CZECH TEXANS: ETHNICITY AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY LAVACA COUNTY

By

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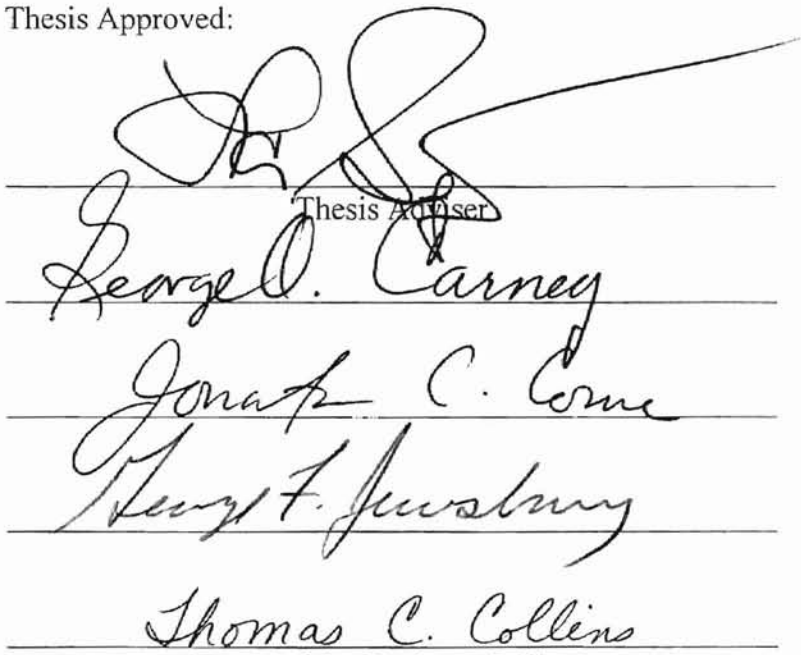

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GLOSSARY

Acculturation	- changes ethnic group makes to fit into a host society
Anglo	- vernacular term used to identify people who migrated to Texas from other parts of the United States before the Czechs arrived
Assimilation	- complete blending of ethnic group with host culture
Bohemia	- westernmost region of Czech lands which was historically a political unit
Bohemian	- term used in nineteenth century, especially in the United States, to designate person of Czech extraction; term used interchangeably with Czech.
Chain Migration	- concentration of immigration from the same area in the old homeland into the same area in the new, which causes heavy concentrations of a particular ethnic group, also called serial migration
Cottager	- term used to designate the middle class of peasants in Czech homeland that were described as skilled individuals who owning ten to twelve acres of land and produced enough grain to sell at market
Cultural-agricultural Island	- a cluster of a rural ethnic group in the United States - term used when studying the impact of ethnic traits on farming practices
Czech	- person of Slavic origins who settled in the region that is today the Czech Republic - one who speaks the Czech language
Czech Texan/Texas Czech	- terms used to identify people of Czech extraction who settled in Texas

Ethnic Group	- people of common ancestry and cultural tradition living as a minority in a larger society, or host culture - can live in original homeland or move to a new area
Ethnic Homeland	- region of a particular ethnic group that is substantially larger than an ethnic island; population exerts some political control, are attached to a region, and have special places that symbolize the homeland and the ethnic group.
Ethnic Island	- usually smaller than a county with a few hundred to a few thousand residents - usually rural where other members already reside thereby attracting new residents of same group - minimizes distances between members - facilitates acculturation and assimilation
Ethnicity	- feeling of group identity or belonging - can be based on race, religion, or national origin - sense of peoplehood
Freethinkers	- Czechs who discarded organized religion upon arriving in America as a result of the state ordered Catholicism in their homeland
Host Culture	- the larger society in which an ethnic group lives as a minority
Moravia	- central region of Czech lands which was historically a political unit
Preadaptation	- adaptive traits possessed by a group in advance of migration that gives them the ability to survive and a competitive advantage in colonizing the new environment
Silesia	- region located in southern Poland occupied by people of Czech extraction who originally were located in the northern parts of Bohemia and Moravia
Slavs	- people who migrated into Europe from the area that is now Russia, as well as Russians themselves - share the same language family, Slavic

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The effect of ethnicity and migration in America has become an integral part of world cultures. Since the 1970s studies concerning the landscape of cultural American identity has increased. The focus of this study examines the settlement of Czechs in Texas and the development of a new ethnicity which reflects developing traits and their impact on cotton production.

Problem Statement

The central thesis of this study is to determine that the Czechs were significant contributors to the success of the cotton culture from the time of their increased migration (the 1870s) into the central region of East Texas. This study attempts to discover if the Czechs of Lavaca County were less apt to enroll in the cotton allotment program in the 1930s. Then Lavaca County is compared to other counties to see if the Czechs remained in cotton cropping longer than surrounding counties. Czechs have been described as a conservative people who would have persevered in cotton production, convinced that success came from hard work and good agricultural practices not from a global market that made other counties more economically successful than Lavaca County.

The ethnicity of the Czechs is examined to determine various objectives. Was there a cultural environment in Texas that eased the settlement of Czechs? Did the Czechs discard aspects of their ethnicity that were detrimental to economic success? Can Czech settlements be described as cultural-agricultural islands? Are the Czech Texans or the Texas Czechs a unique ethnic group to the state of Texas? Lastly, is there an ethnic landscape or evidence of ethnicity in Lavaca County, Texas?

Methodology

Much of this study is descriptive, using primary and secondary sources. Other sources establish a framework, including the ones on Lavaca County. Field research, including interviews, reveal an ethnicity centered around agriculture. Of primary importance is numerical data drawn from the *U.S. Census, Texas Almanac,* and *Texas Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.* These data are mapped or graphed to illustrate ethnicity versus cotton production. A location quotient comparing a region of 42 counties to the study area of Lavaca County reveals the impact of Czechs on cotton production. The location quotient method also determines if Lavaca County ranked low in allotments compared to the region. Percent of change in acres in production between 1930 and 1960 was used to examine if the Czechs continued producing cotton longer than neighboring counties

Definitions and Limitations

Definitions

Ethnicity is defined by Jordan as "a strong feeling of group identity, of belonging" (1994). Ethnicity, explains Gordon, can be based on race, religion, or national origin or some combination of these factors or "a sense of peoplehood" (1964). Ethnic groups, states Jordan, are "people of common ancestry and cultural tradition, living as a minority in a larger society, or host culture." They can be living in their original homeland or move to a new area. Acculturation, according to Jordan, is the changing of an ethnic group to fit into the host society. Assimilation is the "complete blending with the host culture." Preadaptation is considered by Jordan to be "adaptive traits possessed by a group in advance of migration that gives them the ability to survive and a competitive advantage in colonizing the new environment" (1994). This pertains to the Czechs who had never

grown cotton and immigrated to an environment alien to their homeland but settled successfully into Texas.

Ethnic islands, which pertain to this study, are found throughout the United States. Usually smaller than a county, these ethnic farming communities usually contain anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand of a particular ethnic group (Jordan 1994). The first scholar to use the term ethnic islands was Ellen Churchill Semple (1911). Her definition varied slightly, for she was referring to pockets of settlements that were outposts in frontier areas in contrast to areas of continuous settlement. The Czechs of Lavaca County fit the former definition. Ethnic homelands differ from islands in size of population and area; homelands are the larger of the two. The people of the ethnic homeland exert some political control, are attached to a region, and have special places that symbolize the homeland and the ethnic group (Jordan 1994). "Cultural-agricultural islands" is a phrase coined by Kollmorgen in his early works on ethnic groups in the United States and their impact on farming practices (1943).

The method of migration used by the Czechs of Texas was chain or serial. Information on a new area filtered back to the origin point of a particular ethnic group. Usually in the form of letters, prospective emigrants would be attracted and would follow their predecessors to the same locale thus causing high concentrations of a ethnic group. Such was the case with the Czechs, letters and periodicals promoted Texas as an ideal region for settlement (Nugent 1993).

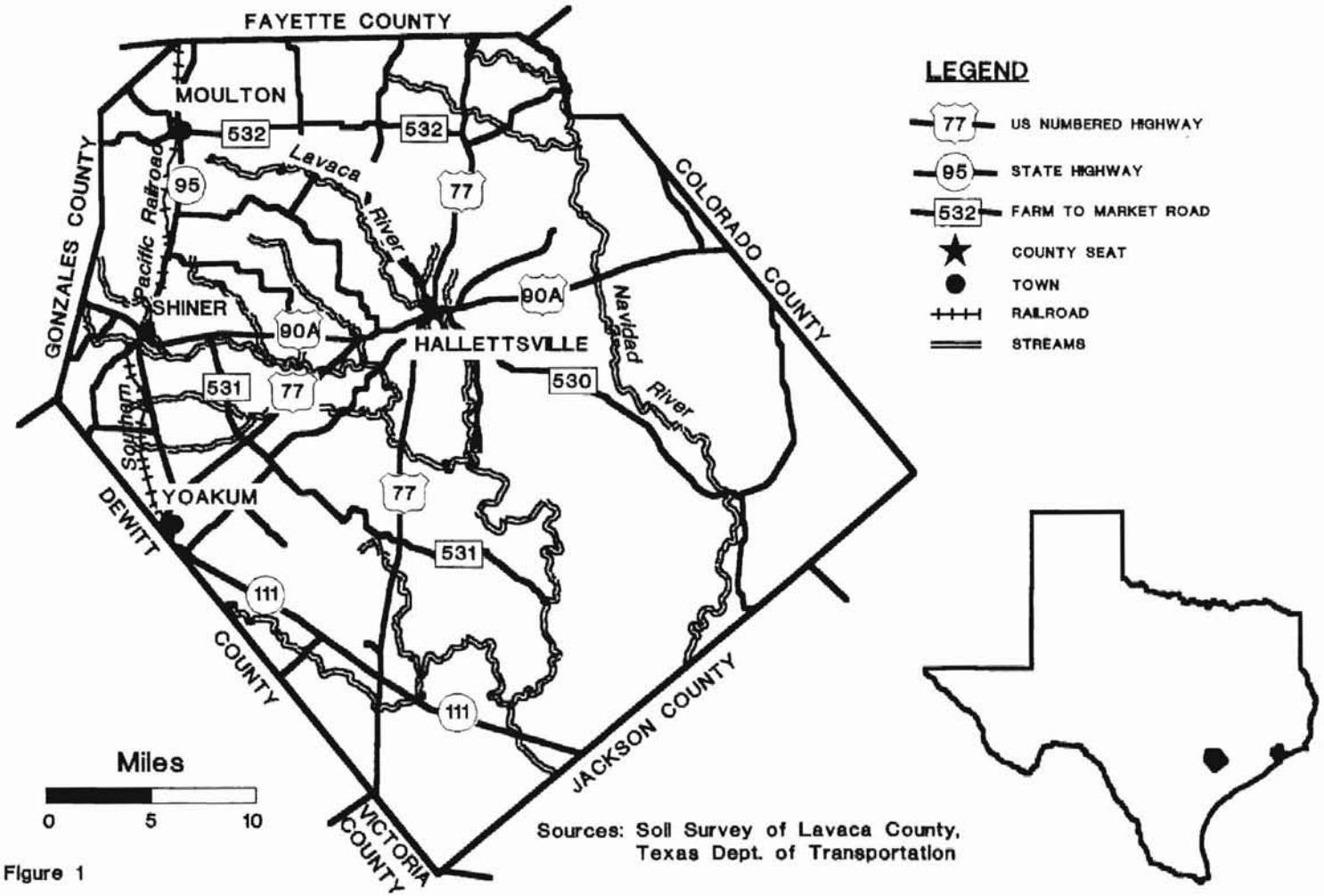
The Slavs are tribes of people who migrated into Europe from the area that is now Russia. Czechs are those people of Slavic origins who settled in the region that is today the Czech Republic and speak the Czech language with regional variations. Within this political unit are the regions of Bohemia and Moravia, each a separate political entity. Another Czech group is the Silesians whose territory was originally in the northern parts of Bohemia and Moravia. The Silesians are not significant to this study of Lavaca County but are included in definitions as they are Czech people (Stanley 1991). The term

"Bohemian", designating the people from the Czech lands in literature and data during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is sometimes used interchangeably with the term Czech. Bohemian has also been used as derogatory slang along with "Bohunk" and "Bohak" and is often not acceptable within the ethnic group (Skrivanek 1946). While it is acceptable to identify those people who migrated to Texas as Czech, the majority came from the Moravian region and still identify themselves as such today. In this study Anglo is a vernacular term to designate those immigrants from other parts of the United States who preceded Czech settlement into Lavaca County. Czech Texan or Texas Czech are terms used interchangeably to identify those people of Czech extraction who settled in Texas and remain there today (Hewitt 1978, Machann and Mendl 1983).

The Czechs who came to Texas were on the whole from one socioeconomic class. The cottager class was one of three peasant classes in the Czech lands (Stasney 1938, Machann and Mendl 1983, Korytova-Magstadt 1993). According to Balch, Americans perceived peasants in Bohemia and Moravia as a low social class (1910). Rather, she states, they were comparable to the American farmer. The middle class of peasants were the cottagers, described by Korytova-Magstadt as skilled individuals who owned ten to twelve acres of land and produced enough grain to sell at market (1993). Those lower on the socioeconomic scale could not afford to come to America and those higher up were comfortably established on the land. The cottager was either forced off his land by agricultural mechanization or out of the market by a global trend toward agricultural businesses. Either way he realized the future was bleak for those in his position. Seeking a better life, the immigrants to Texas came almost exclusively from this cottager group, causing what Skrabanek calls a classless society which led to a solidarity of community and cooperative attitude that would aid the immigrants in their new homes (1950).

Scope. The study area is Lavaca County, located in south central Texas, equidistant from Houston and Austin (Fig. 1). This county fulfills the focus of this research; historically it had substantial cotton production and was a major Czech

LAVACA COUNTY STUDY AREA



Sources: Soil Survey of Lavaca County, Texas Dept. of Transportation

Figure 1

settlement. The time frame is from 1880 to 1920. Before 1880, the Czechs were not as numerous and did not have a significant impact on cotton production. Czech migration to the United States stopped after 1920 due to the formation of Czechoslovakia after World War I, followed by new laws curtailing immigration into the United States. Cotton yields decreased around this same time due to soil depletion and the boll weevil, as well as the development of the West Texas cotton region. Remarks are included on earlier Czech settlement and follow significant cotton production to its end in the 1970s.

Lavaca County, created from parts of Victoria, Colorado, Gonzales, and Jackson Counties in 1846, is located on the coastal plain in southeastern Texas. It was named for the Lavaca River which runs through the county and Lavaca derives from the Spanish, *la vaca*, for cow or buffalo (Boethel 1959). The county contains 971 square miles, or 621,536 acres, and its southern border is within 30 miles of the Gulf of Mexico. The county seat is Hallettsville, a principal commercial and shipping center. Other towns include Shiner, Moulton, and part of Yoakum (part lies in DeWitt County) (*Texas Almanac* 1931). Scattered throughout the county are many communities with populations under 200 people (USDA 1992).

The topography consists of gently rolling hills in the northern part, where elevations range up to 560 feet above sea level, changing to flat, sandy expanses in the south, with elevations around 100 feet. Many creeks and streams run through the county, allowing for much bottomland vegetation. The county is drained by the Lavaca and Navidad rivers. The Lavaca River begins in the southwest corner of Fayette County, located northeast of Lavaca County, and runs southeast, across the county into Lavaca Bay 77 miles away (*Texas Almanac* 1942). The Navidad traverses the eastern part of the county (USDA 1992). Creeks that drain into these two rivers include: Rocky, Mustang, Clark's, Brushy, and Chicolete (*Yearbook* 1910). No major lakes can be found in the county.

Soils include dark Blackland Prairie type, ranging from clayey to loamy, found in the northern and western parts of the county and Texas Claypan, which are light-colored sandy loam and sandy soils in the southern and eastern part. The temperatures range from an average of 55^{o} in the winter to an average of 83^{o} F in the summer. There is little chance of snow. Rainfall is spread evenly throughout the year, averaging around 39 inches (USDA 1992). A long growing season allows for excellent native grasses, mesquite, oak, and timbers

Originally Lavaca County was to be compared to the state of Texas, which would have been unwieldy since Texas contains 254 counties. Determining an arbitrary region within the state could have invalidated the study. Kerr's study of migration into Texas from within the United States explained a system that divided the state into regions based on similar physical geography, especially rainfall and physiography (1967). Kerr based his divisions on Johnson's *The Natural Regions of Texas* (1931). Johnson had mapped these regions and Kerr used this map for his own study. Johnson's "Prairies Province" region proved to be excellent for the proposed study of Czechs in Lavaca County. It includes 42 counties that run in a band from the north to south across east central Texas. Many of the counties contain both Blackland soil which was important to cotton production in the last century, and had Czech and non-Czech populations. This region is large enough to be considered a sample population and allowed for the elimination of extraneous counties.

Limitations

Much of this study is based on historical data and information gained through interviews. Every attempt has been made to validate observations and other studies with secondary sources and census data. Gaps were found in the census data due to different designs by various bureaucrats over the decades making certain comparisons impossible (Table 1). For example in the 1950 census, it was decided that due to the "declining numerical importance of the foreign-born population" less information would be included

TABLE I

The Rise of the Czech Population in Lavaca County

Census Year	Foreign Born Designation	Population
1870	Bohemia	42
	Austria	28
1880	German Empire	621
	Austria Proper	146
1890	Bohemia	447
	Austria	1748
1900	Bohemia	1835
	Austria	1128
1910	Austria	3796
1920	Czechoslovakia	1724
	Austria	438
1930	Native White of Foreign or Mixed Parentage by County of Birth of Parents	
	Czechoslovakia	4821
1940	Foreign Born White, By Country of Birth	
	Czechoslovakia	952
1950	Country of Origin Down to State Level	------
1960	Country of Origin Down to State Level	------
1970	Country of Origin of the Foreign Stock by Nativity and Race	
	Czechoslovakia	SMSA
1980	Selected Countries	------
1990	Czech	5530
	Czechoslovakian	303

Table 1

on nativity (US Dept. of Commerce 1953). Not until 1990 would the Census Bureau included data down to the county level for the majority of the countries of the world (US Dept. of Commerce 1993). Another difficulty, especially in the census data, was determining who were the Czech people and how many were in the population. Miller stated that the 1910 census figures for foreign born white stock were understated by 50 percent (1922). Besides the definitions previously mentioned, the influence of the Austrian Empire and the German people caused some confusion when registering immigrants. By looking at the census after the fall of the Austrian Empire it is possible to determine that many Czechs had been previously designated as Austrians while others had Germanized names. Studies of local records have determined those people who were Czech (Bujnoch and Rhodes 1984).

In general, Czech and Bohemian are somewhat interchangeable. When discussing census data Czech or Bohemian are used, depending on the year. It is interesting to note that the 1910 census employed the term "Austrian", with no trace of Bohemians or Czechs to be found. After 1920 the census uses Czechs or Czechoslovakians for the designation. Most of the immigrants to Lavaca County were from Moravia and so that label is more correct when speaking on the county level. It was not possible to include the diacritical marks characteristic of the Czech spelling system in this work.

Sources of Information

Specific data for Lavaca came from census records, agricultural statistics, and personal field research. Interviews with Lavaca County residents yielded a wealth of information that was verified by secondary sources. These sources were also used to examine the history of the Czechs in Europe, trace their migration to Texas, and describe the ethnicity of the Czechs in Lavaca County. The end result will be how Czech ethnicity impacted on cotton production and the landscape of the county. The chapters on the Czechs in Europe, nineteenth century settlement of Texas prior to the Czechs, and Czech

settlement of Texas with an emphasis on Lavaca county, were with information drawn from secondary sources.

