

THE GRASS WAS NOT GREENER ACROSS THE SABINE RIVER

For me, genealogy is more than the collecting of dead people's names; it is the attempt to put a real face upon a long-gone ancestor and to try to understand his life by understanding the historical events that affected it. I recently read a book, *Lost Spanish Towns; Atascosito and Trinidad de Salcedo* by Jean L. Epperson, that shed light upon an emigration of nearly two hundred years ago that must have had a dramatic and traumatic effect upon a number of Louisiana families whose descendants still inhabit this area. It also proves the old adage, "the grass only seems greener on the other side of the fence".

The United States purchased Louisiana in 1803. Except for the brief period when France's Emperor Napoleon owned and then sold the colony, Louisiana had been ruled and administered by Spain since 1766. While the Spanish were not exactly loved, they represented a known element to the inhabitants, instead of this strange, new and frightening government of the United States of America with its alien concept of democracy. Understandably, many former Spanish citizens of Louisiana were not exactly thrilled. This fear was egged on by the last Spanish governor, the Marquis of Casa Calvo, who remained in now-American Louisiana and attempted to convince Louisianans to move to still-Spanish Texas.

In 1805, fourteen families arrived in Atascosito, a tiny Spanish outpost laying about halfway between the present-day cities of Houston and Beaumont, Texas. Many were related to one another by blood or marriage. What fears led these people to abandon their homes and friends

for the wilds of Texas? Though some of these families came from the area around what is now Lake Charles, at least one came from the Pointe Noire neighborhood between present-day Branch and Church Point. The church and civil records for these families were recorded in Opelousas, regardless of actual homesite, because St. Landry Parish (or Opelousas County, as it was called at the time) then stretched all the way to the Texas border. They were:

1. Charles Sallier and his wife, Catherine LeBleu. Sallier lived at the site of the future Lake Charles and the lake and the resulting city were actually named after him.
2. Blaise Lejeune and his wife Adelaide Quintero. Lejeune lived on Bayou Plaquemine Brûlée in today's Acadia Parish and his wife was the daughter of a Spanish soldier stationed in Louisiana. With them was Blaise's brother Jean Baptiste. Strangely missing from the census was their daughter, Marguerite, who would later marry Catherine LeBleu Sallier's brother, Jean Baptiste LeBleu.
3. Augustin Remi Boudreaux, widower of Judith Martin.
4. Marie Magdeleine Benoit, widow of André Favron.
5. Sebastien Benoit and his wife, Hypolite LeBleu. Hypolite was the sister of Catherine LeBleu Sallier.
6. Frederick Stockman and his wife Catherine Desponete.
7. Joseph Girout and his wife, Celeste Robertson.
8. Anselm Doucet and his wife, Marie Angelle Lejeune. Marie Angelle was the sister of Blaise Lejeune.
9. John Aaron Drake, Sr. and his wife Charity Smith.

10. John Aaron Drake, Jr. and his wife, Rosalie Abshire.
11. Jacob McLaughlin and his wife, Mary Thompson.
12. Pierre Frugé and his wife, Suzanne Burns.
13. François Marcantel and his wife, Josephine Frugé.
Madame Marcantel was the daughter of Pierre Frugé.
14. Daniel Boone (nephew of the famous frontiersman with the same name) and his wife Anne Boudreaux.

Most of these settlers were back in Louisiana within a few years. For various reasons, Texas was far from being the Promised Land. The Frugé, Marcantel, Favron and Stockman families were expelled by the Spanish authorities while records in Opelousas show that the Sallier, Lejeune, Girout, Drake, Boudreaux and Doucet clans also later returned home. The widower Augustin Remi Boudreaux married the widow Marie Magdeleine Benoit Favron in Opelousas in 1815. Even the family of Daniel Boone, who stayed in Texas for many years, moved back to Louisiana after his death.

Why was Texas such a disappointment? Aside from those expelled, why did the other families return to Louisiana? Since few of their friends and relatives followed in their wake, loneliness was obviously a factor. After reading the history books, a more likely reason was that great disrupter of human lives, War.

The Mexican Revolution against imperial Spain began in 1810 and under-populated Texas received more than its fair share of bloodshed. The rebel leader, Juan Bautista de las Casas, quickly conquered Texas in 1811 but was defeated and executed a few months later by Royalist forces under Juan Manuel Zambrano. Another rebel takeover of the province occurred the next year, led by

Bernardo Gutierrez and Augustus Magee with a heavily American force, and it was likewise defeated by Royalists Jose Joaquin Arrendondo and Ignacio Elizondo. The triumphant Spanish bloodily re-established control over Texas with mass executions of rebels and their sympathizers. This was no place for settlers from Louisiana to raise a family. Though the Mexicans eventually ousted the Spanish once and for all, the majority of the settlers were by that time safe and sound in American Louisiana.

Learning of this short Texas adventure brought me a little more understanding of the lives and personalities of two of my ancestors, Blaise Lejeune and Adelaide Quintero.

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