston sent commissioners to seek out the causes of the Cortina conflict. Among those he sent was Angel Navarro III, a son of Jose Antonio Navarro.⁴¹ Jose Antonio Navarro even sent along a letter assuring Cortina that Anglo outrages committed along the Rio Grande were the acts of individuals, and not representative of Americans as a whole.⁴² The Cortina episode concluded when Houston sent a force of Texas Rangers and U.S. Army Regulars to chase Cortina from his strongholds near Brownsville with the help of Mexican Army Regulars from the border town of Matamoros, Mexico.⁴³ For their part, the Rangers sent to capture

Cortina and chase away these outlaws did little to change the view Cortina and other Tejanos had of them. Upon their arrival in Brownsville, William G. Tobin, commander of the Ranger contingent, incited mob violence. In a public square, Tobin lynched one of Cortina's lieutenants who was being held in the Brownsville jail, in a public square.⁴⁴ Perhaps if Cortina had not used his brief occupation of Brownsville to settle personal scores the incident would not be perceived so negatively.⁴⁵

The prominent Benavides family of Laredo stood ready to accommodate to the new order in Texas. Prior to the American annexation of Texas, members of the Benavides family were already landholding elites and wealthy merchants in south Texas. Influential Tejano political leaders such as Jose Antonio Navarro, a political leader in the Texas Revolution, also took part in urging state unity, while looking to transcend ethnic lines.⁴⁶ Although Navarro fought for the cause of Tejano rights he, along with Basilio Benavides, also championed the drive towards secession.⁴⁷ Both men sent members of their families to war, and had enough influence throughout the state of Texas to allow their kinsmen to become officers for the Confederacy.

Without considering the roots of the Tejano alliance with the Anglos, it may seem odd that Tejanos joined with the slaveholders of the South. Tejano attitudes toward slavery varied substantially. Some Tejanos sided against it and aided in the escape of African slaves across the Rio Grande. This led to some local ordinances being passed by city councils and local government officials to

prevent the fraternization of Tejanos and slaves in towns, such as the one passed by the town of Seguin in 1854.⁴⁸ But many Tejanos favored the continuation of slavery in Texas as a means of stimulating the economy and to accommodate southern whites into Texas. For example, Jose Antonio Navarro supported slavery and ideas of white supremacy.⁴⁹ In his journey through Texas, Frederick Law Olmsted observed the sometimes severe ways that some Tejanos treated their slaves, while at the same time others socialized with them.⁵⁰ Olmsted also saw that Anglos treated Tejanos with contempt and suspicion because they saw them as a risk and competition to slave labor.⁵¹

As conflicts over slavery continued, Anglo Democrats in Texas faced their first real threat to political power in the state with the creation of the nativist Know-Nothing Party.⁵² The organizers for the Know-Nothings sought to exclude Tejanos and other ethnic groups from American society. In response to this threat to their traditional way of life, Tejano, German and Czech immigrants began joining the Democratic Party to aid in defeating the Know-Nothing Party. The alliance between the Democrats and Germans was short lasting, since Germans vehemently opposed the pro-slavery platform being pushed by the southern branch of the Democratic Party heading into the election of 1860. Some Tejanos had no problem with the Democrats being pro-slavery. As a part of their accommodation into Texan, American, and southern society, Tejanos had a decision to make regarding their loyalties. Germans could afford to oppose the traditional southern views on slavery. Tejanos, most of whom still

occupied a very low level in Texan society, could not. For this reason, and to stake their claim in the new southern order, Tejanos such as Basilio Benavides, Jose Antonio Navarro and their families, pledged allegiance to the Democratic Party and to the Confederacy.⁵³

The various implications of Mexican American political alliances prior to the Civil War are open to interpretation. Modern historians have begun to examine the complex political culture of the antebellum Tejanos. Several issues separated Tejanos from their Anglo neighbors. Politically and racially, Tejanos were still considered second class citizens. As seen with the Cortina affair, many Tejanos remained angry at Anglo encroachment or Anglo dominance over Texas society. Culturally, Tejanos had also been forced in many parts of the state to give up traditional rights to open land and been forced to discontinue traditional celebrations. Nevertheless, after years of violent clashes between Anglos and Tejanos, many Tejanos were willing to go along with such a radical act as secession. The Tejanos saw the Confederacy for what it was: a new beginning in which they could try from the start to stake out their own place in society and accommodate the Anglos with whom they had so much tension in the early American period.

It is unfortunate that Tejano soldiers and supporters of the Confederacy left so few records to establish their motivations and reasons for fighting, but the fact remains that they joined in notable numbers and did fight. The Tejano population had little problem with slavery, but they also had no great love for the

institution. Therefore, it would be a mistake to accuse them for fighting for slavery. Even in Laredo, where the patronage system would be its strongest in regards to the men of the Benavides Cavalry Regiment, it is still improbable that patronage was the sole factor motivating men to join the Confederate Army. When taken in a large context, patronage is difficult to argue here since the unit was recruited from such a large geographical area.⁵⁴ Home has always been a strong impetus for enlistment, and here it was no different. The estimated 2,500 Tejanos who served for the Confederacy and alongside such Tejano leaders as Santos Benavides saw themselves for what they were: Texans. While some 958 of their Tejano neighbors fought for the Union, they doubtless must have believed that they fought for the right side.⁵⁵ In the end, it is important to remember that each man joined for his own reasons.

In the provocative book, *Boundaries*, historian Peter Sahlin explains that national identity “is the expression of cultural unity and national consciousness consolidated within the political framework of a centralized state.”⁵⁶ It is evident that Tejanos such as Benavides had decided upon a definite national identity. Some Tejanos in Texas began to see themselves as Americans during the latter antebellum period and the Civil War. It is during the Know-Nothing popularity in Texas that many Tejanos become politically active as they saw that they may become marginalized in American society. What kind of Americans they would be was the only question left to be decided. During the Civil War, the issue at hand was how America would be defined. For the Confederacy, national identity

involved, among other things, a slave based economy in which control was vested in the local and state government. Following the Civil War, a national identity for the United States had been established by the victorious northern forces, both military and political. This identity involved greater central governmental political control, but also allowed for more ethnic diversity. In Texas, pressures of war forced Tejanos to try and solidify themselves culturally and politically within Texas and the Confederacy. Given their relative geographic isolation from the rest of America, Tejanos and Anglo Texas identified themselves more with the local authorities rather than the national power. Traditional federalist values, which were held over from the time of the 1824 Mexican Constitution, such as regional autonomy, were reflected in the Confederate cause, and this led to many Tejanos, including the men of the Benavides family, to identify with the Confederacy.⁵⁷

If Sahlins is correct in contending that national identity is created from the center outwards and inwards, then Texas may well be an excellent example of this contention.⁵⁸ Any influence that Laredo or San Antonio may have had on Washington or Richmond was negligible, but these national capitals did have an influence, for a short time, on what the definition of "Texan" would be. The national identities that were being argued over in the East also needed resolution in the West. Therefore, Tejanos such as Navarro and Benavides, as well as myriad others among the common people invested themselves, their effort, and their lives to becoming politically more like their Anglo neighbors.⁵⁹

During the Civil War, Tejanos attempted to show themselves capable of Americanism and to show that they had detached themselves from Mexico, if not completely culturally, then at least politically.

Sahlins claims that the process of crafting a national identity for people in the region between France and Spain took several centuries. If one would look at the Tejano experience in Texas during the Civil War, it is possible to see that same behavior exhibited in the Cerdanya in the centuries after the initial remapping of the political boundary. Sahlins asserts that Cerdans used the national identities of France and Spain to their own benefits.⁶⁰ The same is true of Tejanos during the early American period in Texas from 1848-1865, choosing to be Mexican, Texan, American or Confederate as it suited them. Sahlins' argument that Cerdans defined themselves in regards to the defense of their social and territorial boundaries can be applied in Texas during the antebellum period. Tejanos formulated an alliance of convenience with the Southern Democratic Party when it became apparent that their social boundaries were being challenged. To the Tejanos, the violation of their traditional property rights by Anglos was met by some with violence, as was the case with Cortina. To others, such as the families of Benavides and Navarro, the Anglo encroachment prompted greater degrees of cooperation between the two peoples to prevent further loss of rights.

Sahlins asserts that national identity has nothing to do with so-called natural geographical boundaries.⁶¹ Rather, it is *socially constructed* over many

years and involves a “continuous process of defining ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’.”⁶² Even though the Rio Grande provided a clear natural boundary, it did not do much to sever the ties of the old and new country. That the border was porous enough to allow invasions of Northern Mexico by Benavides during the Civil War with little effort and little to be done by Governor Albino Lopez of the Mexican State of Tamaulipas speaks to the very fluid nature of the national boundaries. From 1838 through 1865, as a new shifting national identity was being crafted by the Tejanos themselves, the distinction between those who sought to identify politically and nationally with the United States those that sought to identify with Mexico were very clear.⁶³

To those Tejanos who served with the Union or with the Confederacy, the process of deciding who was friend and foe was ongoing. This is best evidenced by the Vidal Affair, in which Adrian J. Vidal, a Mexican born Confederate officer and stepson to the wealthy landholder Mifflin Kenedy, defected to Union service and then deserted into Mexico with a large contingent of his men.⁶⁴ To men such as Juan Cortina, any Anglo who stood against him was an outsider and an enemy, yet to men such as Benavides, Anglos could be considered among his allies. Following the war, the definitions changed yet again, as Benavides became more involved with the American identity by being elected to hold state office. Sahlins argues that as the Cerdanya region managed to maintain some local identity, it became increasingly French. The Rio Grande border region was much the same. It is doubtful that many Tejanos were as worried by the Civil

War in the East as they were by the French intervention into Mexico, which lasted from 1864 until 1867. The debate over national identity continues into the twenty-first century. Many believe that to be American one must be English speaking. Many of the people that live along the Rio Grande, both Anglo and Tejano, are bilingual. Yet most living along the northern banks of the river would consider themselves American, and those who live along the southern banks consider themselves Mexican. After Texan independence, the Rio Grande was only the boundary between two nations, but it came to symbolize a national boundary by which people identified themselves. This chapter has examined aspects of the first few years of this process along the Rio Grande, but Sahlins' work provides context and comparison for the understanding of American, Confederate and Mexican national identities.⁶⁵

Endnotes

¹ Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 47. While this work discusses Laredo, Hinojosa does make mention of the western frontier and its lack of concentrated settlement. Andres Resendez also mentions the warm welcome received by Anglos at the beginning of colonization from Tejanos in *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37.

² Randolph B. Campbell, *Gone to Texas: A History of the Lone Star State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 105.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 106-107, 127.

⁵ Resendez, *Changing National Identities*, 162.

⁶ Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 184-185.

⁷ Paul D. Lack, "Occupied Texas: Bexar and Goliad, 1835-1836" in *Mexican Americans in Texas History*, Emilio Zamora, et al., eds. (Austin: Texas State Historical Association Press, 2000), 45.

⁸ Resendez, *Changing National Identities*, 170.

⁹ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁰ As mentioned, many Tejanos who served during the Texas Revolution were from the areas around San Antonio, much like Seguin. Of their service, Lack concludes that “they uniformly acquitted themselves to their credit as patriots and soldiers.” See Lack, *Texas Revolutionary Experience*, 185.

¹¹ Juan N. Seguin, *A Revolution Remembered: The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguin*, ed. Jesus de La Teja (Austin: State House Press, 1991), 6-7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 24-25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁴ James L. Haley, *Sam Houston* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 148.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

¹⁶ Seguin, *Revolution Remembered*, 27.

¹⁷ Haley, *Sam Houston*, 238.

¹⁸ Lack, *Texas Revolutionary Experience*, 205.

¹⁹ Sam Houston, General Order of August, 1838, Rabia Santiago Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library at the Alamo. This is translated from Spanish “Con toda la moderacion y la humanidad que se pueda poner en practica.”

²⁰ *Ibid.* Translated portion reads: “Los actos de humanidad, son los caricteristicas del valeroso y del soldado.”