Hypotheses

At the end of this study the following hypotheses will be assessed:

1. The Czechs who settled in Texas had an impact on cotton production.
2. Czech Texans were less apt to enroll in cotton allotment programs.
3. Czech ethnicity caused cotton production to be retained longer that non-Czech counties.
4. There was a cultural environment in Texas that eased the settlement of Czechs.
5. The Czechs discarded aspects of their ethnicity that were detrimental to their economic success.
6. Czech settlements in Texas formed cultural-agricultural islands.
7. The Czech Texans are an ethnic group unique to the state of Texas.
8. A Czech ethnic landscape is still evident in present day Lavaca County.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study of this type, one that includes Czechs, their migration to and settlement in Texas, and their resulting ethnicity, as well as cotton production in Texas, covers a range of topics which results in a lengthy literature review. General studies on migration to America, ethnicity, and assimilation are abundant and help to understand better how the Czechs were perceived by Americans and why they were so unique. Some publications include the Czechs, Bohemians, and the more general designation, Slav. All were used to build a picture of Czechs in America. Works on Czech migration specifically are available but are often dated from early in the twentieth century just before new laws in the 1920s ended the huge numbers of immigrants. Renewed interest in immigrant studies began around 1950 and gained impetus by the 1970s but there is still a dearth of studies about this unique group of immigrants (Hewitt 1978; Machann and Mendl 1991). Many newer works which examine Czechs or Czech Texans have been generated by scholars of Czech extraction. They are also able to make available to non-Czech speakers information that has accumulated over the last 150 years from the literary works published by many Czech newspapers, journals, and other literary sources. These many works exemplify the Czech trait of literary production; other traits are described in works on religion, education, and social organizations. Also included are the few pieces on Lavaca County, including a history and works on other aspects of county life.

Agricultural studies covered "cultural-agricultural islands" (Kollmorgen 1941) of various ethnic groups for comparison and contrast, including other Czech Americans. In order to understand the cotton culture of Texas and the South, studies and publications on various aspects of cotton production were examined. Information describes the cotton

culture of Texas over the last 150 years, setting the stage for Czechs' involvement in cotton production.

Migration Studies

Examining literature of a more general nature leads to a better understanding of ethnicity, the Czechs who settled in Texas, and the immigrant within the context of the United States. An often-cited work is Milton M. Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (1963). During the 1960s, when the phrase, "the brotherhood of man", referring to homogeneity in American culture, was being coined in the United States, the sociologist Gordon was noting "the sense of ethnicity has proved to be hardy" (Gordon1963). Religious and racial differences were obvious but ethnicity was still neglected in scientific studies. The section on ethnicity is interesting for it aids in defining and understanding the importance of studying Texas Czechs. He uses the term "peoplehood" to distinguish an "ancestral group of fellows...set off by race, religion, or national origin, or some combination of these categories" (Gordon1963). Other chapters on assimilation, the melting pot theory, and cultural pluralism are outside the area of interest but help to understand the phenomenon that are the Czechs of Texas.

Becoming American (Archdeacon 1983), a history of immigration and assimilation, spends a chapter addressing each different period of immigration and the groups who came to the United States. Thomas J. Archdeacon, historian, covers the nativism movement to restrict immigration that began around the time of Czech migration to the United States. This is no coincidence, for he says that "eastern Europeans rekindled nativism" (1983). The movement succeeded in severely restricting immigration in 1924 with quotas. The government was convinced the United States would become a homogenous group, everyone would be an "American man". In actuality, although many did acculturate after two generations, others "continue tenaciously to maintain their ethnic and religious identities." Archdeacon asserts "Diversity is its [United States] greatest

(1983). A rising interest in cultural heritage, an outgrowth of black awareness, has led to a "renaissance of ethnicity" with new studies and new consideration for the pluralism that is the United States.

A trio of historians, Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers, consider ethnic groups in the context of the "economic growth and...social attitudes" in *Natives and Strangers* (1996). Another definition of ethnicity is presented, "a people with a shared or common culture or a sense of identity based on religion, race, or nationality" (Dinnerstein, Nichols, and Reimers 1996). Of interest is the idea that the various support networks, including the Catholic Church, the press and social organizations, while retaining the cultural identity in a more pure form also prevented the immigrants from realizing social mobility. The strength of these networks in the Czech communities aided the Czechs' quest for financially security and until the 1920s the Czechs showed little interest in improving their lives through outside sources, such as higher education.

A work on Slavic migration is a lengthy tome by economist Emily Greene Balch entitled *Our Slavic Fellow Citizens* (1910), the result of over two years of fieldwork in Europe and the United States. Originally a series of magazine articles, the information was revised and expanded to a full-length book. The author used census data from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The European background was useful to understanding the stimuli for migration to the United States but the sections on the United States, though well-written, offered only general information on the subject. Her explanation of the peasant class which provided the immigrants who came to Lavaca County was interesting. Balch explained that the peasants were not the downtrodden, ignorant creatures often considered by Americans, rather they were comparable to the American farmer (1910). She includes vast amounts of data in her appendices, tables, and maps for examination.

Ethnic Studies

When studying the immigration and settlement of Czechs in America, it is important to define ethnicity. Cultural geographer Karl B. Raitz's "Themes in the Cultural Geography of European Ethnic Groups in the United States" (1979) thoroughly fulfills this requirement. The introduction of this study uses his definitions to explain ethnicity. He discusses the trends in geography and the study of ethnicity, Americanization, and clarifies acculturation versus assimilation. Of particular interest is the concept that those elements of an ethnic group that are weak or missing were quickly replaced by elements of the host culture. Those elements that were strong and mobile, for example, Czech language and agricultural practices, survived the move to America. In order to benefit economically, immigrants quickly shed ethnic traits that failed them in their new home. The Czechs of Texas learned new agriculture methods for successful cotton production, melding these methods to those, such as broadcast sowing of wheat, in their homeland. He concludes with the need for microscale studies in the language of the group to fill gaps left by previous work.

A Czech political refugee, Stepanka Korytova-Magstadt, offers *To Reap a Bountiful Harvest* (1993), a very readable history of Czech migration to the western United States. Much of the book is taken up with the European side with vivid descriptions of village life and the economic hardships that forced the peasants to leave for a better life in America. According to the author, "land hunger" was at the heart of the move. In the second section of this book the author discusses specific settlements, including a chapter on Czechs in Texas. Korytova-Magstadt's in-depth study of life in the Czech lands and the push-pull factors leading to immigration added an economic aspect to her study of Czechs that is missing from some of the other pieces.

Regional scale studies of ethnic groups are also available for reference. Some of these include general ethnic studies of Czechs, as well as other groups. Karel D. Bicha's *Czechs in Oklahoma* (1980) is part of a series produced to identify and discuss the ethnic

groups that settled in Oklahoma. This historian describes the Czechs, their homeland in the nineteenth century, and their migration to America and into Oklahoma. He has chapters on all aspects of their culture and a complete section on agriculture. Comparisons to the study group, the Czechs of Lavaca County, helped identify unique traits. For instance, Oklahoma was opened for settlement much later, the late 1880s, so the Czechs often came from other parts of the United States and they competed against other participants from the Land Run and established Native Americans for good farm land. Religion, more specifically Catholicism, was not of great importance to Oklahoma Czechs. Much of the information was used to describe the American Czechs.

Religion is easily the strongest and most lasting ethnic trait. The Slavic scholar Joseph Cada produced *Czech-American Catholics, 1850-1920* (1964) to explain the importance of the Catholic Church in the lives of the Czech Americans. The Czechs had national parishes, organized and run by Czech-speaking priests and administrators to accommodate the immigrants and their descendants. Cada pulled facts from various church publications to trace the history of the Catholic Church in Europe and the United States. The Catholic Church was often the center of Czech life and focused on aiding the immigrant in transition into American society. The priests set up parochial schools throughout the United States in conjunction with the parishes, allowing for religious education and reinforcing the Czech language. The priests discouraged "mixed marriages" well into the 1960s, a phenomenon evident in Lavaca County. This would be marriage with a non-Czech, as well as a non-Catholic. This book was written after the waning of the Catholic system in the United States (1964) but notes until 1945 there were 94 parish schools serving the Czech communities with an enrollment of 16,809 (Cada 1964).

Geographer Terry Jordan's article entitled "A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas, 1836-1986" centers around the ethnic makeup of Texas when the Czechs began their settlement. Jordan refers to Texas as a "shatterbelt, "multiethnic", and "balkanized"; there is no "typical Texan" (Jordan 1991). Few Spanish had settled in this region when

Anglo-Americans began their incursion. These settlers, many of whom still had recognizable European ethnic identities, had only been in Texas a short time when the Czechs began their immigration. According to Jordan, there was a "disappearance of the host culture majority" by the twentieth century. These two characteristics, multiethnicity and no host culture, need to be considered when examining the Czech ethnicity that evolved in Texas.

The first history of Czech immigration to the United States written in English was Czech historian Thomas Capek's *The Cechs in America: A Study of Their National, Cultural, Political, Social, Economic, and Religious Life* (1920). Considered the definitive Czech study, regardless of its age, the author had various types of information available to him dating back to 1860, including data from Prague, Bohemia. He was interested in the period of the greatest migration, which began after the 1848 failed revolution in Bohemia. He offered insight into the success of the Czechs in America: high literacy rate, skilled laborers, self-reliance, and the ability to overcome adversity, brought on by Austrian oppression. The book offers detailed information on Czech immigration with separate chapters on seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries immigration. Other chapters describe Czechs in America -- their politics, music, art, language, journalism, various religions, and the ever-important societies and organizations. Throughout the book are statistical tables with data on Bohemians, Moravians, and Silesians (different ethnic groups within the Czech homeland). Not much is included on regional settlement into the United States.

Texas Czechs

One of the few books published in English in the first half of this century is *Czech Pioneers of the Southwest* by writer Estelle Hudson and Henry R. Maresh (the latter a son of Czech settlers). Printed in 1934, Hewitt mentions it in his dissertation as

"encyclopedic" and "poorly organized and undocumented" (1978). While these remarks are certainly true (no formal bibliography), material can be dissected including remarks on how the success of cotton production in Texas owed much to the agricultural skills of Czech farmers. In the introduction the authors admit much has been lost through lack of the written record but an obvious pride in Czech heritage shines throughout the book.

In a doctoral dissertation entitled "The Czechs in Texas: A Study of the Immigration and the Development of Czech Ethnicity, 1850-1920" (1978) for the University of Texas at Austin, philosopher William Phillip Hewitt examines why the Czechs were unique in their immigration. He traces their history, and reasons for migration, from their homeland to Texas throughout the nineteenth century until the 1920s when large scale immigration ended. The study includes the impact of the Civil War on the original settlers and the development of Czech-Texan ethnic groups and fraternal organizations, which were in direct response to the conflict between Czechs and Confederate sympathizers during the War. Other strong influences were religious support groups and Czech language newspapers. According to Hewitt, economic success and three factors--clubs, church, and Czech press--allowed for the continuation of a Czech ethnicity that is today a product of Old World traditions and the New World Texas experience. This dissertation is a thorough study of Czechs in Texas and can be used as a framework for a more localized study

Krasna Amerika: A Study of the Texas Czechs, 1851-1939 by scholars Clinton J. Machann and James W. Mendl (1983) historically surveys Czech migration into Texas from the initial settlement to the beginning of World War II, an event which led to the dilution of Czech ethnicity. Like the Hewitt study, there are sections on the various aspects of Czech Texan culture including religion, folk culture, education, language, and journalism. The authors go into great detail on a county level to describe the Czech ethnicity in Texas. Of special interest is the chapter on "Ethnic Identity and Assimilation" that defines the Texas Czechs as a unique ethnic group and discusses how the Czechs

assimilated into American society during the twentieth century. The afterword briefly covers the last 50 years, including the resurgence of interest in Czech ethnicity since the 1960s.

We're Czechs, by the agricultural sociologist Robert L. Skrabanek, is an autobiographical account of growing up in the Czech community of Snook, Texas, in the 1920s and 1930s (1988). He personalizes the Czech way of life in Texas at that time but still portrays the different characteristics of Czech ethnicity. He describes the cooperation, social life, and farming practices that personifies the Czechs. Parts of this book were previously found in his scholarly pieces listed in the bibliography that address these three themes.

Theses written from 1935 to 1947 were examined to gain knowledge of the period when Czech ethnicity was still intact in Texas. Some focused on specific aspects of the culture. One of these theses was written by scholar Mollie Emma Stasney, "The Czechs in Texas" (1938). As well as being written before the decline of Czech ethnicity, the author understood the Czech language, so the work is useful for reference in relating the life style of the Texas Czechs to the non-Czech speaker. There is a section describing the settlement of Lavaca County, listing the various settlements that could be used to make a map. Information on newspapers, Catholic schools, and organizations can also be found on the county and city level.

Educator Joe Malik's thesis, "Efforts to Promote the Study of the Czech Language and Culture in Texas" (1947) illustrates how various sectors of Czech culture worked to maintain their cultural identity. Through the schools, universities, churches, newspapers, and various organizations, the language and culture of the Czechs were sustained in Texas. Continuing Czech traditions, brought by the Czech immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century, continued strong until after World War II, and are still evident to some degree today.

Another thesis, "The Education of the Czechs in Texas" (1946) by John Skrivanek, focused on one aspect of Czech ethnicity, education. He begins with the history and immigration of the Czechs, discusses the principal colonies, then details a hundred years of Czechs and their education in Texas. He describes the Department of Slavonic Languages at the University of Texas, established by a group of Czechs in 1909 to continue the study of the Czech culture. He concludes with brief sketches of the leading Czechs of Texas.

The two previous theses utilized information from educator Theodore Hamilton Leslie's thesis, "The History of Lavaca County Schools" (1935). He has extensively detailed all the legal documents setting up the school system. The section on location and ethnicity of the settlement are useful to this study. He also includes maps of the various districts.

Leslie's thesis is one of a few works found on Lavaca County specifically. Two others were produced by a local writer, Paul C. Boethel. He wrote *A History of Lavaca County* (1959) that describes the physical landscape. He also includes chapters on the revolution against Mexico, the Civil War, and the tribulations of forming the actual county. He has chapters on economic and social development but the Czechs are glaringly missing. *The Free State of Lavaca* (1977) is a less scholarly piece with chapters culled from local records, such as court dockets. Here are descriptions of the social climate that greeted the Czechs when they arrived in Lavaca County. Although little mention of the Czech settlers can be found in these two books, they proved helpful in understanding the Anglo culture of mid-nineteenth century Lavaca County.

The last Lavaca County source is *St. Mary's Parish* (1990), a publication compiled by a committee of local residents, in honor of the sesquicentennial. This is a remarkable piece that shows every effort to carefully document the facts surrounding this oldest rural church in Texas. As well as an extensive history, the committee included the biographies of those who served the church, priests and nuns, and the families who have supported the church through the years.

Cultural-Agricultural Islands

This section on cultural-agricultural islands begins with the articles that produced the term. Economic geographer Walter M. Kollmorgen produced two articles in 1941 and 1943 on cultural-agricultural islands after a summer traveling through the South in 1937. The first article was a thumbnail description of agricultural areas throughout the South. Peopled by immigrant farmers, especially prominent are Germans, the various areas exhibit prosperity where previous farmers failed. With hard work, careful management, and diversified farming practices, the immigrants have been able to make a success in an area surrounded by failure. The 1941 article, "A Reconnaissance of Some Cultural-Agricultural Islands in the South," verbally leaps from island to island, with remarks on physical environment, comments on individual groups, and their successes and failures. The reader could surmise "Reconnaissance" was a prelude to "Agricultural-Cultural Islands in the South--Part II," which interprets the material gathered in the first article. Kollmorgen concludes that these immigrant groups are the "superior farmers" brought in to redeem the depleted lands of the South after the Civil War. While merely descriptive, the author does conclude that there are "excellent opportunities for further research on the significance of such island communities" (1943). There were reams of information in the two articles which led to the next piece.

In 1914, economist LeRoy Hodges offered a report, *Slavs on Southern Farms*, to the United States Senate. Agriculture laborers were leaving the farms of the South in such great numbers that production was threatened. Hodges determined that encouraging Slavic farmers to the region would fill the vacuum left by the rapidly urbanizing population. As examples of the agricultural abilities, he related the success stories of various groups, including the Bohemians of Texas. He was particularly impressed with their ability to grow cotton. This was an interesting piece, considering the political

implications, for just ten years later, legislation halted most immigration from Eastern Europe. World War I also interrupted this effort to bring the Slavs into the South.

Geographer Russel L. Gerlach produced a book on *Immigrants in the Ozarks* in 1976 which examines ethnicity on a grand scale compared to the Lavaca County study. He used field observations and census data to look at settlement and agriculture, and their effects on rural landscape, in the Ozarks by the various European ethnic groups, including the Czechs. His methodology was useful as an outline for this study of Czechs in Lavaca County.

The Czech settlers of Lincoln County are the subject of geographer Russell Wilford Lynch's dissertation, *Czech Farmers in Oklahoma*, which was published as a bulletin for the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. Written in 1942, it compares Czech farmers to Native American farmers and control groups. The whites, Anglos and Czechs, came in the land runs of the 1890s. Lynch states all the groups began with "an equal start with free or very cheap land" (Lynch 1942). The Czechs continued to succeed despite the decline of the cotton industry. Lynch wanted to determine if the differences in agricultural practices could be tied to cultural differences. He combined field work with "unpublished statistical data and historical research". He determined that a "different cultural approach to the problems of agriculture" made the difference in economic success. The Czechs were stable, interested in maintaining the land, had a group spirit, considered land ownership of prime importance, and craved the security and social status that came with land ownership. Lynch did not explain why he used Native Americans for his comparison of agricultural methods and his rationale is not apparent. His results were published in short form in 1944 in *Economic Geography* under the same title.

In 1966, Terry Jordan's *German Seed in Texas Soil*, an outgrowth of his doctoral dissertation, looked at German settlement in Texas during the nineteenth century. Using census schedules of agriculture and population for 1850 through 1880, the author set up a

(Jordan, 1966). To this he added his own fieldwork. Jordan wanted to compare German and Southern farmers; both migrated into Texas after the 1830s. He wanted to discern if the Germans retained their European heritage, agricultural and otherwise. He looked for the German imprint on the landscape. Jordan found that the Germans retained certain traits and techniques but were adaptable to new ideas, especially if the new ideas improved their economy. Since the Germans were hugely influential in regard to the Czechs, in Europe and in Texas, any information regarding the Germans is helpful.

Cotton Production

Most of the information on the cotton production was taken directly from secondary sources specifically about Czechs and census data. In order to understand the history of cotton, especially before the Czechs in Texas and after the enactment of the allotments in the 1930s, more general references were needed. This turned out to be difficult. It was necessary to pull the data from works that focused specifically on some aspect of cotton production.

Soil depletion and boll weevils devastated cotton production in Lavaca County beginning in the 1920s. By the early 1930s, the nation was in the throes of a severe economic depression. Cotton production was affected again, with prices down even though production continued. Allotments set up by the federal government were to curtail production, thus allowing for more control of the market and increased prices. In "The Influence of Cotton Allotments on Land Values in Ellis County, Texas 1955-1958" (1963), agricultural economist Alton H. Marwitz describes how the allotments worked and traces some of the history of the system. These allotments were successful for many years but when legislation passed in the 1960s allowing for transfer or sale of the allotments, the cotton farmers of Central Texas, including Lavaca County, turned to more lucrative and less time consuming enterprises.

allotments, the cotton farmers of Central Texas, including Lavaca County, turned to more lucrative and less time consuming enterprises.

