

# German-Alsatian Houses in the Upper Quihi Rural Historic District



## Exhibit Guide and Teacher Resources

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# German-Alsatian Houses in the Upper Quihi Rural Historic District

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## Exhibit Guide

This exhibit seeks to deepen the understanding of local vernacular architecture, explore the changes in Upper Quihi's built environment, and reinforce the connection between the historic structures and the community of Upper Quihi. Specific themes include immigrants' building traditions, immigrants adapting to life in Texas, and the effect of the railroad on the community as seen through the houses built in Upper Quihi.

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# Background Information

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## History of Quihi and Upper Quihi

Quihi, New Fountain, Vandenburg, and Castroville were colonies established in present-day Medina County (officially organized in 1848) in the mid-1840s by empresario Henri Castro. Castroville was the first of these settlements, and Quihi followed soon after, chosen for its advantageous location on Quihi Lake. At the time, Castro's colonies stood on the far western edge of the Texas frontier and were the furthest settlements west of San Antonio. Castro recruited German and French immigrants, many of whom came from the region of Alsace-Lorraine (Ochoa 2010). Ultimately, Castro's land grant would bring some 2,500 settlers into Medina County, and the settlers of Quihi were most often Lutherans or Methodists of German origin. Quihi originally included 27 families—among them the Muennincks, Brucks, Heyens, Pichots, Schweers, Schuehles, Saathoffs, Schneiders, Riedens, Brinkhoffs (Brinchoff), and Boehles. The immigrants traveled by ship to Galveston and crossed Texas on foot, toting carts, to their newly allotted territory west of San Antonio. Along the way, they were met with considerable violence from hostile Comanches. In Texas, the European settlers encountered a climate and terrain that was severely hot, dry, sparse of vegetation, and rocky—environmental elements considerably unlike those of their homeland. Additionally, the German and French Alsatians, many of them trained as craftsmen or merchants, were not entirely prepared to assume an agricultural lifestyle and struggled to acquire adequate implements, livestock, and expertise (Iruegas and Penick 2005:25–26).

Despite these serious obstacles, the immigrants developed Quihi into a successful farming community. Agriculture was the mainstay of the settlement, as land grant terms stipulated that colonists cultivate 15 acres within three years. Initial crops included wheat, corn, rye, and oats, with corn gradually taking precedence as the grain best suited to the climate and conditions. Turnips, squash, and beans also did well in the area. Farmers nearly always raised livestock, typically dairy and beef cattle or hogs, as well as smaller numbers of sheep and goats. In the late 1840s, a military road linking San Antonio to the Rio Grande was built through Quihi, giving the nascent community access to Castroville and San Antonio, as well as to Forts Inge, Lincoln, Duncan, and Clark on the western frontier. These connections provided the settlement with a steady market for its agricultural products. As families established more permanent farmsteads, initial adobe and brush homes gave way to one-story houses built with local timber, sandstone, and limestone in a fashion derived from the settlers' homelands. By 1850, Quihi consisted of sixteen households. Residents were from Germany, Hungary, and Switzerland—as well as one Virginian and one Mexican—and trades included farming, stone masonry, blacksmithing, shoemaking, and mechanics. The town had a post office (built 1854), a Lutheran church (1852), and a private school (1856) (Iruegas and Penick 2005:29).

The 1870s in Quihi saw increased diversification in professions, with teachers, ministers, a postmaster, merchants, and grocers now supporting the growing town (Cassedy 2006:33). Quihi was on a path of expansion during the 1870s, both in population and in farm acreage. However, the construction of the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway through the county in 1881 brought about the establishment of Hondo and LaCoste, causing the subsequent and gradual decline of Quihi, which was bypassed by the new railroad. As central Quihi's status as an economic center diminished and businesses closed, farmers began establishing homesteads farther north of

the original town site, following Quihi and Elm Creeks. These newer, northern farms that developed after the arrival of the railroad became known as Upper Quihi. The Quihi Gun Club (or Quihi *Schuetzen Verein*) was built in 1890 and hosted the community's first social organization, which continues to offer dances, picnics, and other community events.

Upper Quihi was distinct from the earlier settlements in the type and style of its buildings, which adhered more to the wood frame, Victorian, or Classical Revival styles current at the time. Late nineteenth century homes in Upper Quihi were often built from plan books, L-shaped in plan, one or two stories in height, and typically constructed with manufactured wood and iron components. They were built as early as the 1880s, and as late as the 1920s. In 1916, when Albert G. Eckhart built his home on Sturm Hill in the Upper Quihi district, he constructed a typical wood-frame, plan-book house, illustrating the prevailing style of the period and the move away from the earlier German-Alsatian stone house form.