²¹ Marquis James, *The Raven: A Biography of Sam Houston* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1929; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 305. Llerena Friend, considered to be a pre-eminent biographer of Sam Houston, made no mention of Houston's relations with Seguin or Navarro in her book *Sam Houston: The Great Designer* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1954).

²² Joseph Martin Dawson, *Jose Antonio Navarro: Co-Creator of Texas* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1969), 69.

²³ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁴ Sam Houston to Margaret Houston, January 21, 1842, in *The Personal Correspondence of Sam Houston*, ed. Madge Thornall Roberts (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2001), 5 vols., 1:185.

²⁵ The biographies of Sam Houston vary on their treatment of the Houston-Seguín relationship. Some mention Seguin, sparsely if at all, as an able subordinate to Houston during the Texas War of Independence, but do not mention their personal relationship. It is clear from Houston and Seguin's writings that they did visit on social occasions.

²⁶ Dawson, *Jose Antonio Navarro*, 59-61. A check of Census records from 1850 and 1860 did not reveal any slaves owned by Navarro.

²⁷ Johnson's New Map of the State of Texas by Johnson and Ward. (New York : Johnson and Ward, 1864).

²⁸ Arnolde De Leon, *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 13.

²⁹ Ibid., 14.

³⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

³¹ Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town*, 55-56.

³² De Leon, *Tejano Community*, 17.

³³ John Denny Riley, "Santos Benavides: His Influence on the Lower Rio Grande, 1823-1881" (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Christian University, 1976), 4.

³⁴ Ibid., 37. See also Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town*, 82.

³⁵ Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, 193.

³⁶ Lyman L. Woodman, *Cortina: Rogue of the Rio Grande* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1950), 7.

³⁷ Sam Houston, as quoted in Haley, *Sam Houston*, 366. Haley provides a brief excerpt of a speech given by Houston at his inauguration on December 21, 1859. Here, Houston is speaking in regards to the Cortina affair and is quick not to lump in other Tejanos and Mexicanos with Cortina and his band of outlaws.

³⁸ Kenneth L. Stewart and Arnoldo De Leon, *Not Room Enough: Mexicans, Anglos, and Socioeconomic Change in Texas, 1850-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 46.

³⁹ Juan Cortina, *Juan Cortina and the Texas Mexico Frontier, 1859-1877*, ed. Jerry Thompson (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1994), 24.

⁴⁰ Randolph B. Campbell, *Sam Houston and the American Southwest* (New York: Longman Press, 2002), 180.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Jerry D. Thompson, *Cortina: Defending the Mexican Name in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 88.

⁴³ James, *The Raven*, 394.

⁴⁴ Robert M. Utley, *Lone Star Justice: The First Century of the Texas Rangers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 111.

⁴⁵ Thompson, *Cortina*, 41.

⁴⁶ Stewart and De Leon, *Not Room Enough*, 46. See also Riley, "Santos Benavides," 109.

⁴⁷ Riley, "Santos Benavides," 109. See also Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town*, 82.

⁴⁸ De Leon, *Tejano Community*, 15.

⁴⁹ Stewart and De Leon, *Not Room Enough*, 46. In Randolph Campbell's *An Empire For Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), there are no mentions of Tejanos owning many slaves. This is almost certainly due to the concentration of Tejanos along the Mexican border. In Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York: Edward Dix, 1857; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 272, the author mentions that Tejanos did own slaves, but makes no mention of the number of slaves owned by them.

⁵⁰ Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas*, 272.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵² Gregg Cantrell, "Sam Houston and the Know-Nothings: A Reappraisal," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XCVI (Jan., 1993), 329. Here, Cantrell acknowledges the threat the Know-Nothings posed to Democrats in Texas, but argues that Houston supported them as they were the least sectional political party.

⁵³ *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home*, Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Kamphoefner and Helbich show that there is a division between older settlements which had acculturated to Southern life, but that recent German immigrants who settled in the Hill Country of Texas were very opposed to slavery (15).

⁵⁴ The Compiled Service records of the Benavides Cavalry Regiment show that a large number of men came from well north of the Rio Grande Valley where Benavides would have held sway. In fact one of the officers, Captain Pablo Al Deseta, came from as far away as New Mexico, presumably fleeing Unionist sympathies there.

⁵⁵ Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue & Gray* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1977; reprint Austin: State House Press, 2000), xii.

⁵⁶ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 7.

⁵⁷ Riley, "Santos Benavides," 125. Riley also attributes Benavides's elite "Blue Blood" as a basis of support for the Confederacy.

⁵⁸ Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 8.

⁵⁹ Riley, "Santos Benavides," 109. For Navarro's support of slavery in Texas, see Andrew Anthony Tijerina, "Tejanos and Texas: The Native Mexicans of Texas, 1820-1850" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1977), 267. Navarro was influential in getting slavery allowed into Texas.

⁶⁰ Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 269.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ In *The Central Republic in Mexico, 1835-1846: Hombres de Bien in the Age of Santa Anna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Michael P. Costeloe concludes that there is a constant struggle to find a definite Mexican political identity (1). This may help to understand why people such as Benavides and other Mexican Revolutionaries found it so easy to adapt to a new nation and simply carry over ideas of government and how it should best be run and organized.

⁶⁴ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 71.

⁶⁵ Sahlins, *Boundaries*, 229. Sahlins states "The self-definition of national identity in the Cerdanya took shape by the exclusion of outsiders from the village communities – People who indiscriminately manipulated identities in the service of their private interests." As the people of south Texas made their choices in regards to identity, they chose those identities which were of greater benefit to

them. As such, to Tejanos surrounded by Confederates made the decision to support them and become imbedded in their political and military system.

CHAPTER III

NUESTRA GUERRA: TEJANOS AND CONFEDERATE MILITARY SERVICE IN THE CIVIL WAR

The Civil War was a turning point for race relations in the United States. While the most important advances were made in relations to Anglos and African Americans, Mexican Americans also made advances during this period. One avenue in which different ethnicities, such as African, Mexican and Irish Americans made advancements into American society was in military service. This chapter will discuss the military career of Santos Benavides and the men of the Benavides Partisan Cavalry Regiment and draw conclusions from their service in regards to the ongoing process of Americanization.

While Mexican Americans have received mention in Civil War historiography, the process of Americanization has been largely ignored. Remarkably, one of the first writers to acknowledge Mexican Americans, albeit superficially, in his work was Marcus J. Wright, a brigadier general in the Confederate army. In his book, *Texas In The War: 1861-1865*, Wright discussed the wartime career of the Santos Benavides Partisan Cavalry Company and Regiment.¹ The reference is made in passing and list no recognition of the role played by the Benavides Partisan Cavalry Regiment in consolidating

Confederate war goals along the Rio Grande, nor does it discuss any of the engagements in which the unit participated

Recent historiography of Mexican American participation in the war has focused more on the military contributions. In 1977, Jerry Don Thompson focused his book *Vaqueros Blue and Gray* on the war along the Rio Grande, but still not discussing the wider implications for race relations and for Americanization.² Thompson followed this work with another which focused solely on the contributions of Mexican Americans who served in the Union army, but this work is largely a restatement of some of the conclusions and work previously stated in *Vaqueros*.³ Even with the sometimes superficial nature in which Thompson discusses the implications of Tejano military service in the Civil War, these are still the two most important and comprehensive works dealing with Mexican American involvement in the Civil War. Since the publication of these books, several others have been published that look at the war in Texas, but also take only passing interest in the contributions of Mexican Americans. Ralph A. Wooster, in his work on Texas Confederate units, only briefly examines the Mexican Americans who were a part of Benavides' regiment.⁴ Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. likewise discusses the plight of Mexican American troops, but focuses only on the contempt with which they are treated by Anglo officers and other troops.⁵ Undoubtedly, the high illiteracy rate amongst Tejano troops has made research difficult.⁶ Many of the Tejano units had illiteracy rates going as high as 100 percent, with only the officers able to write and read.⁷ For this

reason, resources such as the correspondence between Colonel Santos Benavides and Colonel John Ford are invaluable in the study of the contributions of Mexican Americans to the Confederate war effort in Texas during the American Civil War.

Following the Texas referendum on secession, Texas seceded from the Union on February 23, 1861. On April 17, 1861, Santos Benavides, a shopkeeper and former mayor of Laredo, received a letter from Colonel John Ford, commander of the Rio Grande military district and former Texas Ranger, notifying him of his commission as a Captain of Partisan Rangers for the state of Texas. Colonel Ford told Captain Benavides, "If the civil authorities of Zapata or any other county call on you for aid in executing the law or suppressing insurrection or riotous assemblages, it is your duty to render all the assistance in your power."⁸ Benavides proved to be the most important Mexican American to serve with either side during the war. He is also one of the most influential in regards of the formation of a Mexican American identity.

Santos Benavides was born in Laredo on November 1, 1823. As a young man during Mexico's Federalist-Centralist wars of the 1830's and 1840's, Benavides fought for the Federalist forces in south Texas. During the 1850's, Benavides had been employed in chasing down fugitive slaves after Texas was annexed by the United States.⁹ Benavides was elected mayor of Laredo in 1856, a position that his brother, Refugio held twice. These men were descendants of Tomas Sanchez, the founder of Laredo in 1755.¹⁰ Being from

that part of Texas, Benavides was a popular man who exercised political and economic influence on the area before the war. As such, he was familiar with many of the influential men on both sides of the river.

When Benavides was commissioned as an officer, he also obtained commissions for his two brothers, Refugio and Cristobal. Late in the war, Benavides granted a commission to his brother-in-law, John Z. Leyendecker, as assistant quartermaster of his regiment.¹¹ As historian Walter Buenger asserts, Tejanos mirrored the commitment of Anglos to the land of their birth.¹² Benavides belong to an elite family in South Texas that had made efforts towards accommodation and adaptation to the Anglo presence along the Rio Grande. As such, Benavides showed his loyalty to his home state much as others did, by enlisting to serve. Early in their career as officers for the state of Texas they encountered the man that would prove to be a difficult and pervasive adversary to them well into the war, the Mexican bandit Juan Nepomuceno Cortina.

Hardly a month had passed since Benavides had received his commission when on May 19, Cortina crossed the Rio Grande, launching a raid on south Texas. While Benavides had received notice from Ford that war had begun between “the Confederate States and Mr. Lincoln’s government” on April 19, 1861, it probably came as no surprise that Cortina, rather than a unit of Yankees, should be the first enemy in this war.¹³ Upon getting word of Cortina’s incursion into Texas, Benavides deployed his men to meet Cortina at the ranch

of a Mr. Redmond outside of Carrizo, Texas. In a letter reporting the incident to Col. Ford, Benavides claimed to have had 27 men at his command when making his stand against Cortina at the Redmond ranch, and he was opposed by a “considerable force.”¹⁴ While it is only speculation as to the number of men Cortina had with him on this raid, the number may safely be estimated at or around 30, with some local outlaws joining in as Cortina rode by.¹⁵

Benavides’ troopers met with an advance party of Cortina’s force but fell back because they were outnumbered. Cortina had positioned his men so as to surround Benavides and prevent his escape. What the outlaw did not count on was the dispatch Benavides had sent to Lieutenant Callahan, who was stationed at Fort McIntosh some 65 miles away. Callahan, arriving with reinforcements including Refugio Benavides, added another 36 men to aid Benavides in his fight with Cortina. Benavides set out to meet Cortina and the approximately 70 men he had with him. According to Benavides, Cortina’s men were “completely dispersed,” with Benavides’ men killing seven bandits outright and wounding many more.¹⁶ Evidently, Benavides ordered to his men not to take any prisoners. Since his men had succeeded in taking eleven prisoners, it must be assumed that Benavides ordered these men summarily executed.¹⁷

After the battle at Carrizo, Ford wrote Benavides congratulating him on turning back Cortina. Colonel Ford had himself had some experience in dealing with Cortina. John Ford had become a Texas Ranger after a term in the Texas legislature. In 1859, Cortina and Colonel Ford had clashed several times, with

Ford fighting in conjunction with U.S. Regular Army troops before the war. In fact, historian Lyman L. Woodman argues that the battles against Cortina were a type of “training prologue which benefited a number of officers who were to serve in gray and blue between 1861 and 1865.”¹⁸ On May 27, 1861, Ford praised Benavides for his actions against his old foe. Benavides’ “highly satisfactory” effort against Cortina merited recognition for “judgment, ability and gallantry.”¹⁹

In this same letter, Ford recognized an issue had cropped up that plagued Benavides and the Confederacy as a whole: the problem of supply. Benavides had been ill equipped going into his first fight against Cortina. Ford wanted to make sure this would not happen again. Ford told Benavides that “arrangements have been made to arm the regiment with Colt’s pistols.”²⁰ It is most likely that the men that rode with Benavides against Cortina at Carrizo were armed with an assortment of weapons. Whether or not they were out classed in weaponry by Cortina and his men is a source of speculation. However, it is clear that the command structure in Texas wanted Benavides and his men to be outfitted with the best equipment available to them, thus the request for Colt revolvers.

