

July 19th 1913

BRIEF HISTORY OF CITY OF GALVESTON

EARLY INHABITANTS RECOGNIZED GALVESTON AS A PORT OF ENTRY.

TWO RIVAL SETTLEMENTS

Early Shipping Limited and Excessive Rates Were Charged—Charges by Pilots of Port.

BY J. E. KING.

The city of Galveston was incorporated by an act of the congress of the republic of Texas passed early in 1839 and approved by President Sam Houston. An election was held and a set of city officials, consisting of mayor, recorder, treasurer and nine aldermen, elected. This city council met and elected other city officials and set the machinery of the city government in motion. From April 19, 1839, the date of the first city council meeting, to the present the wheels of the city government have not stopped. Administration has followed administration, each striving to outdo its predecessors in work for the up-building of the city. Many things have been accomplished, ordinances adopted, resolutions passed, improvements undertaken and completed, bonds voted and money spent. It would take volumes to tell in detail all this work. The present series of articles is not intended to be a comprehensive story of the growth of the city of Galveston, but instead a brief review of the principal steps in that growth which at times has been remarkable and at other times slow. This series of articles will tell of this growth by merely hitting the high places, as it were. Only those undertakings and accomplishments of the city officials and patriotic citizens that stand out prominently will be discussed.

In a preceding article the first election of city and county officials has been told, together with names of these officials. These were elected in 1839, at a time when Galveston was a town of not more than two or three hundred inhabitants, a mere village that was striving for recognition among the growing towns of a struggling young republic. These officials were, for the most part, patriotic citizens, men who had cast their fortunes in the new town and were willing to devote their best energies to building a city which the founders held as their ideal.

Early Port of Galveston.

Even in these early days Galveston was a port, the most important port, perhaps, on the gulf coast outside of New Orleans. It was the port of entry for the republic of Texas. The men who had settled in Galveston looked forward to the time when the city would become a great port, not the great port that now ranks second only to New York in the value of her foreign business, but a port that would accommodate the business of the republic of Texas. Even the greatest idealist in those days never dreamed of Galveston as she now is. In those days there was a depth of nine and one-half feet of water on the inner bar and a depth of twelve feet on the outer bar. These depths, however, were sufficient to accommodate the vessels that came into this port. The great ocean liners that now draw thirty feet and more were unknown and undreamed of. The land-locked harbor afforded in what is now termed Bolivar Roads and Galveston Bay was known as a haven for vessels in time of rough weather, and it was known that some day a great harbor must be developed.

Early Pilot Charges.

Even in those days pilots were not unknown, and charges for piloting vessels into and out of the harbor were assessed against the vessels. In 1838 is found the first published schedule of pilots' charges in the tariff posted by Captain George Simpson on Aug. 8. These charges are as follows: "All vessels drawing 6 feet and under, \$2.50 per foot; all vessels drawing 7½ feet and under, \$2.87½ per foot; all vessels drawing 8 feet and under, \$3 per foot; all vessels drawing 8½ feet and under, \$3.25 per foot; all vessels drawing 9 feet and under, \$3.50 per foot; all vessels drawing 9½ feet and under, \$3.75 per foot; all vessels drawing 10 feet and under, \$4 per foot; all vessels drawing 10½ feet and under, \$4.12½ per foot; all vessels drawing 11 feet and under, \$4.25 per foot; all vessels drawing 11½ feet and under, \$4.37½ per foot; all vessels drawing 12 feet and under, \$4.50 per foot."

The congress of the republic of Texas passed an act which was approved by President Houston on May 23, 1838, authorizing the collectors of customs at the various ports to appoint and control pilots, inspect boats and see that pilots performed their duties in accordance with the law. Each pilot was required to give bond in the sum of \$5,000 for the faithful performance of his duty. He was required to keep plenty of small boats for boarding purposes, to board all vessels coming to the harbor and pilot them promptly and safely to their moorings. Among the pilots at the port of Galveston at this time and up to 1850 were: Hezekiah Wilson, Thomas H. Chubb, Luke A. Falvel, L. C. Walters, Rufus Jameson, Thomas B. King, Chas. Fowler, L. Hellmers and John Davidson. There was great rivalry among the pilots for the business and pilot boats cruised sometimes many miles to sea to meet incoming vessels and pilot them to their moorings within the harbor.

Vessels Wrecked in 1837.

