A SURVEY OF THE FOOD SUPPLY AND DIET OF THE
ANGLO-AMERICAN SETTLERS IN TEXAS,
1821-1870

by

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This thesis is a general survey of the food supply and diet of the Anglo-American settlers in Texas from 1821 to 1870. It is by no means an exhaustive detailed study of the food supply and diet of the early Texans, for I failed to find an adequate number of good primary and secondary accounts which mention complete menus or give details as to the available food supply in all settled areas at this time. The most complete accounts are those concerning the area between the Trinity and San Antonio rivers. Because of the lack of specific information in some instances, I have made inferences about the diet which are based upon accounts of the available food supplies and the dietary customs of the people in areas from which the immigrants originated.

To determine the exact diet and food supply in Texas during this period, one should have to consult an exhaustive account of the agricultural pursuits of the people in each area, records of the natural food supply and of all importations and exchanges of foodstuffs, and accounts of methods and practices of preserving and moving foods. He should have to make an intensive study of the peculiar habits of the people in areas from which the settlers originated at the
time of the migration, and also do a good deal of research concerning the circumstances under which the people lived in their new environment and the effects of these circumstances upon their food supply and dietary customs, besides consulting many personal and contemporary accounts of the settlers in the different areas of the country.

I have touched upon most of the factors which influenced the diet and food supply rather superficially and have drawn a large part of my information from personal and contemporary accounts. I have made no attempt to apply the information obtained in this research to social or political behavior or events, but it would undoubtedly be very enlightening to make a thorough study of the diet of a people in conjunction with their general temperament and the social and political events which occur in the area where they live.

I am very grateful to the staffs of the Fondren Library of the Rice Institute and of the Houston Public Library for their kind help in securing research materials, and I am deeply indebted to Dr. Edward H. Phillips, my faculty advisor at the Rice Institute, for checking the first drafts and for making many helpful suggestions.

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CHAPTER I

THE NATURAL FOOD SUPPLY

Throughout the period of 1821-1870 settlers in Texas were almost entirely dependent on the natural food supply and locally raised livestock and cultivated crops for their livelihood. Poor transportation was almost always a hindrance to the importation and exportation of goods in almost all sections, but especially in the inland areas, before the coming of the railroads. Transportation was so bad that it was next to impossible for immigrants to bring along enough provisions to feed themselves and sufficient seeds and livestock to produce enough food for subsistence during the first few years, and there were no convenient markets at which they could buy provisions in times of emergencies such as crop failures.

The only roads at first were those in the vicinity of the Spanish settlements around San Antonio, the Rio Grande, and El Paso, and the Camino Real (Nacogdoches—San Antonio Road) from East Texas. The majority of the first Americans in Texas traveled over this road in coming to Texas and in obtaining supplies from Louisiana. The Santa Fe Trail ran across the Panhandle, but it was a
long time before settlers moved into this section of the country.

Most of the Texas rivers were not navigable except near the mouth or when the water was high. Usually only small vessels could travel on them, and these were easily attacked by Indians. Small vessels traveling near the mouths of the Brazos and the Colorado rivers bringing provisions to Austin's colonists were quite often attacked by the Karankawa Indians who stole the supplies. The Red River which runs near East Texas and borders North Texas, was navigable to Shreveport, Louisiana, and at times to Pecan Point, Texas. Galveston, Matagorda, and Indianola were the most usable ports. Galveston had been used as a pirate's nest before the American colonization, but there were no port facilities for large ships when the first American settlers came to Texas. By the forties a good deal of business was carried on between Galveston and Houston by way of the Buffalo Bayou.

Besides the transportation obstacles encountered in obtaining food supplies, the types of foods which could be

1. Rupert Norval Richardson, Texas the Lone Star State (New York, 1943), 212-214.
preserved and moved over long distances were very limited. Factory canned foods preserved in tin cans were not yet widely used. Even among the later settlers who knew the techniques of home canning, it would have been impractical to move the glass jars which they used over the rough paths that were the Texas roads. Consequently, it is not difficult to understand that settlers had to depend upon whatever was most available in the area in which they settled whether it be game, wild vegetation, beef, or pork.

W. B. Parker recorded one of his experiences in trying to purchase eggs, chickens, and milk from a poor settler near the Trinity in 1854, which illustrates the intellectual and material plight of some of the settlers. He was so amused at the peculiar speech that he recorded the conversation in his journal: "Will you sell me some eggs?" "We ha'nt got nar an eggs." "Any chickens?" "We ha'nt got nar a chickens." "Any milk?" "We ha'nt got nary milk."

1. W. B. Parker, Notes Taken During the Expedition Commanded by Captain R. B. Marcy, U. S. A. Through Unexplored Texas in the Summer and Fall of 1854 (Philadelphia, 1856), 87.
Many of the immigrants came with little more than what they had on their backs. They brought only that clothing and household goods which could be carried in or on a wagon usually loaded with a numerous family. Many of them brought a few breeding animals or a milch cow. Many young men migrated without families, and when they set up homesteads later, they probably had to obtain their breeding animals and seeds and plants from older settlers or do without if the older settlers had none to spare.

Dean Richardson, one of Austin's colonists, has been quoted as saying in his reminiscences that there was not so much suffering in Austin's colony as in others, for Austin's colonists were better supplied with a good start in foodstuffs, seeds, clothing, tools, and weapons than most of the other groups of settlers.

Most of the settlers in Texas, as in other new American settlements, were poor and had to shift for themselves. Only a few of them were slave holders, and labor was very scarce. They had to build their own homes and most of the furniture in them, clear fields, plant and

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harvest the crops, dig water wells, or build cisterns to catch the rain water, or haul or carry water from springs as far as a mile or two away. Many of them had to grow the fibers, spin and weave them into cloth, or tan hides to make their clothes, make their own lye and soap, gather and process their own food, and do many other burdensome jobs that require physical labor.

The scarcity of money also limited the exchange of goods and the importation of supplies. Few settlers could have purchased food supplies even had they been available. As the number of settlers increased, the amount of money in the settlements also increased, but too many of the immigrants brought little or none with them. Barter was the common method of obtaining supplies.

The Indian problem also affected the food supply of the settlers on the frontier and in the areas just behind the frontier. W. B. Dewees, a settler in Austin's colony on the Brazos, stated in a letter dated December 1, 1823, that the Indians were so bad that the colonists could only hunt in companies, and then only part of the men could go because the families had to be protected against the Indians. In this same letter he said that a
group of Indians had forced one settler to kill one of his milch cows to feed them. Other colonists also complained of having to share their provisions with bands of beggar Indians.

In every frontier area in Texas and in many of the settled areas, the Indians stole the settlers' livestock and murdered many of the settlers, and the men were forced to form militia companies to protect their families. Quite possibly this duty and the necessity of hunting to supply the immediate food requirements, in addition to the necessity of providing shelter for their families and preparing the land for crops, caused many of the pioneers to neglect any food crops other than those which were absolutely necessary for the first few years. Even after annexation by the United States, when Federal troops were stationed along the frontier, the troops were not always effective against Indian raids; and during the Civil War the troops were withdrawn and the settlers were again left on their own for protection against the Indians.

1. W. B. Dewees, *Letters from an Early Settler of Texas* (Louisville, 1858), 46. Hereafter referred to as *Dewees, Letters from an Early Settler*. 
Changes in the type of crops which could be grown was another problem which affected the food supply, especially for those who settled in the prairies and the drier western areas. Many of these settlers had to learn from experience what crops grew well.

Notwithstanding the shortages of imported and domesticated foods, largely caused by the problems just mentioned, few of the settlers ever suffered from real starvation because almost every section of Texas was well supplied with game during the early years of settlement. Game provided them with food while their stock multiplied and while they prepared their farms for cultivation and experimented with crops which would later supply their dietary needs when the natural food supply was exhausted.

Wild foods made up a large part of what the Texans ate throughout the period which this study covers. Without the bounty of game, the conquest of most of Texas would have had to await the development of modern transportation systems and modern methods of preserving foods. Under these circumstances it would have been almost impossible for a poor man to migrate on his own initiative without the backing of some organization which would supply him with the necessities of life until he could
produce them through his own efforts.

Deer, bear, wild cattle, mustangs, buffalo, and antelope were numerous; and there were many kinds of smaller game such as raccoon, rabbit, fox, opossum, and squirrel, large flocks of geese, turkeys, ducks, quail, pheasants, prairie hens, pigeons, and doves. The coastal areas and the fresh water streams contained many varieties of fresh water and salt water foods—crab, oysters, shrimp, a great variety of fish, eel, and turtle. Wild honey was found in abundance in the forest areas, and there were many kinds of edible vegetation. Mesquite beans, prickley pear, and agarita berries were found in the drier sections; and wild salads, blackberries, dewberries, mulberries, wild plums, persimmons, grapes of many varieties, pawpaws, may apples, may haws, black haws, and crab apples were found in the forests and along the streams. Pecans, walnuts, hickory nuts, beech nuts, and acorns were also abundant in the woodlands and along the streams.

The larger game such as the mustangs and wild cattle and buffalo did not remain plentiful in the vicinities of settlements very long after the coming of the first pioneers. Many of the mustangs and wild cattle were undoubtedly
captured by the first settlers, branded, and cross-bred with their domesticated animals, but many of the wild herds probably withdrew into unsettled areas. The buffalo herds apparently withdrew to the west of the settlements; but quite often as late as the fifties, herds would migrate almost to the coast giving the settlers along the way a chance to supply themselves with all the meat they needed.

Deer and turkey and almost all varieties of smaller game, fresh water and salt water foods, and wild vegetation were plentiful in most sections throughout the first seventy years of the nineteenth century. As late as 1838, W. C. Kutch, a pioneer in Shelby County east of Nacogdoches, which was one of the most populous areas in Texas at that time, told of living principally on wild meat and honey for twelve months and had no pork for two years.

The wealthier settlers quite often hired hunters to hunt game for them. Mrs. Mary Austin Holley found the

hunter or frontiersman a sort of privileged character because of his hunting skill. Quite often the men in a community would fit out oxen or mule teams and go further west into the prairies to hunt buffalo, and cure and bring home all the buffalo beef that their families could use.

For the first few years on the frontier, the settlers, as in other American frontiers, existed principally on game, honey, and wild vegetation. Often game alone supplied the only food until crops could be raised, for many times there was not even grain for bread. Captain Gibson Kuykendall, whose father came to Texas in 1821 and settled close to the Brazos River near the present town of Independence in 1822, recalled in his reminiscences that the large Kuykendall family had existed upon game alone, mostly venison and turkey, during the winter of 1822.