Growth in Quihi throughout the remainder of the twentieth century continued to center in Upper Quihi. The original school in Quihi closed in 1920, replaced by the newer Upper Quihi School—built in 1910 and in operation until the early 1950s when it was consolidated with the Hondo school district. After declining to a population of twenty residents in the 1940s, Quihi (including Upper Quihi) rebounded to a population of approximately 100 in the late twentieth century (Cassedy 2006:38–39). This population growth may be an effect of the general growth of the San Antonio metropolitan area, in which all of Medina County is included. Despite this growth, Quihi today is home to only a few residences, a church, and a cemetery. Quihi continues to function as a communal center for surrounding farms and ranches but no longer provides commercial or governmental services for area residents, who instead travel to Castroville or Hondo for these purposes. Upper Quihi remains in character much as it was when it was first settled: a collection of farms north and east of Quihi, with many residents descended from original Castro Colonies settlers.

## **Stone Houses in Upper Quihi**

The stone houses constructed in the Upper Quihi area and in many parts of Medina County illustrate a process of borrowing and assimilation of characteristics from local and traditional sources. The resulting vernacular architecture is unique to South Texas (Guerric 1999:v). The stone folk houses of Medina County portray an evolution of a model that was the result of the interaction between the ethos of the people who built them and the place in which those people lived. Many of these immigrants were from Alsace, a region that today is in France, but which for centuries was culturally and linguistically German. They brought with them a series of expectations for domestic architecture that had been shaped by centuries of construction practices in Alsace and western Germany. These ideas, however, had to be adapted to the realities of life in South Texas. This particular combination of Alsatian ethos and Texan realities created a construction style not seen anywhere else.

The most distinct features of traditional Alsatian architecture are half-timber construction, richly decorated facades, and steep gabled roofs (Guerric 1999:2). The practical realities of life on the Texas frontier prevented the same features from becoming standard in Medina County and Upper Quihi. The new forms developed in South Texas reflect the simplicity of nineteenth-century farm life and the modest aspirations of the people who built and lived in these houses. The spatial organization of domestic architecture, its form and materials, and even its decoration can tell us quite a bit about social patterns, how people relate to one another, and the values and technological skills of those who built and lived in the homes (Guerric 1999:8).

Most of the recorded examples of stone houses are found in Castroville. Structurally, these houses are quite similar to those found in Upper Quihi, though their setting and orientation to one another are necessarily different than the farm houses found in Upper Quihi. Stone houses usually consisted of one or two rooms laid out parallel to the road or street with a steeply pitched side-gabled roof. Many were one-and-a-half-stories, with the main living quarters and a storage and/or sleeping loft above. Recorded examples in Castroville usually had a detached building away from the main house for the kitchen and/or for storage purposes (Guerric 1999:10). Subsequent additions, which were common, were added in lean-to manner resulting in a salt-box shape. The stone walls are between 14 and 24 inches thick, of stacked limestone or caliche, with stucco covering both the exterior and the interior walls. The rafters, beams, roofing, window frames, doors, and floors – in those houses that had floors – were either hand-hewn or saw-mill timber, most often cypress but occasionally pine, oak, or mesquite (Guerric 1999:14). A few examples have flagstone floors (Guerric 1999:14). Chimneys were placed on the axis of the room, generally incorporated into the wall at either or both gable ends (Guerric 1999:12). Often the beams and floors of the loft created the ceiling of the main living rooms, while cheesecloth or canvas was used for the ceiling in the lofts: this protected the interior from dust and other particulates while allowing hot air to rise through the ceiling to help ventilate the space (Guerric 1999:11).

## **Alsatian Folk Houses**

The styles of American folk houses were influenced by the building traditions that settlers carried with them to a given region, and the characteristics of American folk houses vary from region to region as a result. Typically used to describe structures that were built using locally available materials, and often by the settlers who were going to occupy the home, the term “folk house” indicates a shelter built with a focus on form over fashion (McAlester 2013). Most Alsatian folk houses are two stories and are oriented perpendicularly to the street (Guerric 1999:19). The majority are half-timbered, or half-timbered in combination with stone masonry construction (a stone-construction ground floor topped by half-timbered construction). They are framed in large timber beams with a variety of infill used to close the spaces between, creating a solid wall. Often, beams are carved or curved (by applying steam) and then placed and articulated into decorative configurations (Guerric 1999:21). The infill might be wattle-and-daub, balls of mud, split wood boards, lattice, planks, tiles, or bricks. The Steinbach House, built in Alsace in the seventeenth century and relocated to Castroville, is an example of a house with brick infill between the timbers (though the current brick is American-made, not shipped from Alsace as the wood structure of the house was). The infill was then covered in plaster, and often featured decorative additions such as textures, inscriptions, or painted patterns on the stucco. The roofs are steeply pitched, most likely a result of the winter snowfalls common in the Alsace region, and clad in tile.

## **Spanish-influenced Texan Folk Houses**

The immigrants to Texas did not arrive to untouched land. Most of them first stepped ashore in Texas at Galveston and traveled overland to San Antonio, before taking up their claims in the frontier of Medina County. Among the Hispanic Texans, there were three discernible house types that the immigrants would have come into contact with: the homes of the elites, the middle class, and the poor. The wealthy Texas residents resided in sprawling one-story stone houses with flat roofs, with few openings in the façade and the rooms organized around an interior courtyard. The middle class lived in one- or two-room houses of stone, sometimes adobe, which in material resembled the houses of the wealthier residents. The majority of the population was poor and lived in *jacales*,

primitive one-room huts of wood covered in mud, without windows or doors, with a thatched roof. Among both the middle and poorer classes, people spent much of their lives outside (Guerric 1999:60-61).