One article that examined the effect of government control on cotton production is "The Broken Cotton Belt" by economist Franklin C. Erickson. The Texas Czechs settled in the western end of a Cotton Belt depicted in maps by Erickson. Government restrictions of acreage and allotments, to decrease the cotton yields and force the price of cotton higher, led to the fragmenting of the Cotton Belt to the areas that could economically raise cotton. The West Texas plains replaced the Blackland soil region that the Czechs settled in and raised cotton on for over fifty years. The soils of East Central Texas had become eroded and depleted by the cotton crops so the economic forces just sped up the move and saved the Texas Czechs from economic disaster.

For decades the Czechs grew cotton in East Central Texas and retained much of their European cultural heritage that is examined in the next chapter. It is necessary to understand the life of the Czech in his homeland to understand how he developed into the Czech Texan of today.

CHAPTER III

MOTIVATION FOR MIGRATION

The Czechs from Europe to Texas

The premise of this study is that the Czech people had an impact on cotton production in Texas the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Korytova-Magstadt (1993), Skrabanek (1988), and Machann and Mendl (1983) all state that the Czechs were a unique ethnic group with special traits that helped them succeed in Texas. Many of the traits that typified the Czechs in Europe were not exclusive. On the other hand these traits, combined with the Czechs' ethnic origin as Slavs, geographical position in Europe, history of outside domination, enlightenment under Charles IV, and results from the martyrdom of Jan Hus, created a people different from neighboring European groups (Germans, Poles, Slovaks, and Austrians). In this chapter the development of Czech ethnicity is briefly traced and then followed by the Czech reaction to the economic and political changes in Europe during the nineteenth century. The settlement of Lavaca County by first Americans and later Europeans, including the Czechs, conclude this chapter.

Settlement and History of the Czech Lands

By the seventh century, Slavic tribes had arrived from the east and settled in the Czech lands, resulting in the Bohemians in the west, the Slovaks in the east, and, in between, the Moravians (from which majority of the Czech Texans came) (Hudson and Maresh 1934). Significant historical periods in Czech history include the Premyslid Dynasty that ruled from the ninth century to the end of the thirteenth century leading to the rise of the Bohemian political state and culture. Also during this century, the invasion of Slovakia by the Magyars effectively cut the Czechs off from their Slavic brethren in the

South. German migration along the Danube further strengthened the split. From this period on, Bohemia was oriented to the West (Thomson 1944).

In the fourteenth century the Golden Age of the Holy Roman Emperor and Bohemian king, Charles IV, brought the Czech people into a period of growth and enlightenment that was the beginning of Czech national pride. Most importantly, the religious reformation of John Hus in the fifteenth century coalesced a Czech nationalism that lasted through the crushing oppression of the Austrian Empire in the early seventeenth century to rebirth of the country in this century (Krofta 1935). This strong, vibrant Czech identity would aid those Czech Texans in their quest for a new home in America.

The Czechs reemerged as a political force during the eighteenth century under the enlightened Joseph II. The time was right for Czech national revival; inspiration was found in the Czech historian Frantisek Palacky's 1836 reinterpretation of Czech history (Kohn 1940). This national rebirth led to the Revolution of 1848, which failed to free the Czechs from the Austrian Empire, but motivated the first Czech emigrants who came to Texas in the 1850s.

Germans, Allies or Oppressors?

The Czechs, who always tried to avoid complete subjugation by the Germans, cultivated a working relationship that greatly aided in the development of the Czech people -- economically, politically, and religiously. This association with Germany was instrumental in turning the Czechs westward away from their roots and the other Slavic people in the east. They sacrificed some independence for security and advancement which aided the Czechs through the years. An example of the German influence in the thirteenth century was the introduction of a legal system that defined civil rights and duties of peasants. On the other hand, the Germans continued to dominate the Czechs as

exemplified in 1620 when the Austrian Empire deeded lands seized from rebelling Czech nobles to the Germans (Krofta 1935).

This long-running enmity was nullified by a bond of historical association that resurfaced when Germans and Czechs met in America (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). Czechs tended to settle in the same areas of the Midwest as the Germans starting in the 1850s (LaGumina 1974). As well as sharing a common language (German was mandatory in the Austrian Empire) and historical association, the Germans often aided the Czechs in adapting to local agricultural techniques.

The Germans outnumbered most other ethnic groups but they did not retain a strong ethnic identity. They quit speaking German when they moved to urban areas. Then in the twentieth century, German Americans were identified as the enemy in two world wars, causing many to disavow their ethnic heritage, while the Czechs' identity remained strong (Korytova-Magstadt 1993).

Land Hunger in the Homeland

Although earlier Czech migration to America was often based on political dissatisfaction, the Czechs who settled in Texas, especially the Moravian element, came for the free land of the 1862 Homestead Act (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). Other factors also came into play: escape from mandatory military conscription, social stratification, and the freedoms enjoyed by Americans (LaGumina 1974). A peasant dislocation had begun with the end of serfdom in 1848. Although no longer tied to the land some peasants were displaced from their position within the economic framework, removing any means of support. After serfdom ended, some peasants were granted lands but a required financial compensation to the landlord caused another kind of economic hardship. This compensation forced the selling of the grant to wealthy landowners. The result was a consolidation of agricultural lands which aided the agricultural mechanization movement of the late nineteenth century (Pech 1969). The peasants were overwhelmed in the

marketplace by these huge agricultural holdings. In certain regions this inequality was further exacerbated by the marginal nature of the lands (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). This was especially true of the Moravians who came to Texas.

Industrialization also hurt the peasants of the Czech lands. By the nineteenth century, Bohemia-Moravia was the industrial center of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Often the farmer displaced by mechanization traveled to industrial centers to find employment. Dislocation from agribusinesses and the breakup of long-established communities was traumatic to a people with traditional patterns of life and work in rural Czech society (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). It is not surprising that the Czechs chose emigration to the "land of opportunity" over life in the Czech lands.

Czechs came to America so their children would have a better life. Middle size farms in the homelands were plots of about ten to twelve acres, hardly enough to support a family. There was little opportunity to buy land on credit (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). Families with more than one son were forced to divide up already minuscule holdings; these farmers became the immigrants to Texas. They left because they were disgruntled, not destitute, so were able to come to America with a certain amount of financial standing.

Migration slowed during the 1860s due to the improved economy, but a new crisis hit the Czech lands in the 1870s -- foreign competition. Cheap American wheat was flooding the European market, cutting the Czech farmers out. This led to a cost-price squeeze, followed by the largest level of migration of Czechs to the United States, where they hoped to take advantage of American agricultural opportunities (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). Only the protective measures of the 1890s, for example wheat tariffs, ended this exodus.

While poor economic conditions were the most significant reason for migration, other factors were also involved. A reason for migration out of the Czech lands was a huge population increase (45 percent) during the second half of the nineteenth century. Czechs also left to avoid mandatory military service in the Austro-Hungarian military, the

army of the oppressor. There was also the attraction of the "religious nonconformism of the United States" (Korytova-Magstadt 1993) although this was of little importance to the Czech Texans who were mainly Catholic. The flow of emigration out of the Czech lands finally ebbed after the restriction of wheat imports in the 1890s and ended with World War I and the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 along with the immigration restrictions enacted in the United States in the 1920s. By this time, there were significant Czech ethnic islands located in the central region of eastern Texas.

Czechs Into Texas

Immigration into Texas does not begin with the Czechs but they did join previous settlers in certain areas to become significant to Texas culture. With their intrusion into Texas, the ethnicity of the Czech Texans began to develop. This group was unique, socially, politically, and, to a degree, religiously (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). These aspects help explain why the Czechs were able to retain their ethnic identity, while acculturating into the American frontier. Today, Czech traits are still apparent to travelers in a defined region that covers southeastern Texas.

The White Mountain massacre, and its bitter aftermath, led the first Czechs to Colonial America (Capek 1969). Over the next 200 years only a trickle of Czechs emigrated across the Atlantic, most of the displaced and disillusioned migrated to other countries within Europe (LaGumina 1974). Following the Revolution of 1848, there was a slight increase in numbers. These immigrants were important for they began the Czech fraternal organizations and Czech language journals in America that were a critical part of the support network for the Texas groups. They also wrote letters back to their homeland that were published or passed from hand to hand and one man's, Josef Bergman's, were credited for beginning the flow of people to Texas (Machann and Mendl 1983).

The First Settlers

First a territory of Spain, then Mexico, it could be assumed these two countries would have colonized the region that was to become Texas. As is common in the Spanish culture of the Americas, the Spanish ignored the area but the new Mexican government, anxious to insure its claim, turned to the United States for settlers (Jordan 1991). The American economy was in crisis during the 1820s. Looking for the opportunity to recoup lost fortunes, Americans were attracted to Texas, especially with its cheap land prices, easy payment schedules, and generous tax relief. Two men who received land grants to set up colonies of Americans were Stephen F. Austin and Green DeWitt (Boethel 1959). Their land grants bordered each other on the Lavaca River, in the area between the Colorado and Guadalupe Rivers that was later to become Lavaca County. Settlers from the southern United States came to these colonies to raise cattle and later began cotton plantations, bringing slaves to work the fields (Jordan 1984).

This region saw a steady stream of settlers until the Texas Revolution of 1836. Then after the disasters of the Alamo and Goliad, Sam Houston retreated east, across the Texas landscape to the San Jacinto River, near modern day Houston. He was followed by all the settlers of the lands between, including those from the area that later became Lavaca County. The "runaway scrape", as this mass exodus was called, moved across the county, emptying it of settlers. After the new Republic of Texas was established, settlers returned to their homesteads. While repelling Indian attacks and later renewed efforts by Mexican government to reclaim the territories, the settlers were able to lead a relatively productive lifestyle. During this period the first Czechs arrived in Texas. In 1846 the constitution for the new State of Texas created new counties out of others, one of which was Lavaca County (Boethel 1959).

As previously mentioned, Lavaca County had been part of both the DeWitt and Austin Colonies. John Hallet was granted his property by Austin in 1831. Hallet never lived to settle on his land but his widow Margaret did to become one of the original

settlers; she remained an important member of the community until her death. She donated the land that became Hallettsville, the county seat. Most of these Anglo settlers chose the flat open area of the southern half of the county. The northern half was too wooded or the soil too heavy and under nearly impenetrable prairie sod. Until the early 1850s, this area of the county would never be settled, it would "'never sustain a dense population'" (Boethel 1959).

The Czechs Come to Texas

The Czechs who came to Texas, or more specifically the Moravians, arrived as a result of an agricultural crisis and population pressures back in their homeland (LaGumina 1974). They came because they heard of opportunities through the press, letters, and, sometimes, through agents for steamship companies. They came because they were hungry for land which was unattainable under the Austrian Empire. Later, they were to marvel at owning 100 acre farms, comparable to larger holdings in Bohemia-Moravia (Korytova-Magstadt 1993).

As the Czech Texans were unique so was their method of migration. Life was hard at home, with no prospect of improvement. The papers were full of news of this new state with vast, cheap, fertile, empty lands. Village leaders encouraged the move, often leading the way, and allowing for a certain amount of stability and leadership in the groups (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). Many emigrated from a few small regions (Fig. 3) and the first Czechs that came to Texas sent for others, encouraging them to settle in the Blackland Prairie region. The Czechs who settled in Texas came directly from Bremen or Hamburg, Germany, to Galveston, through Houston and on to Cat Spring, Austin County, where many settled (Fig. 4). In addition to the chain migration, Korytova-Magstadt states this funneling of the Czechs into such a small area, without any interaction with other parts of America, was the beginning of the change of Czech ethnicity into something that

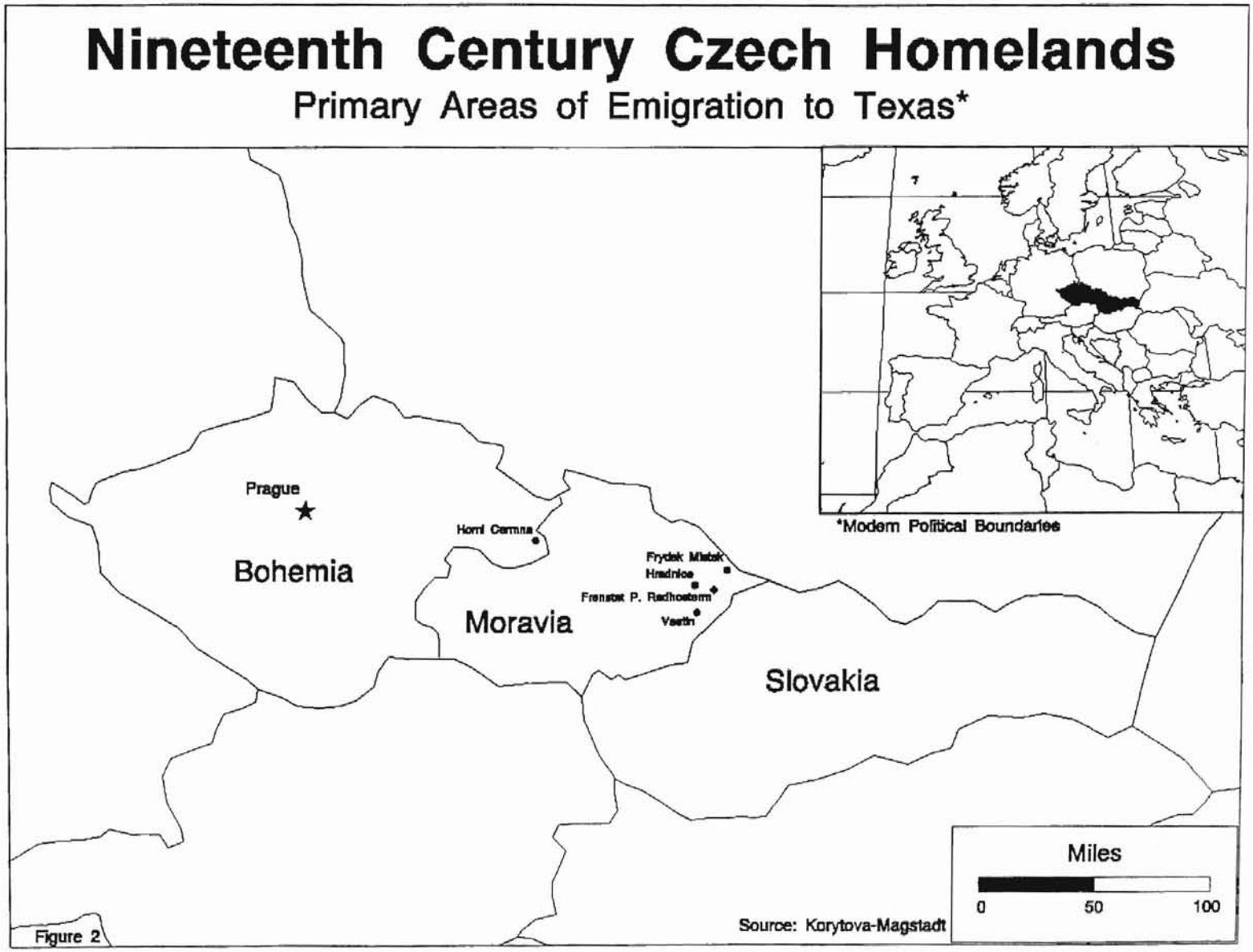

Nineteenth Century Czech Homelands
Primary Areas of Emigration to Texas*
Prague
Horní Cerekev
Frýdek Místek
Hradisko
Frenštát P. Radhoštěm
Vsetín
Bohemia
Moravia
Slovakia
*Modern Political Boundaries
Miles
0
50
100
Source: Korytova-Magstadt

Figure 2

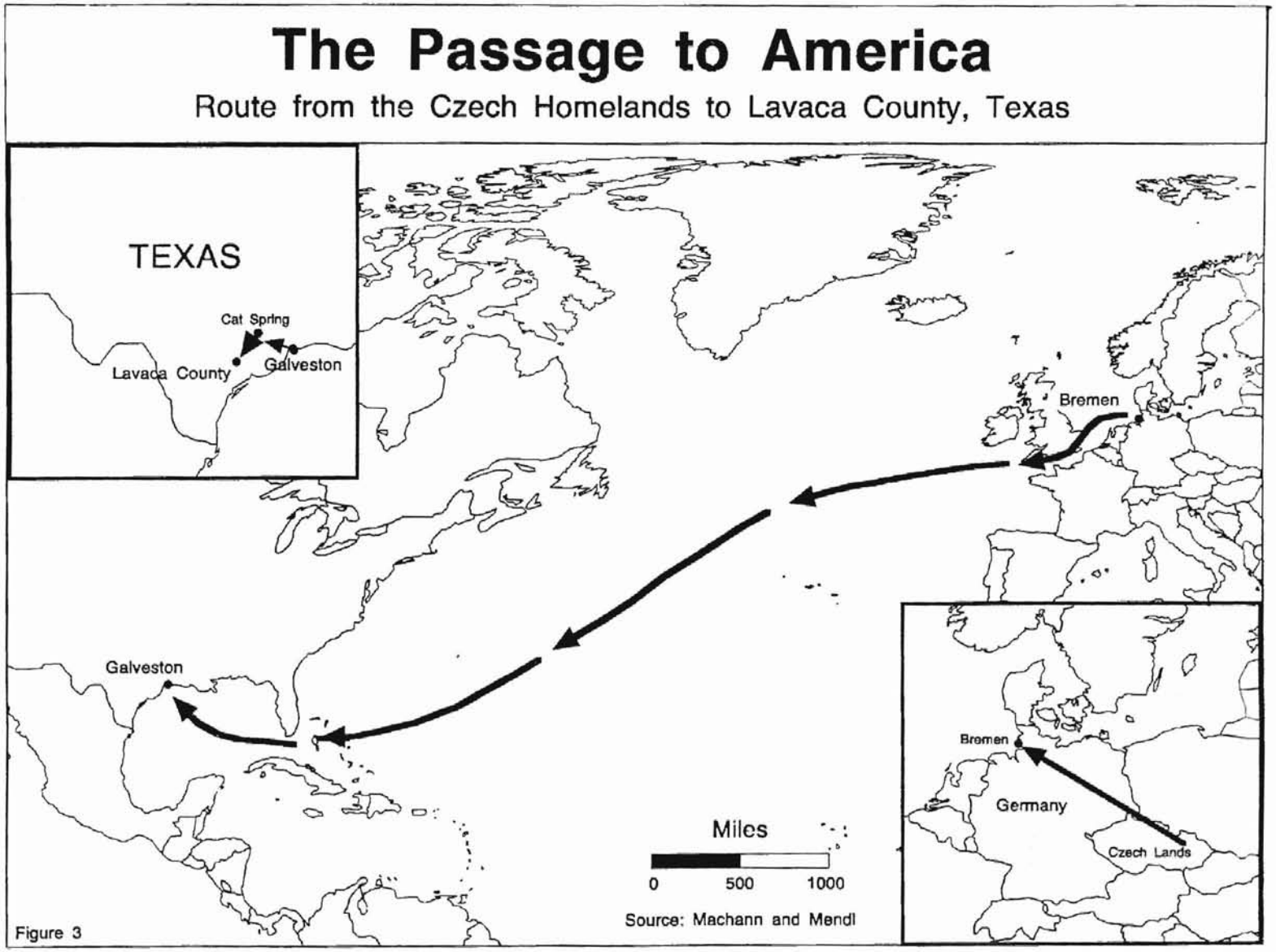

The Passage to America
Route from the Czech Homelands to Lavaca County, Texas
TEXAS
Cat Spring
Lavaca County
Galveston
Bremen
Galveston
Bremen
Germany
Czech Lands
Miles
0
500
1000
Source: Machann and Mendl

Figure 3

was unique to Texas. Most of the Czechs to Lavaca County came by this route, with one layover spot, Dubina, Fayette County.

