



Map of Texas 1846 – Insert: Lord George H. Gordon, the Earl of Aberdeen (Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh)

**From William Kennedy, Her Majesty's Consul at Galveston,  
to Lord George H. Gordon, the Earl of Aberdeen, K. T.  
Dispatch No. 21, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1844.<sup>1</sup>**

My Lord,

When I entered upon the duties of my office, I had in contemplation to include in my reports to Her Majesty's Government occasional notices of the emigration to this country, with especial reference to that portion of it, which might emanate from the United Kingdom. Of Europeans, however, the whole number introduced into Texas since the beginning of the year 1843 (owing probably to the unadjusted relations between Mexico and this Republic) has not been so considerable as to afford much material for suggestion, or remark. It has, at the same time, been large enough to show that persons intending to voyage hither across the Atlantic require to be furnished with some preparatory counsel.

In years preceding 1843, several vessels fitted up for and conveying British emigrants arrived at Galveston, but, from the commencement of that year to the present time, no ship containing a dozen of British families has entered this port. Nearly all the European emigrants within the latter period - which may amount to between six and 700 - have been supplied by France and Germany.

Among the European settlers, the Germans have the reputation of being the most successful. They are generally laborious, persevering and eager to accumulate - orderly for the most part - and they keep well together. They have formed thriving communities at different points of the interior, and they constitute a considerable proportion of the trading and working population of the towns adjacent to the coast. In common with the French, they become market gardeners. And they divide with the Irish the profits of drayage and cartage, which are pretty large during the business season.

The Irish settlers in Galveston are, with few exceptions, Catholics, and have the benefit of an excellent superintendent and adviser in the bishop of that faith, M. Odin. They conduct themselves quietly as a class, and seem healthy, contented and well doing. Those who are married and residents of two or three years' standing, usually have an independent house and lot, their own horse and dray, and frequently one or more cows. The wives of the poorer sort assist in washing and housework.

Of the European immigrants, the French evince the least aptitude for the situation in which they are placed. They require to be moved in companies and led, directed and superintended, until they feel at home upon the soil. A Frenchman left to himself in an insulated settlement, will soon become barbarized.

It is greatly to be wished that all the Europeans who may emigrate to Texas should be instructed, previously to taking the final step, respecting the arrangements proper to be made - the provision necessary to smooth their way to success - the nature and extent of unavoidable inconveniences, hardships or privations - the amount of present sacrifice and prospective advantage - the road to be pursued and the snares to be avoided. For lack of honest guidance and correct information, persons laudably desirous of improving their condition have been thrown upon these shores only to encounter disappointment and despondency - to learn, all too late, from sad experience, how little the sufferings of their fellows deter men from practicing upon ignorance and credulity for the sake of gain.

I have noted the following causes of disappointment and distress among the European immigrants:

1. Purchase of spurious land titles from unprincipled adventures.
2. Emigration at an advanced age and with debilitated constitutions.
3. Arrival here at an improper season of the year.
4. Selection of settlement in unhealthy situations, and exposure to the sun.
5. Want of capital.

It is most extraordinary that people can be so foolish as to purchase titles to land in a country they never saw, from individuals of whom they know nothing, and for whose good faith, they have no satisfactory guarantee. Such has been the case, however, and British settlers have repeatedly complained of having been cheated by vendors of Texas land titles in England, which titles they found to be utterly worthless when they came to enter upon possession. On this point it may be generally laid down that insulated families ought to abstain from the purchase of lands until they arrive in Texas. Under no circumstance, should a foreign holder of land titles be treated with, unless he is prepared to show, by unquestionable British references, that his titles are genuine, and that he is deserving of trust. Even when emigrants reach this country it is requisite that they should proceed with caution and circumspection. They ought to husband their means, and after carefully examining in what section of the Republic they are most likely to find the soil best suited to European farming, united to the advantages of a market for produce and the retention of health, they ought to journey thither, and, after due deliberation, choose their ground, having a vigilant eye to the validity of the title, lest, at the very outset, they fall into the abyss of litigation. The vast extent of unoccupied land precludes the necessity of a precipitate choice. Immigrants, if they think proper, may remain a year without fixing upon

a permanent settlement, as now, and for some time to come, the use of tillage and pasture land may be had, rent free, for that or a still longer period.

It is needless to expatiate on the unfitness of the old and the feeble for distant colonization. Without adverting to other considerations, the climate of the South, however, genial and salubrious in certain localities, must, from its very novelty, be more or less trying to weakness and age. The habits of previous life ought, besides, to sit lightly on the immigrant, to enable him to adapt himself to a sphere of action entirely new - demanding altered modes of labor, variations in food and clothing, and precautions for the preservation of health, which are too apt to be regarded by the inexperienced as unnecessary restraints.

Allowing the amplest latitude consistent with prudence, the season of shipment from Europe, for parties intending to cultivate land in Texas, lies between the first of August and the first of February. Persons who look forward to constructing dwellings and putting in a seasonable crop, ought not, in justice to themselves, or to the country, to arrive here later than November. The earlier they are on the spot, in that month the better. From the first of November to the first of June, there is no danger, with ordinary care, of suffering from local diseases, while the "colds", so productive of indisposition during the English winter, are unknown. The interval between November and summer is calculated to strengthen the fortitude of the stranger, to prepare him for the season of continuous heat, to initiate him in the maxims and usages of the older residents and to make him practically acquainted with the most approved plants of housekeeping and husbandry. The immigrant who lands at Galveston between the first of June and the first of October, perils his health and wastes his resources. The Brig *Weser* from Bremen entered this port on the 4th of July, having 96 emigrants on board. The yellow fever, introduced from Veracruz by the US War steamer *Poinsett*, had attacked the inhabitants of the town. Huddled up wherever they could procure lodging, and destitute of suitable attendance, which local charity was unable to provide, a large proportion of the newly arrived emigrants died of the disease - an expenditure of human life wholly gratuitous - the result of ignorance and misdirection.