## **Process of Adaptation**

Looking at all three types of houses, it becomes clear that the Medina County stone houses are the result of adapting the ethos of Alsatian vernacular architecture to the climate of Texas as well as the realities of living on the frontier. Living and interacting with Texans from other cultures and traditions, the German-Alsatian immigrants to Medina County learned, borrowed, and shared knowledge in their new country. Large timbers were scarce in Texas, so the elaborate and often decorative half-timbering common in Alsace was replaced by stone construction with which the immigrants were familiar; limestone and caliche were relatively easy to acquire in Medina County. Roofs remained steep, reflecting the Alsace tradition even in a region (south Texas) where the snowfall that makes the pitch necessary is unlikely, but also continuing the tradition of a loft space. Decorative features such as textures, tiles, inscriptions, and painted patterns were luxuries on the frontier, and thus generally abandoned.

These adaptations in vernacular architecture continued into the twentieth century, along with, most notably, a general abandonment of the stone house form in favor of frame houses. In some cases, as seen in the house built in 1916, an entirely new house was built using the common form and materials of the time. In other instances, the difficulty of adapting stone construction for modern innovations and inventions led to frame additions onto the existing stone house. With solid stone walls, running electrical wires or pipes for plumbing within the walls is not feasible—frame walls suit the needs of modern life more readily. Stone construction requires more labor, and over the course of the twentieth century, labor costs became one of the largest expenditures on a construction project as it became increasingly the preserve of specialized laborers. Thus, frame construction was not only more suitable to the inclusion of modern conveniences, it was also cheaper. As the average Americans' house has grown significantly larger since the nineteenth century, the small stone houses simply did not fit American lifestyles. Nonetheless, many have been preserved and, with additions and renovation, even continue to serve as homes in Upper Quihi and throughout Medina County, proving that maintaining traditions and adapting to new needs is ongoing.

## Exhibit Highlights

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### Extant German-Alsatian Stone House



This house, probably built about 1870, shows several characteristics of the common form of German-Alsatian houses in Upper Quihi. Small (originally two rooms) and focused on functionality, the house lacks any decorative features. The walls are covered in plain white stucco, and the roof is sloped to accommodate a loft space. While houses in Alsace often had decorative features, these immigrants' houses had to be much simpler. The simplicity of the form reflects the realities of life in what was still in many ways frontier Texas: few people would have had spare funds for decorative features and

even if they had, getting goods to Quihi would have been difficult. Much as they had been for American settlers since the first colonies were founded in North America, buildings were functional and simple. It is only after a place is economically established and connected to the transportation network that luxuries such as decorative architecture are seen.

### Maximizing Space



Many houses of this type are one-and-a-half stories. A half-story is a floor that is partially or wholly built into the framing of the roof or that is less than approximately 2/3 the size of the lower floor. This loft might have been used for storage or as space for sleeping; older children particularly often had their bed in loft spaces (and siblings, especially of the same gender, usually shared just one bed). In fact, it may have been used for both purposes, since in a small house, every space had to serve multiple functions. The ceiling in the loft would have likely been cheesecloth or canvas, which would keep dust and

dirt from falling on the people below but would let hot air rise through the roof to keep the space relatively cool. Because those materials degrade relatively quickly, there isn't any visible evidence of which was used in this house.

### Stone Wall Construction



The walls are over one foot thick, constructed of solid stones that are stacked and joined with adobe mud. In this house, large sections of two walls were removed, likely in the early twenty-first century, for an unknown purpose. This, and the deterioration of the stucco, which protected the wall from the elements, has exposed the stone and adobe to the weather and degraded it. Because adobe is essentially mud, it washes away relatively easily, and without the adobe, the stones fall from their place. The stones are uncut which means they were not shaped into uniform or similar sizes, but are of a wide variety. They are stacked carefully to give a relatively uniform thickness and general coursing which provides stability for the wall. Removing these large segments destabilized the structure and hastened its ruin.

## Transition to Frame Houses



This frame house, built in 1916, shows the changing standards of vernacular architecture. Houses essentially just like this one can be found throughout the United States. After the railroad had reached most parts of the nation, shipping goods and materials was much easier and cheaper than before. This made ordering the “latest” house from a plan book much more feasible for Americans in all 48 contiguous states. This is why houses like this one, which appears to be a standard plan book house, became very common. Frame construction in general requires less material because the walls are

not completely solid, but are frame (hence the name) with infill between the frame members (which are usually called studs). There was a lot less labor involved in building this house, and as labor became increasingly expensive, building frame houses became cheaper than building stone houses. Frame houses are more adaptable than stone houses. Frame houses also have natural hollows in the wall system that makes plumbing and wiring much easier to install.

