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SAGA OF A BRAVE PEOPLE
1926-1948 R

THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF HUSBANDRY

For many generations traders and adventurers had moved freely in the area along the "Trail of Commerce" from Santa Fe to New Orleans, and even beyond. They transported livestock, hides, bones, gold, silver, grain, and many other items. Among these early traders were St. Denis, Gil Ybarbo, Oliver Pollock, Thomas Isaac Cox who operated under the nom de plume Tomas de la Cocques. Also, the Irish horse trader Philip Nolan, and the hunters and trappers who portaged, floated, or pack horsed their goods to Menard, the French Canadian trader who served the entire area. Primitive roads, trails, crossings, and trading posts were established by these earlier men who years before had brought the first Anglo civilization to this area.

Jose de Escandon, a rancher, trader, Colonizer, and later a Spanish Governor of Texas, a part of New Spain, kept open the trade routes by the Army of New Spain to establish a line of missions and presidios in an effort to take the pressure of the hordes from the north off the settlers in central Texas. There were many Irish and other Europeans in his armies. These men had a vast knowledge of natural routes of trade and travel in Texas. Many of these people either deserted and stayed here, or went to the American Colonies, only to return later to Texas to enjoy the fruits of this rich trade. Many of these had secured trading licenses from Spain and later from Mexico. There were some third and fourth generation traders living along the streams and trade routes through this area long before Moses and Stephen F. Austin came to Texas. Nowhere in their colonization agreement were they given rights to disturb the peaceful farmers, ranchers, or traders who were already here.

Many individuals had made calls on Mr. Austin in an effort to change the treatment of the less affluent of his settlers. Now the people became aroused all over the country. As a result

June 11, 1834 found sixteen (16) men from all over central Texas gathered at Nate Brown's log cabin to deliberate the causes and results of Mr. Austin's policies.

Stephen F. Austin, it seemed, demonstrated a total disregard for the unfair trade practices employed by some of the larger plantations in the Colonies. These practices resulted in great hardships and suffering among the smaller and more remote farmers. This group was also concerned by the failure of Mr. Austin to recognize the need for a unified system of travel and transportation of people and commerce with equal advantage to all.

Another problem of the group was to determine whether or not Mr. Austin was aware of advantages his policies provided the larger and more affluent farmers; and, if so, what this group could do in addressing these problems.

It was concluded by this group that Mr. Austin had knowledge of the situation, but found himself powerless to correct it, or in any way amend his errors. This resulted from the many favors Mr. Austin had accepted from the larger farmers in order to survive. This group further concluded that in the beginning Mr. Austin had failed to recognize the value of the small farmers and trade peoples; his problem being that he had failed to grant them any voice in the local government of these communities, and that for any country to survive and prosper there must exist a bond of mutual concern and understanding between those who consented to be governed and those who formulated the rules of government.

Furthermore, it must recognize the rights of all the people, and permit their voices of protest to be heard when they are being oppressed. It was a further conclusion that government must originate in the smaller units of those who permit themselves to be governed, but opposes submission to the whims of the greedy and self-serving officers.

Consent to be governed must spring from the hearts and minds of all people - the humble and uneducated, and the informed and affluent. Government must originate from a desire born at the lowest levels of our society, and it must give just consideration to the humble laborer, farmer or tradesman as well as the great plantation owner.

The final conclusion of this group was that Mr. Austin must realize that in any society there must be consumers as well as producers, and that a climate must exist which is healthy to all of its honest, concerned persons.

These conclusions were reduced to resolutions which, after much debate and deliberation, were presented and adopted as the Constitution and By-Laws of the newborn infant - The Society Of The Friends Of Husbandry" - a rural oriented group to safeguard the positions and interests of those people engaged in the development of a strong, vigorous, rural society as the backbone of an emerging new nation.

Benjamin E. Cox of Bell County was chosen Master, James Johnston of Freestone County, a kinsman of the first Master of the Texas Grange, and Pleasant Cox, a 14 year-old who could write and speak fluently, was chosen as Secretary.

"Mr. Austin had seemed sympathetic to the Society, but other pressing problems, and his own financial woes resulted in an ill and inefficient man" quoted James Johnston. Mr. Austin lived less than three years after this.

The Society grew and prospered, and was effective throughout the Civil War, but yielded to the formation of the Grange because of its national scope. Long Meadows Trading Post was the headquarters and warehouse for the Society's produce, and later became the meeting place of the first Grange in Texas which was organized here October 12, 1869. Thus, the ideas and spirit that prompted the June 14, 1834 meeting lived in the organization of the Grange where the 14 year-old secretary of The Society Of The Friends of Husbandry was chosen to lead the first Grange in Texas. Pleasant Cox was then a 49 year-old man.

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