W. B. Dewees wrote in a letter to a friend, June 16, 1822, that Texas was a land of milk and honey but they were

1. Mary Austin Holley, Texas (Lexington, Kentucky, 1836), 134.

rather short on the milk. Only one man in the settlement owned a few cows. He complained that their breadstuff had given out and they could not obtain any more until they raised it; so they were obliged to subsist entirely upon game from the woods and prairies, but he seemed to have been consoled by the variety of game.

We have only to go out for a few miles into a swamp between Big and Little Brazos, to find as many wild cattle as one could wish. If we desire buffalo meat, we are able to go out, load our horses, and return the same day. Bears are very plenty, but we are obliged to use great care when hunting for them, lest the havelenas (meaning the peccary) kill our dogs.  

John Ingram, who came to Austin's colony in December of 1821, found game in abundance near the Brazos at the crossing of the San Antonio Road. He stated that there was never a scarcity of wild meat, and Baily Anderson,  

1. Louis Wortham, A History of Texas from Wilderness to Commonwealth (Fort Worth, 1924), VI, 192, said that the Kuykendalls brought a number of cattle and hogs with them, and William Horton also brought milch cows to Fort Bend County about this time; so evidently Dewees was speaking of his immediate vicinity. Randal Jones returned to the United States in 1823 and brought back 60 head of cattle.


3. Ibid., 25.

who came to East Texas in 1821, said that he had abundance of meat but no bread and lived on buffalo meat and bear fat. Noah Smithwick, whose family came to Texas in 1827 to colonize Sterling C. Robertson's land grant in the vicinity of Gonzales and Lavaca, found that most of the settlers depended solely on game. His first meal in Texas was dried venison sopped in honey.

In Northwestern Texas, Andrew Davis, whose father had come to Pecan Point, Texas, in 1818, where Andrew was born in 1827, recalled that the living was mostly supplied by wild animals and beef and hominy when corn was in reach. Pioneering stories of settlers in the northern and western areas during the forties, fifties, and sixties also tell of great dependence on game. George Ely, whose father settled

1. George Louis Crocket, Two Centuries in East Texas (Dallas, 1932), 82.


in Hunt County (present Cumby County) in 1852, recalled that game was abundant, and very few people depended on farming, "as it was too dry to raise much produce, aside from wheat and a little corn...." When he worked for his uncle in 1867 in Earth County, he found deer, turkey, and antelope plentiful all over the country.

William W. Hunter, who settled in Grayson County for three years and then moved to Coleman County in 1860, said that he learned to live mostly on wild game which was plentiful. He said there were lots of wild animals on the prairies—deer, antelope, wild turkeys, and buffalo. He recalled seeing the prairies black with thousands of buffalo from the bluff overlooking Jim Ned Creek.

C. C. Cox, who settled in Texas near Corpus Christi in 1856, recalled that game was abundant and that he indulged in his love of hunting to the fullest extent. The river and creeks abounded with fish; mustangs and wild cattle were plentiful in the range twenty miles back from the Nueces River; and wolves, wild cats, panthers, leopard

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cats, and leopards were common.

Venison was the most widely used meat on the frontier and on the semi-frontier behind it until the settlers' stock had multiplied enough to supply adequate meat for the older settlers and the newer immigrants who were always streaming into the older settlements and pushing out to the frontier. Deer were plentiful even after cattle were teeming over the prairies and were often seen grazing unconcerned with the cattle.

Mary Austin Holley, in an account of Texas during the thirties, stated that deer were found in the prairies and forest, and even in settlements, and venison was a common dish among the inhabitants and could be purchased at a low price.

Venison seems to have been popular among most travelers who camped along the way, probably because it could be obtained with little effort. William Henry Chase Whiting,


2. Mary Austin Holley, Texas, 99.
who was in charge of an expedition to locate a route for military and commercial purposes between San Antonio and El Paso, recorded in his journal of 1849 that many deer were brought into camp, and on finding a bee tree while camping on the Paisano, they enjoyed the famous frontier meal of a side of venison roasted on a ramrod, basted with

Bear meat and honey was also a very popular frontiersman's dish. Big-Foot Wallace, who came to Texas in 1836, said that bear meat and honey was the frontiersman's choicest dish and remarked that he would dislike to say how much of such a meal he had seen an old ranger "worry down" after a hard day's ride for fear people might think he had no respect for the truth; and Reverend Chester Newell, in a contemporary account of Texas during the Texas Revolution, also noted that bear meat was very common and


2. John C. Duval, Big-Foot Wallace, the Texas Ranger and Hunter (Macon, Georgia, 1885), 10. Hereafter referred to as Duval, Big-Foot Wallace.
"esteemed excellent" among the settlers. Bears were very plentiful in each new frontier area.

Mary A. Blackburn, a pioneer during the fifties in the Lampasas River area near Killeen, recalled living in a place called Bear Creek which was full of wild beasts. At night panthers, wolves, and bears all gathered around the house and made noise. One day she looked out of her cabin and saw a large bear coming straight toward the house. She became so frightened that she climbed the cabin wall, leaving the door wide open and her baby on the bed. Fortunately, the bear climbed a tree just outside the door where her husband and another man shot it.

Many of the pioneering accounts tell of bear oil being used in place of lard for seasoning and frying. Tilatha Wilson English, a Grayson County pioneer in 1845, recalled that her father had bought bear bacon during


2. Dubbs, Pioneer Days in the Southwest, 289.
their first year there. She remembered that the country was full of bears, turkeys, deer, panthers, antelopes, and wild cats, as well as bee trees.

Wild cattle, mustangs, and buffalo were very numerous almost everywhere on the prairies and plains when settlers first came to Texas, and they were very important in the diet of the pioneers in each frontier area. Noah Smithwick recalled that failing to secure more choice game, the mustangs could always be depended on. He knew of one settler, Jared E. Groce, a planter from South Carolina, who fed nearly a hundred slaves on mustangs while they cleared ground and planted crops. They lived off horse meat until the corn came in.

The prairies teemed with great herds of buffalo which were ceaselessly hunted until their virtual extinction in the late seventies. The meat was dried or pickled in salt by the hunters before bringing it home when they hunted the herds at a distance from their settlements. The dried tongue was the favorite piece; hunters vied with one

another for it. Dr. Ferdinand Roemer, a German visitor in Texas between 1845 and 1847, told of eating dried buffalo meat and smoked buffalo tongue on the fringe of civilization near the Brazos River above Tohwacony Creek. Susan Turnham McCown remembered her family using dried buffalo steak as bread and fresh bear as meat during the forties on Little River.

John A. Hart, whose family settled in Parker County in the late fifties, recalled in his reminiscences that the men in his community hunted buffalo during the winter in the late sixties. They would take from two to four yoke of oxen to a wagon and bring back all one or two families needed. Fat cows made the choicest beef. Only the hind quarter and the tallow and hides were saved to take home. The campers used the ribs and hump. Hart recalled that the hump streaked with fat when hung on a stick before the fire and broiled, made the finest eating in the world. He never


knew of any one getting sick on buffalo meat; a person could eat all he wanted at any time. The hind quarters were salted down whole and left for a week or more and then scalded in a pot of hot brine, then resalted. By the time they reached home the meat was well cured and ready to hang. The meat would stay fresh and sweet all the next summer.

Few pioneers specifically told of using jerked buffalo meat, but they did mention using dried buffalo. Evidently they did not distinguish between dried or jerked meat.

Antelope seems to have been plentiful in the inland areas on the prairies but was not so widely used as deer, probably because it is harder to shoot. Smaller game such as racoon, rabbit, fox, opossum, and squirrel, geese, turkeys, ducks, quail, pheasants, prairie hens, pigeons, and doves was innumerable; but turkeys apparently were the most widely used in all areas during the immediate pioneering period. It seems that the pioneers mainly killed the larger game which was so plentiful that there was little need to waste lead and powder on anything smaller, but evidently the smaller game of all kinds was used in the more settled areas

after the larger game had become scarce.

Almost every variety of fish was available to the pioneers. The rivers, bays, and streams were filled with them. Redfish, yellow, white, and blue catfish, perch, buffalo, sheeps-head, mullet, pike, trout, flounder, drum, suckers, croakers, and gar were found in abundance. Eels were plentiful in fresh water. The black lamprey eel was much esteemed by those who had eaten it. Turtles were also numerous and were used by many. Fresh water and salt water crab, crawfish, shrimp, oysters, clams, and muscles were common. Beds of large, well flavored oysters were found along the coast and near all inlets.

Not many of the early pioneering accounts mention using fresh water or salt water foods in their diet, probably because of the abundance of other game, but they were evidently used. A group of Austin's colonists captured a boat load of fish and oysters from the Karankawa Indians

and found them very acceptable food. In the thirties Mary Austin Holley found Velasco a summer resort for people from north of the colony, with the main attraction being the supply of oysters and fish of first quality. John Hunter Herndon, a young man from Kentucky traveling in the Houston-Galveston area in 1838, noted in his diary, February 13, that he was served oysters for breakfast in Galveston, and, February 14, oysters, fish, and venison for dinner and also for supper.

Susan Turnham McCown stated that fishing and hunting were not sports and pastime, but were serious occupations, pursued for the purpose of feeding and clothing the family. Undoubtedly the people in her community took advantage of

2. Mary Austin Holley, Texas, 101-107.
the fish in Little River and the surrounding streams. Mary A. Blackburn remembered her husband and brother-in-law going fishing and catching a lot of fish; they ate all but the head of one large fish that day and the next day made soup of the head. Apparently these foods, like the smaller land animals, were used more widely in the more settled areas than in frontier areas where larger game was plentiful.

Great numbers of bee trees were found in the woods everywhere. People could cut a bee tree and get all the honey they needed and save the bees. Honey was almost the exclusive sweetening on the frontier, and it was widely used in almost all settlements. It was usually eaten with all kinds of meats. Deerskin bags with the hairy side turned outside were used to store and carry it. Since there was seldom flour on the frontier, honey is not mentioned as being used in pastries, but it was probably used in making sweet bread and cookies in the more settled areas where flour was available.

2. Ibid., 252.
The use of wild vegetation is seldom mentioned in pioneering accounts, but undoubtedly it made up part of the diet of many of the early settlers in Texas. Wild salad, mesquite beans, prickley pear fruit, agarita berries, wild plums, crab apples, persimmons, haws, may apples, blackberries, dewberries, mulberries, pawpaws, and many kinds of nuts—pecans, walnuts, hickory nuts, acorns, and beechnuts, were all abundant and made wholesome foods. Few accounts of this period mention the use of wild salad, but many settlers in Kentucky and Tennessee had used a great number of wild plants as salad in their pioneering days. It seems probable that their descendants who came to Texas also made use of the wild plants.