## Additions



Most people who wanted to continue living in stone houses ended up putting frame additions onto the original building. These additions not only accommodated Americans' increasing desire for more living space, but also made it easier to put in new rooms that brought new inventions and innovations into the household. It is hard to imagine anyone today living in a house without indoor plumbing and electricity, for example. In this picture you can clearly see the block of the original house, with a one-room frame addition just visible at

the left of the photo and a larger frame addition on the right. This larger addition includes a kitchen. Kitchens were a common addition as new inventions revolutionized cooking and kitchens. Many additions also included dedicated bathrooms.

## Teacher Resources

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### Activity: Documenting Houses

#### Background

The images in this exhibit were taken by photographers and architectural historians to document historic houses. Often, we think of things as “historic” only when they’re obviously important: places like the Alamo (one of five frontier missions in San Antonio that are collectively a World Heritage Site) or the Texas State Capitol, a county courthouse, or perhaps even a locally prominent building like the Landmark Inn in Castroville. Many people don’t think of private homes as “historic” or as being significant enough to earn individual consideration. Architectural historians, however, consider vernacular architecture to be an important reflection of how people lived, a way to help us understand the lives of people in the past, and possibly more important than the monumental architecture of public buildings. Documenting these common buildings and analyzing the construction, style, and features of average people’s homes reveals a lot about the history of a place including important changes in population and the economy.

#### Teacher Instructions

In this activity, students are asked to pretend that they are architectural historians on a mission to document the story of the regular houses of your town. Students are asked to photograph his/her own home as well as other homes in his/her neighborhood. They will present their photographs to the class, explaining what each photograph might say about the people who built it and who have lived there. As a group, have the students decide which photographs/houses best represent the houses in your town. All of the students’ photographs may then be compiled into a classroom exhibit illustrating the vernacular architecture of your town.

#### Terms to Discuss

*Vernacular architecture*—the architecture of domestic and functional buildings, commonly constructed.

*Monumental architecture*—large buildings and structures, often serving public functions, intended to commemorate or symbolize some event, place, community, ideal, or principle.

*Historic building*—under both federal and state guidelines, a historic building is any building which is fifty years of age or older and has achieved significance for its association with important themes, events, people, or developments.

#### Document Your Community

Pretend you are an architectural historian on a mission to document historic houses in your town. You’ve been assigned to photograph ten houses to help create a collection of photos (compiled by your class as a team) that tell the story of how people have lived in and built homes in your town. Think about what sort of houses you might photograph. What types of houses do you usually see in your town? Are there any special houses you can think of? If telling the story of the town, should you concentrate on common houses or the special houses or balance between both?

With a parent or guardian, explore your neighborhood or your town. Take pictures of the houses you see. Remember that unless you have permission to go onto private property, you can only take photos from public areas like the sidewalk. When you’re finished, choose the 10 best houses that you photographed and select one photo of each house to contribute to the exhibit. Write a short paragraph to argue why each photo and house is important. Be sure to discuss what you see in the photo and what the house says about its past and any changes it has undergone. What does this

house show about the people who lived there? Present your images to the class, explaining why you think each should be added to the class exhibit. After everyone has presented, your class will decide together which photos will be in your exhibit to represent your town.

## Activity: Immigrant Culture in Texas

### Background

Quihi was one of the colonies established in present-day Medina County during the mid-1840s by *empresario* Henri Castro. At the time, these colonies were on the far western edge of the Texas frontier and were the furthest European-American settlements west of San Antonio. Castro recruited German and French immigrants, many of whom came from the region of Alsace-Lorraine. Ultimately, Castro's colonization efforts brought approximately 2,500 settlers into Medina County. Settlers of Quihi were most often Lutherans or Methodists who were ethnically German. By about 1870, the population had grown, and Upper Quihi was settled as new land had to be cultivated. The most common crops were wheat, corn, rye, and oats. Farmers usually raised livestock as well, including dairy or beef cattle, hogs, and occasionally sheep or goats. The Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railway was built through Medina County in 1881, leading to the establishment of towns like Hondo and LaCoste along the new vital transportation route. Upper Quihi, however, remained a rural agricultural community, though now one that was more closely connected to the outside world with the speed and reliability of the railroad running through nearby towns.

### Teacher Instructions

In this activity, students are asked to imagine that they are new immigrants settling in Medina County during the 1870s, building a house on their new land. They are asked to write a letter home to friends or family they left behind, describing daily life in Upper Quihi, including what they do for a living and the house they will be living in.

### Terms to Discuss

*Adobe*—meaning mudbrick, the word is primarily used for sun-dried bricks consisting of sand, clay, water, and straw or grass formed in wooden molds. This method of construction is found throughout the world, and in the United States is primarily associated with the hot and dry climates of the American Southwest where indigenous people had been using this method for thousands of years. The word's roots can be traced as far back as Ancient Egypt (c. 2000 BC) but its modern form is Spanish. Adobe mud (without the straw or grass) is used as mortar to bond the bricks together and most often to coat the exterior to provide a seamless appearance.