Of all the logistical difficulties faced by the Confederacy, supply was arguably the worst. And while this supply issue was worst in the East, the Confederate troops fighting in the West were no exception. Although Texas was not the site of major battles, such as the states in the East, it still found itself low

on provisions necessary to field effective armies. In the letter acknowledging his commission, Colonel Ford tells Captain Benavides that he “will endeavor to procure the bugle required” of a volunteer company. While this was certainly not a major problem in supply, and a bugle may not have been one of the war materials most desperately needed by the new company, there were other short comings that highlighted the supply problem in the Rio Grande. After Benavides’ engagement against Cortina in late May, Ford seemed to have solved at least some of this problem. On May 29, 1861, Ford issued a dispatch to Benavides telling him that a boat had been sent to Benavides with “fifty rifles and accoutrements,” apparently were “the only kind on hand.”²¹ On this same boat, Ford sent “rations of subsistence” and believed that “your command will be properly supplied.”²²

In this letter, Ford also touched on another sensitive issue which was important not only to the Confederacy, but to the Mexicans and Mexican Americans who fought in the War. The crossing of the Rio Grande frontier of Texas was an issue that bothered the commanders of the Confederacy and the men who fought for it throughout the war. In 1863, with the backing of French Emperor Napoleon III, Emperor Maximilian had seized control of Mexico, deposing Mexican president Benito Juarez, who continued to lead a resistance movement against the occupying forces. This intervention by France was a blatant violation of the Monroe Doctrine. While this may not have been a major concern to the Confederacy, it opened the possibility of yet another hostile force

to contend with along the Rio Grande. The French intervention also meant that Union activity would intensify in Texas as a show of force to the occupation forces. Eventually, the Imperialists and Nationalist forces would ally themselves with the Confederacy and the Union, respectively, but during the initial stages of the conflict, the reactions and intentions of the new regime in Mexico City were still unclear.

In the course of pursuing Cortina, Benavides sometimes found it necessary to follow Cortina across the river. Violating the border line presented a problem to both his superior officer and to the government of Mexico. This is not to say that there was no cooperation between Mexican and Confederate authorities. On June 2, 1861, Ford wrote Benavides notifying him of the intention of General Guadalupe Garcia from Matamoros, Mexico, to cross the river and to “aid in putting down the partisans of Cortina and Ochoa” and to help in “giving peace and tranquility to the frontier.”²³ Antonio Ochoa was another Mexican outlaw and sometime ally of Cortina, who had also been sought for inciting rebellion in Zapata County.²⁴

Cooperation, however, was not the norm. In correspondence to General Hamilton P. Bee, Governor Albino Lopez complained that Benavides and his men, in crossing into Mexico, have trampled “on civil and military authorities.”²⁵ Adding to the outrage felt by Governor Lopez was the apparent abduction of former Texas judge and Federal Colonel Edmund J. Davis, who was at the time organizing troops of Texas Unionists and Mexicans willing to fight for the Union.

Lopez was apparently concerned that these attacks would “produce bitter feelings; the slightest motive may render fruitless all efforts of the chief authorities to settle existing differences,” and perhaps lead to further violence between Mexican bandits, Mexican troops and Confederate soldiers if Bee’s subordinates (including Benavides) “do not act with more prudence.”²⁶ Lopez, in his correspondence to Bee, asserted Mexico’s neutrality and stated that he would not tolerate “acts which violate the neutrality of Mexico,” including Colonel Davis’ attempts to raise troops to fight against the Confederacy.²⁷

For his part, Bee disavowed the border crossing that seized Colonel Davis.²⁸ But even then, Bee was unapologetic in doing so. After all, Davis was an enemy, and it appeared, at least to Bee, and probably also to Ford and Benavides, that Governor Lopez was, if not completely supporting the actions taken by Davis, then at least allowing them to go on by his inaction. On the topic of Davis’ release from custody of the Confederacy, Bee stated that “Were I to consider the many instances in which the dignity of my country has been outraged, and the lives and property of my fellow-citizens sacrificed, by persons operating under the advice and control of this same E. J. Davis, while harbored on the neutral soil of Mexico, I might perhaps be justly led to a different determination.”²⁹

Accordingly, Bee also praised Benavides in a letter to Lopez after Davis was returned to the south bank of the Rio Grande. Bee said that he held a “high appreciation” of Captain Benavides “as a man of prudence and discretion” and

that he was “satisfied that the authorities on both sides of the line may equally confide in him as not likely to do any act to compromise the relation which should exist.”³⁰ Even as the relations between the Confederacy and Mexico remained tenuous and strained, Bee recognized the ability of his subordinate and, in effect, did nothing to stop Benavides from making any further raids into Mexican territory.

It is important to note that not all Mexican Americans fought for the Confederacy. Edmund J. Davis, a former Texas Judge and Union colonel, had fled to Mexico after secession and had begun enlisting men in the First Texas (Union) Cavalry Regiment, a unit that served in Texas and Louisiana. In Mexico, Davis found an ally in Leonard Pierce, U.S. Consul to Mexico at Matamoros. In his own right, Pierce raised many troops for the Union cause, mainly Germans from the Texas Hill country who had escaped lynching by secessionists and some old veterans from the regular army.³¹ While Davis’ 1st Texas (Union) Cavalry consisted of some Tejanos, John L. Haynes wanted to recruit Tejanos exclusively for his newly formed unit, the 2nd Texas (Union) Cavalry Regiment. Haynes was a Unionist, but openly opposed the election of Abraham Lincoln, calling him an “obnoxious man.”³²

Haynes began circulating handbills promising a bounty on signing up, clothing, another bounty at the end of the war and a salary of thirteen dollars a month for the duration of the war.³³ Apparently, these offers prompted a large number of Mexican nationals and Tejanos who had not enlisted for service in

one of the Confederate units to enlist in Federal forces. If there was a difference to the men who served with Benavides and the men who served with Haynes and Davis, it must have been purely ideological. The men who served on either side seemed to come from similar backgrounds. Perhaps these men were more like Juan Cortina who had previous grievances with the South and with Texas, and these grievances contributed to their choice in allegiance. However, as had been the case since before even the Revolutionary War, men who were given bounties sometimes deserted their newly formed unit. The problem seems appeared to be so bad in the 2nd Texas (Union) Cavalry that the commanders decided to make an example of one of the men for desertion. This unfortunate man, Private Pedro Garcia, who was believed to have been a twenty-five-year-old farmer, was executed on June 22, 1864.³⁴ Historian Jerry Thompson argues that the reason for the mass amounts of desertion is due in large part to not receiving the clothing promised in the handbill these men saw before enlisting.³⁵ It seems, however that Private Garcia was not nearly the coward many thought he was. According to Benjamin F. McIntyre, Garcia refused the bandage offered him to hide his eyes from the firing squad.³⁶ Private Garcia showed the men who executed him something of the bravery he would have had, if the Union lived up to its end of the bargain. As infamous as Private Garcia's case was, it was still just a basic case of desertion. There is a more telling example of how a young idealist can be shifted away from a cause due in no small part to

institutional racism and the inability of both Union and Confederate governments to make good on their promises.

Such was the story of Adrian J. Vidal. Vidal was born in Mexico before the Mexican American War. He moved to Texas when his mother married a wealthy landowner in south Texas named Mifflin Kenedy.³⁷ In October of 1862, Vidal enlisted as a private in a Confederate partisan company being formed in San Antonio. Soon, due in no small part to the influence of his stepfather, Vidal became a lieutenant of a partisan company, under the command of Captain Richard Taylor.³⁸ The conditions under which Vidal served were difficult. His men often lacked shoes and clothing, and many of the items needed for camp, such as tents, pots and pans.³⁹ At least at the beginning of his Confederate career, Vidal made the best of the situation, even capturing a Union gunboat in July, 1863.⁴⁰ For unclear reasons, Vidal and his men chose to abandon the Confederacy, and fled to Mexico after his desertion and the murder of two of their former comrades.⁴¹ Some of these men were captured by Cortina, who was by then a Mexican military officer.⁴²

Cooperation between Mexico and the Confederacy prevailed during the mutiny of Vidal and his men. Like General Garcia and Colonel Benavides, men from both sides of the river decided that perhaps the best course of action would be to hunt down these men for the crimes they committed while in Texas, and for any crimes they might commit in Mexico. In a letter to Governor Manuel Ruiz, General Bee speculated that “one who would violate his allegiance, to

plunder his own people, would not be likely to be more lenient in a foreign country, and the cause of humanity and justice both appeal for prompt and united action.”⁴³ In his reply, Ruiz assured Bee that “I at once gave orders that all the troops on the line should unite in pursuing the insurrectionists” and that “combined efforts” on behalf of Mexican and Confederate troops would provide the best results to concluding this affair.⁴⁴

Had this been the end of the Vidal affair, it would have been enough, but Vidal apparently was not done fighting the Civil War of his adopted country. On November 26, 1863, Vidal volunteered for service with Union forces gathering in the newly occupied city of Brownsville, and agreed to raise a company of partisan rangers attached to Davis’ 1st Texas (Union) Cavalry.⁴⁵ Vidal and his men served the Union army well into 1864, but the same problems arose for Vidal yet again. Vidal, who was still a young man at the time, soon began to reject the authority that was being placed over him by the Union army. To his credit, it seems Vidal remained loyal to his second army longer than many of the men whom he recruited. Prior to Vidal’s desertion, 53 men had already deserted, with more men leaving after their captain had left.⁴⁶ Of the men who joined Vidal and served the Union army, only 23 served out the remainder of their time.⁴⁷ Vidal met his end eventually at the hands of the imperialist troops of Maximilian after joining up with Benito Juarez and his revolutionaries.⁴⁸

Even as the Union had its trials and tribulations with the use of Mexican American troops, the Confederates still enjoyed the success of theirs. While

Davis and Haynes organized their men into fighting units, Benavides continued his fight against outlaws and Union troops. For Benavides, 1863 was an eventful, and highly successful, year. Early in the year, the Texas State Legislature acknowledged Benavides along with his brother Refugio for “their vigilance, energy, and gallantry in pursuing and chastising the bandits infesting the Rio Grande frontier.”⁴⁹ Shortly thereafter, Benavides was promoted to major. As a major, Benavides proceeded to execute his war against outlaws on the Rio Grande. In September of 1863, Benavides received an opportunity to finally crush a band of outlaws under Ocaivano Zapata, who had been receiving arms and support from the Union army at New Orleans.⁵⁰ Benavides took command of the company of his brother Cristobal and crossed the Rio Grande, surprising the Zapatistas in a ravine and killing most of the leaders, including Zapata himself.⁵¹ Nearly two months later, Benavides was given permission by W. R. Briggs, chief of staff to Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith, to “raise a regiment of partisan rangers in western Texas, from any men, whether within conscript age or not, not now in service, which regiment you will be appointed to command” due in large part to Benavides’ “gallant and distinguished services.”⁵²

In many ways, 1864 was the year that defined both Benavides and his regiment. Supply troubles still prevailed along the Rio Grande, just as they did along the Rappahannock River in Virginia. The only possible advantage the western Confederacy, especially Texans, had was the border with Mexico and the booming cotton trade through Matamoros which resulted from the Union

naval blockade on all southern ports. Even with the cotton trade, supplies were still hard to come by. In a letter from Ford to Benavides in December of 1863, Ford began to order Benavides to hoard supplies. Benavides was ordered by Ford to confiscate “a large quantity of flour at or near Laredo” and to “have it transported to some point near the Sol Del Rey and protected by a sufficient guard.”⁵³ Ford told Benavides that capturing horses and mules should also become a priority, and that Benavides “should have an eye to them.”⁵⁴ When Benavides replied on January 10, 1864, he acknowledged the orders, and informed Ford that he “has in Camargo 9,000 lbs of Flour, 500 lbs of rice, 160 lbs of coffee and 2,500 lbs of powder” with beef “plentiful in the county” and adding “there will be no difficulty in getting them at a moments [*sic*] notice.”⁵⁵ It appears that Benavides and his men had no trouble finding food. However, as later correspondence shows, finding weapons and munitions was still a difficult enterprise in South Texas.