In the spring many may apples, may haws, and berries could be had for the gathering. It seems that the women and children gathered the berries. John Hart recalled going blackberry hunting when he was a boy with a party of women and children, and Mary Maverick told of gathering dewberries in the spring of 1841. Her group found a great abundance of ripe luscious berries, ate all they wanted, and

1. Dubbs, Pioneer Days in the Southwest, 129.
filled their buckets.

At first there seldom was sugar to sweeten or preserve any of these fruits or berries, so they must have been mainly eaten without cooking. Probably the lack of sugar also kept them from being widely used in making wine, cider, and brandy; the wild plums, haws, crab apples, berries, and grapes could have all been used. Possibly honey could have been substituted for sugar. By 1870, sugar was more available and homemade jellies, jams, preserves, and wines were made especially from the grapes and berries. Joseph L. Clark said that grape wine and persimmon beer were favorites in East Texas. The haws also make delicious jelly. Most of these fruits could be used in making pies and cobblers when other ingredients were available. Viktor Bracht found that the planters made vinegar out of the large ripe

1. Mary A. Maverick, Memoirs of Mary A. Maverick, arranged by Mary A. Maverick and her son George Madison Maverick and edited by Rena Maverick Green (San Antonio, 1921), 50-51. Hereafter referred to as Mary A. Maverick, Memoirs.

2. Joseph L. Clark, A History of Texas Land of Promise (Dallas, 1940), 141. Hereafter to be referred to as Clark, A History of Texas.
mustang grapes.

Besides supplying mast for hogs, the nuts could be depended on as food for human consumption. In the autumn, hunters could always find a supply of nuts to abate their hunger when they found no game in the woods and were without supplies. V. B. Dewees, in a letter dated June 10, 1821, told of a trip from Jonesborough to Nacogdoches in which the travelers subsisted principally on meat killed in the chase and a kind of lye hominy seasoned with hickory nut kernels. Matilda Lockhart and four other children were captured by Indians in 1831 while gathering pecans. It appears that both wild fruits and nuts were eaten for the most part between meals. Undoubtedly most youngsters made good use of all of them.

Almost every part of Texas was fortunately well supplied with wild game and edible vegetation throughout the life span of the majority of the first pioneers in each

1. Viktor Bracht, *Texas in 1848*, translated from the German by Charles Frank Schmidt (San Antonio, 1931), 38. Hereafter referred to as Bracht, *Texas in 1848*.


frontier area. This natural food supply helped equalize the opportunity of all classes of settlers in taking possession of the wilderness areas. A poor man with initiative and a gun well supplied with powder and lead could go into the frontier, take up a homestead which cost relatively little, and supply himself with food, clothing, and shelter from his own land and the surrounding territory. Besides supplying food, the animals also furnished pelts that could be sold or bartered for items which could not be produced on the land. Game and other natural food resources supplied almost all of the pioneers with most of the necessities of life until their domesticated food supply became sufficient to take care of most of their dietary needs.
CHAPTER II

THE DOMESTICATED FOOD SUPPLY

After the first phase of the frontier had passed and the larger game had become more scarce, domesticated meats, smaller game, milk, butter, eggs, and grain became the staples in the average diet. The majority of settlers during the period of 1821-1870 were not well established and were inclined to depend on the foods which were most readily available and which required the least time and money to obtain; although some of the better established settlers seem to have used a variety of vegetables, melons, and fruits before 1840, and a few of them were also able to supplement their diet with imported items.

Mary Austin Holley, while visiting in the Brazos area in the early thirties, found beef, pork, venison, wild fowl, and other game, domesticated fowls, vegetables of every description, eggs, milk, tea, and coffee used by the settlers. She remarked that "...he who can relish the most wholesome viands, dressed in the plain manner of the country will never find opportunity to complain of the quality or quantity of fare which is to be found upon a
In 1850 while traveling in the southern part of Texas, Cora Montgomery found that the established farmers of Texas had abundant and hospitable tables, and remarked that "the traveller must be delicate and difficult indeed if he is not suited with the fare." She told of being served only one "hard dinner," and that was about a day's stage from San Antonio. It was served in extra style; handsome tureen, and china soup plates to match were set on an irreproachable damask, but the soup was dirty salt water, a bit of bacon in something green, and dry corn cake completed the meal.

She was served delicious food at an inn called Eberly House in Indianola, run by a lady proprietor. Fine oysters, roast beef "so juicy and tender," and turtle "perfectly delicious" were served. She told of another dinner which was so abundant and excellent as to win the commendation of a very critical Englishman, with the reservation that

1. Mary Austin Holley, Texas, 140.
3. Ibid., 19.
the venison and wild turkey "had no justice in cooking" which he observed was a universal fault in America.

Andrew Davis recalled that milk, butter, and cheese were abundant and were principal sources of food in northeastern Texas, and that livestock were fat even in the winter; although he complained of having a difficult time in getting a start of hogs in "the old days." He said that once or twice a year several persons in his community would join together to send to market for supplies of coffee, sugar, and flour.

Dilue Harris, who based her reminiscences on her father's journal and her own experiences, said that when her family arrived at Harrisburg in 1833, her father was ill, and no houses were available for rent in town, so the neighbors found one outside town and supplied it with meal, butter, eggs, milk, and honey and had the house in order and supper ready when her father and family arrived. She recalled that her mother saved rice, tea, white sugar,


and dried apples, which had been brought from New Orleans, for hard times. She said her family had plenty of milk, butter, venison, and small game to eat, and when a neighbor butchered beef, he divided with the other neighbors.

A few 1844 entries in the diary of Adolphus Sterne, a Harrison County settler, are an indication of the food used by one industrious East Texas settler.

January 5, "Killed Seven Hogs this Morning weighing 841 lbs...."

January 6, "... Family all Busy Salting Pork and making Sausage."

February 14, "... family are engaged in fixing the gardens, have a Mexican hired to work in the garden...."

February 17, "... planted Irish Potatoes...."

February 18, "... all the Peach Trees are in Blossom...."

February 23, "... busy at work in the garden all day, planting apple trees...."

February 26, "Patton was in Town today, just returned

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from a very successful trip down the
Angelina, Nechaz, to Sabine Pass and
back, brought a Cargo of coffee, Sugar,
Salt, Iron, and flour....

March 8, "... worked all day without intermission
in the garden, Sowed Rice, and Sowed,
and planted all kinds of vegetables...."

March 10, "... received some Pear and white mul-
berry trees from my friend...."

March 21, "... planted corn all day...."

March 22, "... finished planting half of the field
of corn...."

Rice was probably used more by East Texas settlers
than by settlers in other areas, for it was grown in nearby
Louisiana, and probably in a few other eastern counties in
Texas. William Kennedy was informed that Jefferson County
was adapted to the growing of rice.

The diary of Reading W. Black, founder of Uvalde and
a storekeeper there, gives some idea of the food used in
the southwestern part of the country during the fifties.
Throughout January, 1854, he bought turkeys and venison
from Indian traders, once a cargo and half of piloncillo


2. William Kennedy, Esq., Rice, Progress, and Prospects of the
Republic of Texas (Fort Worth, 1925), 177. Hereafter refer-
red to as Kennedy, Rice, Progress, and Prospects of Texas.
at $19 per cargo (Piloncillo is a sugar loaf of conical shape about five inches long and two inches in diameter at the larger end; it was the common delicacy on the Rio Grande frontier.), five chickens and guinea fowl, and sugar cane seed. During February, he butchered one beef and three hogs and sold corn and beef to Indians. Throughout March, he ploughed in the garden and peach orchard, set out some peach trees, fenced the garden, sowed clover in the peach orchard, planted corn and potatoes, fixed a hot bed, took meat out of pickle, and got some sweet potatoes for seed.

In April he sold 220 head of cattle at $12.80 per head, and in May he bought 272 pounds of flour at seven cents per pound. In September an acquaintance of his bought thirty bushel of corn at sixty-two and half cents per bushel. In October he killed three ducks, four quail, and two turkeys. Throughout November he killed approximately forty-one ducks, three quail, and one turkey; and bought three-fourths of a beef for $10.50, some onions at ten cents per pound, pecans at $1.12 1/2 per bushel, ten bushel of corn at seventy-five cents per bushel, some potatoes, and 100 pounds of butter.
During December he killed approximately thirty-six ducks, agreed to take 100 bushel of corn at seventy-five cents per bushel, and bought oranges at three cents each, and had a wild goose dinner with a friend. In January, 1855, he bought a cargo of piloncillo at $18, some fig, peach, and pomegranate trees; and hunted wild horses between the Rio Leona and Neuse. He saw thousands of mustangs about fifty miles from the head of the Rio Leona River. The mustang hunters also found a herd of wild cattle and killed two and dried some of the meat, and killed two turkeys. Black, himself, killed one wild cow and five turkeys.

Throughout March he killed approximately thirteen turkeys and two deer; in April he replanted corn, fished—catching trout and sunfish, and killed thirteen turkeys; and in May he plowed and hoed corn and sheered sheep. In July he bought a lot of piloncillo and whiskey from El Paso. During November he bought thirty-five bushel of potatoes for $1 per bushel and sold them for $1.25, and in December he bought pork, flour, rice, peones, and figs, and a friend of his killed three hogs weighing 275 pounds each.

1. Ike Moore, The Life and Diary of Reading W. Black, A History of Early Uvalde (Uvalde, Texas, 1934), 14-33.
Apparently the foods used in this section were about the same as in other sections of Texas with the exception of the Mexican piloncillo. As in other more recent settlements, few orchards were producing fruit, but evidently a few fruits could be purchased from the Spanish settlements. Black only mentioned buying rice once; it must have been seldom available in this area.

It seems that animal products were the most important sources of food throughout Texas during the 1821-1870 period. Even the corn supply failed at times, but there are very few accounts of menus which did not include meat, milk, butter, eggs, or fresh water or salt water foods. Both fresh and cured meats were widely used on the frontier and in the older settlements. When an animal as large as a cow was butchered, most of the meat had to be cured immediately to keep it from spoiling; the usual curing methods were drying and pickling with salt. Quite often, as in Dilue Harris' community, settlers living near each other shared fresh beef when a cow was butchered, and in this way each time anyone in the community butchered, every one had fresh meat.

Probably no kind of domesticated meat was widely used
for the first few years in the earlier frontier areas. What few animals the settlers had brought with them or had managed to secure otherwise had to be kept for breeding stock. Wild cattle and buffalo supplied beef; their domesticated cattle were more important for milch cows and breeders. Wild animals must have been very bad on their hogs and poultry, for wolves, bears, fox, and other animals were plentiful, and they are usually very destructive to young livestock and poultry until they are thinned out; but according to many accounts, by the thirties livestock and poultry were plentiful and constituted the major part of the older settlers' diet.