*Alsace*—a region on the eastern border of France, separated from Germany and Switzerland by the Rhine River. An agriculturally rich area, it was contested between Germany and France for much of its modern history. The province of Alsace was annexed into France in the 1600s, but it was predominantly culturally and economically associated with German lands to its east. For example, the Alsatian language is Germanic rather than French/Romantic. Alsace was under German control between the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 and the end of World War I, when Germany ceded the region to France.

*Empresario*—a person granted the right to settle on land in exchange for recruiting new settlers and taking responsibility for organizing the new settlers and the new communities. The word is Spanish for entrepreneur. Intended to encourage settlement in Texas, the policy began there in 1820 under Spanish governance and continued through the period of Mexican rule (1821–1836) and the Republic of Texas (1836–1846).

*Stucco*—typically made up of slaked lime, sand, and water, stucco is used for coating wall surfaces or molding into architectural decorations. A variety of ingredients may be added to increase its water-repellant properties or slow the setting time if desired. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century,

some stucco was made with Portland cement instead of lime: this is darker, harder, and more brittle than lime stuccoes.

### **Write a Letter**

Imagine you are a new settler in Upper Quihi in the 1870s. You have just purchased your land and built a home for your family. Based on what you've learned from the exhibit, write a letter to a friend or family member back in Germany or Alsace. Be sure to describe the house you built, who lives there with you, and what your daily life is like in the house. You may also choose to include a description of Upper Quihi and of Texas, but the focus of the letter should be on your new house. Don't forget to include a discussion of why your house looks like it does, including what materials were used to build it, where those materials came from, how many rooms it has, and which (if any) luxury items you were able to incorporate.

## Activity: Transportation Revolutions

### Background

Transportation networks are key to a community's economy and often to its physical structure, sometimes even to its very foundation and/or survival. Many settlements began at an important location along a transportation route such as a natural ocean harbor (like Boston or New York), intersection or landing along a river, or in later times along a railroad line. By the mid-twentieth century, railroads were displaced by highways, and the placement of high-speed highways (like an Interstate Highway) can be very influential in how and whether a community grows. In the late 1840s, after Quihi was established, a military road was built linking San Antonio to Forts Inge, Lincoln, Duncan, and Clark on the western frontier. This road passed through Quihi and provided the agricultural settlement with steady markets for its products, and as the economy flourished so did the community. Within a decade, Quihi had a post office, a church, and a school—all the hallmarks of an established town. Yet, in 1881 the new railroad through Medina County bypassed Quihi, and instead two new towns (LaCoste and Hondo) were built along the railroad. These towns grew because they were connected to the new transportation network. Quihi declined in importance. Quihi and Upper Quihi—a rural unincorporated community north of Quihi—remain today much as they were in the 1880s: a collection of farms, many owned by descendants of some of the original Castro Colonies settlers. Nonetheless, the railroads and later the highways would revolutionize life even in rural areas by bringing goods, services, and people into and out of the community much more efficiently than ever before.

### Teacher Instructions

In this activity, students are asked to evaluate the effects of the railroad on the community of Quihi and Upper Quihi by examining the changes in vernacular architecture that came about in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. They will be asked to relate these changes to the availability of new materials and new ideas that came with the new transportation network and to assess what items in their own lives today are available because of subsequent changes in transportation technology.

### Terms to Discuss

*Innovation*—making changes in something established by introducing new methods, ideas, or products. This should not be confused with invention, which is the creation or design of something that did not exist before.

*Revolutionary*—involving or causing a complete or dramatic change; new or innovative, being outside or beyond established procedure.

*Vernacular architecture*—the architecture of domestic and functional buildings, commonly constructed.

## Transportation Revolutions

What characteristics distinguished the German-Alsatian Stones Houses in Quihi and Upper Quihi in the mid-nineteenth century (approximately 1850–1880)?

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What factors shaped these characteristics?

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Consider the early twentieth century frame house featured in the exhibit. What sets this house apart from the earlier houses in the area?

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What factors helped bring about the new style of vernacular building?

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The railroad bypassed Quihi in 1881, and its economy subsequently stagnated. Because of this, it has maintained much of its status as a tight-knit rural community still closely connected to its roots in the Castro Colonies. Do you think that being bypassed is always a bad thing for a community? Explain.

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Consider where many of the things in your daily life are produced. How many do you think are produced within 30 miles of your town? How many do you think are produced within Texas?

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What items, including food, which you use or consume in your daily life has to travel a great distance to get to you? Which transportation invention or innovation was necessary to make that travel possible?

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Imagine your life without airplane travel or automobile travel. How far from home do you think you'd travel regularly? How have these revolutions in transportation affected Americans' lives?

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## Glossary

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**Adobe**—meaning mudbrick, the word is primarily used for sun-dried bricks consisting of sand, clay, water, and straw or grass formed in wooden molds. This method of construction is found throughout the world, and in the United States is primarily associated with the hot and dry climates of the American Southwest, where indigenous people had been using this method for thousands of years. The word's roots can be traced as far back as Ancient Egypt (c. 2000 BC) but its modern form is Spanish. However, adobe mud (without the straw or grass) is used as mortar to bond the bricks together and most often to coat the exterior to provide a seamless appearance.