Another important aspect of Czech migration was support groups within a network that brought whole families or groupings of individuals to Texas. This support network was critical for first Czechs arriving (1850s) to the Cat Spring area. The overland route was harsh, their supplies were often exhausted, and Cat Spring had little settlement to attract newcomers. Such hardship strengthened existing bonds, creating a feeling of fellowship, enhancing their shared ethnic identity. The suffering did not end with the arrival at the first Czech settlement. Some settlers did not want to stay and set out for better prospects, often on foot. Those that did stay had to compete for the best lands or jobs, often with slaves. They stayed within a certain area, often associated with the Blackland Belt of the southeast where the soil was similar to the fertile valleys of their homeland. These peasants had been pushed from these valleys to the surrounding barren ridges (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). They settled near Germans who helped with the transition and information. By 1860, Czech colonies were developing among the American settlers. Lavaca and Washington Counties soon had colonies as well. Then the Civil War disrupted all immigration and also disrupted the lives of the Czech settlers (Machann and Mendl 1983).

The vast majority of Texans were staunch secessionists. Not so the Czechs. They had recently been released from serfdom, closely akin to slavery, so were repelled by ownership of humans by humans. Instead the Czechs felt all Americans should enjoy a democracy unattainable in their European homelands. They wanted to be left alone to work their homesteads but the Anglos would not allow the Czechs to remain isolated from the war. One reason the Czechs had left Europe was compulsory military service in the hated Austrian army. Now they were drafted into the Confederate army or were killed. Some hid for years in the woods near their homes or went to Mexico until the war was over. Some traveled between their homes and Mexico, moving cotton, circumventing the

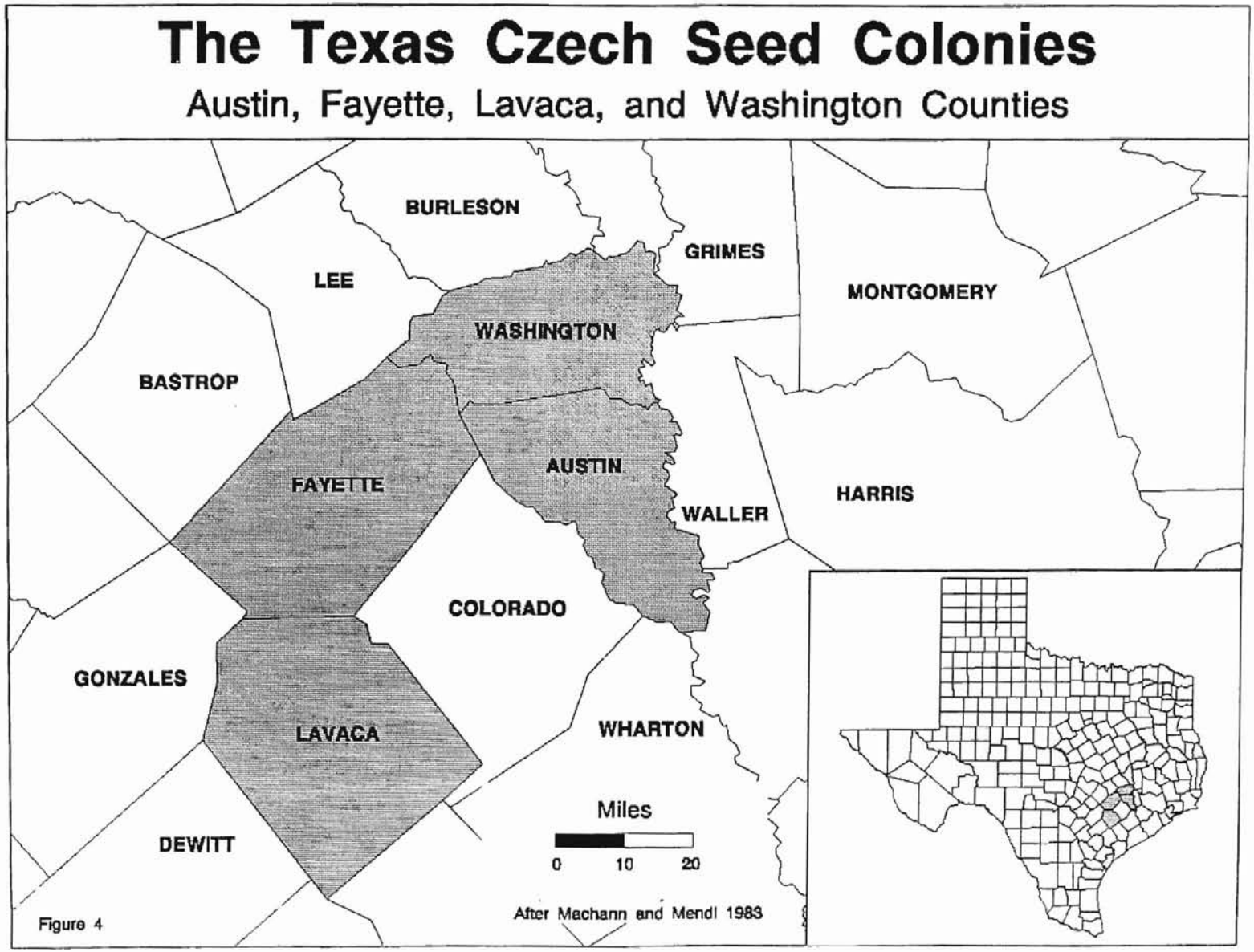
Union blockade. Those left behind, the women, children, and old men, also suffered during the war years, forced to survive without the protection and aid of their main breadwinner (Hewitt 1978).

Finally the war ended; the men came home. Meanwhile in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a new policy began in 1867, allowing unrestricted emigration (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). These two factors accelerated immigration beginning around 1870. By this time there were the seed colonies of Austin, Fayette, Lavaca, and Washington Counties (Fig. 5) where new immigrants stayed with family or friends already established. After a settling in period, they might remain, buy land, or move on, usually to the northeast (Machann and Mendl 1983). By the early twentieth century, 250 settlements were located in bands running north and south across the eastern part of Texas (Maresh 1947). These bands coincided with the Blackland Prairie soil regions, "some of the finest soil in Texas" (Machann and Mendl 1983). Immigration and this settlement pattern continued into the twentieth century.

Czechs into Lavaca County

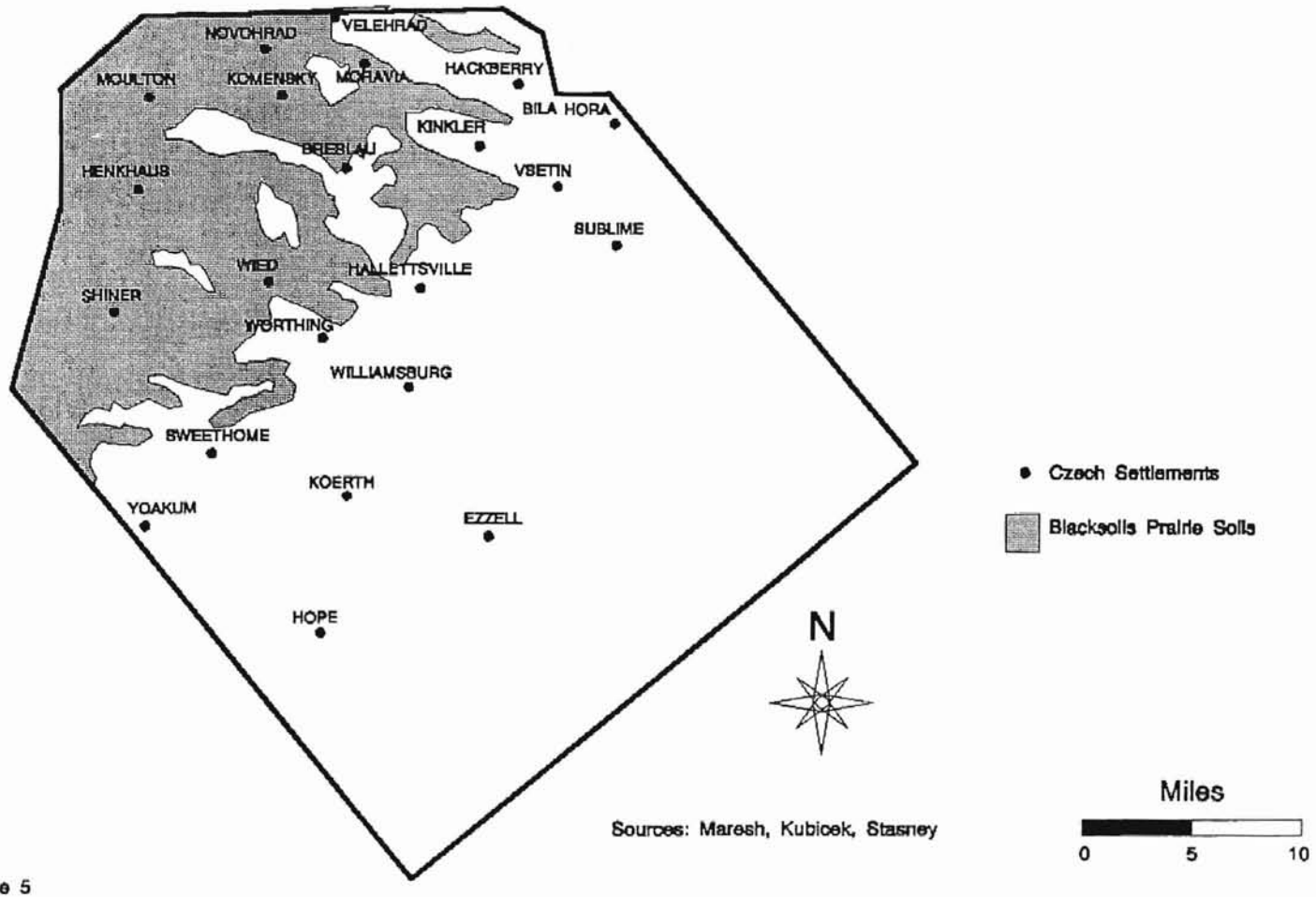
The first Czechs arrived in Lavaca County in the 1850s, some moving there from Fayette County, others arriving shortly after immigrating from the Czech lands. By 1876, Czechs ethnic islands were located in the northwestern part of the county (Fig. 6). This was part of the Blackland Prairie which was shunned by the Anglos. By 1880 the area under cultivation resulted in a settlement of Novohrad. Later Czech settlements include: Bila Hora, Vsetin, Velehrad, Vysehrad, Moravia, and Komensky (Stasney 1938).

By 1880 Czechs also moved into Anglo towns such as Hallettsville. By 1900 there were 100 Czech farms in the surrounding area, and the town was a business center for the Czechs, with Czechs businesses and one newspaper published in the Czech language. Moulton received the first Czech settlers in 1876 and by 1900 had over 150 Czech families, mostly from other parts of Texas. From its establishment in 1880, Shiner had


The Texas Czech Seed Colonies
Austin, Fayette, Lavaca, and Washington Counties
BURLESON
LEE
GRIMES
MONTGOMERY
WASHINGTON
BASTROP
AUSTIN
FAYETTE
WALLER
HARRIS
COLORADO
GONZALES
LAVACA
WHARTON
DEWITT
Miles
0
10
20
After Machann and Mendl 1983
Figure 4

The Texas Blackland Prairie Soils

In Relationship to Czech Settlements in Lavaca County



Sources: Maresh, Kubicek, Stasney

Figure 5

some Czech settlers. These numbered about 300 families by 1900; many moved in from Fayette County and other adjacent counties. Czechs settled in the town of Wied by 1870 and there were 150 families in 1900. These settlers arrived from within Texas and Europe. The Czechs of Worthington came as early as 1860 from Moravia then later from other counties in Texas so that by 1900 there were 125 Czech families, many second generation. In 1872, the first Czech settled in Sweethome, where in 1900 there were 60 families (Congress 1911). Czechs were arriving into the town of Sublime by 1873 and in 1890 50 Czech families were living there (Stasney 1938). By 1900, Lavaca was second to Fayette County in numbers of Czech settlers. Out of a population of 28,121, 18 percent were Czechs. In a report to the Committee on Immigration, it was noted that these Czechs principally farmed cotton, as well as raised beef cattle, and "were the best farmers in the region" (Congress 1911).

The Czechs were very ambitious and anxious to improve their lot and gain financial success. If this meant moving to find the best, cheapest land, they did. If this meant the entire family working constantly in the field to get the best harvest and going without, they did. They believed strongly in family and community. They enjoyed their fraternal organizations that also acted as a support group and they held onto their love and desire for the land that was to last until this day.

In 1980 there were 750,000 Czech-Americans in Texas, the only Southern state to have a Czech minority according to the census. This is five percent of the Texas population and the Czech language was the third most important (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). Why were the Czechs so successful in Texas, why is Czech identity still so strong, and why are there so many Czechs still in Texas? The Czechs were successful in America, socially and economically, because of their long history of success in their homelands, politically and economically. When the Czechs arrived in America, they would turn to established German settlers for assistance, renewing the original European bond of

cooperation. The first Czechs to arrive in Texas encouraged others to join them and had a support network which helped later immigrants.

Another reason for success can be discerned in "A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas, 1836-1986" (1991), where Terry Jordan puts forward various ideas of about the initial settling of Texas that affected the ethnicity of the Czechs who settled there. First the Americans had only been in the region approximately 30 years when the Czechs arrived. They were relative newcomers. During that time Americans, or Texans, fought a war of independence from Mexico in 1836, creating a unique culture into which the Czechs arrived. Next, the Americans themselves were not homogenous and still retained certain ethnic traits of the various European ethnic groups who had settled elsewhere in the United States. Jordan states that the region quickly became a shatterbelt, calling it culturally balkanized. The Czechs were part of this phenomenon.

The Civil War also affected Czech settlement. The Texans were adamant that all able-bodied men would fight, which caused friction with the Czechs but when the War was over the situation changed. The Czechs filled an empty niche left by the vanishing plantation culture. The plantation owners, in the throes of economic hardship, welcomed the opportunity to sell out to Czech farmers, even aided the Czechs in their new agricultural pursuits.

Lastly, in his article Jordan presents the premise that there was a weak host culture in Texas by the turn of the century. That is not to say there was no Czech ethnicity. This was a unique situation that aided the Czechs in their economic pursuits, in retaining their Czech heritage. and helped create a new ethnicity, the Czech Texan.

Summary

Czech ethnicity began to form as a Slavic people settled in their new European home. Over the centuries the Czechs developed an ethnicity unique from the bordering

groups. One of these groups, the Germans, has always been closely associated to the Czechs and helped the Czechs settle in Texas.

Pride and identity as Czechs, pushed those who left for America. They were not willing to suffer economic hardship any longer, not when America offered a better life. The Czechs came from certain regions in their homeland, in groups or family units. They chain migrated along an insulating route into a relatively hospitable host culture. The fragmented Texas culture and the shattered economic aftermath of the Civil War would aid the Czechs in their new homes and with their new identities. Another reason the Czechs were successful in Texas was because they were willing to work harder than their Anglo neighbors and sacrifice many comforts for economic advancement (Skrabanek 1988). Also, they were willing to move from place to place if they thought they could find better, cheaper land somewhere else. All these factors spelled prosperity for the Czechs. All these factors melded into a new identity, the ethnicity of the Czech Texan.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMPACT OF CZECHS ON COTTON CROPPING IN LAVACA COUNTY

> *"The* (Czech) *immigrants frequently chose the rich black-soil prairie lands, concentrated on cotton, and used modern farming methods. Most were excellent farmers who became major producers of cotton in Texas"* (Allen and Turner 1987).

Czech ethnicity and cotton production, even within the context of Texas, are broad and diverse subjects. Cotton production, its history and its movement into Texas, is examined in this chapter. The agricultural practices of the Czech Texans are traced back to their European roots to show how these practices manifested themselves in cotton cropping. Cotton production needs are discussed within the context of the agricultural sector to understand the whole picture of the impact of Czech ethnicity on cotton production in Lavaca County. The cotton culture also had an impact on the Czechs, for although cotton helped the Czechs succeed in their new life in America, there came a time when it was no longer economically feasible to grow it in Lavaca County. How did the Czechs react to this dilemma? How did the end of cotton production affect them? This chapter examines cotton production and agriculture, as well as the agricultural practices of the Czechs, and how they applied to the Czechs of Lavaca County.

The Agricultural History of Texas With Emphasis on Lavaca County

By the 1850s, when Czech settlement began, a typical Texas cotton culture was firmly established in Lavaca County. First recorded by Cabeza de Vaca in his sixteenth century explorations, then noted at San Antonio missions in the eighteenth century, Stephen Austin encouraged his colonists to grow cotton. By the 1820s the first

commercial bales were shipped to New Orleans from a plantation within the colony (*Texas Almanac* 1980). With a soil and climate similar to their previous homes, Anglo immigrants from the Old South quickly supplanted many existing livestock endeavors with their cotton plantations, using the slaves they brought into the area (*Texas Almanac* 1958). It was cheaper and easier to ship nonperishable cotton to the nearby Gulf ports for export than to drive a herd of cattle the long distance north through the dangerous Indian Territory (*Texas Almanac* 1941). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Anglo plantation owners shunned the Blackland soil of the northwest, competing with the cattle raisers for the sandy bottom lands of the southeast sector of the county (USDA 1992). The Czechs settled on the Blackland soils and with their agricultural practices revolutionized the industry within the county (Boethel 1959).

A few Czechs were already practicing their methods of intensified and diverse agriculture when a series of events occurred that would completely change the cultural landscape in Lavaca County (Kubicek 1996). The most important event was the Civil War, which would change the agricultural economy of Lavaca County from cattle raising and plantation farming of large tracts of land to small self-sustaining cotton farms, each tended by one Czech immigrant and his family, practicing the agricultural methods unique to his culture. The plantation owners were impoverished by the loss of a labor force that had accounted for half the taxable property in Lavaca County (Long 1996). These two factors led to a faltering economy until the increased immigration of Czechs around 1870. Soon the plantation owners were breaking up their properties and parceling them off to the Czechs; the number of farms rose from 905 in 1870 to 3,062 by 1890. This accelerated immigration happened in conjunction with the invention of barbed wire, which allowed for the fencing of crops, encouraging the westward movement of the cattle raisers. Moreover, according to Kubicek, this is the period when Germans in the county turned their agricultural holdings over to the Czechs and moved to urban areas, sometimes staying within the county, running the businesses that supplied the outlying areas. Success

was guaranteed in 1887 when the San Antonio and Aransas Pass railroad finished the branch that runs through Hallettsville (Kubicek 1996; Long 1996). Now cotton gins within the county could ship bales of cotton to the Gulf ports for export. Between 1870 and 1890, the number of bales grew from 3,528 to 38,349 per year (Long 1996).