Beef and pork were the most heavily used meats in the more settled areas and were the principal items on the menu especially during the winter. A few menus of meals served Mr. and Mrs. Houston, when they were visiting Galveston and Houston in 1843, are good illustrations. While on board the steam boat from Galveston to Houston, they had a supper of boiled oysters and beef steaks, "of which there was plenty." Mrs. Houston was amazed at the rapidity with which the tough steaks were eaten by the men. In Houston at Houston House, kept by Captain (or Colonel)
Baldwin, breakfast consisted of tough beef-steak, the size of a good size dish, eggs hardly warmed through emptied over the meat, and squirrels. The usual dinner consisted of "Pork dodgers," and turkey or chicken fixed with sausages, varied with some "dough doings" in the shape of puddings. Once they were served tea made in a huge tea kettle. Back on board the boat they had a breakfast of beef, raw eggs, and egg nog; dinner consisted of pig and parsnips.

Dr. Ferdinand Roemer said that in accordance with an American custom, he was served warm meat for breakfast, mostly beef, during his visit to New Braunfels. He found that beef was about the cheapest food in Texas during the forties. It could be purchased for three cents a pound.

Jerked beef was widely used. Olmsted called it the general dish of the country along the southeastern border of Texas near Louisiana. It was an especially important

1. Mrs. Houstoun, Texas and the Gulf of Mexico or Yachting in the New World (London, 1844), 178-214. Hereafter referred to as Mrs. Houstoun, Texas and the Gulf of Mexico.

2. Dr. Roemer, Texas, 98.

food item among surveying parties, Indian fighters, and soldiers during the Texas Revolution and the Mexican War. According to Captain Gibson Kuykendall, beef cut in strings and dried penole and coffee were the usual provisions for an Indian campaign; and Andrew Boyle recalled that during the Texas Revolution, Colonel Fannin had ordered the troops to carry dried beef and bread sufficient for several days.

Mary A. Maverick told in her memoirs about Mexicans jerking up beef at their place in San Antonio in preparation for a surveying trip in 1839. She complained that everything else except beef, corn, fowls, and butter was very high during the Mexican War.

Dr. Joseph H. Field, who was in Texas during the Revolution noticed that there seemed to be something peculiar about the country that created a more than ordinary

3. Mary A. Maverick, Memoirs, 52.
4. Ibid, 87.
appetite for food, and that beef and pork, raised in the easiest manner and abundance, made up a large part of what was consumed in the ordinary mode of living among all classes. William Kennedy believed that there would always be a large market for beef and pork, together with butter, milk, lard, and poultry, in the towns, and among the lowland planters, who restricted themselves chiefly to the cultivation of cotton and sugar.

Soldiers traveling through Texas during the Texas Revolution at the time of the Runaway Scrape found many abandoned settlements which were well supplied with pork, poultry, corn, and pumpkins. S. F. Sparks recalled in his reminiscences that he and a group of soldiers had gone to a settlement to buy beef and upon finding the family gone and a yard full of chickens and plenty of corn meal

1. Dr. Joseph H. Field, Original Narrative of Texas History and Adventure, Three Years in Texas Including a View of the Texas Revolution and an Account of the Principal Battles, Together with Descriptions of the Soil, Commerce, and Agricultural Advantages (Austin, 1935), 44-46. Hereafter referred to as Dr. Field, Original Narrative of Texas History.

2. Kennedy, Rise, Progress, and Prospects of Texas, 133-134.
and bacon in the smokehouse, they cooked twelve chickens in a large wash pot with sliced bacon. Even General Houston seemed to enjoy the meal, although he reprimanded Sparks for taking the chickens without the permission of the owner.

John Duval, while traveling on Caney Creek during the Revolution, found two well supplied settlements which were untouched by the Mexicans. One had a smokehouse which contained at least a thousand pounds of bacon, a crib of corn, potatoes, and pumpkins, and a barrel of brown sugar and a sack of coffee. He believed the other house to be the residence of a wealthy planter, for he found large quantities of corn and potatoes in the barn and cribs, plenty of sugar and coffee in the store room, a box of tobacco, and many pigs, chickens, and ducks about the place.

It appears that by the thirties pork was widely used in the settlements, for swine multiplied very fast in the


2. John C. Duval, Early Times in Texas (Austin, 1892), 98. Hereafter referred to as Duval, Early Times in Texas.
forest areas, and very little care except marking and an occasional feeding was required to supply an abundance of pork and lard. The hogs could live the year round on mast, and were usually fat and ready to butcher in early winter when the mast was heavy. They could be butchered directly from the forest or penned up and fed corn for a few weeks to make the meat and lard firm. During the butchering period the whole family took part in salting, smoking, and pickling meat and rendering lard. Noah Smithwick knew of an old pioneer who had a lot of hogs running wild, and when he wanted pork, he just went out and shot one.

The majority of the Texas pioneers were originally from the Southern States in which pork was one of the most important foodstuffs especially among the poorer people, and apparently as soon as they were settled well enough, swine was raised for bacon and lard. Pork was especially popular during the winter when the hogs were fat and the cattle were lean. Many travelers who travelled through Texas in the forties and fifties commented upon the primary place pork had on the menu. It was an important food item

among all classes, but many other types of meat were always available. Possibly, new settlers who moved into the older areas after the wild cattle had been claimed and the larger game had moved further west found pork more economical to use than beef. They were able to buy cattle cheaply, but as previously mentioned, many immigrants had little or no money. What cattle they could afford to buy or had brought with them were probably of more value as breeding animals, work oxen, and milch cows. Swine, which breeds and matures much faster than cattle, could supply a poor settler with all the meat and lard he needed after a few years of breeding.

Colonel William F. Gray, while traveling in Texas during the winter and spring of 1836, noted in his diary many of the menus of meals served to him along the way. The usual meal in the cabins along the roadway consisted of bacon, fried pork, corn bread, milk, and coffee—artificial or genuine, often without sugar or cream. He mentioned the inclusion of eggs a few times. Once in late February while in the area of the Brazos and Washington, he was served an excellent meal which included turnip tops. Not far from the Brazos and again at Anahuac, he received meals of only milk and bread. Another time, near Beaumont, he was served veal
without bread or salt and coffee without sugar.¹

Evidently the diet was rather limited during the winter. But from many other accounts of the food supply during this period, it does not seem that these meals described by the Colonel are always representative of those found in the home of the average settler. It seems that when he dined with a person of importance, he did not record the meal but simply commented that it was very good or excellent or made no comment at all.

Some of the later settlers apparently depended quite often on corn bread and milk products even more than meat. Most travelers who travelled extensively in Texas mention menus of milk and corn bread in some of the poor cabins. These cases could have been representative of nare-do-well settlers, but probably many of them were poor settlers who had not been in Texas long enough to raise other livestock or crops and did not have the money to buy anything else.

There seems to have been a temporary shortage of milk among the first settlers, but a milch cow was one of the first animals obtained or raised. Noah Smithwick said that a milch cow, poultry, and corn were the first things raised.²

² Smithwick, Evolution of a State, 23.
By the early thirties milk and butter were abundant according to Mary Austin Holley. Immigrants into the eastern part of Texas could easily secure cattle from Louisiana, if they had not driven a milch cow along with their oxen team from their old homesteads. Some of Austin's colonists bought cattle in Louisiana and drove them over the Camino Real to the settlements on the Brazos and Colorado. Very few pioneering accounts mention being without milk except for the first year or two. Certainly there was less of a scarcity of milk in the later frontier areas because livestock could be secured very cheaply from older settlers along the way, and some of the older settlers themselves moved into the frontier taking their herds with them.

Milk products and milk were used by almost all settlers, and many early settlers in all sections told of having enough milk and butter to sell in the nearby towns.

Few writers except Olmsted complained of the butter being rancid, but undoubtedly much of it was, especially during the warmer months. The large quantities which were

1. Mary Austin Holley, Texas, 96, 140.
2. Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas, 115-116
sold to hotels or rooming houses must have been very rancid, for there was no refrigeration. Mary Blackburn recalled in her reminiscences that at times she had taken as much as 500 pounds of butter to Koss and to Austin after the railroad came.

It is possible that the heat and the lack of sanitary methods of handling the milk were both responsible for much of the rank smelling butter Olmsted mentioned. Probably very few people at this time were careful about washing before handling the milk and butter or about sterilizing the milk vessels. John Duval had this point illustrated to him during the Texas Revolution in 1835 when he was one of a group of soldiers traveling between Copano and Refugio. They noticed a number of cattle in the vicinity and decided that this was a good opportunity to supplement their camp diet with some milk. Duval took a camp kettle and went to the nearest house and inquired of a woman if she had any milk for sale. She answered, "Faith, and I have, any kind you may want, swate milk, buttermilk, clabber milk and blue johns." He told her he would take some sweet milk, and they went into a small out house in which there were a

number of pans filled with milk. The woman rolled up her sleeve and deliberately skimmed the milk with her open hand, which looked as though it had been "unacquainted with soap and water" for a long time and poured it into his kettle.

Few accounts mention the use of sheep and goats as sources of food, although William Kennedy noted that sheep raised in the north and western part of the country were tender and well flavored, and that goats multiplied rapidly. It is probable that sheep and goats were more widely used in the area of the Spanish settlements, for many of the settlers here raised sheep and goats.

Poultry of all kinds and evidently eggs were plentiful in Texas by the thirties. It is very strange, but travelers seldom mention chicken or any other kind of poultry on a menu, although they usually tell of seeing poultry in the yard or around the settlements. Almost all pioneering accounts tell of the abundance of chickens, ducks, and geese, but they seldom mention them on a menu.

2. Kennedy, Rise, Progress, and Prospects of Texas, 135.
John A. Hart, when a boy in Parker County in the fifties, was invited to a party by an old time Arkansan who had been in Texas a long time. There were a lot of people at the party and everything good to eat was put on the table, and more boiled eggs than he had ever seen. Everyone seemed to have goose eggs. Hart said this was something people had never seen before, "goose eggs on the table at a supper."  