**Alsace**—a region on the eastern border of France, separated from Germany and Switzerland by the Rhine River. An agriculturally rich area, it was contested between Germany and France for much of its modern history. The province of Alsace was annexed into France in the 1600s, but it was predominantly culturally and economically associated with German lands to its east. For example, the Alsatian language is Germanic rather than French/Romantic. Alsace was under German control between the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 and the end of World War I, when Germany ceded the region to France.

**Coursing**—The horizontal layering of similarly-sized building material one unit high, usually in a wall.

**Empresario**—a person granted the right to settle on land in exchange for recruiting new settlers and taking responsibility for organizing the new settlers and the new communities. The word is Spanish for entrepreneur. Intended to encourage settlement in Texas, the policy began there in 1820 under Spanish governance and continued through the period of Mexican rule (1821–1836) and the Republic of Texas (1836–1846).

**Historic building**—under both federal and state guidelines, a historic building is any building which is fifty years of age or older and has achieved significance for its association with important themes, events, people, or developments.

**Niche**—a shallow recess, most commonly one in a wall, used for storage or extra space or particularly in monumental architecture for the housing of statues or other artistic and decorative features.

**Stucco**—typically made up of slaked lime, sand, and water, stucco is used for coating wall surfaces or molding into architectural decorations. A variety of ingredients may be added to increase its water-repellant properties or slow the setting time if desired. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, some stucco is made with Portland cement instead of lime: this is darker, harder, and more brittle than lime stuccoes.

**Truss**—a framework, typically consisting of rafters, posts, and struts, used to support a roof, bridge or other structure. In a truss, several pieces are assembled in such a way that they behave structurally as a single object.

**Vernacular architecture**—architecture concerned with domestic and functional buildings rather than monumental architecture (large, often public or semi-public, buildings or communal spaces intended to be monument or landmark) or high-style architecture (emphasizes aesthetics, usually for elite houses or large corporate or institutional buildings).

**Wattle and daub**—a network of interwoven sticks and twigs (wattle) covered with mud or clay (daub). Wattle is made by weaving thin branches or slats between upright stakes and most

commonly is slotted between timber framing to make infill panels. Daub is a mixture of binder, aggregate, and reinforcement. The binder holds the mix together and is usually clay but may be lime, chalk dust, or limestone dust. Aggregates give the mix bulk and stability—usually consisting of earth, sand, crushed chalk, or crushed stone. Reinforcement helps hold the mix together, controlling shrinkage and providing flexibility. Traditionally this is provided by straw, hay, animal hair, or other fibrous material.

## Additional Resources

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### For Children

**Hewitt, Sally and Jane Rowe. *The Homes We Live In*. Raintree-Steck-Vaughn: Austin, 1997.**

A book for young children that explores why various parts of houses—including walls, roofs, windows, floors, and furnishings, are made of particular materials, have certain shapes, and serve specific functions.

**Hoff, Carol. *Johnny Texas*. Hendrick-Long: Dallas, 1992.**

Historical fiction for upper elementary children telling the story of ten-year-old Johann who moves from Germany to settle in the vast land of Texas.

**Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out and Back Again*. Harper: New York, 2011.**

For upper elementary ages, this book tells the story of the author's journey from war-torn Vietnam in 1975 to Guam, then Florida, then Alabama. It is written in short free-verse poems, and captures the struggles of adjusting to life in a new nation filled with a new language, new customs, and even new kinds of clothes.

**Parr, Todd. *Be Who You Are*. Boston, Little, Brown: New York, 2016.**

For young children, this book encourages children to embrace the things that make them unique and to be proud of who they are and where they are from.

**Dillon, Patrick. *The Story of Buildings: From the Pyramids to the Sydney Opera House and Beyond*. Candlewick, Press: Somerville, 2014.**

For upper elementary students, this book traces the history of building from Ancient Egypt to today, celebrating the ingenuity of the people who made these buildings. The detailed illustrations demonstrate how the structures were built, not just the final exterior.

**Knight, Margy Burns. *Who Belongs Here? An American Story*. Tilbury House Publishers: Thomaston, 2003.**

A fictional account of a young Cambodian boy's immigration to the United States, this book for middle and upper elementary students includes parallel text that provides interesting information about American immigration and history, as well as about intolerance and prejudice.

**Laroche, Giles. *If You Lived Here: Houses of the World*. HMH Books for Young Readers, part of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Boston, 2011.**

This book for lower elementary ages provides brief introductions to a wide variety of houses from around the world, why each home is constructed as it is, and asks the reader to imagine what it would be like to live in homes very different from his/her own.

**Morris, Ann. *Houses and Homes*. HarperCollins: New York, 1995.**

Lower elementary students may enjoy this photographic survey of housing from around the world.

**Ritchie, Scot. *Look at That Building: A First Book of Structures*. Kids Can Press: Toronto, 2011.**

Intended for early readers, this book introduces basic construction concepts including foundations, beams, frames, and other building fundamentals.