In connection with the water front it is not out of place to mention at this time the storm of 1837, which drove the waters of the gulf over the island and wrecked a number of vessels. The German brig Elbe, which, as has been mentioned in a preceding article, served as a city prison for a number of years, was driven ashore during this storm. Other vessels that were wrecked at this time were: Brigs Perseverance, Jane and Elie; schooners Select, Henry, Star, Lady of the Lake, Correo and Tom Toby. The latter vessel had been a privateer during the Texas revolution. The schooner Brutus was also damaged, but not wrecked.

Even as early as 1834 steamboats were plying in Texas waters, although at that time Galveston as a town was unknown. The steamboat Sabine was one of these vessels, which was engaged in plying between New Orleans and Matagorda and Anahuac. An incident happened in December, 1834, which shows what Galveston Island was at that time and also shows to what extent steamboats and other vessels were then engaged in plying in gulf waters. The Sabine left New Orleans on Dec. 22, 1834, for the Texas coast with a party of colonists and their plunder on board. The Sabine was wrecked off Galveston Island and went to the bottom. The party of colonists, with a large part of their plunder, reached the island in safety. The late R. J. Kleberg, father of M. E. Kleberg of Galveston, was one of the party. According to his statements, afterward published, the island at that time was little more than a wilderness. There remained on the island for three days when the steamer Ocean, from New Orleans, hove in sight and answering their signal of distress sent a boat ashore. This steamer took several of the party on board but could not take all. Mr. Kleberg went along as agent for the members of the party left on the island, expecting to charter a vessel and return for them. He reports that he was unable to procure a boat at Matagorda, Valasco or Anahuac. Hearing that a vessel was at San Felipe which could be chartered he walked to that place. Here he found a steamboat, but as the owner

asked \$1,000 for its charter he did not make a deal with him. These incidents show the scarcity of vessels in Galveston Bay waters as early as 1834.

First Texas-Built Steamer.

One of the first steamboats to be built in Texas was the Laffitte, built by Captain Follett. The Laffitte was built on the Brazos River near Quintana for McKinney & Williams, merchants of Galveston, and made her first trip in the early part of 1841. On her first visit to Galveston the citizens presented her captain, James E. Haviland, with a handsome silver trumpet. This vessel was engaged in trade between Galveston, Sabine Pass and Velasco.

One of the early steamboats brought to Galveston to enter the Galveston-Houston trade was the Warsaw. After a few trials this vessel was found too large to navigate the Buffalo Bayou successfully and she was beached at the foot of Seventeenth street and made into a hotel. The following advertisement appeared in the Commercial Intelligence under date of Jan. 12, 1839:

"The fine, large and commodious steamer Warsaw, being too large for the profitable navigation of Buffalo Bayou, has been permanently laid up at Galveston Island and converted into a receiving ship for goods and merchandise which will be forwarded or kept on storage by an agent for that purpose. Her accommodations being spacious, she will be converted into a marine hotel, where everything that land and sea can furnish will be served. A few state-rooms for families and ladies, a fine yawl, row and sailboats will be kept for fishing and sailing parties. Arrangements will be made for comfortable sea bathing for ladies and gentlemen, and no pains spared to render the establishment a desirable one for the man of business or pleasure."

One of the earliest advertisements relating to the Galveston-Houston river trade appeared in the Houston Telegraph and Texas Register under date of April 4, 1837. In this advertisement it was stated that the steamer Leonidas, Captain Hanna, would ply regularly between Galveston and Houston, making trips once each week, and carrying both freight and passengers. The regular passenger fare was \$7 and it usually required from fifty to sixty hours to make the trip. There were numerous vessels engaged in this trade and trade between Galveston and other Texas coast points within a few years after this. Under active competition fares and freight rates were materially reduced. As an example the fare between Houston and Galveston was reduced to \$5.

Election Contest of 1840.

In 1840 occurred the election on the adoption of the new city charter. There were two parties, each of which put a ticket in the field. From June to August of that year both tickets with mayor and other officials were claiming victory and it was hard to tell who was mayor. The two men who claimed the office were John M. Allen, who was elected the year before and had served one year as the first mayor of Galveston, and John H. Walton. The new city charter triumphed and John H. Walton and his set of city officials were duly declared in office. They served till March, 1841. This set of city officials were as follows: John H. Walton, mayor; James M. McKnight, recorder; William Fields, treasurer; Josh C. Shaw, Lent M. Hitchcock, B. A. Shepherd, Peter J. Menard, W. B. Nichols, S. W. Tichenor, Michael See-ligson, John D. Groesbeck and John S. Sydnor, aldermen; George Haswell, secretary; Leander Westcott, marshal; J. Seldon, harbor master.