The selection of a healthy situation for settlement is a point of primary importance, inattention to which has been followed by calamitous consequences.

Immigrants shrewd enough in worldly matters, but unacquainted with a Southern soil and climate, and the incidents of settlement, so well known on this side of the Atlantic, are apt to be tempted by the opportunity of buying, for a comparatively trifling amount of money, lands lying on, or near, the borders of a navigable river. Now, these lands may be really cheap, - even in this land abounding country - their fertility may not have been exaggerated, their pasturage may be unlimited, the wood unfailing - they may offer a most desirable investment for the planter of sugar and cotton - but, to the unacclimated European, their occupation is always perilous and often fatal. Swollen by the autumn and winter rains, they overflow their banks - a large expanse of the exuberant alluvion becomes the bed of their redundant waters, which receive constant accessions of rank and decaying vegetation - exhalations arise from the marshy surface - "intermittent", by repeated assaults, wear down the frame, or the rapid march of congestive fever subdues the powers of life. These are the dangers not all unknown in the Northern divisions of this continent, which beset the European who piles his log house on the margin of a forest girdled and periodically overflowing river of the South. Many a foreign settler in the United States as well as in Texas, in choosing such an abiding place, has doomed himself to an early grave.

Caution is too often given in vain to persons unacquainted with the effects of careless exposure to the summer sun. It is a frequent cause of sickness, for which, as for disease induced by intemperance, the sufferer has himself to blame.

Cultivation, drainage, and the clearing of the woods, will doubtless operate favorably on the districts unfriendly to the European constitution, but this is of no moment to the

immigrant, who, leaving these lands to the cultivators of tropical products, can find others far better suited to his native husbandry, in sections of the Republic of proved salubrity. With the exception of Galveston Island, and the more open and elevated tracts bordering the bay of the same name, Europeans, as a general rule, ought not to settle, within 150 miles of the coast, from the river Sabine to the river Colorado. But, in no part of the country lying between those two rivers (although not a few of them are already resident there) would I recommend my countrymen to establish themselves as agriculturists. The West is free from debilitating influences, and they should move westward as far as a prudent regard to safety from frontier troubles and annoyances will justify. From the river Colorado to the Nueces, the insalubrity of the coast rapidly decreases, until it disappears altogether at Corpus Christi. The Irish colony, planted on the Nueces in 1832, was both healthy and prosperous until broken up by the revolutionary War.

Wherever the British immigrants may resolve to abide, they ought to bear in mind that the sward they turn up has not been cultivated before, that the sun in Texas shines with Southern fervor, and that, if they are protected from the effects of their combined influence, they have little to apprehend on the score of health. Every climate has some draw back; the North has its pulmonary complaints and the South its bilious fevers.

Notwithstanding the low price of land, the farmer requires capital, and he will have much to struggle against unless he has sufficient to enable him to fence, stock and crop his land, and to maintain himself until the soil renders its first return. If frugal and industrious, and seconded by what Americans might call an "available" family, he may venture to start upon 200 pounds but double that amount would not be too much for preparatory outlay and incidental wants. A great saving is effected and an inspiring impulse communicated to the settler's endeavors, in consequence of the abundance of open land, fit for tillage, and the free range for stock, which may be enjoyed for years. The expense of clearing the forest is a burden from which the Texas husbandman escapes. By the richness of the thickly timbered river "bottoms" the *planter* is attracted, and there he lays out these fields for the growth of sugar, and cotton.

Farmers possessing the necessary capital, intelligence and energy are the only *class* to which Texas, as she is, offers the prospect of advantageous settlement. A small annual supply of mechanics will, for some time, be sufficient for the demand; the same may be said of agricultural laborers, unless they are attached to farming capitalists. The towns will absorb a limited number of useful domestic servants, at good wages. A mere subsistence can easily be obtained by any person capable of manual labor, and not wholly indisposed to exertion.

In addition to all other considerations, the individual who proposes to emigrate ought not only to examine whether the country to which he thinks of removing is fitted for him, but whether he is fitted for the country, and for the condition of a colonist. If he is unable to endure what, in older communities, would be deemed privations - if he is wanting in moral courage - if he cannot look hopefully to the future under temporary discouragement, he ought not to enter upon the life of a settler in the wilderness, however fair and fruitful that wilderness may be.

The sufferings to which emigrants from Continental Europe have been needlessly subjected induces me to observe that it would be a worthy and becoming service if their respective governments would supply their emigrating people with means of precise and accurate information, protect them from fraudulent speculators, and keep them paternally in view until they had made a lodgment on their adopted soil. Blighted expectation, sickness and bereavement by death are heavy and hard to bear among the friends and associations of home, but their pressure is increased a thousand fold when they are sustained among the unfamiliar faces and unwonted scenes of an alien land.