## **For Adults**

**Alexander, Drury Blakeley. *Texas Homes of the Nineteenth Century*. Published for the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art by the University of Texas Press: Austin, 1966.**

An exploration of vernacular architecture in Texas during the nineteenth century, a time during which six different national flags flew over Texas and immigrants from many parts of the world came to its vast and varied lands.

**Biese, Rudolph L. *The History of German Settlements in Texas*. Originally written as a dissertation at the University of Texas in 1928. Eakin Press: Austin, 1987.**

Although originally written nearly a century ago, this remains one of the only major works on the topic. The book explores the interest of both German and non-German groups in German colonization in Texas and the progress of those efforts prior to the American Civil War.

**Castro Colonies Archaeology** <https://castrocoloniesarchaeology.wordpress.com/>

A website that includes a brief but informative blog about some of the artifacts discovered during excavations of the Castro Colonies Living History Center (the Jacob Biry House) on Paris Street in Castroville. The excavations were undertaken by Dr. Ruth Van Dyke and various undergraduate and graduate students from Binghamton University.

**Carter, Thomas and Elizabeth Collins Cromley. *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture: A Guide to the Study of Ordinary Buildings and Landscapes*. University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 2005.**

A manual for exploring and interpreting vernacular architecture, the common buildings of particular regions and time periods.

**Castro, Lorenzo. *Immigration from Alsace and Lorraine: A Brief Sketch of the History of Castro's Colony in Western Texas*. Originally published by George W. Wheat & Co, 1871.**

Written by Henri Castro's son, this is a brief piece that in many ways is one of the closest things to a primary source material readily available regarding the settlement of the Castro Colonies.

**Castro Colonies Historical Association. *History of Medina County, Texas*. H. V. Chapman & Sons: Abilene, 2014.**

A locally written and organized history of the settlement and development of Medina County.

**Castro Colonies Historical Association. *Tales Told and Retold: A Collection of Fact, Fiction, and Folklore*. Nortex Press: Austin, 2003.**

Local stories compiled into a concise collection of the folklore of German-Alsatian settlers predominantly in the Castro Colonies in South Texas.

**Crook, Cornelia E. *Henry Castro and His Homestead*. Self-Published: San Antonio, 1978.**

A brief examination of the life of Henry Castro and a detailed look at the homestead he established in his colonies in Medina County, within the town that now bears his name.

**Crook, Cornelia E. *Henry Castro—A Story of Early Colonization in Texas*. Saint Mary's University Press: San Antonio, 1987.**

This work examines the myriad challenges faced by the colonists in South Texas, including raids from native tribes, drought, and illness. It also looks at how the settlers built a thriving community despite the challenges.

**Edwards, George. *Alsace-Lorraine*. Windham Press, a division of Simon & Schuster: New York, 2013.**

Originally written in the early twentieth century, this book examines the contentious situation of Alsace-Lorraine when the debate over whether the territories were German or French was a significant issue for European foreign policies.

**Gish, Theodore G. and Richard Spuler, eds. *Eagle in the New World: German Immigration to Texas and America*. Published for the Texas Committee for the Humanities by Texas A&M University Press: College Station, 1986.**

A series of papers given at a symposium focusing primarily on the settlement of Germans in the Texas Hill Country.

**Glassie, Henry. *Vernacular Architecture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 2000.**

An interesting articulation of key principles of architectural analysis drawing examples from Europe, Asia, and North America. Glassie shows how vernacular architecture can be an important resource informing the development of a comprehensive history of the “common” person.

**Harvey, David Allen. *Constructing Class and Nationality in Alsace, 1830–1945*. Northern Illinois University Press: DeKalb, 2001.**

This book analyzes the combination of politics, economics, culture, and ethnicity to explain both the successive attempts of French and German authorities to impose one or the other national identity on Alsace and how Alsatians eventually identified with the French republican state, despite being linguistically and ethnically tied to Germany. It is an interesting study of Alsatian history but also of collective identity, class, and political culture.

**Heimsath, Clovis. *Pioneer Texas Buildings: A Geometry Lesson*. University of Texas Press: Austin, 1968.**

A simple and straightforward assessment of the structure of numerous historic buildings in Texas, including discussion of the history that shaped the construction of these buildings.

**Kownslar, Allan O. *The European Texans*. Texas A&M University Press: College Station, 2004.**

A comprehensive look at the various European peoples that immigrated to Texas, including short assessments of the contributions of French, English, Scottish, Irish, Dutch, Belgian, Swiss, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, German, Wend, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Italian, Greek, and Slavic immigrants. Part of a five-book series, entitled *Texans All*, the other volumes address Native Americans, Mexicans, Africans, and Asians.

**Lagarde, Francois, ed. *The French in Texas: History, Migration, Culture*. University of Texas Press: Austin, 2003.**

A compilation of several articles analyzing French influence in Texas history, including early colonists and explorers, Catholic missions, the Castro Colonies, and French influence on art and architecture in Texas.