Eggs sold in the towns at from twenty-five to forty cents a dozen, and had been known to sell as high as fifty cents each in 1837 at Houston and Brazoria during New Years when egg-nog was in demand. Mary Austin Holley knew of one dozen which had sold for $13 at that time. Mary Blackburn recalled selling 100 dozen eggs at forty cents a dozen in Koss, Texas, when she lived in Bell County; and Susan Francis Lomax remembered that as a young girl she had made pocket money by selling eggs at forty cents a dozen; people

1. Dubbs, Pioneer Days in the Southwest, 135.
in Meridian came to her home to buy them. Eggs were rather expensive for the time, and probably some innkeepers and boarding house keepers were disinclined to buy them to serve to travelers. Immigration was so heavy during the forties and fifties that it may have been difficult for public eating places to obtain an adequate supply, although many eggs were produced in the country especially during the spring and early summer. Probably poor transportation kept many farmers from bringing their produce into town or to roadside inns to sell.

Cultivated crops were comparatively less important in the average diet than meats and other animal produce; although corn was heavily relied on by almost all settlers in Texas. Few domesticated foods besides corn were widely used on the frontier. It seems to have been the most universal of all crops throughout Texas. It was the principal breadstuff and vegetable for most pioneers, as well as feed for their animals. There was usually a great

shortage even of corn in most frontier communities during the early years of settlement. Most of the immigrants brought a supply of corn with them when they came, but much of it had to be saved for seed and many were without bread for months until the first crops came in. Quite often for the first few years corn for bread gave out from one season to the next. Many people were often without bread from late winter until the corn crop matured because a good deal of seed was required for the next crop and probably because they divided with more recent immigrants who had come without adequate provisions.

Corn was the first crop planted because it could be grown with a minimum of cultivation and could be used in many ways the year round. Green corn was boiled, roasted, and fried. It was husked and boiled in a pot of water or stood on ends before the fire and turned until brown on all sides, or the grains were cut from the cob and fried in butter, bear oil, or lard. Noah Smithwick remarked that the sweetest way corn was ever cooked was by burying the ears, husk and all, in hot ashes.

When the corn began to harden, graters of old tinware— "coffee pots being most in vogue," were made to grate it for bread. This tinware was ripped open and spread flat on a board and punched full of ragged holes, then bent into an oval and the straight edges nailed to board. The corn was easily grated on this contraption and made into a very rich bread.

After the corn was dry many methods were used to grind or pound it into meal. Some people in Andrew Davis's community in Northeastern Texas pounded it into meal with a pestle made from a round stick of wood about four inches in diameter, which had one end rounded off and the other end worked down to the size that a man could grasp. The corn was usually pounded in a mortar made by hollowing out a three to four foot block of oak. The resulting meal was sifted through a sifter made with a piece of young pecan or hickory wood from four to six inches wide, shaved thin and bent into a hoop with the ends secured and a deer skin from which the hair had been removed drawn tightly over it and holes punched all over the skin with a sharp

instrument. The fine meal was used for bread and the coarse was used as hominy.

In Noah Smithwick's community many of the people made corn meal in a mortar and sweep, which was made by cutting off a sound tree about three or four feet above the ground and hollowing it out by alternate burning and scraping until it would hold about a peck of shelled corn. A long pole, to the butt end of which a pestle was attached, was swung into the forks of an adjacent tree, and the corn was pounded into meal by pulling the pestle down upon the corn. The weight of the other end of the pole would pull the pestle back up. The meal produced was often baked without sifting or salt. It was simply mixed with water and baked.

Delue Harris recalled that the children in her community had fun pulling the sweep down and seeing it go up. She said that when the neighbors met, the first words were, "Is your corn getting hard? Have you had any bread? Send


2. Smithwick, Evolution of a State, 24
to my house and get meal or corn.¹

A variation of the mortar and sweep is the "Show Tom" described by George Ely as an ancient machine used by the earlier settlers. It was made by securely fastening a water trough to one end of a long strong pole, to the other end of which a pestle was fixed so that it would just drop into the bottom of a basin dug out of the top of a stump or a solid rock. The pole was fixed on a pivot in such a way that when water ran into the trough that end went down and the pestle went up from the corn. As the pestle went up the water in the trough spilt out and the pestle fell back down on the corn. This process could be herd all through the night, pounding meal for breakfast. Sometimes the "coons" and bears helped themselves to the meal before morning.

Small steel hand mills were used in many homes for grinding corn into meal, and in some of the more established settlements, settlers took their corn to windmills or mills.

¹ Diluc Harris, "Reminiscences," Texas State Historical Quarterly, VI, 109.
² Dubbs, Pioneer Days in the Southwest, 256.
turned by oxen to be ground.

During the winter a big kettle of lye hominy was very popular. Hominy was made by putting whole corn in vessels with wood ashes and boiling it until the husk would slip off on pressure between the thumb and finger. It was eaten either whole or pounded fine with a pestle and fried in lard or bear oil by the pioneers.

Little or no wheat was grown by the pioneers during their pioneering days. Flour was always scarce and expensive—from $25 to $30 a barrel, on the frontier. In June, 1823, Captain Gibson Kuykendall told of buying a barrel of flour for $25 at the mouth of the Colorado and carrying it home on horseback and mules, affording his family the first bread they tasted in seven months.

Captain Kuykendall was more fortunate than most settlers, for few settlers could afford to pay so much for bread. It was seldom used even by those living in the less isolated areas. Many of the pioneer children forgot or had never known what wheat bread was like. Noah Smithwick illustrates

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this in a little story told him by an old pioneer, Martin Varner, about his son's first experience with biscuits:

The old man had managed to get together money or pelts enough to buy a barrel of flour. Mrs. Varner made a batch of biscuits, which, considering the resources of the country, were doubtless heavy as lead and hard as wood. The boy looked at them curiously, helped himself to one and made for the door with it. In a few minutes he came back for another. Doubting the child's ability to eat it so quickly, the old man followed him to see what disposition he had made of the second. The ingenious youngster had conceived a novel and not altogether illogical idea of their utility. He had punched holes through the center, inserted an axle and triumphantly displayed a miniature Mexican cart.1

Flour was more accessible in the later frontier areas because of the cultivation of wheat and the establishment of flour mills in the older settlements in the Central Basin area. William Kennedy found wheat grown in Robertson, Milam, Colorado, Fayette, Bastrop, Travis, Victoria, and Gonzales counties. No doubt people in these areas used wheat bread, and flour was more available to newcomers than it had been among some of the first settlers in Texas.

Many settlers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area grew

wheat for their own use after the first few years there. George Jackson, whose family moved close to Dallas in 1848, remembered that his family had grown splendid crops of corn and wheat. Almost all accounts of settlers in the northern and central areas of Texas tell of growing corn and wheat. Corn was always the first crop, but after a few years, good crops of wheat were also grown. In many places wheat could have been grown much sooner than it was, but there were no flour mills nearby to grind it into flour. Many of the first wheat growers had to drive many miles to get the grain ground. Wheat could not be ground into flour by make-shift contrivances such as used to grind meal. Even in these wheat-growing areas corn was widely used. It was a more certain crop and could be grown with less cultivation and could be ground at home. Considering the lack of baking powder and the scarcity of soda, corn bread must have been preferred to wheat bread especially when these leavening agents were not available, for most American people used biscuits instead of yeast bread. The shortage of sugar

1. George Jackson, *Sixty Years in Texas* (Dallas, 1908), 32.
prevented the average settler from making pastries; although molasses gingerbread was probably made by many of the settlers.

The German settlers probably influenced a few Americans to use yeast bread. It seems that they were responsible for some of the first bakeries in Texas. Most of the German immigrants settled in areas where wheat could be grown. American settlers were already growing wheat in nearby counties at the time of the establishment of the German settlements at New Braunfels and Fredericksburg which are not far from San Antonio. It seems that these settlers were not so dependent on corn as the majority of American pioneers. They had not been accustomed to using corn bread in Europe and, of course, were disinclined to do so in America when flour could be obtained. Nevertheless, according to Mrs. Caroline Von Hinueber's reminiscences, her family, when they immigrated to Texas in 1831, was even more dependent on corn than the American settlers. She recalled that her family had no money and the Americans knew better how to help themselves than they. Her father was a poor hunter and they lived mostly on corn bread at first. Her father made them a mortar in which to grind corn.
Sometimes they boiled the corn until it was soft, then grated and baked it. She said her father raised a fine garden. Her family is possibly typical of German settlers who came to Texas before the forties when the larger German colonies were established.

The principal breadstuff of the Mexican settlers, like the American immigrants, was corn. They seldom used wheat bread. Reverend P. F. Parisot, writing of Texas during the fifties, said that the Mexican ranchers used thin tortillas made from corn meal without any yeast. The women softened the corn in lime water and placed it on a flat stone called a metate, and then with another stone shaped like a rolling-pin they ground the corn into a paste. This paste was then patted with the hands into thin cakes and baked quickly on a metal plate. Olmsted called the

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Mexican tortillas and tamales, corn slap-jacks and hashed meat in corn shucks.

Reverend Parisot found that tortillas and frijoles (beans) were the principal food of the Mexican ranchero. It was hardly ever varied by the poor; sometimes they had frijoles and chile (red pepper), an egg or two, and chile con carne (meat and red pepper). Reverend Parisot said that the manner of eating tortillas and frijoles was soon learned by Americans and any others who had been among the poorest classes of Mexicans. They spread the beans or eggs on a thin cake, using it as a plate. Then they doubled up another cake, which was used as a spoon, and with it they conveyed the beans or eggs to the mouth. After the other food was eaten the plate and spoon were consumed.

A few pioneers may have had vegetable gardens during the first two or three years on the frontier, but very few early pioneering accounts mention them. Usually wild animals in a new area are very destructive to truck patches,

as well as to livestock and poultry, especially in areas in which the settlements are far apart. A surveying party with whom Big-Foot Wallace was working while traveling to the head of the Brazos in 1836, found a solitary settler along the way who was confronted with this problem. The usual camper’s diet of honey and meat was probably getting rather monotonous at this point in their journey and upon finding a settlement, they welcomed the opportunity to buy vegetables. Big-Foot Wallace was elected to go buy them. The man of the family was away from home on a hunting trip, but his wife, a "tall, raw-boned, hard-favored woman," who was on the lookout for Indians, met Wallace with a gun aimed at him, while half a dozen cotton-headed children scattered to hiding places. Wallace quickly explained to her that he only wanted to buy some vegetables and she invited him to come in and showed him to the truck patch where he filled his "wallet" with "mushmillions" and "cowcumbers." She complained to him that she had no vegetables left "except 'cowcumbers' and 'mushmillions', and mabe so, a few 'collards', the dratted 'varmints' are so uncommon bad on 'em...." 

1. Duval, Big-Foot Wallace, 6-10.
Many of the settlers grew pumpkins in their corn. Probably it was one of the first vegetables widely grown, because it required no extra work except planting. Mary Austin Holley said that pumpkins often grew as large as a man could lift. The yield was usually abundant. Tilatha Wilson English recalled that her family grew lots of pumpkins from which they made pumpkin bread. The pumpkin was stewed until done and put in meal and salt, worked up into a dough, and made into small thin cakes and baked.