In the city election held in June, 1841, John M. Allen was again elected mayor. The aldermen chosen at this election were: Oscar Farish, Lent M. Hitchcock, Stephen Kirkland, James Foulhouse, H. M. Hannay, A. J. Cody, Jacob L. Briggs, S. W. Tichenor and W. B. Nichols. Other officers were: John S. Jones, secretary; Leander Westcott, marshal; J. M. Branham, treasurer; Lent M. Hitchcock, harbor master.

Rise and Fall of "Sac-a-Rap."

The first settlements on Galveston Island after the present city of Galveston had been founded were made chiefly by Northern people, many of whom were from Maine. These people settled on the extreme eastern end of the island, while other settlements grew up farther to the westward. The eastern settlements were about where the Sealy Hospital and St. Mary's Infirmary now are and the section of flats to the eastward of the seawall. This eastern settlement was called by the Maine people Saccharappa, from a small town of this name near Portland, Maine. There grew considerable rivalry between these two settlements, the eastern settlement being given the name locally of "Sac-a-rap."

At first "Sac-a-rap" was the most important part of the city of Galveston and here was projected the first wharf, which was never completed. The first piling ever driven into the bottom of Galveston Bay was driven here. One of the first hotels to be conducted was also here, that under the management of John N. Reed and Arnold Lashley. The first court sat in "Sac-a-rap." The first conviction and the first legal execution ever had on the island was had in this part of the city. This was of the negro, Henry Forbes, who after trial on charges of burglary and prison breaking, both capital crimes, was sentenced to hang and was executed on Nov. 13, 1838.

"Sac-a-rap" also is claimed to have been the birthplace of the first white male child born on Galveston Island. This was the birth of the late Thomas H. Edgar of Galveston, who died only a few years ago. Mr. Edgar was born on June 27, 1837, in "Sac-a-rap." His father was Alexander Edgar, who was one of the first settlers in Austin's colony. After serving through the Texas revolution he came to Galveston to cast his fortunes with the new city and seaport of the republic.

With the completion of McKinney & Williams' wharf at the foot of Twenty-first street in 1840 the death knell of "Sac-a-rap" was sounded and that part of the city gradually moved westward and the two settlements combined.

OLD TELEGRAPH INSTRUMENT

J. J. Ghegan Has Apparatus Made for Professor S. F. B. Morse—Set Attracts Wide Attention.

New York.—One of the oldest sets of telegraph instruments, made for Professor Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor has recently come into the possession of J. J. Ghegan, president of the J. H. Bunnell Company of New York. The set consisting of a key, sounder, relay and battery, was made by C. T. and J. N. Chester of New York for Professor Morse, and they are attracting wide attention among electrical engineers and collectors of relics.

The battery, which is of the plunging type, differs little from the similar contrivances of today in principle, and in workmanship, compactness and finish. It yields to none of the most improved type of battery. There are six tiny jars to the battery, which is extremely small and compact. Into the jars zinc and carbon electrodes are lowered by means of a frame guided by upright brass posts at the ends of the battery rack. When in use the life of the battery is prolonged by lifting the electrodes out of the exciting fluid.

On top of the lifting rack are switches which permit the cutting out of any number of the six cells. So compact is the battery that the overall dimensions are only seven inches in length and three inches in height. The base is a zinc plate and the cell guards and lifting rack are of hard rubber. The key is of the straight lever pattern and the sounder is almost identical with the modern sounder, except that the armature lever being made in the form of a right angle instead of being straight as in the modern instrument. The stop on the down stroke is a post located in front of the magnets, and the back is a similar post behind the magnets. The magnets are encased in polished hard rubber shells and the base is made of the same material.

The relay, too, much resembles the present day instrument. The magnetic cores are of the horseshoe shape and are movable within the coils. The instruments are inclosed in a Morocco leather case lined with plush, and a plate on the cover is engraved with the words, "Made for Professor Morse by C. T. and J. M. N. Chester." The outfit was used by the inventor in his laboratory experiments.

counter 23916

1913. *Galveston News of Jan 12/13* *E. von Rosenberg*

BRIEF HISTORY OF CITY OF GALVESTON

SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF MICHEL B. MENARD, THE FOUNDER OF GALVESTON.