**Lawler, Ruth Curry. *The Story of Castroville: Its People, Founder, and Traditions*. Steck Co.: Austin, 1961.**

A brief work addressing exactly what the title states: Castroville’s foundation, its early settlers, and the traditions maintained by those settlers’ descendants.

**Meyers, Della and Tchelistcheff, Kiera. *Images of Alsace*. The Bookworm, 2005.**

Essentially a compilation of beautiful photographs of Alsace, the book illustrates Alsatian vernacular architecture, and can be useful as a comparison to the buildings in Medina County.

**Payne, Richard. *Texas Towns and the Art of Architecture*. University of Texas Press: Austin, 2007.**

A photographic survey of small Texas towns, illustrating the architecture of small towns' downtowns, many of which were predominantly built between 1880 and 1930. It also examines the general decline of these downtowns, including their architecture, and in many cases the towns themselves, as the cultural and economic fabric of rural Texas changed.

**Putnam, Ruth. *Alsace and Lorraine, from Caesar to Kaiser, 58 B.C.–1871 A.D.* G.P. Putnam's Sons: New York, 1915. Reprinted in 2013 by HardPress Publishing. Also available online at <https://archive.org/details/alsacelorrainef00putn>**

Originally published during World War I, the book has a clear argument against Germany's occupation of Alsace since 1871 (which ended following Germany's defeat in World War I and again after World War II). Although its bias is evident in a somewhat one-sided view, it does convey an interesting history of Alsace, and it also helps illustrate the complicated issues of Alsatian nationality.

**Smith, Clifford Neal. *Emigrants from France: Haut-Rhin Department to America*. Two parts. Westland Publications: McNeal, 1986 and 1989.**

Primarily useful for those interested in personal histories and genealogies, these volumes cull nearly 2,000 records from the Haut-Rhin Department's registers of passports issued to emigrants headed for the United States. Each gives the emigrant's name, age, place of birth, destination, profession, and accompanying family members.

**Tetzlaff, Otto W. *The Emigrant to Texas: A Handbook and Guide for Those Who Want to Colonize (Settle) in Texas, with Special Consideration for Those Who Join the Mainz and Antwerp Society*. Originally published in German by C. Schuenemann's Retail Book Store: Bremen.**

A translation of a primary source regarding German immigration to Texas, what the emigrant might expect to experience both in the journey and primarily upon arrival in Texas.

**University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio. *The French Texans*. Part of the Institute of Texan Cultures' The Texians and the Texans series. Published 1973. Available online as a pdf at <http://digital.utsa.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16018coll6/id/256/rec/1>**

A book specifically addressing the experience and contributions of French immigrants to Texas. Includes a discussion of Henri Castro and the Castro Colonies, and the identification of Alsatians as French despite their being culturally and linguistically Germanic.

**University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio. *The German Texans*. Part of the Institute of Texan Cultures' The Texians and the Texans series. Published 1987. Available online as a pdf at <http://digital.utsa.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16018coll6/id/263/rec/8>.**

Specifically addressing the experience and contributions of German immigrants to Texas, many of whom settled in the Texas Hill Country as well as in the Castro Colonies.

**University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio. *Gone to Texas: The Immigration of Cultures*. Published 2003. Available online as a pdf at <http://digital.utsa.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16018coll6/id/577/rec/14>**

Aimed at teachers, this series of short articles and instructional activities may be of interest to general readers or homeschoolers, or just anyone looking to give their children small lessons in Texas history and diversity.

**University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures at San Antonio. *The Hungarian Texans*. Part of the Institute of Texan Cultures' The Texians and the Texans series. Published 1993. Available online as a pdf at <http://digital.utsa.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16018coll6/id/323/rec/17>**

Although most of the settlers in the Castro Colonies were Alsatian or German, a few were other nationalities. This book looks at the Hungarians, and in the case of Medina County, provides an interesting biography and primary-source descriptions of the Castro Colonies by Rudolph Schorobiny, an influential resident of Medina County for the second half of the nineteenth century.

**Upton, Dell, and John Vlach, eds. *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. University of Georgia Press: Athens, 1986.**

A compilation of essays that focus on American houses and landscapes, including discussion of such "All-American" images as the courthouse square, the modern bungalow, log cabins, shotgun houses, barns, and even the commercial strip. The articles reflect the variety of vernacular architecture in the United States as well as its ongoing evolution in response to changing tastes and lifestyles.

**Waugh, Julia Nott. *Castroville and Henry Castro—Empresario*. Castro Colonies Heritage Association: Castroville, 1986.**

A short book examining the history of Castroville as well as a biography of its organizer, Henry Castro. It also includes a translation from an original nineteenth-century manuscript describing life in Castroville.

**Weaver, Bobby D. *Castro's Colony: Empresario Development in Texas 1842–1865*. Texas A&M University Press: College Station, 1985.**

This book not only examines the life of Henri Castro, the French Jew who secured a colonization grant in Texas and recruited more than two thousand people to populate his colony, but also looks more closely at the empresario system and how it evolved during the Republic of Texas from its origins under the Spanish and later Mexican governments, as well as how it adapted to statehood after Texas was annexed into the United States.

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