With few exceptions, it is safe to say that garden vegetables did not figure heavily in the diet of any of the pioneers in any of the frontier areas, but by the middle thirties Mary Austin Holley found many kinds of vegetables, melons, and fruits growing in the more established settlements; there were peas, beans, sweet and Irish potatoes, pumpkins, and delicious melons in abundance.

The anonymous author of Emigrant's Guide, who claimed to have visited the southwestern border of Texas and the interior during the late thirties, said he found that

1. Mary Austin Holley, Texas, 66.
2. Dubbs, Pioneer Days in the Southwest, 252.
garden vegetables of every kind flourished: beets, parsnips, carrots, and other roots, beans, peas, lettuce and other herbs, tomatoes, egg plant, cucumbers, squash, and pumpkins. He found small patches of sweet potatoes, cabbages, turnips, mustard, and Irish potatoes at almost every dwelling.

Abbe Domenech, while traveling in Galveston in 1848, noticed that homes in Galveston were generally surrounded by small gardens. He also found "kitchen gardens" in San Antonio. From all indications the majority of established settlers grew gardens, and during the spring and summer vegetables must have been fairly plentiful.

Sweet potatoes were very widely used and seem to have been grown in almost all settlements. Small patches were found at almost every cabin. Dr. Fields found them preeminent among culinary vegetables in the thirties. Once when he was dining at the home of a Texas lady, he chanced to admire the great size of her potatoes, and she told him that they were not large. She said that a short time before they had one so large that she was induced to call together her whole numerous family to dine upon it.


They all made a hearty meal of that alone, and left enough to feed the pigs.

Sweet potatoes were baked, fried, and boiled. Baked potatoes were common on many camping menus, and were an important part of the school children's lunch. The children probably ate a great many of them raw between meals.

Domesticated fruits were almost absent on the frontier. A few may have been imported or brought from the older Spanish settlements, but they were not available to the average settler. By the thirties some of the better established settlers had producing orchards. Mary Austin Holley said that fruits of "tropical and temperate climates produced in uncommon abundance and perfection"—olives, oranges, lemons, figs, prunes, peaches, and "grapes of many varieties and of fine flavor." She said that dried fruits and distilled spirits were estimated as important articles of produce especially peaches, figs, and grapes, whiskey, peach and grape brandy, and rum. Peaches, figs, and grapes grew well in almost all parts of Texas, and citrus fruits produced abundantly in the southern and southwestern area near the Rio Grande. Pears, plums, nectarines, pomegranate, and

1. Dr. Field, *Original Narrative of Texas History*, 44-46.
quince also flourished. A few settlers planted apple orchards, but they did not produce well. Almost all writers who wrote about Texas during the thirties and forties told of finding orchards in the older settlements. Viktor Bracht found peach, fig, pomegranate, plum, and mulberry orchards; and the author of Emigrant's Guide found quince, fig, peach, and nectarine orchards. Reverend Chester Newell also found that fruits could be grown in great abundance. He said that peaches, plums, and figs produced well and that apricots were adapted to the climate.

It seems that fruits were used for between-meal refreshments. W. Y. Allen, a young minister from Kentucky, recorded in his diary, while en route from Velasco to Houston in July, 1838, that he had been entertained with plenty of figs and melons at one place, with figs and grapes at another, and further on he was received kindly.

1. Bracht, Texas in 1848, 36.
and treated to figs and peaches. Viktor Bracht noticed that food and drink were seldom offered between meals, except fruit.

Very few personal accounts by the settlers themselves mention fruits. It appears that despite the foregoing account, the average settler used very little fruit, for there were not enough established orchards in Texas at this time to produce sufficient fruit for both the older settlers and the more recent immigrants who were always moving into Texas.

Those who had orchards undoubtedly dried and preserved some of the fruit for winter use, and by 1870, undoubtedly some of the people were learning to can fruits and vegetables. Dr. Ferdinand Roemer told of being served canned fruit near Gonzales. Probably the scarcity of sugar prevented many settlers from canning and preserving some of their fruits, but sugar was more available in the lower Brazos and Colorado and East Texas areas where most of the orchards were at this time.

2. Bracht, Texas in 1848, 72.
3. Dr. Roemer, Texas, 62.
In addition to honey, molasses was used as a substitute for sugar and as syrup. Mary A. Maverick told of having been served tarts of mustang grapes, sweetened with molasses by the wife of a large cattle owner on the Navidad during the Mexican War.

Few accounts written by travelers or the settlers refer to the use of molasses. But it seems probable that in the treeless areas where there was no honey and where sugar was very difficult to obtain, molasses was used. Olmsted was served a jug of molasses as part of a very bad meal at a Red River plantation when he was traveling through Texas in the winter of 1855. He found turkeys, chickens, and a pet sow with a litter of pigs in the yard, and the lady of the house ironing. She finished her ironing, then went to the kitchen in compliance with Olmsted's request for something to eat and quickly returned with cold, fat, salt pork, a cup of butter that looked like lard, a plate of very stale, dry, flaky, micaceous corn bread, a jug of molasses, and a pitcher of milk. Then she turned to her guest and said, "Well now its ready, if you'll eat it. Best we've got. Sit up. Take some butter;" and she sat down in a rocker at one end of the table. "Take

In some communities sorghum-making implements were owned jointly by a number of families. In John A. Hart's community in Parker County, three or four families owned a sorghum mill together, and the owners assisted each other in making the molasses. A single horse or steer was used to turn the mill; usually a driver kept the steer moving. Each person would make from one to three barrels of molasses. When the molasses making was over the youngsters had a candy pulling; old people and all would take part.

A few planters along the coast began to grow sugar cane immediately upon coming to Texas. Robert Hancock Hunter, who came to Harris County in 1822 with his father, recalled that they raised sugar cane and shipped it to Harrisburg in exchange for corn. William Kennedy stated that sugar cane was grown in Jasper, Matagorda, Victoria, Gonzales, Refugio, Goliad, and San Patricio counties when

he was visiting in Texas in 1839 or 1840. Evidently sugar and syrup were made for home use in areas in which the sugar cane was produced, but in most areas there was always a shortage of sugar among the average settler.

It is probable that many of the settlers made use of the natural salt deposits and salt springs in Texas, but most of them seem to have purchased salt. I found no personal accounts which told of gathering salt or of making it from the salt springs by the settlers for their own use; although William Kennedy implied that settlers on the Brazos and Colorado made use of the deposit near the Brazos. There were many salt deposits and salt water springs in all parts of Texas; many of the nearby settlers must have made use of them.

The most widely used beverages in Texas were milk, coffee, and whiskey. It seems that milk was served three times a day in many homes. Viktor Bracht remarked that sweet milk, buttermilk, and curdled milk with cream were

1. Kennedy, Rise, Progress, and Prospects of Texas, 137-172.
2. Ibid., 143-152.
served three times a day.

The most indispensable beverage throughout 1821-1870 was coffee, which was widely used by all classes of immigrants. If the settlers could not manage to buy it, they made substitutes. The coffee substitutes were probably more widely used than real coffee. This artificial coffee was made by parching corn and wheat, and Viktor Bracht implied that it was also made from okra seeds. Most travelers spoke of coffee as being the one indispensable beverage throughout early Texas. The settlers had little money but most of them managed to buy coffee when it was available.

Tea was also used, although not so widely as coffee. Many kinds of wild teas as well as imported tea were used. J. L. Clark named sassafras tea, mullein tea, "kinnikinik" or Shawnee haw tea, and drinks of other herbs as having been used by early Texans. Two Germans, Dr. Ferdinand

1. Bracht, Texas in 1848, 72.
2. Ibid., 28.
3. Clark, A History of Texas, 141.
Roemer and Viktor Bracht, were rather fascinated with the American customs associated with the serving of tea and coffee. Dr. Roemer noticed that the hostess or some feminine member of the family sat at one end of the table and served tea in a most dignified and solemn manner. The cups were passed in silence, and later repassed in the same manner. The hostess was silent except for the necessary questions, "You take tea or coffee sir? Do you take milk and sugar?" Then the hostess added the milk and sugar as directed.

Viktor Bracht found coffee or tea served at every meal. Coffee was poured as soon as the guest sat down at the noon meal. He noticed that the lady of the house occupied the place at the head of the table which at times was elevated. She poured the coffee or tea, served the guests, and gave direction to the conversation. He remarked that she did all this with unaffected dignity and natural grace.

Whiskey seems to have been another indispensable

1. Dr. Roemer, Texas, 37-38.
2. Bracht, Texas in 1848, 69-70.
beverage, especially among the men. The shortage of corn probably greatly affected the supply on the frontier, but some of it was imported, for W. B. Devees told of seeing some barrels of whiskey imported by the Dummitt Company at the mouth of the Colorado River in 1823. Whiskey is seldom mentioned in the memoirs and reminiscences of any of the older settlers, but since it was habitually used all over the United States at that time, there is little doubt that many managed to obtain it in some way or make substitutes for it. Of course, as soon as the corn crops were grown, it could be made for home consumption and for sale or barter to other settlers. It was used straight or mixed with water or in a hot toddy, probably sweetened with honey on the frontier.

Almost all travelers, who were in Texas during the early period, commented upon the widespread use of liquor. Dr. Roemer found that at some houses the host would ask the guests in a sly manner to follow him into an adjoining room and would offer them a drink of whiskey or cognac diluted with water and sugar, in order to stimulate the appetite.

1. Devees, Letters from an Early Settler, 22-37.
2. Dr. Roemer, Texas, 37.
Olmsted also noticed this custom when he was in Texas in 1855 and 1856.

John Hunter Herndon's diary is an index to the type of liquor drinks to be had in Texas in 1838. February 15, he was treated to an apple toddy; on the seventeenth one of his friends drank whiskey out of a skull that still had brains in it; on April 3, he took an egg nog with a half-dozen acquaintances; and on May 3, he rose early and took a fine mint julep.

Mrs. Houstoun commented upon the popularity of egg nog when she was visiting Texas. While on board the steamboat on the way to Houston, she was asked "do you liquor, Ma'am?" and was brought a glass of egg nog, which she thought excellent and which was in great request by men and women on the boat. William Kennedy told of even being invited to a champagne supper while visiting Houston.

1. Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas, 368.