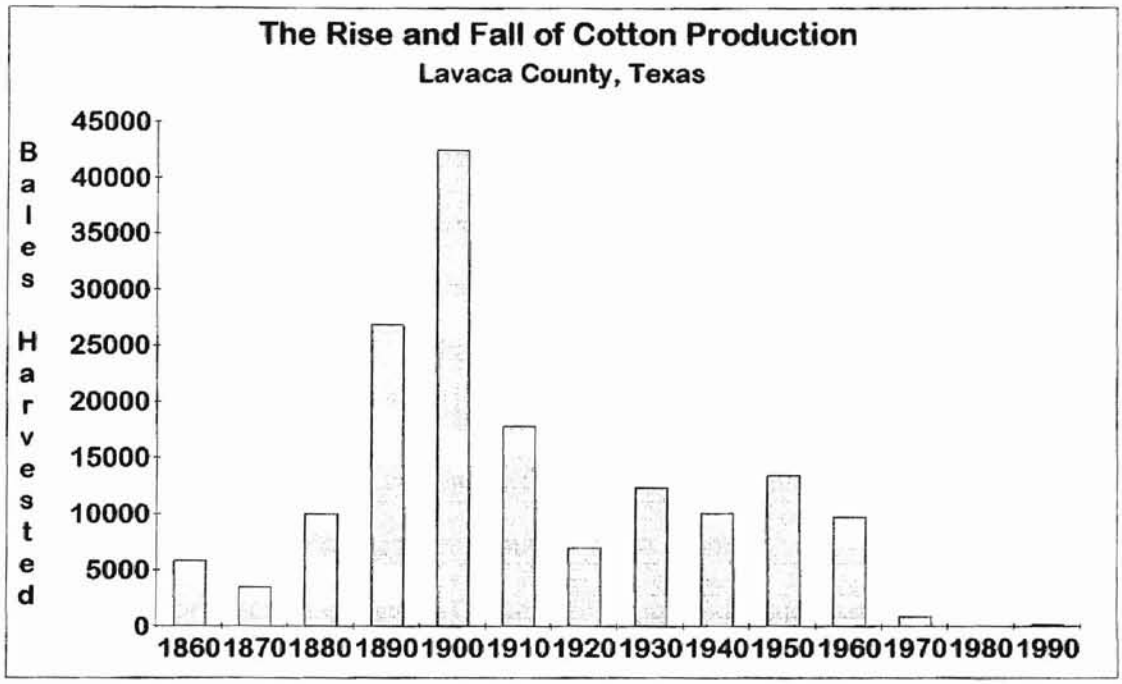


Figure 6

Cotton culture was at its peak in East Central Texas in 1900 (U.S. Dept. of Interior, 1902) (Fig. 6). This thesis examines this period to find if the Czechs had an impact on cotton production in Texas. First, the location quotient method was chosen to determine if counties with a high percentage of Czechs had higher yields of cotton. Using a regionalization based on information in the Kerr study (1967), 42 counties are compared. These counties run in a band from the north to the south across the Blackland Prairie region. Within this region were some of the highest Czech populations as well as some counties without any Czechs. When the location quotient was calculated using bales

of cotton harvested divided by acres in cotton production, Lavaca County was in the top quadrant at 1.20, significantly higher than the 1.00 benchmark and placing it well above the average (Fig. 7). In fact only two counties placed higher, Aransas with 1.97 and Fayette with 1.31. Aransas is an anomaly because the county only had 53 acres in cotton with a yield of 42 bales, while other counties had tens of thousand bales and hundreds of thousands of acres of land in cotton. Lavaca County had 79,428 acres in cotton production and harvested 38,349 bales in the 1900 census (US Dept. of Interior 1902). Fayette County had the second highest percentage of Czech population behind Lavaca County in 1900, 6.2 percent to 6.5 percent respectively. Then the percentage of Czechs in county populations was figured for the 42 counties and as previously mentioned Lavaca County was the highest (Fig. 8). When comparing the two maps, there is a definite relationship between the counties with high Czech populations and high cotton production. In both cases Lavaca County falls in the highest quadrant. This high rate of cotton production would only last for about 20 more years.

Cotton production in Lavaca County continued to be successful until the 1930s. Around 1900 there was a period of diversification in agriculture within the county, beginning with new, commercial endeavors in dairy cattle and swine herds. After 1910, poultry production was initiated that would place Lavaca County among the top producers of eggs and poultry by the 1930s. Another change was the new truck farming industry; the sandy soils of the southern part of the county were well-suited to the raising of various vegetables, such as Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, and tomatoes. For a time, tomatoes were important to Lavaca County (Kubicek 1996) and in the early 1930s it was among the leading producers in Texas (*Texas Almanac* 1931). Until the 1950s, Yoakum was the center of the commercial tomato industry of the county (Kubicek 1996). Farmers hoped that tomatoes would replace cotton as a cash crop as soil depletion and erosion coupled with the boll weevil were causing a decline in the cotton harvest (*Texas Almanac* 1939; Herman Hanslik 1996; Long 1996).

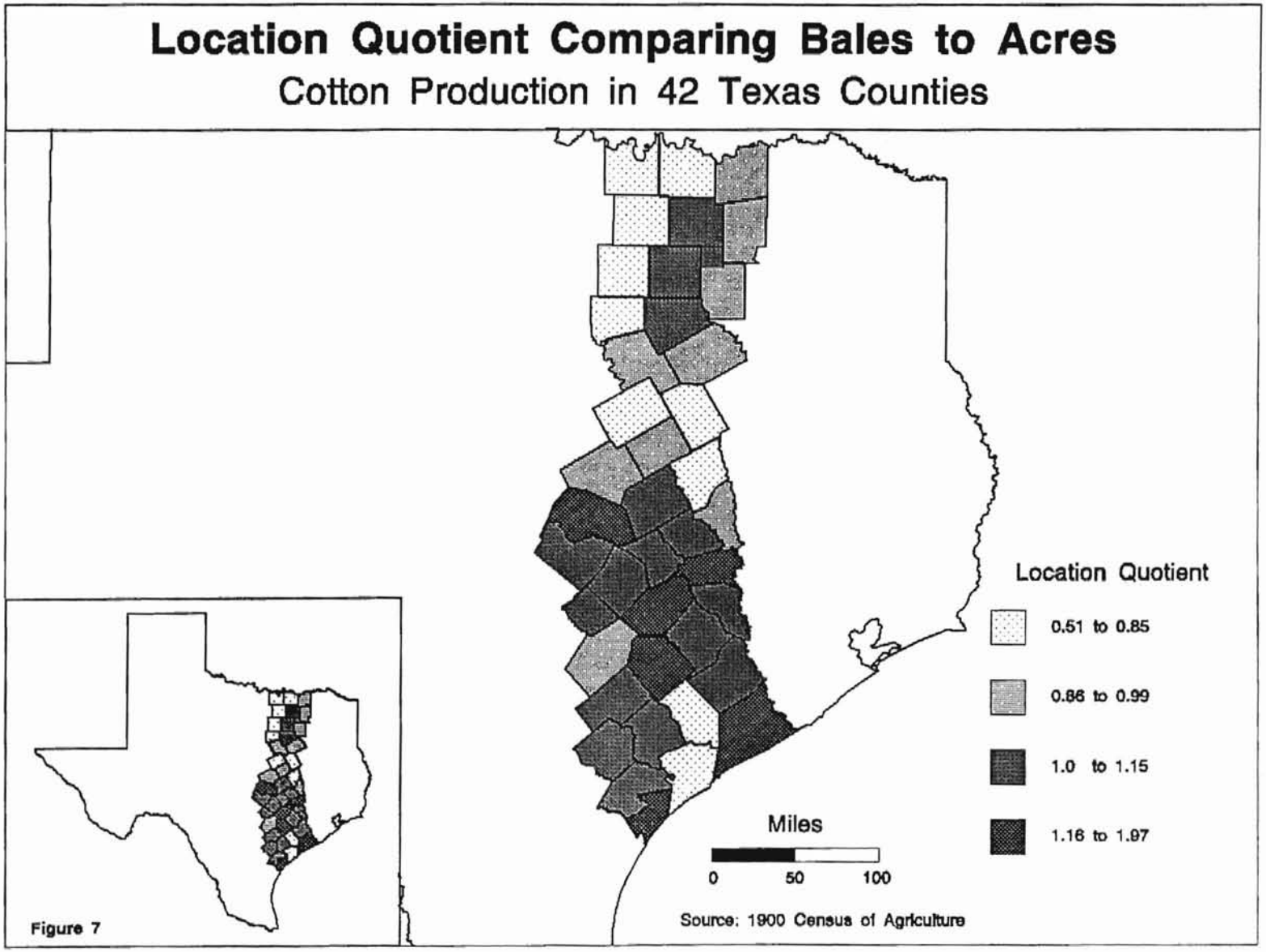
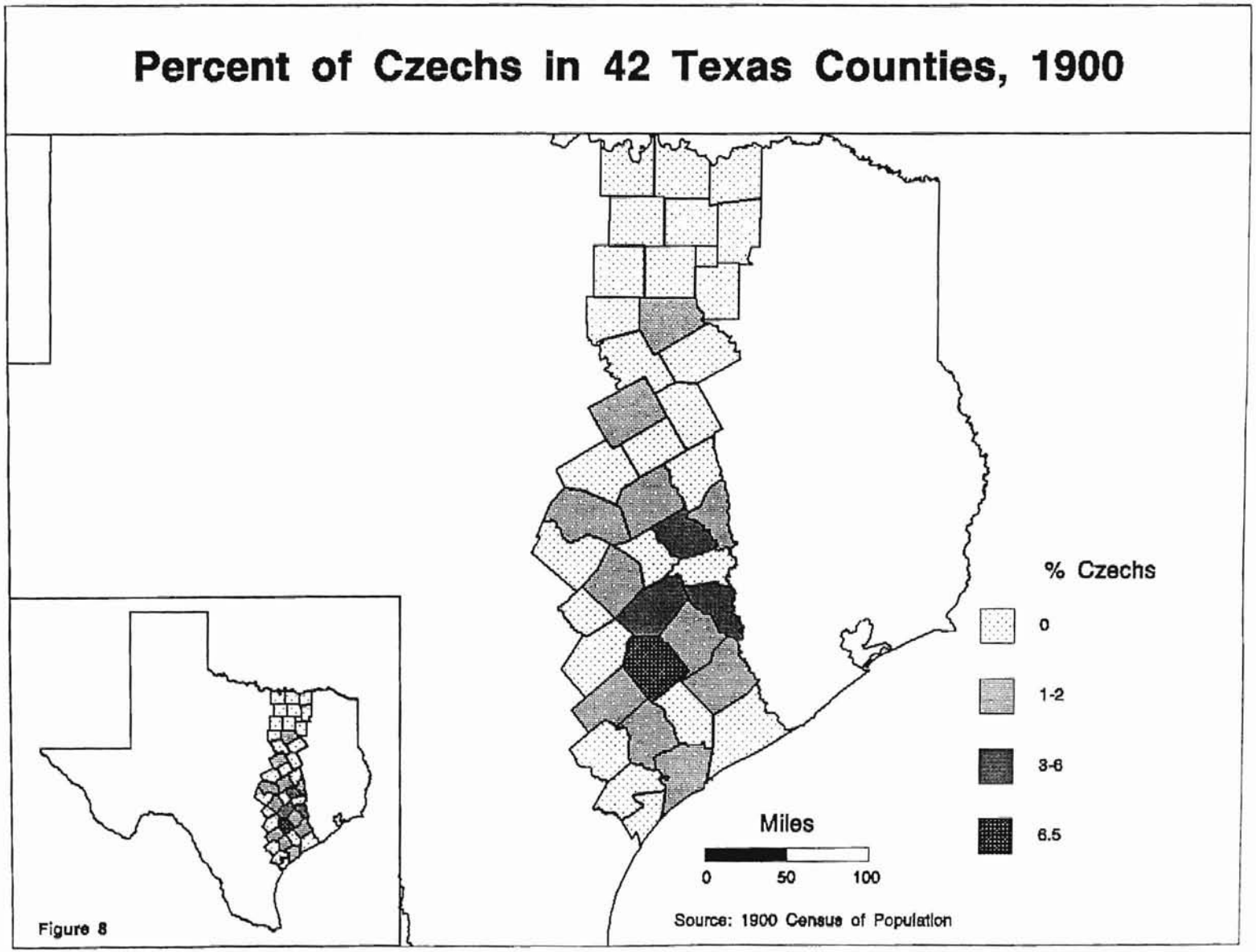

Location Quotient Comparing Bales to Acres
Cotton Production in 42 Texas Counties
Location Quotient
0.51 to 0.85
0.86 to 0.99
1.0 to 1.15
1.16 to 1.97
Miles
0
50
100
Source: 1900 Census of Agriculture

Figure 7


Percent of Czechs in 42 Texas Counties, 1900
% Czechs
0
1-2
3-6
6.5
Miles
0
50
100
Source: 1900 Census of Population
Figure 8

By the 1930s, the Blackland soils of Lavaca County were producing one-third to one-half the cotton crop of previous years (Herman Hanslik 1996). Compounding poor yields were the plummeting prices for cotton on the world market. Since Texas exported 90 percent of its bales, the state was hard hit (*Texas Almanac* 1939). Although Lavaca County saw a decrease in production, the market was flooded with cotton as growers tried to offset low prices. Tariffs on cotton added to the economic crisis at a time when the entire United States was in the middle of the Great Depression (*Texas Almanac* 1939). To alleviate the crises in cotton, and other areas of agriculture, Congress enacted an allotment system to control production (*Texas Almanac* 1934). The glut in production would be relieved by curtailing the numbers of acres of a particular crop. The allotments and how they affected Lavaca County are discussed in a separate section.

It was time for a change and cotton production began to move to the new fields in West and Southwest Texas. The new cotton farms ran from the Lubbock area of the South High Plains down to the Rio Grande area, where cotton was raised in large tracts of land using irrigation to offset the dry climate. This change in climate cut the occurrence of boll weevil infestations, which had thrived in subtropical, southeast Texas. Labor shortages in this new cotton culture were alleviated by the mechanization of the industry, a change that had been held back by the one-man operations of the Blackland region. Improvements ranged from machines to pick cotton to others that cleaned the harvested cotton at new, multimillion dollar gins (*Texas Almanac* 1958). How could the small farmers of the Blackland region on their depleted, eroded, pest infested tracts of land compete against this modern, mechanized giant in the West?

In the 1950s agricultural methods changed again. First, this decade followed the second most important event in the history of the Czechs of Lavaca County, World War II. The men who had fought overseas returned home changed forever; they became Americanized. They wanted a better life than that of "chopping cotton" because raising cotton the traditional way had been backbreaking work. In addition, the GI Bill offered

opportunities for social mobility, a drastic shift from the Czech ethnicity of the pre-War years. Many men took advantage of this opportunity, and when they finished their education, found jobs in the large cities of Texas, utilizing their training (Kubicek 1996).

Meanwhile, the agriculture of Lavaca County was undergoing a transformation. The trends in diversification began in the early 1900s continued but the emphasis turned back to the original agriculture of the first colonists, cattle raising and supporting crops. New, improved cattle breeds increased output (USDA 1992) and the consolidation of the many small farms aided livestock production (Long 1996). Ruined cotton fields have been restored as pastures for cattle (USDA 1992) Modern Lavaca County produces significant harvests of hay, milo, and corn, as well as beef cattle and poultry (Long 1996). Agricultural income is supplemented by oil and natural gas revenues. There is also a burgeoning pecan industry that, according to Hanslik and Kubicek, is centered around the Czech sector of the population. This is covered in a separate section (1996).

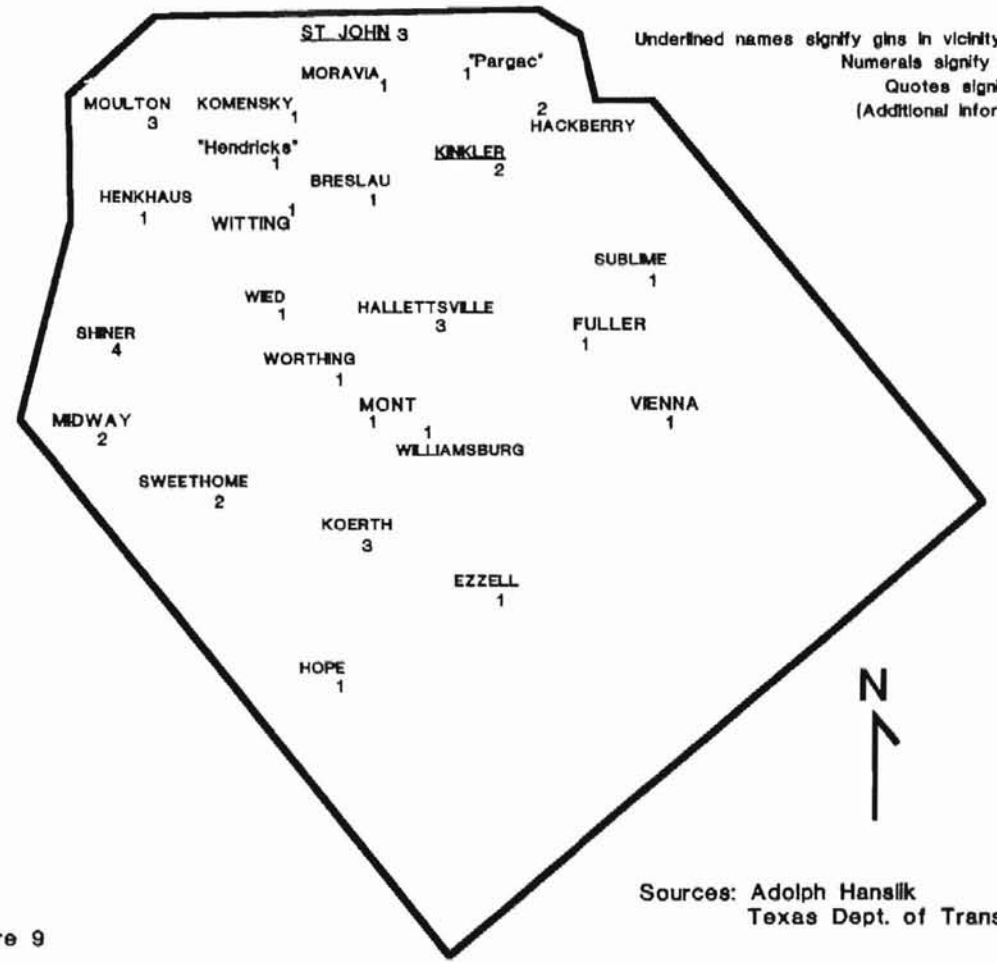
The Cotton Gins of Lavaca County

Cotton is history to the people of Lavaca County. Many of the records that showed where the cotton farms had been located and whether these farms had been run by the Czechs in the county are gone. Information on cotton gins was located through a cotton broker in Lubbock who had been raised in Lavaca County. Adolph Hanslik (of Czech descent) grew up chopping cotton in his father's fields. He has accumulated information about the locations of the gins of Lavaca County (Fig. 9). These gins were located every five to six miles, so they could be accessible to the cotton farmers in the surrounding areas (Kubicek 1996).

Little evidence remains of the gins today. The Buske Gin is located in Shiner. It was here that the last bale of cotton was processed in Lavaca County in 1971 (Rogers 1992). Another older gin stands idle in the small community of Wied. The gin owners were usually also cotton farmers who supplemented their own incomes by processing

LAVACA COUNTY COTTON GINS

HISTORICAL LOCATIONS (1900-1950)



Underlined names signify gins in vicinity but no place name on map.
Numerals signify number of gins in community.
Quotes signify owner's name of rural gin.
(Additional information located in Appendix B.)

Sources: Adolph Hansilk
Texas Dept. of Transportation

Miles
0 5 10

Figure 9

cotton for other farmers from July to September. Throughout the years they processed other crops, e.g. corn, as they were harvested (Kubicek 1996). Ginners of Lavaca County could build a gin for between $8,000 and $10,000 and pay it off in three years, which made the investment worthwhile. Nowadays gins in West Texas cost three million dollars, states Adolph Hanslik (1996). The one man operations like those in Lavaca County can no longer compete.