In March of 1864, Benavides and his men received what would be their greatest challenge of the war. On March 19, 1864, Benavides was attacked while camped at the border city of Laredo by 200 enemy cavalry composed of “Mexicans and Americans”, and expected 300 more enemy infantry and two pieces of artillery to face off against his force of only 60 men.⁵⁶ According to one of Benavides’ men, the colonel blamed himself for being taken by surprise, since Benavides had been laid up sick in Laredo for several days.⁵⁷ Nearly three years in the saddle were taking their toll on Benavides. The day after the

battle, W. W. Camp wrote to Ford telling him that the Colonel was “seriously ill, owing to the fatigue and exposure he has undergone lately,” and that Benavides “cannot much longer stand the strain of it.”⁵⁸ The Union troops, part of Haynes’ 2nd Cavalry, attacked Laredo for nearly three hours, but were turned back by Benavides’ men and their staunch defense of the city.

Benavides again received acclaim from his Anglo superior officers for his actions. As the eyes of the Confederate Army on the Rio Grande, Benavides and his men had witnessed various and increasing Union activity. Earlier in the year, Benavides’ men had reported several large columns of troops leaving the Union-controlled city of Brownsville, including a large one on January 27, 1864, which “consisted of 300 Mexicans and 200 Negroes” out of a combined total of about 1500 troops.⁵⁹ Benavides himself did not have the numbers to confront a force of this size, and instead kept a steady flow of messages going to Ford in San Antonio about their whereabouts and movements.⁶⁰ Around this time, Benavides was presented with the opportunity to gain the rank of brigadier general if he could raise a brigade of troops. Although he never did so, Benavides greatly desired the rank to further his prestige.

With the Confederate fortunes in the East fading, the men of Benavides’ Regiment were forced ever more to look after themselves. Again, supplies from Confederate sources were a necessity and Benavides was running out of money to buy them. Benavides was often forced to confiscate cotton shipments and sell them for the supplies he needed. In doing so, charges were leveled against

Benavides, saying that “he has seized cotton and sold it, after it had been disposed of by the agent of the Cotton Bureau.”⁶¹ The Cotton Bureau was the agency created by the Confederate government in Richmond to regulate cotton sales in hope of raising demand and forcing foreign intervention. In seizing this cotton, Benavides was in violation of Special Order No. 157, issued by Ford on June 5, 1864, that prohibited the transportation of cotton over the border into Mexico.⁶² The investigation against Benavides, while having some basis, was more than likely a direct result of a growing feud between Colonel Ford and Colonel Benavides over the prospect of Benavides being awarded a brigadier general’s commission.⁶³

For Benavides, the issue was simple: equip his men properly or face more mutiny and desertion like that of Adrian Vidal and his men. His men had, in some cases, been poorly equipped since the beginning of the war. The Benavides’ Regiment was woefully under equipped in regards to weapons. On January 18, 1864, Benavides wrote Major A. G. Dickinson, a commander at San Antonio, telling him that “there are some of the men in my command who have no guns. If possible send me 50 Enfield rifles – If you have not got the Enfield send the best possible.”⁶⁴ As of July of that same year, Benavides still had not received arms for his men. In his correspondence to Ford, Benavides told him that “the men of Capt. Garcia’s company are without arms, and until supplied are of very little service.”⁶⁵ Even Benavides’ men, who had thus far been loyal, nearly took to rioting at Ringgold Barracks while demanding new uniforms. Only

the intervention of Captain Cristobal Benavides, who ordered the uniforms to be handed out, stopped a riot.⁶⁶

As the American Civil War neared an end in South Texas, even Benavides' regiment, that had been spared thus far of a spectacle the likes of a Vidal-type mutiny, began deserting.⁶⁷ Despite increasing desertions, Benavides still had ten companies in the field as of February, 1865.⁶⁸ With the war ending, Benavides took his men out of the towns on the border, intent on keeping them from engaging in lawlessness.⁶⁹ On June 30, 1865, Ford wrote Benavides with his final instructions as to how to parole his men. Ford informed Benavides that General E. Kirby Smith had surrendered to Major General E. R. S. Canby on May 26.⁷⁰ Benavides gave his officers thirty pesos each and sent them on their way home.⁷¹ For Santos Benavides and his men, the war of rebellion was over.

In the end, why Tejanos fought was not a simple matter. Thompson argues that the Mexican Americans who fought in the war did so in an attempt to improve their economic or class standings. This, however, is debatable. In the various examples seen here, class does not seem as important a factor as Thompson makes it out to be. In many cases, the Confederate Army was not paid for months at a time, and when they were paid, it was in devalued Confederate currency. It could be argued that many of these men, including Benavides, Vidal, and even Private Garcia, fought to find a better understanding of if and how they belonged in American society. Benavides and Vidal both came from wealthy families, and would have no reason to fight for some abstract

ideals of class or economics. Instead, these leaders fought on behalf of an ethnicity which was considered to be inferior to their Anglo neighbors. If, as Thompson argues, economics and patronage were the important reasons for enlisting in the opposing armies, there were, at the time, better, less risky alternatives to becoming soldiers.⁷² It is likely that the Patron system may have had some role, but to what extent is uncertain. Juan Cortina and his men, being so active, should have been a better alternative to Tejanos looking solely for profit from war. Certainly, a deserter from Cortina's bandits would not have met the end that Private Garcia met.

In the case of Adrian Vidal, he joined three different armies before facing a firing squad at the hands of Maximilian's forces. A coward, or someone looking only for economic benefit, would have found a different way to have done so without risking their lives. Vidal, who was still a young man of twenty years old, and already the veteran of three armies at his death, could have just as easily used his stepfather's influence to stay out of the war.⁷³ Benavides, already a much older man (37 years old when the war began), almost certainly had more patience than Vidal. This is perhaps why Benavides never wavered from his loyalty to the Confederacy.

Tejanos fighting for the Confederacy along the Rio Grande did not play a vital role, either in the final victory or loss of the Confederacy. They did, however, provide valuable men to the Confederate government in Texas. The Tejanos helped to control border raids by Bandits, Indian attacks from the west,

and Union incursions at Brownsville and Laredo. For the Confederate war effort in Texas, the Tejanos were invaluable.

James McPherson contends a revolutionary tradition was drawn upon by both the Union and the Confederacy. It was no different for Tejanos. Santos Benavides came from a family with deep roots in both martial and revolutionary traditions. The same could be said for some of the men in his command. It is well known that Texas and Northern Mexico was a hotbed for insurgent activity in revolutions against both Spain and Mexico's Centralist government. It was also in Northern Mexico where Benito Juarez launched his attacks against Maximilian's Imperialist government.

While chapter two described the events that led up to the decision to fight for the Confederacy, this chapter has described the wartime career of the most famous Tejano to join with the South in its struggle for independence. This chapter has also argued that Tejano service has implications beyond what previous historians have written. Here, Tejanos such as Santos Benavides took a positive step towards the creation of a new identity, one that identified with its Anglo neighbors. Likewise, it shows that Benavides' Anglo superior officers were willing to overlook his ethnicity based on his service, loyalty, and commitment to Confederate ideals. As historian Peter Sahlin argues, rhetoric is a tool that is used by border populations to begin their identification both toward and from a nation.⁷⁴ As a Tejano in 1861 could not have conceptualized what the United States was in the same terms that men in Massachusetts or

Indiana did, they did recognize that they could use the rhetoric of the South to form alliances for self-protection. Tejanos saw the American Civil War as a means to advance their struggle for equality and recognition as Americans. The Civil War provided an opportunity for Tejanos, such as the Benavides family, to declare themselves interested in the internal affairs in American politics. While their service remains somewhat obscure today, their efforts provided a firm foundation upon which a new Mexican American identity could be formed.

Endnotes

¹ Marcus J. Wright, *Texas In the War: 1861-1865*, ed. Harold B. Simpson (Hillsboro, TX: Hill Junior College Press, 1965), 28-29. This work was written by Wright sometime after the war, and was found by Simpson in the Texas State Archives and first published in 1965.

² Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue & Gray* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1977; reprint, Austin: State House Press, 2000).

³ Jerry D. Thompson, *Mexican Texans in the Union Army* (El Paso, TX: Texas Western Press, 1986).

⁴ Ralph A. Wooster, *Lone Star Regiments in Gray* (Austin: Eakin Press, 2002), 214.

⁵ Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 63.

⁶ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸ John S. Ford to Santos Benavides, April 17, 1861, John S. Ford papers, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. Hereafter referred to as Ford Papers, TSA.

⁹ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹² Walter L. Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 90.

¹³ Ford to Benavides, April 19, 1861, Ford Papers, TSA.

¹⁴ Benavides to Ford, May 29, 1861, Ford Papers, TSA.

¹⁵ Jerry D. Thompson, *Cortina: Defending the Mexican Name in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 99-100.

¹⁶ Benavides to Ford, May 29, 1861, Ford Papers.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Lyman L. Woodman, *Cortina: Rogue of the Rio Grande* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1950), 43.

¹⁹ Ford to Benavides, May 27, 1861, Ford Papers, TSA.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ford to Benavides, May 29, 1861, Ford Papers, TSA.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ford to Benavides, June 2, 1861, Ford Papers.

²⁴ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 17.

²⁵ Albino Lopez to Hamilton P. Bee, March 15, 1863, in War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 parts in 70 volumes; Washington, D.C.: 1880-1901), Series I, Volume XV, 1129. Hereafter referred to as *O.R.* All citations are to Series I unless otherwise indicated.

²⁶ Albino Lopez to Bee, March 17, 1863, *O.R.*, XV, 1131.

²⁷ Albino Lopez to Bee, March 18, 1863, *O.R.*, XV, 1133.

²⁸ Hamilton P. Bee to Lopez, March 16, 1863, *O.R.*, XV, 1130.

- ²⁹ Hamilton P. Bee to Lopez, March 18, 1863, *O.R.*, XV, 1132.
- ³⁰ Hamilton P. Bee to Lopez, March 22, 1863, *O.R.*, XV, 1135.
- ³¹ Thompson, *Mexican Texans*, 13.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 14.
- ³³ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 85.
- ³⁴ Thompson, *Mexican Texans*, 29.
- ³⁵ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 89.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.
- ³⁸ Jerry D. Thompson, "Mutiny and Desertion on the Rio Grande: The Strange Saga of Captain Adrian J. Vidal," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest* 12 (1974), 161.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 72.
- ⁴¹ Bee to Capt. Edmund P. Turner, Assistant Adjutant General, October 28, 1863, *O.R.*, XXVI, I, 448-49.
- ⁴² Bee to Turner, October 31, 1863, *O.R.*, XXVI, I, 451.
- ⁴³ Bee to Manuel Ruiz, October 28, 1863, *O.R.*, XXVI, I, 450.
- ⁴⁴ Manuel Ruiz to Bee, October 28, 1863, *O.R.*, XXVI, I, 450.
- ⁴⁵ Thompson, "Mutiny and Desertion", 165.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

⁴⁸ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 79.

⁴⁹ Steven D. Yancey, Acting Assistant Adjutant-General, to Headquarters, District of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, San Antonio, March 30, 1863, *O.R.*, XV, 221.

⁵⁰ Thompson, *Mexican Texans*, 9.