HE CAME TO TEXAS IN 1833

**A Man of Great Influence, He Used This
in Keeping the Indians Quiet Dur-
ing the Texas Revolution.**

(BY J. E. KING.)

It is proper at this stage of this historical review of the growth and development of the city of Galveston to turn aside and give a short sketch of the founder of the city, if any one man can be given the title of "Founder of the City of Galveston." When the lives and work of the men who have done much in the building and development of the city are considered there is none that stands out more prominently than Michel B. Menard, the man who conceived the idea of purchasing a tract of land on the eastern end of the island and building thereon a city. This man had the foresight to see that here was destined to grow up the principal seaport of the great stretch of country that lay to the northward and westward, and laid the foundation of a city that should accommodate the shipping of the port that must grow up. A brief sketch of his life and career in Texas will be given in this article.

In reading of his life and work it is noted that in all the older documents the name is spelled Michael B. Menard, but on the shaft which marks his grave in the Catholic Cemetery it is spelled Michel B. Menard. It is not known which spelling is correct, but it is presumed that this latter is preferred.

Born in Canada.

Michel Branamour Menard was born in Canada in the little village of La Prairie, near Montreal, on Dec. 5, 1805. He was of French parentage, and throughout his life exhibited French characteristics in manner of speech, gesture, accent and in courtesy toward womankind. According to historians who have sketched his life, at the age of 16 years he engaged in fur trading in the Northwest, being in the employ of an American company with headquarters at Detroit. He was with this company for several years, but at the age of 19 years went to Kaskaskia, Ill., then a flourishing trading post, where his uncle, Colonel Pierre Menard, first lieutenant governor of that state, resided. His uncle was engaged in fur trading and young Menard entered his employ, where he remained for a number of years. His duties took him among many of the western Indian tribes. While among these tribes he formed a great attachment to the freedom of the Indian life and decided to adopt it. He decided to remain among the western tribes for the rest of his life. He was elected chief of one of the principal tribes of the Shawnees, which station he held for several years. Finally, however, he grew tired of the Indian life and gave it up. His influence while among the Indians was very great, not only with the tribe over which he was chief, but over all other tribes to whom he was known. His truthfulness, honor and great courage placed him high in their regard and he was held almost as a superhuman being.

Came to Texas in 1833.

After leaving the Indians he drifted with the tide of immigration toward Texas, of which he had heard much. It was in 1832 or 1833 that he landed at Nacogdoches, where he first settled. Here he carried on his fur trading business with the Mexicans and Indians, being very successful in his venture.

After a year or more he became interested in a sawmill and trading post, which he and two associates, Thomas F. McKinney and Samuel M. Williams, afterwards interested with him in his Galveston project, established on a creek that now bears his name, a picturesque stream that runs up into the central portion of Polk County. For building the sawmill and establishing a trading post, Menard and associates received a grant of six leagues of land from the Mexican government. He induced several of his relatives to come to Texas from Canada and various points in the north, and these were associated with him in his various ventures. His venture in the sawmill and trading post on Menard Creek was very successful financially and he made considerable money. The mill was burned during the Texas revolution, but was rebuilt at the close of the war, and, it is said, some of the timbers and foundation work of the structure may be seen today.

Plans to Found Galveston.

During this time he had been attracted to the island of Galveston and had seen the possibilities of a great city and port there. He began in 1834 to make plans for locating a grant of land and founding a city. He secured a grant of one league and one labor of land from James B. Woods, the alcalde of the jurisdiction of Liberty, as has been outlined in the previous article of this series, and set to work toward laying out a town and disposing of town lots. Later, under the republic of Texas, he and his associates had this title confirmed on the payment of \$50,000 for whatever right and title the republic of Texas had in the land in question.

After coming back to Texas he took an active part in everything for the upbuilding of his adopted country. He was a member of the convention that framed the declaration of independence of the republic of Texas and played an important part in the Texas revolution. When the revolution broke out the Mexicans endeavored to incite the Indian tribes on the northwestern frontier to overrun and devastate the country. At the solicitation of the Texas government, Menard went among them and by his personal exertion and knowledge of Indians and Indian ways, prevented an invasion and kept them quiet during the revolution. His life among the tribes of the northwest had excellently fitted him for this work and it is largely due to him, perhaps, that the Indians did not rise up and raid and devastate the country during the revolution to an extent that would have made the success of the Texans impossible.