The Effect of Cotton Allotments on Lavaca County

According to Herman Hanslik the decline in cotton production began as early as 1910 (1996). The boll weevil and years of hard rains in the 1920s, on top of the soil depletion, meant the end of Lavaca County as a leader in cotton production in Texas. Just adding manure, the standard Czech solution to a poor soil, was no longer enough; the Czechs were having to put all their land to cotton for a profit, meaning no diversification. In addition the Czechs never adjusted to the torrential rains of Texas. To compensate for lower yields the cotton fields were planted right up to the river banks. In the 1920s, Herman Hanslik remembers his father attaching a sign on a native pecan tree, claiming the yield for himself. Due to soil loss from cultivated fields this sign, originally seven to eight feet up the tree, sat on the ground in just over ten years. Erosion of the farmlands, coupled with cattlemen establishing ponds on their properties, has left the Lavaca River dry most of the year. Hanslik's father terraced his fields in the 1930s but it was too late. When Hanslik senior died in 1953, he no longer planted cotton and was trying to turn his land into pecan production.

The Czechs practiced their traditional agricultural methods of cotton cropping for many years even though yields continued to decline. The Czechs were also known for their conservative nature; they did not like change. Did the Czechs of Lavaca County remain in cotton growing longer than other counties of the Blackland region? A comparison between two dates using the 42 counties, some Czech and some non-Czech,

of the Kerr study was made to examine this hypothesis. The censuses of 1930 and 1960 were used because these were two significant years, the former as a date just prior to enactment of government regulations and the latter because shortly after this date allotments were sold off, ending production in the county within a short time. As a whole most production plummeted, sometimes as much as 95 percent. Only Travis County saw an increase, of 121 percent. Acres in production in Lavaca County fell 70 percent in 30 years, putting it in the second lowest quadrant (Fig. 10). Lavaca County is slightly below the median, 74.5. Calculating the mean is a problem due to the 121 percent outlier. With 41 counties, the mean is 70.41, putting Lavaca below the average, and with the outlier, the average is 65.86. Although Lavaca County is in the lower half of the region in change, the evidence is not conclusive enough to determine the Czechs grew cotton longer than other counties in the region.

Herman Hanslik himself farmed cotton until 1960. What kept him in cotton so long were the government allotments, part of the New Deal program of the 1930s (Marwitz 1963). Enacted by the federal government to control production of cotton, thus raising prices, the allotments in Lavaca County were $113, 491.39 by 1938 (*Texas Almanac* 1939). According to Hanslik, the allotments were not successful in Lavaca County (1996). Most of the Czechs were adamantly against the cotton allotments and grew "wild cotton". Rather than abide by the law, the farmers would bypass the system and arrange the sale of their cotton. Hanslik senior hauled his own cotton to Galveston or Houston and shipped it off to a buyer in Germany. When he did join the allotment program, he had to pay penalties for all the years he had run wild cotton. Some years the allotments were lifted. When this occurred production would increase, offsetting the previous downturns (Marwitz 1963).

The *Texas Almanac 1939* included dollar amounts for cotton allotments by county. A location quotient is used to compare these allotments to acres in production for 1940 (U. S. Department of Commerce 1943). Lavaca county stands out as one of two counties

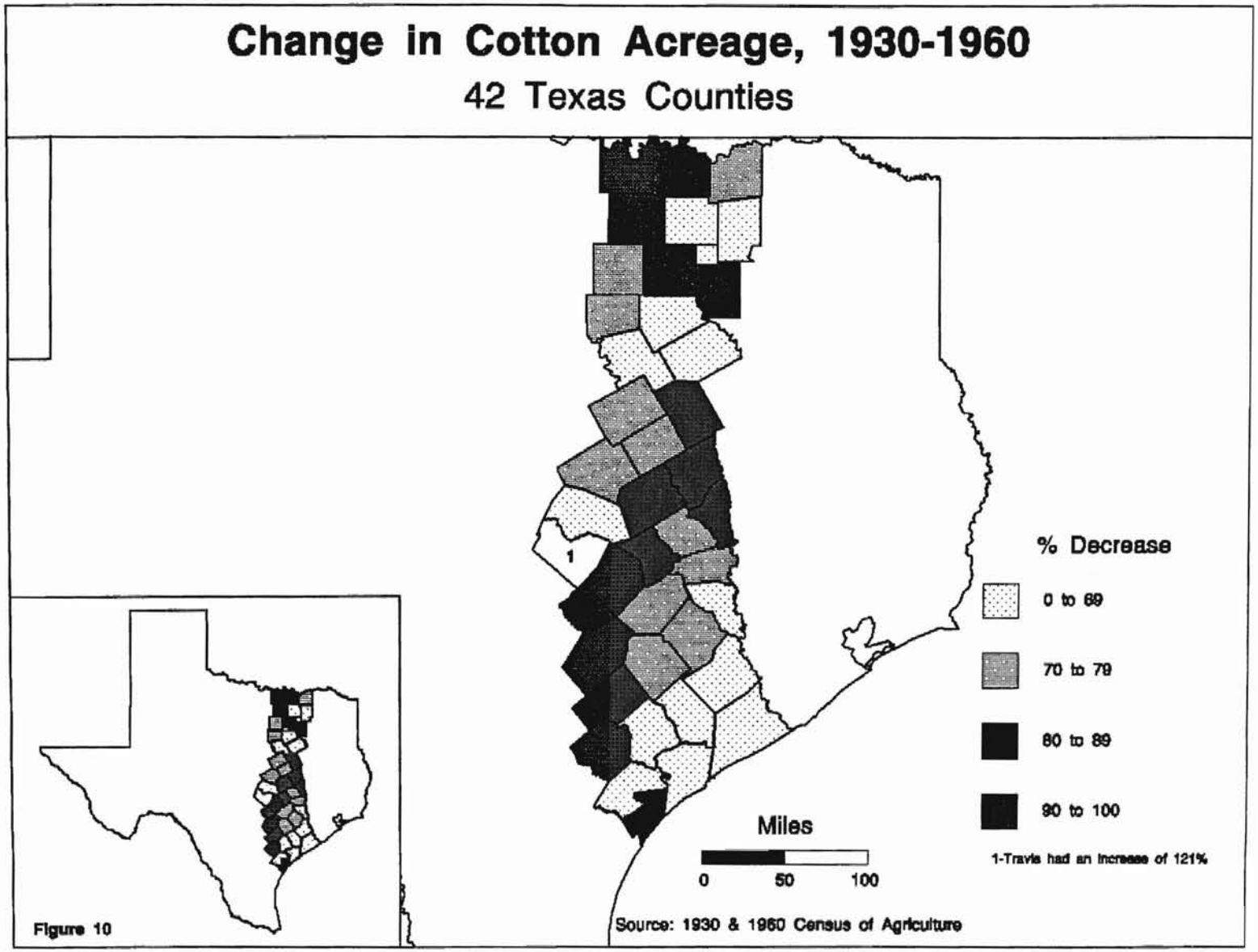

Change in Cotton Acreage, 1930-1960
42 Texas Counties
1
% Decrease
0 to 69
70 to 79
80 to 89
90 to 100
1-Travis had an increase of 121%
Miles
0
50
100
Source: 1930 & 1960 Census of Agriculture

Figure 10

in the lowest quadrant (Fig.11). Although other factors, such as correct reporting of acres would need to be investigated, the evidence seems to substantiate Hanslik's claim.

During the 1960s, new legislation was passed to allow for the sale of the allotments. When Herman Hanslik was chairman of the Agricultural County Committee in 1954, there were over 3000 allotments in Lavaca County. No records were found that showed the location of individual allotments. Originally allotments were tied to the farms, adding to the worth of the property. Between 1964 and 1965, the allotments were transferred to the West Texas cotton fields (Herman Hanslik 1996). It would be interesting to discover if a modern day chain migration led the Czechs of Lavaca County into West Texas. Hanslik knows some Czechs went there in the 1930s, and he has seen evidence of Lavaca County family names in the small towns around San Angelo (1996).

Every year a few farmers still try to grow cotton in Lavaca County (Fig. 12). Between the economics of cotton, government regulations, and the ever-present boll weevil, cotton is a thing of the past in Lavaca County. Kubicek said that three years ago, cotton prices were up but the sprays the government brought in for pests killed the cotton (1996). The farmers there depend on cattle raising, feed crops, and oil and natural gas leases for their income. Both Kubicek and Hanslik claim pecans could fulfill the need to grow plants that is such an important part of the Czech culture (1996).

Pecans and the Czechs of Lavaca County

According to the *Soil Survey of Lavaca County, Texas* (1992), pecan production is becoming a major industry in the county. Pecans are native to Texas, growing along the many river banks in the state; for over 100 years pecans have been grown commercially (Evans 1996). Often ranking second in the nation, Texas harvests millions of pounds every year. With improved methods, including sophisticated cultivation, mechanical shakers, and sweepers, the pecan industry is becoming more productive. Two

Location Quotient Comparing Allotments to Acres

Cotton Production in 42 Texas Counties

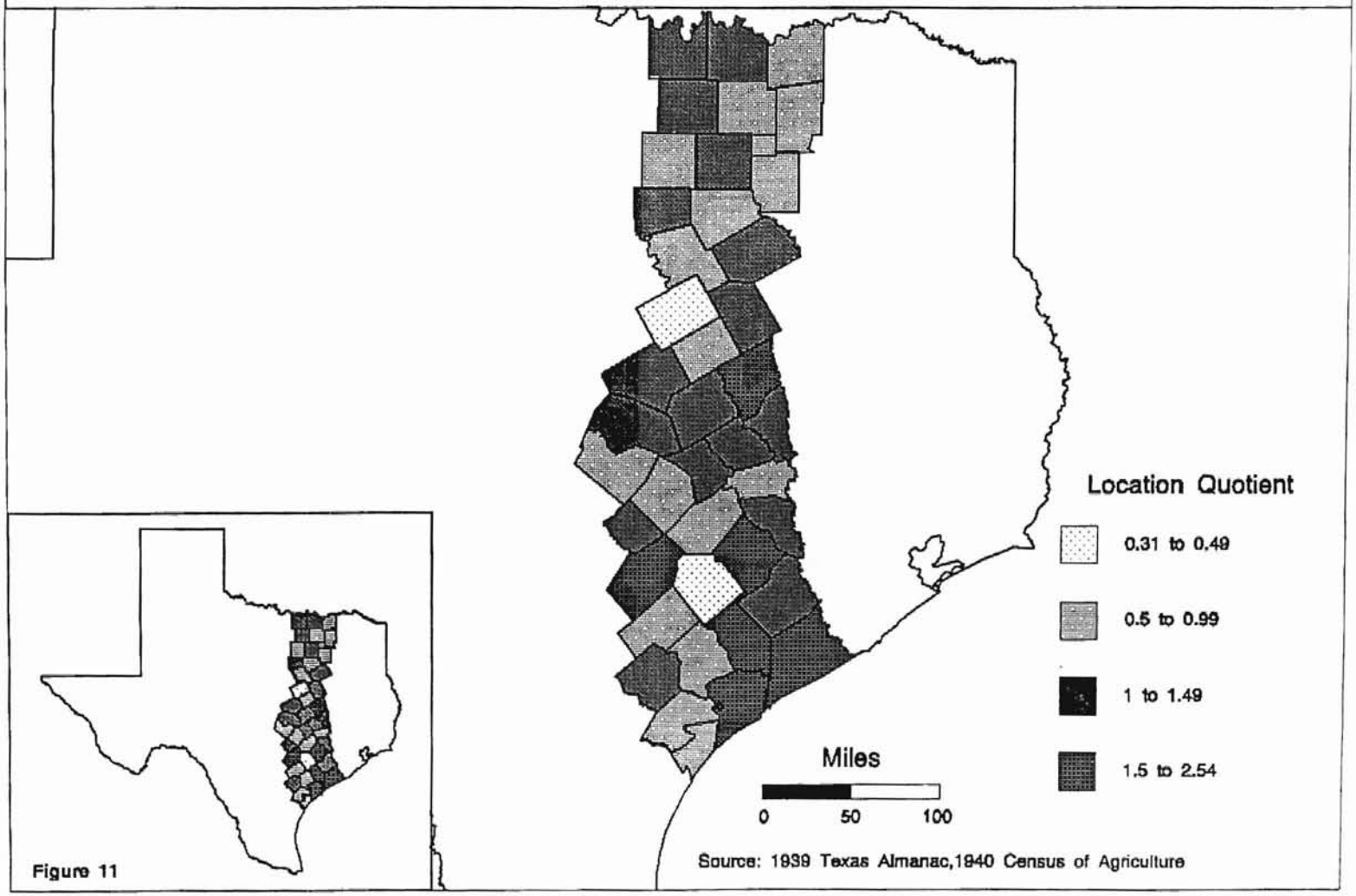
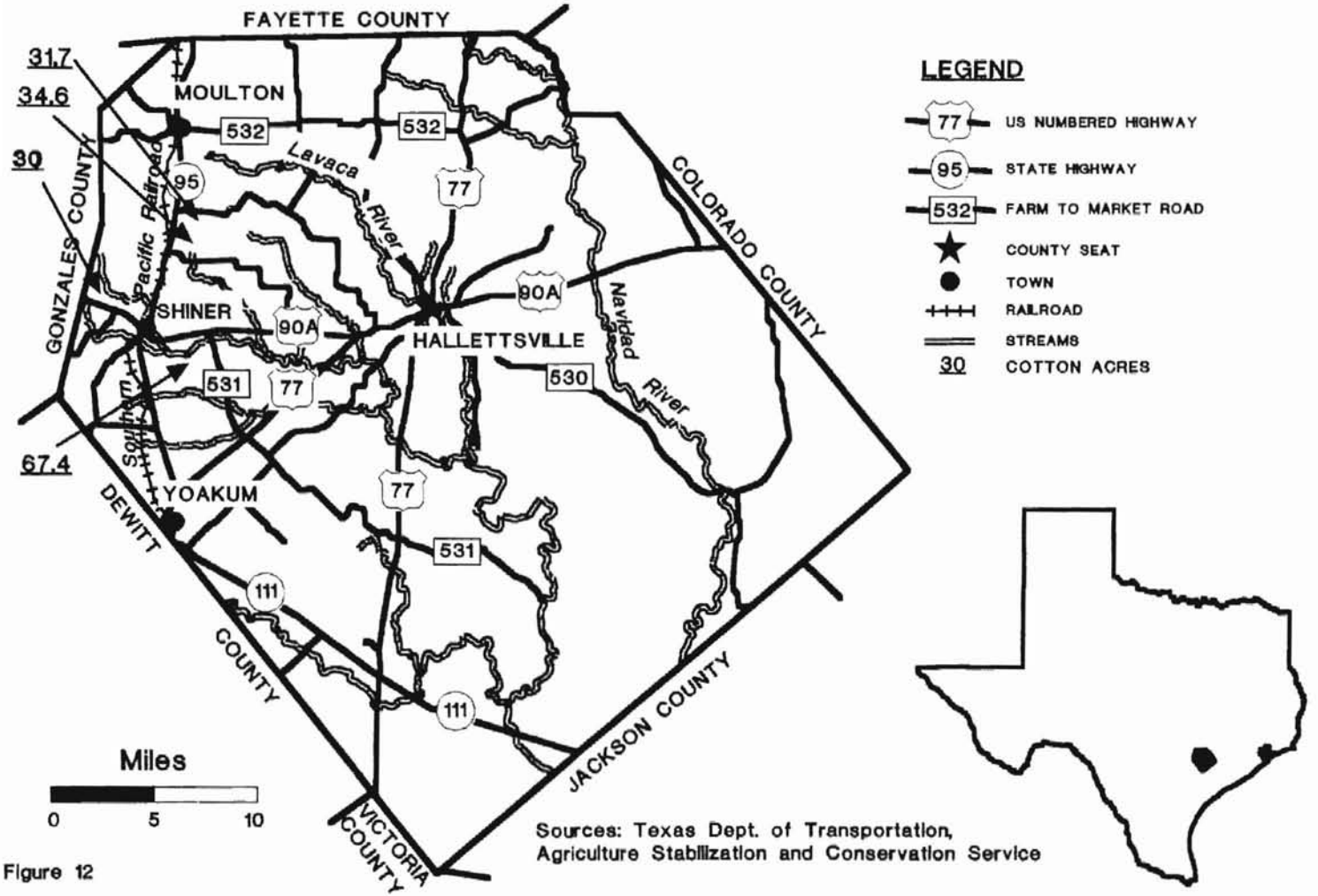


Figure 11

1996 ACRES IN COTTON

LAVACA COUNTY, TEXAS



Sources: Texas Dept. of Transportation,
Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service

Figure 12

farmers integrate pecan production with other agricultural pursuits; cattle can graze among the pecan trees and use them for shade (Herman Hanslik 1996).

Over the years, farmers have been encouraged to increase their pecan production. In a 1932 edition of the *Lavaca County Tribune*, the county agent suggested that farmers look to their native pecans for economic relief. With the land becoming too depleted to grow cotton, he suggested cultivating native pecans because the seasons when the pecans require the most labor, midwinter and summer, are lull times for other crops. The article included advice on how to enhance growth by thinning, pruning, and clearing the area around the trees of other growth.

Growers in the county have produced a State Champion Native called the Prilop Pecan. There is a great deal of controversy whether the pecan was developed through grafting by a gentleman named Prilop or by two others, Steffek and Kallus, both Czechs. Pecans are cultivated by Czechs just south of Hallettsville near the rivers where the native trees grow. It would be possible to map the location of both cultivated and native pecans groves using topographic maps and field survey. Some of the local farmers, through leasing land and sharing harvests with other farmers, can bring in 250,000 pounds of pecans in a good year (Janak 1996). It is the opinion of both Hanslik and Kubicek that pecan growing fulfills a need in the Czech to nurture plants (1996).

How the Cultural Agricultural Island of Lavaca County Developed

There is an abundance of publications that praise the Czechs for their high level of agricultural expertise. The works of Skrabanek, Machann and Mendl, Hodges, and Korytova-Magstadt all describe the success of the Czechs, especially in cotton production. A *Report of the Immigration Commission, Part 24: Recent Immigrants in Agriculture* (1911) stated the Bohemian farmer exemplified the qualities of industry, intelligence, and perseverance of the German landowner. This is high praise for the Germans have always been considered expert agriculturists. This ability was passed on while the Germans and

perseverance of the German landowner. This is high praise for the Germans have always been considered expert agriculturists. This ability was passed on while the Germans and Czechs commingled over the centuries. Still a big difference between the two ethnic groups is that the Czechs almost exclusively remained agriculturists until the middle of the twentieth century. Oftentimes, Lavaca County included, the Germans sold their farms to Czech immigrants and moved into urban areas (Kubicek 1996). According to the report the Czechs came into the region, homesteaded the land, began to cultivate cotton, and within a short period of time had prosperous farmsteads that surpassed non-Czech farmers in cotton production, as well as other crops (1911). They literally pushed the Anglos and other ethnic groups out of the cotton fields.

In Skrabanek's study on Czech agricultural practices, he found cultural factors were responsible for their success. Among these was a firmly entrenched value system that included a reverence for the land and the view that farming was a way of life rather than a source of income. The Czechs found fulfillment and happiness in successfully tending their fields and improving their farmsteads. According to Skrabanek, this cultural conditioning was shared by virtually every member of the Czech communities of Texas (1950). Immigrants passed these agricultural traits on to their children and grandchildren. These traits that were so firmly indoctrinated that often the first and second generations had more farmers, not less, as is the case in other immigrant groups (Report 1911).