⁵¹ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 60-61.

⁵² W. R. Briggs to Benavides, November 3, 1863, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁵³ Ford to Benavides, December 28, 1863, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Benavides to Ford, January 10, 1864, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁵⁶ Benavides to Ford, March 119, 1864, *O.R.*, XXXIV, I, 647.

⁵⁷ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 108.

⁵⁸ Camp to Ford, March 20, 1864, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁵⁹ Benavides to Ford, January 27, 1864, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Benavides informed Ford that he would keep him apprised of Federal movements in South Texas, but these messages are not present in the collection of correspondence between the two men collected at the Texas State Archives.

⁶¹ W. L. Newsom, Assistant Inspector General to Lt. W. Kearney, Acting Assistant Adjutant General, September 4, 1864, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁶² Santos Benavides, Special Orders No. 12, June 25, 1864, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁶³ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 119-120.

⁶⁴ Benavides to Dickinson, January 18, 1864, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁶⁵ Benavides to Ford, July 19, 1864, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁶⁶ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 122-123.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁷⁰ Ford to Benavides, June 30, 1865, Ford Papers, TSA.

⁷¹ Thompson, *Vaqueros*, 124-125.

⁷² Thompson, *Vaqueros*, xii.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁷⁴ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 269.

CHAPTER IV

A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS: GERMANS, IRISH, TEJANOS AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

At the commencement of the Civil War, the United States was a nation of immigrants. Over the course of the twenty years before the war, the United States saw many people come from a variety of nations. As such, it should come as no surprise that many of these people quickly developed an acute sense of nationalism, and signed up in droves to fight for their new nation, either for the Union and the Confederacy.

Following the War of 1812 with Great Britain, the United States received a massive influx of immigrants from the British Isles.¹ This flow of immigration to the United States amounted to some 2,750,874 people between 1819 and 1860. Of these immigrants, nearly one million of them came from Ireland.² Many Irish came to the shores of America to escape dire economic times in their homeland. Although certain events forced foreigners from their home countries to the United States, many of the immigrants still came willingly.

Much like the Irish, Germans also came to the United States in search of a better life. As with much of Europe, the German states were devastated by the prolonged and bloody Napoleonic Wars. Those wars were among the first factors to push German immigration into Texas.³ Some came to the United States seeking asylum after the abortive 1848 Revolution in Germany. Others

came both before and after the revolution seeking new lands to cultivate. By the beginning of the Civil War, German immigrants comprised almost one-third of foreign born Americans.⁴ As opposed to the Irish, the Germans, while also predominantly Catholic, were in many cases much better off in terms of economics and education.

In contrast to the Germans and Irish, many other immigrants occupied the new conquered lands west of the Mississippi River. The new state of Texas had an approximate population of 604,000. Out of this, 23,200 people claimed Mexican descent.⁵ Following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans living in Texas had American citizenship given to them, and their property was supposed to be protected by the United States Government. Almost immediately, Mexican Texans were excluded from many rights within the state, and were prohibited from entering some areas of the state, such as Austin and Seguin.⁶ To many of the Know-Nothings in Texas, the Mexican Catholic was both inferior to the Anglo settler and a danger to his freedom.⁷

This chapter will argue that the American Civil War provided an opportunity to advance the cause of Americanization by Tejanos, Germans and Irishmen. In part, their participation in the war shows that there is some undercurrent of the formation of a national identity as German Americans, Irish Americans and Mexican Americans. Aside from a few scattered German and Irish Immigrants before the major influx of immigrants after 1848, the Civil War was the first time that these ethnic groups were able to demonstrate their

devotion to their new nation through military service. The wartime contributions of these three ethnicities can be illustrated by comparing unit records of the Union's 69th New York Volunteer Infantry and the Confederacy's Benavides Texas Partisan Cavalry Regiment. These two units are unique due to their ethnic make up, with the 69th being made up primarily of Irishmen and the Benavides Partisan Regiment being made up of mostly Tejanos. The German aspect of this chapter will serve to place Tejanos into context as fellow settlers of antebellum and Civil War Texas. As this chapter will show, Tejano and Irish units, fighting in vastly different environments, and under very different conditions, shared some important characteristics. Apart from their relative location in the war, these units also had some notable points of contrast. This chapter will also argue that German Americans, in settling antebellum Texas, made many of the same adaptations and accommodating gestures that Tejanos did leading up to the Civil War. This chapter will also compare and contrast the settlement experience of Tejanos and Germans and examine their place in Texas society. It will also seek to establish the nature of German acquiescence to or resistance against Confederate policy. Were the Germans as rebellious against the slaveholding South as one might expect given their abolitionist tendencies?

After arriving in the United States, German immigrants quickly found their points of destination, such as Texas and Missouri, and set themselves upon a path to create as near a mirror image of their home nation as they could. The

way that German immigrants settled Texas was almost a complete opposite of the way in which Anglos and Tejanos had cultivated the state. Far from the expansive southern plantations in East Texas and the ranches in South Texas, the German immigrants began to cultivate their land along the road from Galveston to Austin. Many also settled in cities and towns in Texas, rather than seek out farmsteads.⁸

While their reception from their Anglo neighbors may have been less than hospitable, it was indeed more welcoming than that accorded to the Irish in New York or to the Tejanos in South and Central Texas. As noted before, one of the main points of contention between Anglo and German settlers in Texas was the issue of slavery.⁹ Likewise, the German population was more isolated than most other settlers. Their self-imposed seclusion and segregation from their neighbors only contributed to their status as outsiders.¹⁰ Many of the radical democrats amongst the Germans saw the slave-holding system of the South as a perversion of democratic ideals they had fought for in 1848.

Politically, Germans were more split than either the Irish or the Tejanos. Whereas the other two groups were clearly dominated by political figures such as Jose Antonio Navarro in Texas and William "Boss" Tweed in New York, the Germans had political factions within their community. Many Germans had differences of opinion on the political party that best served their needs. On one hand, many Germans liked the southern Democratic claim of "equal rights for all and special privileges for none."¹¹ This was a small source of agreement for

those Germans who took particular issue with the increasingly radical slaveholding stance the party adopted as the election of 1860 grew closer. However, as with the Tejanos, the appearance of the Know-Nothings in Texas politics forced many Germans who considered slavery abhorrent to ally themselves with the Democrats in an effort to end the Know-Nothings nativist tendencies.¹²

To what extent the Germans in Texas were forced to follow the Confederate line is still a source of contention. Historians such as Gilbert Giddings Benjamin contend that Germans served the Confederacy as they saw northern Republicans as a greater threat to the Union. Others, such as Anne J. Bailey argue the Germans who did serve did so only to avoid confiscation of property and murder by angry neighbors.¹³ Bailey asserts that while much of the dissent and disloyalty occurred from native southerners, Texas Germans were a specific target by the state government due in large part to the public's perception of them as abolitionists.¹⁴ Thus, Germans and Tejanos alike were sometimes the focus of legislation and public policy that isolated them and prohibited their interactions with slaves due to their respective ethnicity's perceived abolitionist tendencies. Although many served the Confederacy loyally, the prevailing thought was that they were in league with slaves, and were not to be trusted, as is evidenced by the laws prohibiting fraternization between Tejanos and slaves.¹⁵

The decision for Germans to fight for the Union was not always an easy one. Many German Texans enlisted of their own accord to fight for the Confederacy. Arguably, the same devotion and understanding of home in Texas that drove many Tejanos and Anglos to enlist was also present in German Texans. Religion was also a contributing factor in determining what side Germans supported during the war. Historians Walter Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich contend that German immigrants sided along denominational lines, with German Catholics and Protestants enlisting in differing numbers. Kamphoefner and Helbich are quick to point out that even though this may have effected overall enlistment of German Catholics, who largely supported the Union, but did not enlist in numbers as great as their Protestant countrymen, this had little to do with the side that they chose to fight for.¹⁶ In fact, Carl Hilmar Guenther, a German immigrant to Texas, did not believe that war was inevitable. Perhaps this was a reflection on his naiveté, or the feelings of Germans and Texans as a whole, but it showed that not all Germans were politically astute before the coming of the Civil War.¹⁷

Germans, like the Irish and Tejanos, had also felt the ire of the nativist Know-Nothings during the antebellum period. While Germans came to be known as the bulwarks of the Republican Party and of Texas Unionism, they rarely stood side-by-side with their Anglo neighbors in regards to how best to combat secession politically. This was due in large part to the Anglo Unionist links with nativism.¹⁸ While the predominantly Tejano counties of South Texas

voted overwhelmingly in favor of secession, the German frontier counties in West Texas voted overwhelmingly against secession.¹⁹ German opponents of slavery and secession had limited options in deciding which side to fight for during the war. Although Germans did serve in the Texas Unionist regiments, they also served in Confederate Texas units.²⁰

When conscription came, and the choice to fight was no longer a choice for German Texans, a number chose to enlist to be with friends and neighbors rather than out of some love for the Confederacy.²¹ One such man was Carl Traugott Bauer of Round Top, Texas. Writing to his wife Lina in 1862, Bauer mentioned that enthusiasm for the war had already begun to fade and that there was little faith in victory.²² It is unclear whether Bauer was a conscript taken after the First Confederate Conscription in April of 1862, which might account for the low morale of Bauer and his men. By 1863, following the Battle of Galveston, Bauer confessed to his wife that he prayed for an end to the war, as all soldiers must, be they Confederate or Union.²³ Bauer told his wife that along the Red River, there is much dissatisfaction, and that rumors had begun of desertions amongst the brigade.²⁴ Taken in context, Bauer and Guenther show that amongst Texas Germans, feelings on the war differed, and many were proud to fight for the Confederacy or at least for their homes.²⁵ That men in Bauer's brigade began to desert shows that the men of the Benavides regiment had something in common, both with other Confederate units and with other ethnic

units. As the outcome of the war become more uncertain, the willingness to fight also subsided.

The Germans, perhaps, were a mirror image of the Tejanos. While some Tejanos had little ideological stake in the outcome of the Civil War, they fought to gain the esteem of their neighbors and to further their own assimilation into American society. Tejanos who fought for the Union likely did so for the same motivation that drove their fellows to fight for the Confederacy. German immigrants who fought for the Confederacy did so more out of necessity to avoid property liens and harassment by neighbors.²⁶

While one supported slavery nearly unquestioningly, the other was torn by internal politics on how best to combat slavery and secession and on which side to serve. In many ways, the Irish men are a curious mix of both German and Tejano dilemmas during the Civil War, believing both in Union and in white supremacy and slavery. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Irish came to America for a variety of reasons. For one, the potato blight in Ireland had created economic desperation and forced many to leave their homes. Yet others were exiled for participating in revolutionary activities against Queen Victoria of Britain. Others, like Michael Corcoran, the first wartime commander of the 69th New York, fled from the abortive Irish Rebellion in 1848 that occurred the same year as numerous other rebellions erupted across Europe.²⁷ Corcoran had been enlisted in the British Revenue Police in Ireland for a brief time before joining the Ribbonmen, a group of guerrilla fighters. Corcoran fled to American

in 1849, rather than face being caught and hung for his revolutionary activities.²⁸ Once Corcoran arrived in New York City, he took work at the Hibernian Hall, an Irish pub across the street from St. Patrick's Cathedral.²⁹

As a result of growing nativist tensions in New York, and all throughout the United States, Irish immigrants had been excluded from joining local militias. Going as far back as colonial America, the militia had often been seen as a social status symbol, and the exclusion of the newly arrived Irish immigrants was one more effort by nativists to keep the Irish alienated from American society.³⁰ To respond to this, the 69th New York Militia was formed in November of 1850 as the second Irish regiment to be accepted into New York service.³¹ Unbeknownst to New York society, the organizers of the 69th New York also intended it as a way to train men to fight against the British occupation of Ireland.³² Corcoran had joined the 69th early on in its history, before the unit was mustered into New York service. As a testament to his ability and popularity, Corcoran was elected first lieutenant of I Company in the winter of 1851.³³

In seemingly direct contrast to the life led by Michael Corcoran was Patrick Cleburne. Cleburne was roughly the same age as Corcoran, but was born into an upper-middle class Protestant family in Northern Ireland. Historian Craig L. Symonds argues that even though Cleburne was a member of the gentry, his family still supported emancipation efforts on behalf of the lower class Catholic Irishmen. Like many of the men of his time, such as Corcoran or

Thomas Meagher, Cleburne had been active in the military before his migration to the United States.³⁴ However, unlike those other two Irishmen, Cleburne was involved in the suppression of revolutionary activity. As a corporal, Cleburne served a year and a half in the 41st Foot Regiment in the British Army. Patrick Cleburne arrived in the United States on Christmas Day, 1849. Eighteen months later, he moved and settled in Helena, Arkansas.³⁵ It is perhaps no accident that these three men ended up on opposite sides of the American Civil War. Like Santos Benavides, Cleburne was born into an upper-middle class household. While Benavides was a member of an ethnic group that was seen as unequal by members of his community, Cleburne was born into a family that was placed in charge of collecting rent from Catholic Irish peasants. The fathers of both Benavides and Cleburne died early in their sons' lives, giving Cleburne the impetus to immigrate and pushing Benavides into his uncle Basilio's political orbit.