3. Mrs. Houstoun, Texas and the Gulf of Mexico, 179.

4. Kennedy, Rise, Progress, and Prospects of Texas, xi-xii.
Whiskey was the drink with which all holidays were celebrated. When Dr. Roemer was visiting Texas in 1845, he was invited to Tremont House, the most prominent hotel in Galveston, to celebrate Christmas by indulging in a
glass of whiskey punch. Dilue Harris gave an interesting
account of a barbecue held on July 4, 1834, at which she
seemed relieved that there was not an abundance of whiskey
in her community at that time. The ladies spent the day
in conversation and work while the young people danced in
the yard. The children played under trees, and the men
talked politics. The music consisted of two fiddles,
played turn-about by three Negro men. One Negro used an
iron pin and clevis, used at the end of a cart tongue or
plough beam, to beat time with the fiddles, another beat
a tin pan. The young people danced by the music from three
in the evening until next morning. They served barbecued
meat, all sorts of vegetables, coffee, fowls, potatoes,
honey, corn bread, but no cake because there was no flour
in the country. The whiskey gave out early "and there was
no fuss or quarreling."

1. Dr. Roemer, Texas, 43.
2. Dilue Harris, "Reminiscences," Texas State Historical Quarterly, IV, 110.
It is evident, therefore, that domesticated foods of many kinds were used in Texas; although the diet usually varied with the status of the individual settler and the part of the country in which he had settled, as well as with the season of the year and whether or not he lived on a farm or in a town. These variations remain to be examined.
CHAPTER III

VARIATIONS IN DIET

Settlers living in the Brazos and Colorado valleys were probably better fed than the average settler, for the soil was very rich and produced abundant crops. Joseph Eve, United States Chargé D'Affaires to Texas, in a letter to Robert Letcher dated November 30, 1841, said that he believed the land of the Brazos and Colorado to be the best in the United States in production of sugar cane and cotton. He said that it produced as much corn as Kentucky and double the potatoes of South Carolina. "They raise in great abundance all the vegetables that are raised in Kentucky; also figs, oranges, lemons and the best melons of every kind...." He believed it to be the best stock country in the world and said that it was not uncommon for a planter to have a thousand herd of cattle.

C. C. Cox found great prosperity along the San Marcos, Guadalupe, and San Antonio rivers in 1856. Large crops had been raised previous to that year, and a large immigration was attracted there, among them many wealthy and well-to-do.

farmers and planters from the Southern States. New settlers put more money into circulation, and consequently increased the buying power of all communities into which they moved. They brought Negro slaves, mules, carriages, and farm equipment. Cox recalled that society was "if not aristocratic at least highly respectable and refined and as pretentious as the most select of older settled countries."

By the late forties many imports could be obtained through the ports of Galveston, Matagorda, and Indianola, as well as overland by way of the Camino Real. By the late fifties a few railroads connected some of the more important towns, with the principal railroads radiating from Houston. Evidently by the seventies settlers between the Trinity and the San Antonio rivers were better able to obtain sugar, flour, and a greater variety of fruits than those in most other parts of Texas.

According to Colonel R. T. Milner, who grew up in East Texas in the fifties, that part of the country was also well supplied with food. He said the forests abounded in

cattle and hogs, sheep furnished wool for clothing, and that corn, wheat, potatoes, and all manner of vegetables were produced in abundance; wild bees stored away an endless supply of honey in hollow trees of the forest. "To condense into the fewest possible words what could be lengthened into a long and interesting story, there never existed a country that abounded so lavishly in the necessities of life as did this East Texas Country during the War [Civil War]."

This section of Texas had the greatest concentration of population. Probably many of the less ambitious immigrants who had started to find land on the frontier for one reason or the other stopped here and never reached their destination. Hogs were numerous in the forests and apparently made up a major part of the poorer settler's diet. Pork was probably more heavily depended on here than in other sections of the country. As previously mentioned, rice was also more widely used in this section than in others. East Texas settlers seemed to have concentrated

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less effort in growing food crops than in growing cotton. Before the Civil War East Texas produced more cotton than any other area in Texas.

Natchitoches and Shreveport, Louisiana, and Nacogdoches, Texas, were all nearby supply centers for East Texas settlers, and a great many supplies were also shipped from New Orleans by way of the Red River to this area from where many of the supplies were carried overland into many other sections of Texas. Such imports as sugar, flour, salt, coffee, and tea could be purchased by those with money.

R. K. Clark, a lawyer and recent arrival in Paris, Lamar County, Texas, wrote a letter to his sister and brother-in-law in 1844 in which he said that money was scarcer than he had ever seen in Tennessee. He said a great deal of immigration was flowing into the country, and provisions were scarce. He remarked that he expected it to be impossible to get corn, "however flower and all kinds of provisions can be bought up the river [Red River]."

American settlers did not begin moving into the northern, southern, and western sections of Texas until the

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forties, and consequently agriculture was not as well developed here as in the older areas. Stock raising seems to have been the major industry in the southern section, and it was also important in the north, but many of the settlers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area were from Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas where co-operative farming and stock raising were practiced. They were accustomed to growing grain and vegetables and raising cattle, horses, sheep, and goats. This section was very isolated until the railroad was built through that part of the country in the seventies making connections with eastern and southern lines. No doubt purchased items were very scarce.

Cattle, horses, sheep, and goats were raised in the southern and southwestern section. Livestock had been introduced by the Spanish, and cattle ranching and sheep raising were widely practiced by Spanish settlers along the Rio Grande, in San Antonio and the El Paso vicinities. The Spanish settlers had been growing corn, some sugar cane, and a few vegetables long before the Americans had begun to move into that part of the country, and some of them also had producing orchards. The Spanish settlers were already
growing crops by irrigation along the Rio Grande, but few Americans used irrigation there until the twentieth century; consequently, the American settlers were probably more dependent on their cattle, sheep, and goats as sources of food than settlers in the more arable areas. The road going to California passed through this area, and many of the settlers along the way must have profited by the migration to California in the late forties and fifties by selling supplies. Cattle at this time sold at a good price in California, and probably ranchers in this section sold livestock to immigrants on their way there and drove some livestock into California to sell.

There is little doubt that American settlers in the vicinities of the Spanish settlements were influenced by the Spanish or Mexican settlers and vice versa. Mary A. Maverick, recalled that the American women in San Antonio fell into the fashion of the climate, dining at twelve then taking a siesta until three, and at three having a cup of coffee and a bath. She told of giving a party about 1841 at which she served ice cream. A norther blew up and she

1. Mary A. Maverick, Memoirs, 56-57.
had excellent luck in making it. Her guests were very surprised. The Mexicans tasted it for the first time in their lives and all of them liked it. Mrs. Yturri, a society leader in San Antonio at that time, ate so much that she took the cramps and had to be carried home.

Little of the territory south and west of the present Wichita Falls and north of Gillespie County was settled before 1870, and agriculture was not widely practiced in these settlements; but game and cattle were plentiful and some corn, wheat, pumpkins, cushaws, and a few other vegetables were cultivated. Few pioneering accounts of this section tell of vegetable gardens. They usually say that the climate was too dry to grow many crops. Evidently beef, game, and grain were the staples in this region.

It seems that the town dwellers in all sections were more dependent on meat and bread than the country folk. As previously stated, vegetable gardens were raised in the towns; but they did not supply enough vegetables for those without gardens or for public eating places. Vegetables, fruits, eggs, milk, and butter were always in demand in the towns. It seems that few American people were accustomed to growing vegetables to sell. Olmsted found that

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1. Mary A. Maverick, Memoirs, 56.
the vegetable markets in San Antonio were largely owned by the German immigrants. Many German peasants had probably made their living as truck farmers in the old country, and would naturally follow the same profession in America.

The average diet among all classes in most of Texas was undoubtedly more varied during the spring, summer, and autumn than during the winter, although the long growing season and the generally mild weather made it possible for the thrifty to grow some vegetables almost the year round and allowed livestock to range in the open even during the winter. Many accounts tell of livestock staying fat the year round. The milder weather was also conducive to the raising of poultry and the production of eggs. Some writers said that the chickens laid the year round; but, of course, eggs were not so plentiful during the winter.

Canning was not widely practiced at this time and there was no refrigeration to keep vegetables, fruits, or meats any length of time. Dehydration and pickling were about the only methods of preserving foods. Cushaw, pumpkins, beans, peas, figs, peaches, and such meats as beef, buffalo meat, and venison were undoubtedly dehydrated, but there are few accounts of dried vegetables and fruits having

been used by the average settler, although dried meats were a staple the year round. Beans, cabbage, and corn, as well as many kinds of meats were probably pickled; although none of the accounts I have read tell of the use of pickled vegetables except a few mixed pickles. It seems that only meats were widely preserved by this method.

Apparently the living conditions of the settlers in Texas varied with the types of immigrants and their peculiar living habits, as well as with the natural resources to be found in the various parts of the country where they settled, just as had been the case in the different sections of the United States. The industrious and the indolent, the well-to-do and the poor, the ignorant and the educated were all represented. Travelers could have found almost any type of person they were looking for, although the poor and less educated people were in the majority.

To be sure, Texas received her share of shiftless, unambitious drifters, seemingly satisfied with sheer existence, or if not satisfied, too lazy to make the effort to better themselves; but on the whole the limited diet of many of the settlers was more often due to immediate circumstances, custom, and ignorance than indolence; or
perhaps their perspective caused them to put other things before an improved diet.

Much of the population throughout the period covered by this study was too fluid for extensive agriculture. The first land was cleared to produce food for immediate needs, and certain dispensables such as orchards, which require years instead of months to produce food, were neglected until the settlers were more established and had more time. Many of the settlers had to learn from experience which fruits grew well and which ones did not. The presence of a variety of wild fruits also lessened the need for domesticated fruits, especially in the wooded areas.

The abundance of game and the ease with which livestock and poultry could be raised lessened the desire and the necessity for the cultivation of a great variety of vegetables. As a rule, there are few vegetarians in the midst of an abundant supply of meat unless moral ideals prevent its consumption. Man seems to be naturally more carnivorous than herbivorous. The American people are proving this today; for as their income rises so does their consumption of meat, even though vegetables can be purchased in great variety at any market at a much less cost than meat.
American dietary customs also greatly influenced the average diet of the early Texans. The diet of the average American during this period was rather rough and often lacking in aesthetics. Delicacies such as fancy pastries were almost absent from the average diet, as was yeast bread, and the preparation of food was very plain. It seems that a minimum of fruits and not a very great variety of vegetables were used by the average people in the Southern States at this time, and from all accounts, the majority of immigrants to Texas were from this section of the country.