Czech agricultural practices formed out of inadequate land resources in Europe, creating land hungry peasants (Skrabanek (1950). Not only were these peasants limited to incredibly small (five acre) plots of land, the situation was further aggravated with the knowledge that political rights and prestige went along with large holdings. These conditions created a deep respect for land ownership, putting it above everything else, and was brought by the Czech immigrants to America where success was measured by owning a piece of land and how well it was tended. Skrabanek claimed it was more socially unacceptable to have weeds in the field than to miss church or get drunk (1950). Even

those who worked outside farming usually had a piece of property. Tenants usually worked for relatives so they could earn enough money to buy land or would later inherit the land they worked.

Bohemian and Moravian land shortages meant the Czechs depended on ingenuity coupled with working the crops excessive hours every day for a successful harvest . Being accustomed to hard work aided the Czechs in their quest for property in America. They often worked for ten years to save enough money to purchase land. Hanslik traced his great-grandfather to Dubina, Fayette County. He accounts for the gap in years between arriving in the United States and buying land in Lavaca County as those spent laboring to earn the money needed to purchase a farm (1996). The Czechs used their networks to discover the best land buys. Once a family found a good deal, they would often write to friends and relatives in Europe regarding their purchase.

Even after purchasing the tract of land, Czech farmers were still too poor to hire workers, therefore, they turned to the family unit for help. This is another ethnic trait begun in the homeland, where in order to successfully farm their tiny plots of land, all the members of a Czech family worked in the fields. Women and children worked alongside the men, creating a close harmonious unit with strong ties; the children learned early a sense of responsibility and family solidarity with little place for individualism (Skrabanek 1950).

Once a Czech found the best bargain on a piece of fertile land, he stayed. In the Old Country land had been a premium; once settled the farmer had considered it his duty to tend the land, preserving it for future generations. By tradition, most of the settlers in Texas were of the cottager class who considered farming their rightful occupation. The Czech immigrants had a deep attachment to the soil, and felt duty-bound to care for the earth that supported them.

Due to the diminutive land holdings in Europe, the Czechs were accustomed to labor intensive, diversified farming practices that were hugely successful in the larger

farms on the fertile prairies of Texas. Most of the Czech farms were around 100 acres, run by the family unit, self-sufficient, and revolved around a classless community that replaced the small villages of the homeland. As well as cash crops like cotton and corn, each farm had a vegetable garden, fruit trees, a hay meadow, and small fields of grain. The farm might include a truck garden whose vegetables could be sold in town. These diversified operations were also typical of the homeland, where variety usually meant there would be something to harvest in the fall (Skrabanek 1950).

At first the Czechs encountered problems with cotton and corn already being grown in the region. They planted the fertile soils of Texas the same as they had planted the poor soils of the Moravian hills. For example they planted too close but readily took advice from their Anglo and German neighbors. Within a few years they demonstrated successful farming practices and soon surpassed the non-Czech farmers (Machann and Mendl 1983).

These much larger farms meant the end of the small, tightly knit villages of the homeland. This isolation was alien to the Czechs but they adapted to the new conditions as best they could. Czech towns did develop where the farmers and their families could socialize; visiting between farms was a regular occurrence. The Czechs found they had little in common with the natives and although they originally settled near Germans, soon turned within their own ethnic group for socializing and aid. The cooperative spirit was strong in the Czech rural communities where everyone helped each other and they even instigated cooperative ventures to purchase merchandise or farm supplies. They would share equipment, aid a sick farmer in the field, and sometimes maintain plots that benefited the community. An example would be a small cotton patch to pay for the cost of a school. This spirit of cooperation would later manifest itself as a social aspect of Czech ethnicity in Texas: mutual benefit and fraternal organizations (Skrabanek 1950).

One cooperative that was unique to the Czechs and quickly became widespread was the beef clubs. These small nonprofit cooperatives, with no affiliation outside their

week, on a rotating basis, a farmer would supply one head of cattle for the club. Each Saturday, members would assemble in a special building where a designated butcher had parceled up the cuts of meat. Careful records determined who received which cut. As the fall approached, when hog butchering temporarily halted the club, the totals were tallied up. After paying the butchers, any debits or credits were paid off in cash. Traditionally the men met to collect the meat which turned the beef clubs into a social occasion (Skrabanek 1950).

Summary

Lavaca County appears to be a classic example of the impact the Czechs had on cotton production. Other studies have high praise for the agricultural expertise of the Czech Texans. The location quotient quantitatively backs up the opinions. The Czechs did have an impact on cotton production in Texas. The Czechs retained an aversion to government policies, a leftover of the years under the Habsburgs. They were adamantly against any kind of government regulation, including cotton allotments. Lavaca County remains a highly agricultural area where the residents still exhibit an ethnicity that had developed over the centuries in the homelands of the Czechs. Although pecan growing has not replaced cotton production acreage under cultivation it fulfills the desire to "husband" the soil that has typified the Czechs for centuries. Altered by living in the United States for the last 150 years, many Czech cultural traits are still apparent in Lavaca County, especially in the area of agriculture.

The Czechs of Texas came to America seeking economic prosperity which they achieved through growing cotton. They succeeded using the agricultural practices they had developed in their homeland -- diversification, self-sufficiency, and hard work. They also were willing to learn from established farmers how to grow cotton in the fertile soils of their new home, quickly shedding aspects of their ethnicity that hindered economic success. This was typical in many ethnic groups, as Baltsperger determined in his study on

success. This was typical in many ethnic groups, as Baltsperger determined in his study on Russian Germans (1983). They sacrificed their village society for the isolation of Texas farmsteads, for in this isolation, the family unit gained greater importance. They became cultural agricultural islands as described by Kollmorgen (1941). Communities developed among the settlers, still the social centers of the Czechs. Through the cooperative efforts created in these communities, the Czechs developed a new identity, a new social life that is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

CZECH ETHNICITY AS IT RELATES TO LAVACA COUNTY, TEXAS

This chapter addresses the social aspects of Czech ethnicity in the county, including education, organizations, press, religion, the physical landscape, and the cultural landscape. After the Czechs immigrated to Texas in the middle of the nineteenth century, they retained much of their European cultural identity while also adopting certain aspects of the Anglo society already in place. Their ethnicity developed into something different, they became Czech Texans, a combination that proved successful in cotton production. There are many descriptions of Czech ethnicity in America in the literature review. Ones that focus on the Czech Texans specifically are *Krasna Amerika by* Machann and Mendl and the three articles by Robert Skrabanek; the three authors also describe the Czech Americans and their ethnic roots in Europe. Lavaca County Czechs shared traits with rural Czechs across America. Other sources for understanding the ethnic composition of Czech Americans are the works of Korytova-Magstadt and Bicha. Interviews with two residents of Lavaca County, Doug Kubicek and Herman Hanslik, produced abundant information which was documented whenever possible. As discussed in Chapter IV on agriculture, the social structure of the Czechs in Lavaca County was typical of the Czechs in Texas.

The Czechs who settled in Texas, according to Machann and Mendl, had formed an increasingly complex and sophisticated social structure by the turn of the century. The roots for this society were in Europe, where emigrants left from well-defined geographical locations in chain migrations to Texas. Once in Texas they concentrated settlement in another geographically similar region, the Blackland Prairie region. Another important trait was the classlessness of the settlers. Czech Texans were mostly the cottagers of

Moravia who had struggled to farm ten to twelve acre plots of land under Austrian oppression, compounded by the threat of land consolidation and agricultural commercialization. With no hope for a better life and a hopeless future for their children, they followed the bright promise of opportunity in Texas (Korytova-Magstadt 1993).

Since their lives were centered on farming, Czech society in Texas developed as an outgrowth of agricultural practices where the typical rural Czech American sought to retain the values, family customs, and social forms of the Czech folk tradition (Skrabanek 1950). For centuries the Czechs had fought to preserve their cultural identity against a program of Germanization enacted and supported by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The peasants were aware of the concept of equal rights, compared to many European countries, for Charles IV had began a period of enlightenment in the fourteenth century that remained alive through the centuries of oppression. Czech nationalism was reborn at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). When the Czechs arrived in America, this pride flowered under American freedoms. Bicha said that in the cultural agricultural islands of Texas, the Czechs were able to set up ethnic colonies, becoming more Czech than in their homeland so Czech ethnicity remained vibrant for generations, not dissipating until the age of communication in the 1950s (1980).

Although stratified, based on land ownership, the Czechs were basically a classless society that banded together to survive. Stratification was on two levels: the family unit and the nucleated village, which was much like an extended family (Bicha 1980). These traits manifested themselves in different forms in the rural United States, including Texas. The united family became more united, being drawn together by common goals, one of which was surviving on a harsh American frontier; the village was replaced in part by a different church infrastructure and various clubs and organizations. According to Skrabanek, the initial social organization was tied to the agricultural practices (1950). Some, like the beef clubs and agriculture cooperatives, were direct outgrowths of these practices.

The Czech Family Unit

The first level of Czech society, or more correctly the inner circle, was the family unit. Czech families had worked together in the fields of Bohemia-Moravia and they migrated to America as a unit, looking for a better life for their children (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). They came more firmly united as they struggled in their new homes. After purchasing land, they depended on each other to make the family farm a success. Torn from their village social structure and isolated on farmsteads that were much larger than in Europe, the family unit gained new importance in Texas. The concept of the individual was alien to their world, unlike Anglo-Americans (Skrabanek 1950). Each member had his assigned roles. The family was patriarchal; the father was the leader who also tended the crops, the animals, and the outbuildings. The mother's domain was the home, especially the preservation of harvested produce. Food preservation was a manifestation of the Czech trait of self-sufficiency. But if some large project arose, whether it was chopping or picking cotton or quickly preserving a butchered hog, all members of the family joined the effort. Americans criticized the Czechs because women and ten year old children were seen working in the cotton fields, but the Czechs considered fieldwork as striving toward a common goal, a successful cotton crop. Skrabanek said that this family unity, as well as open affection combined with firm discipline, created a home environment with few runaways, divorces, or criminal activities (1950). Czech families with ten or more children were not uncommon. Later when available land ran out, these children had to go outside agriculture to find work to avoid breaking up the family farms as they had been fragmented in Europe.

The Czech Community Unit

The outer circle of the Czech society was the community, which in turn was much like an extended family. Abundance of land in Texas disallowed the small, tightly knit village structure of Europe (Machann and Mendl, 1983). Isolated and self-contained,

Skrabanek said that the Czechs formed all-Czech communities to avoid the possibility of persecution by outsiders (1950). The Czechs took the solidarity that had developed as a united front against their European oppressors and created a society that mimicked village life. Since extended families or groups with previous ties often migrated together or followed in a chain migration, this was easy to do. According to Skrabanek, when the Czechs landed in Texas, they turned inward, setting up a society that sustained their native language, customs, habits, traditions, and social values (1950). In the rural United States, they became more Czech. The Czech immigrants quickly realized they were different but no longer had to fear oppression by an alien government and so separated themselves from mainstream American society and practiced their Czech culture without interference. Like the family unit they were self-contained, cooperating in labor and business, an attitude that was exaggerated by isolation and settling in the shatter belt of Texas (Jordan 1991). The communities were places where the Czechs could come to do business, preferably with other Czechs (Machann and Mendl 1983) and socialize outside the family circle, reminiscent of European village life. An example of this attitude, isolating themselves from other ethnic groups, manifested itself in marriage. Young people were encouraged to marry someone within the community (Skrabanek 1950). A mixed marriage was to a non-Czech; marriage to a non-Catholic Czech was more acceptable. In Lavaca County, marriage between Bohemians and Moravians was discouraged until 1900, according to Kubicek (1996). This marriage policy that was propagated by the Catholic Church lasted into the 1960s.

Czech ethnicity in Texas, as a result of long domination by a Germanization program in Europe, was not as noticeable in the more obvious physical characteristics like other ethnic groups. In Texas, there was little evidence of Czech architecture or national dress. The Czechs quickly adopted the dress of the Texans, saving traditional costumes for special occasions such as worn at Czech festivals today.

When the Czechs arrived in Texas, they adopted the typical East Texas farm house. Brought to Texas by immigrants from the lower South, the Czechs built a modified dogtrot house type, which was best suited for the climate. The house had two rooms, built like an L, with the kitchen at the foot. This kept the larger living quarters separate from the heat of cooking and the fire danger; a dog trot joined the two rooms. Usually the living quarters had two double doors, centered on the northeast and southwest walls, to encourage cross ventilation by the prevailing winds (Herman Hanslik 1996).

The Czechs also had a particular personality type. They have been described as hard working, thrifty, polite, honest, self-sufficient, practical, conservative, stable, moral, and law-abiding (*Report* 1911, Hodges 1914, Skrabanek 1950, Bicha 1980a, Bicha 1980b, and Machann and Mendl 1983). The little criticism includes argumentative nature, which is said to have led to the extensive press network, and materialism.

Bicha states the Czechs have been accused of being excessively materialistic (1980). This trait, he claims is typical of Slavic land hunger where security meant land ownership. Upon arriving in Texas, Czechs strove for up to ten years to accumulate the cash needed to purchase land. After buying property, they continued to scrimp to develop successful farmsteads. They avoided credit purchases initially, with recent memories of land lost under the self-serving Habsburg system (Korytova-Magstadt 1993). Later some of the social organizations would include lending programs as part of an aid network to new arrivals. Once established, Czechs stayed on their homestead (Skrabanek 1950), but they were also known for seeking out the best land deals across Texas and encouraging others to join them there. The young Czech men only left the family farm to earn funds for their land purchase, often buying in the same locality and returning to the family farm to aid the original family unit. Skrabanek states one reason that later Czechs sought a higher education away from the farms was the end of available cheap farmland, as well as a distaste for the prospect of breaking up the original homestead.

As has been previously stated, the Czechs concentrated on being self-sufficient. By careful preservation, they could stretch a food supply long past fall harvest when the hogs were butchered (Skrabanek 1950). The Czechs were noted cooks, especially the women, yet the entire family joined in on major food preservation projects, the yearly hog butchering for example. Smoking the meat or preparing the tasty Czech sausage needed quick and careful processing. According to Kubicek, there are still extended families in Lavaca County who practice the Czech food customs: butchering hogs, beef clubs, sausage making, processing as much food as they can. There is one family who for years grew a few acres of sorghum to make molasses. Just within the last few years they had to quit when one damp spring ruined the seeds. After 75 years of using the same seed, they tried storebought but it was not acceptable (1996).

Many Czech ethnic foods are still very evident in Lavaca County today. The sausage is served with pancakes for breakfast and at dinner smothered in Texas chili bar-b-que sauce. On the side will be a serving of homemade sauerkraut, another Czech food. Local Czechs now produce the traditional sausage for regional distribution; these are also available in the local stores. Two of the more popular types are *jaternice* and *klobasa* (Machann and Mendl 1983). Another treat is to find the traditional pastries behind the American facade of a chain bakery. Still made with a lot of butter and fruit or cheese filling, a favorite is the *kolache.*

Another Czech trait is their love of alcoholic beverages, specifically wines and beers. The Czech wife created the home brew while the husband was responsible for the quality of the wine. Consumption of these two beverages was a focal point at various social occasions. In Lavaca County, the best brew comes from the Spoetzl Brewery in Shiner, Texas. Although Spoetzl is a German name, the brewery began as a cooperative effort by a group of German and Czechs in 1909. Shiner beer is successful on a regional basis (Rogers 1992). The best social gatherings included drinking good Czech brews, eating Czech culinary treats, and enjoying traditional Czech music, either through dancing

or singing, on a weekly basis (Bicha 1980). In Lavaca County dance halls were built in most communities (Adolph Hanslik 1996) where the favorite polka was performed (Machann and Mendl 1983). To the traditional Czech holidays and church festivals, the Czechs added the standard American holidays (Hodges 1914). Tourists can still enjoy these traditions at the many festivals throughout the state, for the many Czechs are promoting events to keep Czech ethnicity alive. In the county seat of Lavaca County, Hallettsville, the Czech Festival is held every September. There is a reigning Kolache Granny who competes at a later statewide *kolache* bakeoff. Attendees can also enjoy traditional Czech music and food. There are various religious festivals, usually on the feast day of the patron saint of that church. These fund raisers attract former residents who return home for the occasion. Another big event is the domino tournament. Around 1900, the Czechs made dominoes part of their culture, circumventing the gambling ban of the Catholic Church. Hallettsville sponsors two statewide domino tournaments and domino halls are evident in the communities of Lavaca County (Kubicek 1996).

Language and Religion

Two important ethnic traits of the Czechs are their language and their religious beliefs, once again a nonmaterial trait that the Habsburgs could not completely wipe out. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, due to Germanization programs and the elimination of the elite class, the Czech language had almost disappeared. Although the peasants spoke Czech at home, in the compulsory education programs they read and wrote in German. When the National Revival Movement began at the end of the eighteenth century, it was led by peasants. They promoted history of the Czech people and used the Czech language. All the arts glorified the Czechs and their language. One reason the Czechs came to America was to enjoy the freedom to be Czech. This included continuing to use the Czech language exclusively. Within a few years of settlement, they

had started schools in their communities, using part of the cotton crop to fund these schools (Machann and Mendl 1983).

In these schools the curriculum was in Czech, with emphasis on Czech culture. These schools were similar to those in the homeland; only eight grades were taught, for although Czechs were literate, they considered a formal education unnecessary. After the eighth grade the children went to work in the fields.

The first formal school was set up in Wesley in 1859. By the 1870s, most Czech communities had established schools. The first schools had few supplies; the need for books in the Czech language was hard to fill. During the 1870s, the Texas Public School System began to organize, which created a problem in the Czech schools because an English-speaking teacher became mandatory. Except in private and parochial schools, the time of the Czech teacher was running short. For many years, the Czech language was taught in summer schools.

According to Machann and Mendl, Lavaca County lead Texas in number of schools at the end of the nineteenth century (1983). Leslie describes a school superintendent visiting 100 schools in 1900 (1935). Over 60 of locations of these schools have been mapped (Fig. 13) using data supplied by Kubicek (1996) and Leslie (1935). Both Kubicek and Leslie commented on the ethnic enrollment. With this information it is possible to look at ethnic distribution on a larger scale. A pattern of Czechs in the northwest county is reinforced while Anglos populate the southern part. There does not seem to be a line dividing the two dominant ethnic groups, Czechs and Anglos. The Czechs seemed to have communities across the county. The exact date of these ethnic distributions is unclear; however, Kubicek states Czech students were populating Anglo schools within a few years of settlement(1996).