Cleburne, like Corcoran, was a figure of some controversy. Cleburne became the architect of a radical and drastic plan to arm slaves as soldiers for the Confederacy.³⁶ Symonds believes that Cleburne was overly optimistic in his beliefs that the South cared more for the principles of self-governance than the institution of slavery.³⁷ In the end, Cleburne gave his life for the Confederacy at the battle of Franklin on November 30, 1864. Symonds argues that Cleburne was never a part of the society for which he fought and did so perhaps more out of duty than a sincere belief in the cause of the Confederacy.³⁸ If this is so,

Cleburne and Benavides had much in common. Benavides fought alongside many who deemed him socially less than equal. Knowing this, Benavides, a former fugitive slave marshal, almost certainly believed in ideas of white supremacy and in the institution of slavery.³⁹

The backgrounds of Cleburne, Corcoran and Colonel Santos Benavides, lend themselves easily to becoming wartime leaders in the American Civil War. Their revolutionary and military activities had shown them both willing to fight for a cause. Their new nation provided them the opportunity to fight in a relatively short time after their incorporation into the United States. That two foreign revolutionaries and a member of the Protestant Irish middle-class fought on opposing sides during the Civil War is not in itself extraordinary. As shown by Ella Lonn in *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, a great number of soldiers with combat experience had immigrated to the United States, both North and South, and would fight for their new nation. Some of these men were “Forty-eighters,” who fled Europe following the abortive 1848 revolutions, such as Thomas Meagher, a future commander of the Irish Brigade.⁴⁰ Others who had joined fought for, and against, the United States in the Mexican War.

What is most remarkable about both Corcoran and Benavides is that they fought for societies that had gone to extreme measures to ensure their status as second class citizens. As a result of Irish immigration into the United States, feelings of anti-immigration and anti-Catholicism culminated in the formation of the Know-Nothing Party. This party achieved notoriety around the nation for both

its secretive practices and its virulent nativism. Irish immigrants were prevented from joining certain organizations, such as the militia, in response to Know-Nothing policies. Historian Susannah Bruce argues that Catholic Irishmen fought for the United States out of respect for their past in Ireland and their future as Irish Americans.⁴¹ According to historian David R. Roediger, the whiteness of antebellum Irishmen was constantly called into question.⁴² In some places in the United States prior to the Civil War, Irish, and all the connotations that came with it, was seen by many to be as bad as being an African American Slave. As Roediger argues, the fact that these two groups were so often linked together in derogatory terms did not foster any type of solidarity. On the contrary, the Irish displayed an almost irrational and uncontrollable hatred towards free blacks that led to particularly violent flare ups between the Irish and free blacks.⁴³

In many respects, the Mexican Texans faced similar, if not worse, conditions in what used to be their home nation. Although far from New York, Mexican Texans were tormented by many of the same Know-Nothing policies and discriminations. In large part, the Know-Nothings can be attributed to turning many Mexican Texans away from the Union and towards the Democratic Party.⁴⁴ After the annexation of Texas, Mexican Texans found themselves subjected to economic harassment and exclusion from certain areas of the state. One of the more bloody chapters in the exclusion of Mexicans from the local economy resulted in the Cart Wars of 1857. During this incident, Mexican *carteros*, or cart drivers, were targeted by their white neighbors, and had their

carts destroyed, cargo stolen, and in many cases, the drivers themselves murdered.⁴⁵ During this incident, an estimated 75 Mexicans were killed.⁴⁶ Only the intervention of the U.S. Secretary of State, the Mexican government, and Texas volunteer troops ended the violence.⁴⁷

The inability of many Irish and Mexican immigrants to speak the dominant language, English, further led to mistrust amongst communities of whites and immigrants. This along with the tendency of Tejanos and Irishmen to cloister themselves within groups of other immigrants like themselves led to the belief by Anglo Americans that they did not wish to become “Americanized” and adopt the dominant culture, which included English as the only language as well as conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism. Regardless of the pre-war experiences of these ethnic groups, they would nonetheless enlist and fight for their new nation in the Civil War. In writing about the 10th Tennessee Infantry Regiment (Irish), historian Ed Gleeson states that the Irish had a notable lack of the sectional issues between North and South, and were looked down upon due to their accents and lack of education.⁴⁸ Likewise, once Irishmen joined the armed forces of either the Confederacy or the Union, many were seen as shirkers or deserters.⁴⁹ Historian Terry L. Jones cites poverty as a being the main impetus for Irish enlistment in Louisiana during the Civil War, and there is little reason to suspect that the case was very different in New York or Boston during the same time.⁵⁰

On the eve of the war, Michael Corcoran, by then Colonel of the 69th New York, was set to stand trial for insubordination. In October of 1860, the Prince of Wales, son of Queen Victoria, planned to visit New York City. The 69th New York had met and voted to not parade before the visiting future King of Britain.⁵¹ Colonel Corcoran, and many of the men of the 69th, had seen their refusal to parade before the Prince of Wales as a form of protest against the British occupation of Ireland. This action earned Corcoran the praise of many Irishmen and anti-royalists all over the United States. He received a gold palmetto cane from Irishmen in South Carolina, and a gold medal from Irish residents of San Francisco.⁵² However, some from his home state were outraged. They asked for, and received, the convening of a court martial for Corcoran for charges of insubordination. Some went so far as to ask for the dissolution of the 69th New York.

Fortunately for Corcoran, events elsewhere shifted the focus off his trial. On April 12, 1861, secessionists in South Carolina fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. The 69th decided to answer the call for troops, despite the initial objection of the largely Democratic composition of the regiment. Among the voices objecting to the original call for volunteers after secession was none other than Michael Corcoran.⁵³ Once a vote was taken of the 69th, Corcoran dropped his objections, and led his men to Washington, D.C., to serve their initial three month stint as volunteer troops in Federal service. The men who refused to enter into Federal service with the 69th were drummed out of camp

and humiliated by their former comrades. Once in Washington, the men set about building the fortification, Fort Corcoran, in honor of their commanding officer.⁵⁴

Shortly after their arrival in Washington, D.C., the 69th New York was deployed as part of General Irvin McDowell's army. Colonel Corcoran had received his orders on July 12 to march out with sixty rounds of ammunition and three days of rations each.⁵⁵ The 69th was brigaded with other units from New York and Wisconsin and placed under the command of Colonel William T. Sherman in McDowell's First Division. The result for the 69th was as disastrous for the regiment as it was for the rest of the army at the Battle of Bull Run. In the chaos, the 69th lost many men, including the standard bearer, who nearly lost the colors of the regiment, only to have it recaptured by another unit.⁵⁶ In all, the 69th New York suffered thirty-eight men killed, fifty-nine wounded and ninety-five missing at Bull Run, including Colonel Corcoran, who was wounded leading his men from the field and taken as a prisoner of war. In the words of David Power Conyngham, a staff officer who served under General Thomas Meagher in the Irish Brigade, "The 69th left the field in good order, with colors flying."⁵⁷ Upon Corcoran's arrival at a P.O.W. camp in Richmond, his Confederate captors asked him to sign a parole, promising not to bear arms against the South. He refused. Corcoran was eventually exchanged, after being threatened with execution in retaliation for the hanging of a Confederate privateer.⁵⁸ Corcoran received a promotion to brigadier general during his confinement. Later, at the

head of his own Irish Legion, Corcoran suffered what appears to have been a fatal stroke and died on December 22, 1863.⁵⁹

The duration of the war produced different results for the men of the 69th New York Militia and the men of the Benavides Cavalry Regiment. After the disaster of Bull Run, the men of the 69th New York returned home amid much pomp and fanfare. Upon their arrival, many of the men re-enlisted with the newly renamed 69th New York Volunteer Infantry.⁶⁰ This unit had in its ranks Irishmen from beyond the island of Manhattan. Company K was composed of men from Buffalo, Company F from Brooklyn and Company D from Chicago, Illinois. The 69th, along with other Irish units, the 63rd New York, the 88th New York and the 2nd New York Artillery Battalion, were organized as the Irish Brigade under the leadership of a former 69th company commander, Thomas Meagher.⁶¹

Meagher was yet another former revolutionary that had settled in the United States following the abortive rebellion in 1848. Unlike Benavides and Corcoran, Meagher managed to miss most of the key revolutionary activities that he was charged with by the British government. Meagher had not raised arms against the crown or erected barricades, but was implicated in planning these actions.⁶² For his complicity in the revolution, Meagher was sentenced to exile in Tasmania.⁶³ Meagher eventually escaped Tasmania to the United States by paying six hundred British pounds to a ship captain.⁶⁴

Like many Irishmen, and most notably, like Corcoran, Meagher favored the southern ideals and thoughts, especially concerning the right to secede and rebel.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, Meagher joined the Union Army as part of Corcoran's regiment, believing, as the colonel did, that this would serve as an opportunity to gain military experience for the eventual war to rid Ireland of the British.⁶⁶ For Meagher, his allegiance to the Union was solidified by the Confederacy firing on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861.⁶⁷

Meagher previously had commanded the original K Company of the 69th, the New York Irish Zouaves.⁶⁸ These units would be added to the II Corps under Edwin Sumner and, later, Winfield Scott Hancock.⁶⁹ With the re-organization of the men under the Irish Brigade, came a new philosophy on how they would be used in battle. Meagher's idea on how best to use these men was reflected in the choice of ordnance for them. Meagher insisted that the men of the 69th, and most of the men of the Irish Brigade, be equipped with the .69 caliber 1842 Smoothbore Musket, rather than have them equipped with the .58 caliber Springfield Rifled-Musket. General Meagher decided that his men would close with the enemy and use the shorter ranged smoothbore muskets to fire "buck and ball" for its advantages at close range combat.⁷⁰

Unfortunately for the men of the Irish Brigade, the tactics employed by Meagher led to extremely high casualty rates. The best evidence of this was seen at the battle of Antietam, where according to Captain Conyngham, the men of the Irish Brigade, with the 69th forming on the right of the line, "the muskets

were become red-hot in the men's hands, for they were three hours engaged."⁷¹ The men suffered greatly in their fight on that bloody day, leaving forty-four dead and 152 wounded, of which twenty-seven succumbed to their wounds.⁷² The 69th would lose more men in the coming battles. At the battle of Fredericksburg, the 69th New York, and the Irish Brigade behind them, suffered grievous losses. As Conyngham remembered the events, writing in 1867, "the rebel position was unassailable, it was a perfect slaughter-pen, and column after column was broken against it."⁷³ Colonel Robert Nugent and fifteen other officers of the 69th were lost, including 112 of the 173 men who crossed the Rappahannock.⁷⁴ By February of the next year, 1863, the Irish Brigade as a whole contained only 340 men. When the 69th New York fought at Gettysburg, the regimental rolls counted only 107 men.⁷⁵ Six officers and sixty-nine enlisted men died there during the fighting on the Stony Hill and across the Wheat Field.⁷⁶ The Brigade was also involved in repulsing Pickett's Charge on the third day of the battle where "they defiantly stood, and as the enemy closed upon them they poured a most destructive volley into them, contributing materially to their confusion."⁷⁷ When the 69th New York left Virginia in early 1864, the unit consisted only of two companies.⁷⁸ Although the 69th would rejoin the fight for the Army of the Potomac, it had already suffered serious losses to those who had enlisted in 1861, which shows the extent of their loyalty to the Union cause.