Member of Texas Congress.

After coming to Galveston Colonel Menard was chosen to represent the county of Galveston in the congress of the republic of Texas, and in 1839 was the author and strong advocate of the system of finance that was adopted at the next session of the congress. This system was for the issuance of exchequer bills. By the issuance of these bills, a revenue for the young republic was provided and the country saved from bankruptcy.

Colonel Menard built for himself a residence in the western portion of the city, and here he lived in quiet and peace with his family. The Menard home was noted for its hospitality. The doors were never closed against those who desired shelter. The home was also the scene of many social functions. The first masquerade ball ever given in Galveston was here.

Colonel Menard was married four times. His first wife was Miss Diana Le Clere, daughter of the late T. S. Le Clere of Galveston. This wife died in 1833 while on board a sailing vessel en route from New Orleans to Anahuac, the town at the head of Galveston Bay that had been founded by the Mexicans some years previous and was at that time the port of entry for the entire Galveston Bay waters. His second wife was Miss Adeline Maxwell of Kaskaskia, Ill., who died shortly after the marriage. The third wife was a widow of St. Louis, whose name is not learned. She, too, did not live long after the marriage. The fourth and last wife was a Mrs. Bass of Galveston. This wife outlived Colonel Menard a number of years, and later married Colonel J. S. Thrasher of Galveston. To this last marriage of

Colonel Menard there was born one son, Doswell Menard, who lived to manhood and died in Galveston. The widow Bass had two daughters, Helen and Clara, by her first marriage. These girls were adopted by Colonel Menard and bore his name to their marriage.

Died Sept. 2, 1856.

Colonel Menard died on Sept. 2, 1856, at his home in the western portion of the city. He had lived long enough in Galveston that the people had learned his true worth, and his demise was mourned by the entire city. His funeral took place from St. Mary's Cathedral with interment in the Catholic Cemetery. Almost the entire population of the city followed the remains to their last resting place and paid tribute to the founder of the city of Galveston.

On the shaft that now marks his last resting place is the inscription:

MICHEL B. MENARD.
BORN IN
CANADA.
Dec. 5, 1805.
Died in
GALVESTON,
Sept. 2, 1856.

After a life illustrated by public and private virtues, he rests in the country whose infancy he adopted and in the city which he founded. His deeds are recorded in the history of this state. His memory is embalmed in the hearts of his family and friends. Requiescat in Pace.

The following extract from the tribute published in Galveston papers at the time of his death fittingly sums the life and virtues of Colonel Michel B. Menard, founder of the city of Galveston:

Tribute of the Press.

"When the Texas revolution broke out the Mexicans endeavored to incite the Indian tribes on the northwestern frontier to overrun and devastate the country. At the solicitation of the Texas government Colonel Menard went among them, and by his personal exertions prevented an invasion and kept them quiet. He was a member of the convention which declared the independence of Texas and framed the constitution of the republic of Texas. In 1839 he was a member of congress from Galveston County and was the author and powerful advocate of the system of finance by the issue of exchequer bills, which, failing of passage at that session, was recommended by President Houston at the next and adopted at the time when the country was flooded with "red backs" at a mere nominal value, and the credit entirely gone. This provided a revenue and saved the country from bankruptcy. He was emphatically the founder of Galveston, and from that day to the time of his death was identified with every step in the progress of the city. Of enlarged public spirit and the truest benevolence, there was no enterprise which did not receive his helping hand. Colonel Menard was essentially a man of the people and possessed a mind of great originality and vigor. He was a strong, direct and practical thinker. He went to the inner fact of things and expressed himself in the most sententious, nervous and exact language. His conversation was amusing and agreeable, abundant in anecdote, influenced by keen wit, and rendered especially striking by his French gesture and accent. He was a powerful man, being over six feet in height, and often told with great glee of how, when a youth in the Northwest, he conquered the bully of all voyageurs at the trading post who had sought to impose on him.

County 23911

28.

Newspaper clippings from Gal-
veston News. Jan. 9 & 13, 1913,

By Livingston Co

Counter 23912