These Southern States were all west of the approximate frontier line of 1800 which indicates that semi-frontier conditions were not far removed when the migration began to Texas. It is probable that some of the immigrants to Texas were from transitory families who had moved too often to have engaged in extensive food production or had lived in areas where game and wild vegetation lessened the necessity for cultivating food crops, and consequently it is probable that many of this group of settlers were slower than the average settler about cultivating vegetables and planting orchards after they came to Texas. It appears that they had depended heavily on corn and pork when in areas in
which the game was scarce, for most of the timber-lands of the South at this time were filled with woods-hogs which thrived with little or no care.

It seems that this group customarily depended more heavily on corn and pork than the average American, although these items were also important in the average diet. Even with the enormous supply of wild game and cattle in most of Texas, salt pork appears to have been a customary dish, used by rich and poor; and as in areas east of the Mississippi, as the game receded, swine increased in the forest areas and came to be depended on more heavily, especially by the poorer settlers. As previously mentioned, corn remained the most important grain among all classes in Texas as among the majority of Americans of this period.

The extensive use of sweet potatoes was another Southern custom which was transplanted to Texas. Sweet potatoes were very widely used in most Southern States and constituted a considerable part of the fall and winter diet. The use of coffee and whiskey were also American customs which were brought to Texas as previously illustrated. Coffee and tea had been considered unfit for working people in eighteenth century America, but by the time of the
opening of Texas, both were used by all classes; although on the average coffee was more popular than tea, as it is today.

Whiskey was used by all classes of Americans. It was not a regular part of meals, but it seems assuredly to have figured in the men's diet. It was especially popular during the cold weather. A hot-toddy was the standard remedy against colds. Most of the men were rather heavy drinkers. Even the women were permitted a hot-toddy or an egg nog.

In spite of the many factors which may have influenced the Texas diet, all occupied sections of Texas during the first fifty years of American immigration were blessed with a bountiful supply of food. Wild game and honey, livestock, corn, potatoes, and pumpkins were available in abundance in almost every settlement, and a variety of vegetables, and melons were cultivated by many of the more established settlers. By the end of this period wheat bread was becoming more common on the average menu, and many of the established settlers had producing orchards. Sugar was also becoming more accessible and was more widely used, and consequently fruit preserves, homemade wines, and pastries must have been
more common in many homes.

Animal produce and corn were the most important food-stuffs among all classes throughout the first fifty years of the American immigration to Texas. Beef and milk products were probably more widely depended on by these Texans than by any other group of settlers in America before this time. Evidently vegetation of any kind, with, perhaps, the exception of corn, was never as important in the average diet as animal products which were the most available and were usually the easiest obtained, especially on the frontier and in the drier western areas.

Although meats, dairy products, grain, and probably eggs constituted the major part of the Texan's diet during this period, upon considering the available food supply which could have rounded out a well balanced diet for the average settler, and the American pioneer's inclination to make use of most available food supplies when necessary, there is little doubt that the majority of the settlers in Texas were well fed. Most of Texas seems to have been truly a "land of milk and honey."
APPRAISAL OF THE MATERIALS USED

It is doubtful that the meals described by many of the travelers in Texas represented the average menu in the average home; for it is quite possible that a poor group of settlers settled along main roadways in order to take advantage of travelers' needs, and probably they were not too much concerned about the service rendered, as some of the accounts indicate. Some of the travelers were traveling during the winter when the diet was naturally limited and give the impression in their writings that the meals they received were always representative of the Texan diet.

Possibly many travelers would ride up to a house unexpectedly and request a meal and whatever was already prepared to cook was put on the table. It would have taken too much time to go out into the garden and gather greens, beans, peas, or other vegetables, then prepare and cook them. It would also take a longer time to cook dried vegetables or beef, or fresh beef from tough range cattle than it would to fry bacon and fresh pork. Houses frequented by travelers would understandably keep on hand less perishable food items, and perhaps the shortage of help in the
kitchen made them inclined to serve foods that required the least preparation.

Even accounts written or dictated by the pioneers themselves are possibly not representative of the average pioneer, and therefore, may not portray a true picture of the normal living conditions of the majority of people in Texas at that time. The average person seldom keeps a diary or writes his memoirs or reminiscences. Also, some embellishment of facts must be allowed for in these personal accounts. As most of us know, the usual is seldom specifically recalled or written about or even noticed; it is the unusual which is most vivid in the mind when recalling the past or when recording in a diary. This applies to the contemporary accounts of travelers as well as to the personal accounts of the settlers.

The pioneers seldom describe a meal in their reminiscences. Most of them simply recall the staples which were unusually abundant or absent. Few settlers or travelers specifically mention vegetables on the menu, but this does not necessarily mean that they were not served, especially during the spring and summer. The staples were served the year round. It is possible that travelers, who had noticed
the great dependence on meat and corn bread during the winter, were so impressed at seeing these items remain the staples in the diet that they mentioned them to the exclusion of other foods on the table. It seems probable that Europeans, who were unaccustomed to such abundance of meat as found in Texas and who were not well acquainted with the use of corn bread, would notice the widespread use of these items among the Americans. Most Europeans were evidently more dependent on vegetables and wheat and consequently were probably inclined to over-emphasize the shortage of vegetables and wheat bread in the diet of many Americans.

Abundant staples would naturally be mentioned by the settlers; but vegetables, which were neither necessities nor uncommon, were seldom mentioned by them. Nevertheless, most of the settlers' accounts mention vegetable gardens.

The writer's purpose must also be considered in evaluating the truth of his material. Most of the contemporary accounts were written as guides for immigrants, and they probably represented some possibilities as actual facts. The authors did not always write about what they themselves had seen, but often repeated what they had heard or what they considered probable. Most of the guides give so nearly the
same information that one must conclude that they either consulted the same sources, or that the later writers consulted the writings of the earlier writers, or that they actually found nearly the same conditions to write about.

Mary Austin Holley, Dr. Joseph E. Field, Reverend Chester Newell, the anonymous author of *Emigrant's Guide,* and William Kennedy all give basically the same information as to the natural and cultivated food supply and agricultural possibilities of Texas during the 1830's, and the German authors, Prince Carl Solms-Braunfels, Dr. Ferdinand Roemer, and Viktor Bracht give substantially the same information for the 1840's. Prince Carl Solms-Braunfels, whose standards were so different from those of the Americans, was very severe in his criticism of their diet and manners. Viktor Bracht found them to be of the bent of mind which always puts first things first. He, like Solms-Braunfels, tended to generalize too much when he said that the Americans were content when they had milk, coffee, corn bread, and bacon, chewing tobacco, and whiskey; for even he admitted finding orchards and gardens in the older colonies.

It is natural that Frederick Law Olmsted would write a rather unfavorable account of the Texans in the late 1850's,
because the purpose of his trip seems to have been to prove that slavery caused a degenerate condition among the poor white people of the South, and it is not at all unusual for a man in his position to observe most astutely those things which seem to prove his point to the exclusion of those which do not. Also, he was traveling through most of Texas during the winter. He found the Texans rather inhospitable, but it seems that hospitality is quite often a reflection of the attitude of the receiver. Also immigration was extremely heavy during the period in which he was traveling, and many of the immigrants followed about the same route he took. The settlers along the way must have been approached by a great many of these travelers for food, and, of course, it became necessary to charge something for the meals.

An anonymous traveler in Texas in 1831, traveling between Brazoria and San Felipe, found that this area was pretty well settled with houses kept as regular inns. He seemed happy to be relieved of the uncertainty of knowing whether or not to offer pay for food and lodging. He found the inns always well supplied with various and excellent food—fresh bread, venison, wild turkey, beef, fowls, eggs,
milk, and good coffee; and usually the beds were comfortable. Of course, the game was not plentiful enough to be served very often in East Texas at the time of Olmsted's trip, and immigration through East Texas was much greater than any other route.

Rosa Kleberg found the early American settlers very kind and hospitable; they would receive guest with "genuine pleasure, and share the last piece of bread."

The authenticity of W. B. Dewees' Letters from an Early Settler of Texas has been questioned, but the excerpts I have used in my paper are consistent with other sources which I have consulted, with the exception of one letter dated December 1, 1823, in which he says that the game has left that part of the country. The drought and excessive hunting could have caused many of the animals to leave his immediate vicinity. Other sources also tell of a slight scarcity of game at this time and say that the deer were lean.


2. Rosa Kleberg, "Some of My Early Experiences in Texas," translated from German by Rudolph Kleberg, Jr., Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, I (1897-1898), 299.
Even with the probable errors in some of the accounts consulted, there is enough consistency in the descriptions of the menus, the cultivated crops, and the natural food supply found in the prairies and forest to lead to the conclusion that the Texas pioneers were probably the best-fed pioneers since the settling of the Kentucky territory.

I have not tried to draw any conclusions as to the results or influences of the food supply and dietary habits upon the development of any particular physical, mental, or personality traits, or even the perspective of Texans; but many scientists and psychologists of today claim that the food supply and the food one eats affects his whole being—physically, intellectually, and emotionally; and historians and educators point out that the food supply has always played a major role in the cultural advancement of all peoples. All I have tried to do in this paper is make a survey of the food supply and dietary customs mostly as recorded in the memoirs, reminiscences, letters, and diaries of the Texas pioneers themselves, contemporary accounts written as guides for immigrants, and travel accounts and diaries written by persons who visited Texas during the period between 1821 and 1870. I have also consulted a number of Texas histories as shown in the bibliography.
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The following articles from the Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, the Southwestern Historical Quarterly, and the Frontier Times are personal accounts written or dictated by Texas pioneers or travelers in Texas during the first fifty years after the beginning of the American migration to Texas. They contain reminiscences, letters, diaries, and memoirs. Some of the articles contain excerpts from personal accounts. Almost all of them contain useful material illustrating the living conditions of this period. Especially helpful were the "Reminiscences of C. C. Cox," J. H. Ruykendall's "Reminiscences of Early Texans," "The Reminiscences of Mrs. Dilue Harris," Harriet Smith's "Diary of Adolphus Sterne," Andrew Davis's "Folk Life in Early Texas," and Rosalind Langston's "The Life of Colonel R. T. Milner." Most of these accounts give valuable information as to the staples in the average diet and some indication as to the general food supply.


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II. Secondary Material

A. Periodical Articles


B. Books


3. Crockett, George Louis, Two Centuries in East Texas. Dallas, 1932. A history of San Augustine County and surrounding territory from 1685 to the present. Useful in determining the food supply on the frontier of East Texas.


8. Looscan, Adele B., Harris County, 1822-1845. Austin, Texas, 1914. Gives indications as to the cultural level of some of the Texans.


12. Richardson, Rupert Norval, Texas The Lone Star State. New York, 1943. Useful in determining the accessibility of various areas.


15. Woolen, Dudley G., A Complete History of Texas. Dallas, 1899. Indicates the nature of the pioneers' diet in the vicinity of Austin's colony.