It may seem with the divergent courses of the war that the careers of the 69th New York and the Benavides Cavalry Regiment had little in common.

However, some aspects of these units do lend themselves to comparison. The leaders of these two units had previously fought for their home countries prior to the war. Thus, these men could only loosely associate themselves with their new nation. With Corcoran and Meagher, the struggle for Irish independence was always foremost in their thoughts. Meagher and Corcoran were both Fenians who thought that Irish independence from Britain required American assistance.⁷⁹ While Corcoran eventually encouraged Irish enlistment in the Civil War, he asked that Irishmen only enlist in Irish units, or else hold themselves back for the Fenian cause.⁸⁰ While many Irishmen fought in “Mr. Lincoln’s war,” many of them did not support “Mr. Lincoln’s” party. In the presidential election of 1860, the Irish of New York overwhelmingly supported the candidacy of Democrat Stephen Douglas.⁸¹

As the question of secession loomed in New York, the Irish drafted a resolution in favor of the Union, but against the use of force, and condemned the Republican Party as the “British Anti-Slavery party.”⁸² The Irish as a whole were in support of slavery. As David Roediger suggests, this may have had more to do with job competition from freed slaves than support for slavery itself.⁸³ Naturally, the fact that most Irishmen were working class in New York made most Irish suspicious of black freedom in the North, as they felt it threatened their livelihood. This dangerous undercurrent, coupled with the Irish continued support of the Democratic Party contributed to the eventual causes of the worst riot of the Civil War, the New York City draft riots of 1863. The Irish rioters

attacked draft offices and those in charge of them. Colonel Robert Nugent, hero of the 69th New York at the Battle of Fredericksburg, was acting provost marshal in charge of the draft, and as a result, had his home burnt to the ground.⁸⁴ To his credit, Nugent had organized the draft in such a way that would keep dissent against the draft localized to deal with potential opposition. For this reason, Nugent started the drafts in the outlying areas of New York.⁸⁵ Nugent also knew that if there was trouble, it would start in the working class Irish neighborhoods in the Five Points and Corlear's Hook.⁸⁶

The most telling effect of the wartime contribution of these ethnic groups would be their treatment and status following the war. Following the war, German Americans were widely hailed for their participation. For the Irish their service was recognized, but largely ignored. The status of the Irish following the war was largely the same as it was before. This may be in part due to their economic status. Most Irish were impoverished before the war, and little was done to improve their status. The Irish contributed twelve general officers to the war effort, as well as 7 percent of the combat troops of the war.⁸⁷ This is a significant contribution, considering that in 1860, 13 percent of the population of America was born outside the borders of the nation.⁸⁸ While this includes other Europeans and North Americans, it is still an indication of a great Irish wartime effort for the Union and Confederate causes.

In Texas, Mexican Americans contributed many fewer men to the struggle, but they did serve in great numbers nonetheless. Tejanos were

approximately 3.8 percent of the Texas population at the time of the war. From the Mexican Texan population, some 2,500 fought for the Confederacy. With the end of the war, the necessity of good relations between white and Mexican Texans ended. While Benavides won an office as a state representative following the war, Mexican contributions to the American Civil war would be largely ignored as unimportant actions in an unimportant theater. Their actions, however, suggest that Mexican Texans as a whole fought for an idea and an identity in a new nation, just as the Irish of New York, Louisiana and Tennessee did in other theaters.

Whereas some may see the Americanization of varying ethnic groups as a matter of conflict between the dominant and immigrant cultures, the actions of Tejanos, Germans and Irishmen during the American Civil War are testaments to the lengths by which immigrant cultures are willing to go to try and assimilate. The path towards Americanization was never an easy one, and it is hardly a complete one. As Peter Sahlins argues, the path to a national identity is one that may take centuries.⁸⁹ Certainly, it has taken many years for the Irish to be considered as white, a classification that Tejanos have not yet attained, yet are not excluded from.

The various ethnic groups that helped to define antebellum and post-war America, as philosopher and historian Michel Foucault has argued, created an identity that was important to them. Yet, even as they did this, they sought to become one with their new nation. Becoming American was not an easy

process, and the Germans, Irish and Tejanos found much resistance along the way. The Civil War has long been a watershed event in American history. But in studying the Civil War, historiography must reflect the nature of the discussions that were being held on the periphery of greater issues of slavery and freedom. The Civil War allowed for groups such as the Germans, Irish and Tejanos to have an active voice in what it different ethnicities believed it meant to be American.

Endnotes

¹ Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 2.

² Murray M. Horowitz, "Ethnicity and Command: The Civil War Experience," *Military Affairs*: 42, No. 4 (Dec., 1978), 182.

³ Gilbert Giddings Benjamin, *The Germans in Texas: A Study in Immigration* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1974), 3.

⁴ Christian B. Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 10.

⁵ Robert A. Calvert, et al., *The History of Texas* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2002), 117, 126.

⁶ Miguel Gonzales Quiroga, "Mexicanos in Texas During the Civil War," *Mexican Americans in Texas History*, ed. Emilio Zamora, et al. (Austin: Texas State Historical Association Press, 2000), 52-54.

⁷ Walter L. Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 27. For other sources on the Know-Nothings in Texas and their impact on Tejanos, see Gregg Cantrell, "Sam Houston and the Know-Nothings: A Reappraisal," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XCVI (Jan., 1993) and Roberto Ramon Calderon, "Mexican Politics in the American Era, 1846-1900: Laredo, Texas" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1993).

⁸ Terry G. Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), 53.

⁹ Benjamin, *Germans in Texas*, 82.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 95.

¹² Ibid., 102. For other implications of Know-Nothings in Texas, see Gregg Cantrell, "Sam Houston and the Know-Nothings: A Reappraisal," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XCVI (Jan., 1993). Cantrell examines Sam Houston's brief association with the Know-Nothings in Texas during the 1850's. See also *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/AA/waa1.html> (accessed June 12, 2008). It appears as though the Know-Nothing presence in Texas was a grassroots movement that was sparked by xenophobic fears of German and Mexican settlers in the state.

¹³ Anne J. Bailey, *Invisible Southerners: Ethnicity in the Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 22.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York: Edward Dix, 1857; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 272.

¹⁶ Walter Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Heblich, *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7.

¹⁷ Carl Hilmar Guenther, *An Immigrant Miller Picks Texas: The Letters of Carl Hilmar Guenther*, translated by Regina Beckmann Hurst and Walter D. Kamphoefner (San Antonio: Maverick Publishing Company, 2001), 86.

¹⁸ Walter Kamphoefner, "New Perspectives on Texas Germans and the Confederacy," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Volume CII, No. 4 (April, 1999), 444.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 448-449.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 449.

²² Carl Traugott Bauer to Lina Bauer, December 15, 1862, Carl Bauer Papers, Texas State Archives, hereafter referred to as Bauer Papers, TSA.

²³ Carl Traugott Bauer to Lina Bauer, April 2, 1863, *ibid.*

²⁴ Carl Traugott Bauer to Lina Bauer, May 2, 1863, *ibid.*

²⁵ As we can see with Bauer's letters, Confederate Germans did take pride in their service to their homes and to the Confederacy. As with the Benavides regiment's desertions, German desertions most likely had to do with the increasingly dire straits of the Confederacy and the lack of supplies and support.

²⁶ Bailey, *Invisible Southerners*, 16.

²⁷ Phyllis Lane, "Colonel Michael Corcoran: Fighting Irishman of the Irish Brigade," *The History of the Irish Brigade*, ed. Phillip Thomas Tucker (Fredericksburg, VA: Sergeant Kirkland's Museum and Historical Society, Inc., 1995), 72.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 73.

³⁰ John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983), 15.

³¹ Lane, "Colonel Corcoran," 74.

³² Mahon, *History of the Militia*, 86.

³³ Susannah Ural Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 49.

³⁴ Craig L. Symonds, *Stonewall of the West: Patrick Cleburne and the Civil War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 12.

³⁵ Ibid., 26-27.

³⁶ Ibid., 186-187.

³⁷ Ibid., 181.

³⁸ Ibid., 263.

³⁹ Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue & Gray* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1977; reprint, Austin: State House Press, 2000), 12.

⁴⁰ Lonon, *Foreigners in the Union Army*, 202.

⁴¹ Bruce, *Harp and the Eagle*, 2.

⁴² David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991, 2003), 133.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁴ Buenger, *Secession*, 134.

⁴⁵ Quiroga, "Mexicanos in Texas During the Civil War," 53.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Calvert, *History of Texas*, 126.

⁴⁸ Ed Gleeson, *Rebel Sons of Erin: A Civil War Unit History of the Tenth Tennessee Infantry Regiment (Irish) Confederate States Volunteers* (Indianapolis: Guild Press of Indiana, 1993), 10-11.

⁴⁹ Terry L. Jones, *Lee's Tigers: The Louisiana Infantry in the Army of Northern Virginia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), xii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7. Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995), 2. According to Ignatiev, the Irish were often given the most dangerous jobs, as they could be replaced cheaper than slaves. The districts inhabited by the Irish in New York, Boston and other eastern cities were renowned for their squalor, crime and poverty.

⁵¹ Lane, "Colonel Michael Corcoran," 77.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 79.

⁵³ William L. Burton, "'Title Deed to America': Union Ethnic Regiments in the Civil War," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Volume 124, No.6 (Dec. 17, 1980), 459.

⁵⁴ Mahon, *History of the Militia*, 98.

⁵⁵ Joseph G. Bilby, *Remember Fontenoy!: The 69th New York and the Irish Brigade in the Civil War* (Hightstown, NJ: Longstreet House, 1995), 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁷ David Power Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade* (New York: William McSorley & Co., 1867; Gaithersburg, MD: Olde Soldier Books, Inc., 1990), 40.

⁵⁸ Lane, "Colonel Corcoran," 82.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶⁰ Bilby, *Remember Fontenoy!*, 19.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶² Paul R. Wylie, *The Irish General: Thomas Francis Meagher* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 58.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁶⁸ Bilby, *Remember Fontenoy!*, 7, 20.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷¹ Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade*, 306.

⁷² Bilby, *Remember Fontenoy!*, 60.

⁷³ Ibid., 343.

⁷⁴ Bilby, *Remember Fontenoy!*, 70.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 91.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade*, 419.

⁷⁸ Bilby, *Remember Fontenoy!* 98.

⁷⁹ Horowitz, "Ethnicity and Command," 187.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 186.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 76-77.

⁸⁴ Bilby, *Remember Fontenoy!*, 92.

⁸⁵ Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 13.

⁸⁶ Adrian Cook, *The Armies of the Streets: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 54.

⁸⁷ Horowitz, "Ethnicity and Command," 182, 188.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 182.

⁸⁹ Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 269.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION- “ESTA SANGUINA GUERRA”: THE END OF THE ANGLO TEJANO ALLIANCE

Antonio Bustillo, an enlisted soldier from San Antonio serving with the 6th Texas Volunteers near Dalton, Georgia with Cleburne’s Division, wrote in March of 1864, “Everyone assures me that this bloody war will be over in the coming year.”¹ He concluded, “I very much wish to see you all again, for it has been nearly two years that I have been absent from my home.”² While those who served in south Texas no doubt were less apt to the home sickness that Private Bustillo showed, many still endured four years of hardship in their service to the Confederacy. Even as the enlistees of 1861-1862 continued to serve honorably, the enthusiasm had long since worn off, replaced by a desire only to return home. The sentiments expressed by Bustillo in his letter could have just as easily been those of many German, Irish or Anglo soldiers.

With the surrender of Confederate forces under Edmund Kirby Smith, the Civil War in the Trans-Mississippi ended on May 26, 1865.³ Along with the end of the war, hopes for Tejano inclusion into Texas society and life also had been placed on hold. While Santos Benavides and his brothers remained fixtures in Laredo politics for years to come, Anglo Texan attitudes towards Tejanos reverted to their antebellum position. For a large majority of Tejanos the wartime political expediency of the Anglo-Tejano alliance was over.

The steps for Tejano assimilation into Texan culture which began before Texas gained its independence from Mexico by men such as Juan Seguin and Jose Antonio Navarro had carried on past annexation, War with Mexico, and secession. Aided by a national debate over the nature of immigrants, Tejanos had, in part, found shelter within the Democratic Party.⁴ The Democrats, in allowing the inclusion of Irish and Tejano immigrants into the party, had consolidated their control over immigrant groups in hope of maintaining their hold both on the South and the institution of slavery. While it is true that many Tejanos had no interest in maintaining slavery in Texas, they, like some Germans, had accepted this tenet of the Democratic Party in order to gain acceptance into Texan society.⁵

The creation of a Mexican Texan identity was well underway by the time Fort Sumter was fired upon. Acceptance into the Democratic Party was only one step in the creation of this identity. Prominent Tejano families, such as the Navarro, Seguin and Benavides families, not only socialized with prominent Anglo families, but also in many cases intermarried. In Mexican Texas, where a strong national identity had not been established by either Spain or Mexico before 1835, national identity was negotiable and fluid. According to Peter Sahllins, national identity is a negotiable characteristic that groups along national frontiers often adopt in self-interest.⁶ That the northern provinces of Mexico and Spain had so often been seats of rebellion further supports this view.

In his provocative book *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, James McPherson asserts that the men who fought for the Union and Confederacy did so based on previous revolutionary traditions, amongst other things.⁷ This is certainly true for the German “Forty-Eighters,” the Irish exiles from the Famine, and the Tejano rebels against the Centralist government in Mexico. That Tejanos such as the Navarro and Benavides families took an active part in the Confederacy should come as no surprise, any more than the involvement of ethnic Irish such as Thomas Meagher and Michael Corcoran on the Federal side. Part of the negotiation of identity between Tejanos and Anglos involved the Tejanos accepting of American cultural mores, which in the South included acceptance of the system of slavery. In Noel Ignatiev’s influential book *How the Irish Became White*, the author argues that the alliance between the Democratic Party and the Irish was an alliance of convenience, which rejected nativism as championed by the Know-Nothings, and then the Republican Party, in favor of an institutional form of racism.⁸ This assertion is one that is very close in nature to the reason that Tejano elites allied themselves with the Democrats. While there is evidence, as reported by Frederick Olmsted, that a certain degree of camaraderie, or a “culture of the low,” as described by Ignatiev, existed between Texas slaves and Tejanos, the same author reports of the brutal treatment of slaves at the hands of Tejano masters.⁹

The wartime experience of Santos Benavides and his Tejano soldiers does much to show the extent of dedication to the Texan and Confederate

causes. The identity that was adopted by Tejanos was a reflection of the men and women who lived around them. The governments and policies in Washington and Richmond had little to do with the day-to-day lives of the Tejanos who served with Santos Benavides, and antagonistically, with Union General Edmund J. Davis. Nonetheless, traditional scholarship that treated the men of the Benavides Partisan Cavalry Regiment and the 1st and 2nd Texas (Union) as little more than hirelings no longer appears viable. While there was higher than average desertion rates among some of the units composed of Tejanos, many units composed of Anglos had similar desertion rates when faced with little or no pay and unsatisfactory provisions and equipment. The Benavides Regiment, which was manned by a majority of the Tejanos who served with the Confederacy, still had ten companies of troops in the field as of the surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Army under General Edmund Kirby Smith.¹⁰

The Tejanos' service to the Confederacy, while certainly not important in the way that many of the famous Confederate regiments were, still served an important function and may be taken to demonstrate unexpected racial acceptance by Anglo Confederates, at least within nineteenth century racial attitudes. Before the interdiction of the Mississippi River in July of 1863 by Union forces, Texas, and its southern border, were lifelines of supplies in to the Confederate Southwest. The Tejano units along the Rio Grande allowed supplies to escape the predation of Juan N. Cortina and his bandits. As shown

by the Benavides Regiment's involvement in the Battle of Laredo, Tejano units also helped to defend the interior of the state. The true legacy of the Benavides Cavalry Regiment's combat service to the Confederacy is therefore at the local level. On the other hand, the regiment's *military* service may be interpreted as less significant than the exceptional steps toward social acceptance of the Tejanos by Anglo Confederates.

The American Civil War had numerous implications as far as ethnicity and Americanization. The Irish, while not seen as a part of the dominant Anglo ethnicity, were still considered white, if only just barely. Officers like Thomas Meagher and Michael Corcoran came from a very different tradition than those like Santos Benavides and Patrick Cleburne. While Meagher, Corcoran and Benavides are linked together by virtue of having fought as revolutionaries, their class still separated them. Meagher and Corcoran came from a different class background than Benavides and Cleburne. The latter two officers came from an middle class background, and this no doubt played a part in the way they chose their ultimate alliance with the Confederacy.

Walter Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich assert in their book *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home*, that Germans were hardly a homogenous group in their opposition or support of slavery.¹¹ Those Germans who entered the United States before the revolution of 1848 were more apt to settle in areas which had slaves and were thus more likely to accept slavery. Ignatiev argues that the Irish, while traditionally opposed to slavery, found

common cause with the Democrats in opposing the Republican Party's nativist and anti-Catholic attitudes. Tejanos were confronted with the same issues after the initial success of the Know-Nothings in Texas during the mid-1850's. Traditional scholarship has ignored the commonalities between the various ethnic groups that fought for both sides during the Civil War and this thesis concludes that models for the service of one ethnic group, such as the Irish and Germans, should be extended to other, more obscure groups, such as the Tejanos, to test the theory of service and Americanization.

Accommodation to the dominant culture of America has been an issue for immigrant groups since before the United States was independent from England. With the massive influx of immigrants in the nineteenth century, this issue was once again brought to the forefront. That most Irish were poor and most could not settle past the port cities made them all the more wretched in the eyes of American born Anglos. Similarly, Tejanos along the Rio Grande were attacked due to the perception that they took jobs from lower class Anglo settlers. When emancipation was announced in 1862, the backlash against free blacks took a very similar form, as evidenced by the New York Draft Riots of 1863. Similar in feel, if not in scope, to the Cart Wars of the 1850's in Texas, an ethnic group was singled out due to the perceived increase in job competition.

While men such as Benavides and Cleburne had little to fear in this regard, many of the men who served with them did not enjoy similar economic prosperity. According to the U.S. Census records on 1850 and 1860 listed many

of the men who served with Benavides as ranch workers or other types of unskilled labor. Meanwhile, Benavides and many of his officers were wealthy by comparison, having their occupations listed as various types of merchants and landowners. An example of this is Captain H. Clay Davis, commander of H company of the Benavides Cavalry Regiment, owned more than \$25,000 worth of real property in 1850.¹² The traditional interpretation of Tejano service does include a heavy emphasis on economics. Jerry Thompson, in his book *Vaqueros Blue and Gray*, contends that Tejanos enlisted to enhance their economic opportunities. However, as shown by Miguel Gonzales Quiroga in his article "Mexicanos in Texas During the Civil War," Tejanos were not subject to the Confederate conscription laws.¹³ Economic opportunities were not limited to the Confederate or Union armies. Rather, with trade to Mexico booming during this time, that might have seemed a better, and somewhat more comfortable trade to engage in.

Traditional scholarship has also cited Santos Benavides himself as a major source of enlistment of Tejanos. Again, the social and economic prominence of Benavides may have explained the number of Tejanos from Laredo that joined, since the Benavides family had been an influential one as far back as the founding of the town. However, the Benavides Cavalry Regiment had members from as far north as Austin, and as far west as New Mexico. The geographic area from which the Benavides Cavalry Regiment recruited was impressive, and Benavides' reputation before the war could not have drawn in

so many. The Benavides Cavalry Regiment was not a homogenous group. Both Tejanos and Anglos served under Benavides. Anglos served under Benavides as officers and enlisted men. This can be interpreted as a sign of Anglo acceptance of a Tejano as a competent officer. In the Benavides Cavalry Regiment, many Tejanos were given positions of prominence, from Captains of half of the companies to various non-commissioned officer positions within the units themselves.¹⁴ Praise given to Benavides by the Governor of Texas and his Anglo commanding officers shows that his ethnicity, for a time, was not an issue. Again, the attraction of a Tejano officer would not have drawn such a diverse group. Rather, traditional explanations of enlistment, such as patriotism, concern for home and the aforementioned revolutionary spirit appear to have combined prompting Tejanos to rally for the Confederacy.¹⁵

While the Civil War doubtless left a legacy on Texas, its legacy on Tejanos has been significantly more difficult to determine. The Tejanos who served either the Confederacy or the Union were like many immigrants before them, and since, in having little ability to read and write English. Regardless, Tejanos enlisting voluntarily for the Confederacy under some harsh conditions indicates multiple motivations were at work. Again, incidents like Adrian Vidal's repeated defections and desertions cast doubts on the dedication of Tejano troops to either side. Vidal was a young man when his desertion occurred, and was the result of chronic neglect by both the Confederacy and the Union. This

cannot be taken as a reflection on the dedication of Tejano troops any more than the patriotism of Germans after their retreat at Chancellorsville, Virginia.

Tejanos, Germans, and the Irish ultimately decided to fight for the side they thought best represented their vision of America. In some cases, it was for a more perfect Union, complete with ideals of freedom and equality. To others, it was ideals of home and the need simply to belong in a state and regional setting. While other ethnic groups left more complete records of their reasons for fighting in the American Civil War, scholars who study Tejanos draw conclusions from the incomplete records of why these men who had little or no stake in the war's outcome fought as they did and for who they did. While Tejanos wrote and spoke differently than their contemporaries, they nonetheless vocalized sentiments that would be understood by soldiers in either army during the war. While they were unique in their position of being Tejano and Confederate, much still tied them to their fellow soldiers of any ethnicity.

Endnotes

¹ Antonio Bustillo to Petra Martines de Bustillo, March 1, 1864, Bustillo Family Papers, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas. Hereafter referred to as Bustillo Papers, DRT Library. This is translated from the sentence in the letter dated March 1, 1864. “Todas me aseguran que esta sanguina guerra debe de finalizar en este ano cuando mas tarde, y espero que asi suceda, pues ya tengo muchas ganas de ver a todos ustedes, pues ya va para dos anos que me alla ausente de mi casa, en fines de este mez se cumplen los dos anos.” The sentence goes on to describe the election of Eugenio Navarro, a member of Jose Antonio Navarro’s family, to the rank of lieutenant.

² Ibid.

³ Ford to Benavides, June 30, 1865, John S. Ford Papers, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas, Hereafter referred to as Ford Papers, TSA.

⁴ John Denny Riley, “Santos Benavides: His Influence on the Lower Rio Grande, 1823-1881” (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Christian University, 1976), 109.

⁵ *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home*, ed. Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 15.

⁶ Peter Sahllins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 269.

⁷ James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 104.

⁸ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 69.

⁹ See Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas: Or a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York: Edward Dix, 1857; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 272, and Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 2.

¹⁰ Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue & Gray* (Austin: Presidential Press, 1977; reprint, Austin: State House Press, 2000), 122.

¹¹ Kamphoefner and Hebllich, *Germans in the Civil War*, 7.

¹² United States Census Department, *United States Census, 1850*.

¹³ Miguel Gonzales Quiroga, "Mexicanos in Texas During the Civil War," in *Mexican Americans in Texas History*. ed. Emilio Zamora, et al. (Austin: Texas State Historical Association Press, 2000), 52-54.

¹⁴ J. E. Slaughter, Special Orders No. 32, February 7, 1863, John S. Ford Papers, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. Slaughter, in organizing the Benavides Regiment, writes that the captains of A, B, D, G, and I companies have Hispanic surnames.

¹⁵ McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 104. McPherson discusses the previous revolutionary tradition in the United States, as well as many soldiers perceived their homes to be at risk during the Civil War.

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