In 1964 this sparsely populated county still had 60 rural schools. According to Kubicek, there are rural schools still operating in three Czech communities: Vsehrad, Sweethome, and Ezzell. The parents of the communities recently voted an increase in

RURAL SCHOOLS OF LAVACA COUNTY*

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

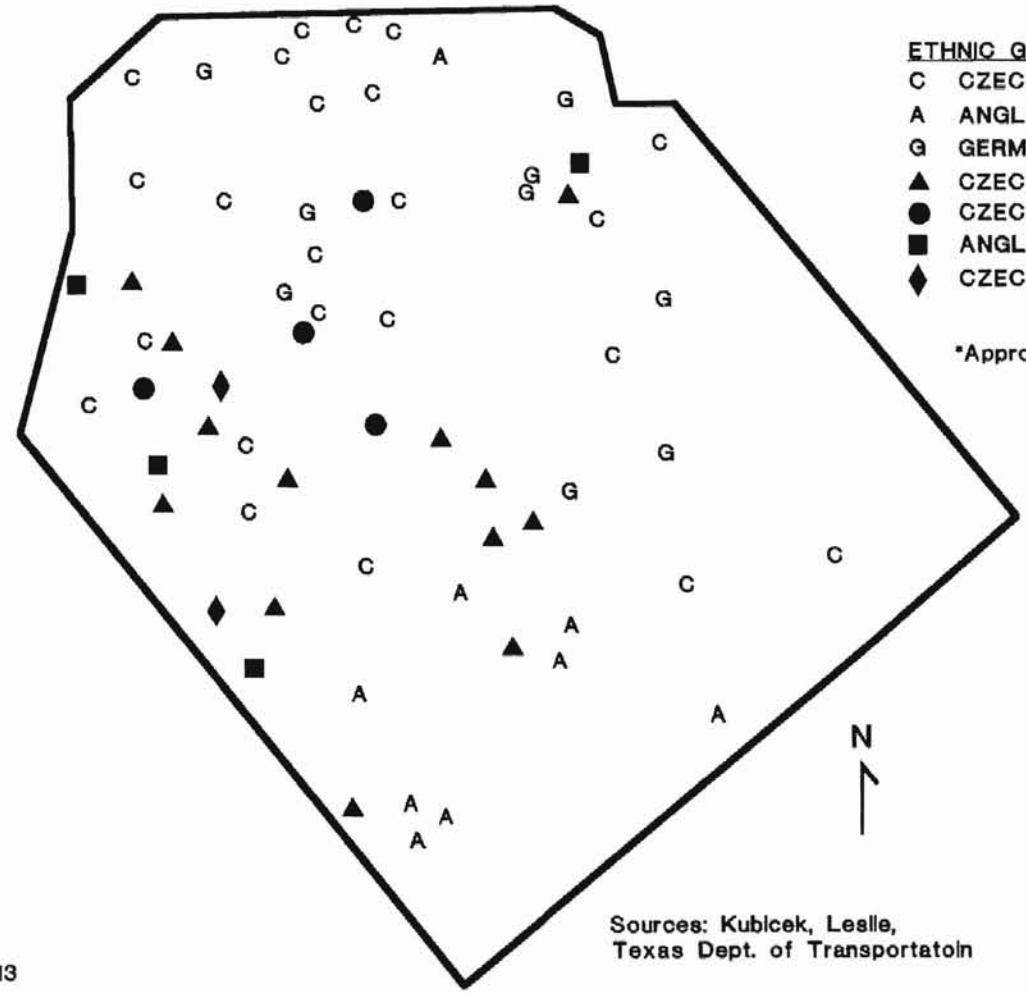


Figure 13

taxes in order to keep these schools functioning so they can control curriculum in their local schools (1996).

Czech students began to seek higher education opportunities in the twentieth century when all available farm land was gone and they became aware that they would have to leave agriculture to make a living (Machann and Mendl 1983). After World War II and with the establishment of the GI Bill, a college education became common among the Czechs. This allowed young Czechs to leave the farms in greater numbers, altering the concentration and isolation of the Czechs and diluting Czech ethnicity.

Today in Lavaca County, an effort is being made to once again teach a Czech language course. As well as Czech Culture Week in the high school, the Czech Heritage Society is trying to set up a scholarship for students who want to study Czech in college (Kubicek 1996). This would be possible at the University of Texas in Austin, where a Department of Slavic Languages is located. It was established in 1915 through the efforts of some Czech students (Machann and Mendl 1983).

The press was another area where this commitment to the use of the Czech language manifested itself. When Bergman had sent his letters home, they had been published in the newspapers of Bohemia-Moravia. During the National Revival Movement, Bicha says the newspapers were the principal medium for literary expression of Czech nationalism (1980). Already firmly established in Bohemia-Moravia, it quickly became established in America, especially in the large cities. Machann and Mendl joked that wherever two Czechs met, a new periodical resulted (1983). The Czechs loved a good argument and often when a Czech did not agree with an editorial he started his own newspaper. The first Czech newspaper was founded in the United States in 1860. By 1910 there 326 serials nationwide.

Some of these Czech serials were in Lavaca County like the *Novy domov*, a Catholic organ founded in Hallettsville in 1914 and published until the 1960s. As late as 1944, obituaries in the local English language paper in Lavaca County were in both Czech

and English. For ten years, around the 1980s, a local historian, Doug Kubicek, published the *Nase Dejiny*. This was a journal whose purpose was to support and promote the heritage of the Czechs. Articles came from Czechs across the United States, often putting in print information that would have been lost to history.

Although religious conflict plagued the Czech lands for centuries, in Texas these differences were of minor importance. There were three religious groups nationwide: Roman Catholics, Protestants, and freethinkers. The freethinkers were often atheists and were also called nonaffiliated (Machann and Mendl 1983). The freethinkers were a group of Czechs who, upon arriving in the liberal religious atmosphere of America, completely shed the mandatory religion of their homeland. They were not significant in Texas, for the Czechs who settled in Texas, especially in Lavaca County, were primarily Roman Catholics. According to Machann and Mendl, Texas had more Catholics among its Czech communities than any other state (1983). These conservative Moravian peasants were content in their religious beliefs. Protestants were finally free to openly practice their religion in their new homeland. In Europe, the Austrian government had supported the Catholic Church, but in America, all three religious groups supported the community church, financially, and physically. They supplied the buildings, sought out priests, and continued to aid in church endeavors.

In return, the various religions supported the Czechs, more so than in the homeland. Part of the lost village structure was replaced by the church; it was integrated into the community. Church-established schools taught religious education and Czech language and history. The church organizations and benevolent societies are described below. This changed role was particularly true of the Catholic Church.

The Czechs were also part of the system of national parishes established by the Catholic Church. Historically the different nations of Europe each had its own state religion so the different ethnic groups considered their Catholicism different from other groups. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Irish Catholic Church dominated

in America, which was unacceptable to other ethnic groups. National parishes were set up for Germans, Poles, Italians, Lithuanians, Slovaks, Croatians, and Bohemians. Between 1890 and 1916, national parishes celebrated the liturgy in their native tongue (Walch 1994). Hundreds of parishes developed through the years, usually setting up parochial schools that also encouraged the continuation of the language of the parish. Fearing a breakdown in the Catholic Church, in 1918 the Papacy decreed there would be no new national parishes. It would be 20 more years before these parishes would fade from existence.

The Catholic Church helped preserve the Czech cultural heritage in Texas. The Czech Catholic tradition was clannish compared to non-Catholics; they kept themselves separate from non-Czech Catholics. This was partly in response to the Protestant aspect of the Anglo majority (Machann and Mendl 1983). The Catholic Church established Czech parochial schools, had Czech publications, maintained Czech reading libraries, and organized Czech choral and dramatic groups.

In Lavaca County, according to Long, Catholics and Baptists are prevalent today (1996). The county is the location of St. Mary's Catholic Church, the oldest rural church in Texas. Established in 1840, it is still an active parish located just outside of Hallettsville. Its history has been documented in a publication that was printed in honor of its sesquicentennial. Another church of interest is the Czech Moravian Brethren Church in Vsetin. This was a Protestant group which combined religion with Czech nationalism. They can be traced to the Czech lands and based their beliefs on the fifteenth century Unity of the Brethren, part of the Hussite movement (Machann and Mendl 1983).

Formal Czech Clubs and Organizations

When the Czechs first came to Texas, they broke the monotony of farm work with weekly activities such as picnics, dancing, and visiting where they could socialize and enjoy their food and drink (Bicha 1980). As time passed Czechs formed dramatic groups,

bands, and orchestras that performed at their home communities and sometimes traveled across Texas. In Lavaca County there was the Frank Panus Lone Star Orchestra in the 1940s and the 1950s, as well as the Shiner Dance Club (Rogers 1992).

Reading clubs were organized to maintain collections of Czech literature. The first in Texas was the Czechoslovanic Reading Club, which was founded in Wesley in 1867. Formal social institutions were organized after the Czechs had settled and prospered in their new home. Another replacement for the European village, many of these clubs and organizations had national networks. What sets the Texas Czechs apart is that they broke with many of these national organizations around 1900 and set up Texas or regional groups of basically two types, benevolent societies or fraternal and mutual societies. The organizations could be associated with a church or be nonaffiliated (Machann and Mendl 1983).

Bicha states that benefit societies were not unique to the Czech people but they were pioneers in ethnic fraternalism (1980). The Czechs had a heritage of helping each other, first in the impoverished villages of Bohemia-Moravia and later when the migration network was set up to aid the incoming Czechs in America. Help came through support and small loans, the outgrowth of which would be the benevolent and mutual societies. Initially fraternal orders supplied life insurance for members while the mutual societies insured the property of their members against damage or loss. The fraternal organizations established local lodge halls where insurance needs were administered which became centers of social activities with meeting and dances, picnics, and ethnic-related festivals. Some of these organizations would become lending institutions, handling millions of dollars for their members (Bicha 1980). The most important societies to Texas and Lavaca County are described in the following paragraphs For a more complete listing of these organizations, see Appendix A.

The SPJST, the Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas, was one of the splinter groups from a national organization. In disagreement with national policy, they

formed their own group in 1896 at LaGrange (Machann and Mendl 1983). Like its predecessor, the SPJST was a nondenominational, nonpolitical society that offered life insurance policies to members. According to Skrabanek, the groups also offered entertainment, an opportunity for socializing, and continued the use of the Czech language (1950). In Lavaca County, the SPJST lodge was located in the community of Hackberry.

The first religiously affiliated society was the First Texas Czech-Moravian Benevolent Society, which was organized at Bluff (later to be changed to Hostyn by the Czechs) in 1879. They became associated with a national Catholic group but became a separate group in 1889 to become the Catholic Society of Texas (KJT). The Catholics kept their fraternal organizations separated by gender and had a women's group associated with the KJT, the Czech-Roman Catholic Benevolent Society in Texas (KJZT). These two Catholic groups worked together to aid the community (Machann and Mendl 1983). Lavaca had chapters of both these organizations (Kubicek 1996).

A Catholic group that organized in Lavaca County was the Agricultural Benevolent Society of St. Isador. Machann and Mendl state that this men's group encouraged the improvement of agriculture and horticulture and had its first meeting at Worthing in 1901 (1983). The Protestant religion was represented with the founding of the Mutual Aid Society of the Unity of the Brethren in Taylor in 1904. They adopted a set of bylaws in the Lavaca County community of Shiner the following year.

Sokols were unique to the Czechs, a result of the National Revival Movement. Founded in Prague, Bohemia, in 1862, these clubs promoted themselves to better the body and the mind. A gymnasium on the surface, the *Sokols* (Czech for falcon) were an instrument to promote Czech nationalism, which quickly spread to the United States. The first Texas unit was formed in 1908 and continued to sustain strong Czech ethnicity in the Czech communities for many years, cultivating the cooperative spirit of the Czech family and community (Machann and Mendl 1983). Units were still active in the mid-1980s (Laznovsky 1985) According to Kubicek, the Knights of Columbus and the American

Legion have replaced many of the Czech lodges in Lavaca County. The size of two meeting halls, the Knights in Hallettsville and the American Legion in Shiner, is huge, supporting the claim that Czechs are social creatures (1996).

A description of the social structure of culture is not complete without politics. With the Czechs this aspect of their ethnicity is easy to overlook, for the Czechs showed little interest in elections, beyond local issues and candidates, where they practiced their right to vote but otherwise wanted to be left alone. In Lavaca County, the Czechs followed state trends and for many years they voted Democratic. Starting in the 1960s, they began to vote Republican (Long 1996). According to Herman Hanslik, the only area of concern was agriculture where most Czechs were adamantly against any government program regulating any aspect of agriculture.

Summary

Czech ethnicity was sustained through a strong national identity, their support network, and their success. After economic achievement, community and a strong family unit were of major importance. The Czech communities chose to remain separate from mainstream American society for many years longer than other ethnic groups. They did assimilate certain aspects that aided their economic success. Through the years, circumstances and a strong ethnic identity allowed the Czech Texans to evolve into a unique group who have taken from both worlds, the old and the new, to add to our American landscape as an important and significant people.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

As Doug Kubicek, local historian, drove through the prime farm lands of Lavaca County he reminisced that where as a boy cotton fields had stretched as far as the eye could see now cattle grazed on green pastures. Passing through the county and into the towns, there is little evidence of the cotton production of the nineteenth century. However, the Czech Texans who grew the cotton still live in Lavaca County and their ethnicity is still apparent in the cultural landscape.

Visible proof of ethnicity is found in business signs with names that are obviously Czech: Janak, Bohuslav, Patek, and Novosad. A walk through the cemetery of St. Mary's Catholic Church reveals more Czech names. Iron crosses manufactured by a Czech for the Czechs mark some of the graves. Kubicek showed how the stones run two directions. Further investigation reveals the Anglos' graves faced the church to the southwest. The Czechs were in a more typical European tradition, feet to the east, facing Jerusalem, waiting for the Judgment Day (Jordan 1982).

As the guided tour continues through the county, other Czech Texan traits are observed. Sometimes these traits exemplify the acculturation of the Czechs. Traditional Czech Texan fraternal orders have been replaced by American Legion and Knights of Columbus Halls. The Czech enthusiasm for social organizations is evident in the massive size of the structures that house each group. As one walks along the town square of Hallettsville, the slamming of dominoes resounds in the quiet summer air, a remnant of Czech adaptation to the Texas culture. The Czechs have embraced the dominoes as their own, sponsoring two statewide tournaments in Hallettsville. A SPJST Hall still stands in the quiet hamlet of Breslau and the Komensky School still houses eight grades, financed by parents of Czech descent. A visit to a local restaurant or grocery store reveals a blend of Czech food with Texas cuisine.

Less obvious is ethnicity in agricultural practices of Lavaca County. The handful of cotton fields are tended by Czechs. The Janak Nursery proudly advertises 250,000 plants, evidence of the husbandry that typified the Czechs. A visit to a local pecan grower, daughter of a Czech, reveals the dedication and desire to grow the best pecans. This youthful grandmother has finally given up climbing the pecan trees or grafting trees for others.

Another Janak tells how he has finally returned home after an absence of 30 years. He trained and lived in Houston, he states, but always made many trips to the home farm. Now his long-held dream has come true and he has returned to stay in Lavaca County. Janak feels he is not alone in this desire to return home and Kubicek agrees. Referring to an article in *American Demographics* (1992), they point out Lavaca County is among the top 20 counties in the United State to have high number of 65 and older citizens who live alone. Are these widows and widowers who have stayed to live out their lives on the family farm or are they, as Kubicek and Janak state, a returning population (1996)?

Hypotheses

This study covered many areas, including different aspects of ethnicity and agriculture. Regarding their impact on cotton in the nineteenth century, without a doubt the Czechs did make a difference. A comparison of Czech population to a location quotient of bales over acres in cotton production ranked Lavaca County high. The Czechs came into a faltering cotton culture, took over the fields, and through the intensive agricultural methods on soil that had been neglected by the plantation owners, raised cotton successfully for almost 100 years.

Evidence shows Lavaca County had low allotments compared to the number of acres in production. Herman Hanslik stated the Czechs were against government controls and had tried to bypass the allotment system. A location quotient of allotment amounts

over acres in production shows Lavaca County in the lowest quadrant. Assuming these figures are accurate, it would appear the Czechs of Lavaca County did circumvent the allotment program.

The Czechs were known for their conservative nature, they stayed in cotton production where they had found prosperity. A comparison of two censuses determined Lavaca County was in the lower half of the region in decline of cotton production. The evidence is not conclusive to decide if Czechs grew cotton longer than non-Czechs. Further studies would be necessary to discover if the Czechs stayed with cotton even though they knew without diversified planting, they were in trouble

Different factors eased the settlement of the Czechs in to Texas. First the Jordan study states there was a host culture but it was relatively new to the area and not homogenous, welcoming new arrivals (1991). The Civil War caused friction between Anglos and Czechs but this soon faded, replaced by an economy devastated by the loss of slave labor. The Czechs replaced this work force and prospered as cotton farmers.

The Czechs were highly adaptable before they left Europe. Upon arriving in Texas they quickly determined which aspects of the Texas culture would best suit them. They adopted the dress and house type of Texas. After initial mistakes and with the aid of their non-Czech neighbors, they soon found the best methods of Texas agriculture while at the same time retaining traditional practices that worked. This combination succeeded in cotton production for many years.

After arriving in Texas the Czechs formed cultural agricultural islands where they practiced much of their traditional farming. They were isolated by miles and insulated by a desire to practice their culture, free from the oppression of their homeland. The family unit dominated Czech society, the community enhanced and supported Czech ethnicity, and the Czechs developed unique organizations to maintain a high degree of Czech ethnicity. It would take the age of communication (1950s) to finally shake the foundation

of these cultural agricultural islands

The Czech Texans are an ethnic group unique to the state of Texas and different from their identity in Europe and compared to Czechs across America. Their immigration into Texas directly from Europe, through an established route across Texas, was the beginning of their new ethnicity. When they arrived in their new homes, they turned their hands to growing cotton, utilizing the methods they had used in their homeland. These methods were adapted to the differences in crop and environment, to create another new trait of ethnicity. Other evidence of their unique Czech Texan ethnicity is found in their social life: organizations and cooperatives, found only in Texas

The hypothesis regarding Czech ethnicity still existing in Lavaca County is substantiated. Although not as evident as in the past, ethnicity is still very much part of the cultural landscape, as evident in the above paragraphs. In the past the Czech Texans in Lavaca County were typical of the group: they were agriculturists who were self-sufficient and self-contained. They prospered in their new home through determination, hard work, and careful tending of their lands, their homes, and their lives.

Further Studies

Determining if a high number of residents of Lavaca County is 65 or older is due to a high Czech population would take another study of ethnicity in Lavaca County, Texas. Further efforts to investigate current ethnicity could prove fruitful. Interviews with the younger generation of Czechs in Lavaca County would have been revealing. How do young people perceive their ancestry and ethnicity?

Studies could be done on pecan farming, which would entail lengthy field research. Other studies could further examine if the Czechs stayed in cotton production longer and if they circumvented the allotment system set up by the federal government.

Summary

This study has examined the ethnicity of the Czechs who settled in Lavaca County, Texas, focusing on their agricultural practices. Allen and Turner stated the Czechs greatly aided the production of cotton in Texas in the nineteenth century (1987). Using Lavaca County as a case study supports this observation. In addition, the history and ethnicity of the Czechs reveal a group that was well-suited to succeed in the Blackland region of Texas. By adapting to their new land, these people became a blend of their European heritage and the Texas culture that is still evident today.

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APPENDIX A

CZECH ORGANIZATIONS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Czech Catholic Organizations

1. 1877 First Roman Catholic Central Society
2. 1879 First Texas Czech-Moravian Benevolent Society*
3. 1883 #2 joined Second Roman Catholic Central Society
4. 1889 Czech Roman-Catholic Unity of Texas**
5. 1894 Benevolent Society of the Ascension of the Virgin Mary***
6. 1897 #5 became Czech-Roman Catholic Aiding Union of Women in Texas
7. 1897 The State Council Of the Catholic Worker ****
8. 1901 Agricultural Benevolent Society of St. Isador
9. 1917 National Union of Czech Catholics of the State of Texas

*Organized by Czechs in Texas
**Ended affiliation with non-Texas organization
***Women's organization
****Became a national organization

Czech-Moravian Brethren Organizations

1. 1905 Mutual Aid Society of the Czech-Moravian Brethren
2. 1910 Hus Memorial Association

(This list may not be complete.)

Czech Non-Affiliated Organization

1. 1854 Czechoslovak Benevolent Society *
2. 1862 *Sokol* (Falcon) - into Texas 1908
3. 1897 Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas **
4. 1897 Western Fraternal Life Association
5. 1901 Farmers Mutual Protective Association of Texas
6. 1902 Society for the Promotion of Higher Education
7. 1909 Czech Club ****
8. 1909 *Slavie* - similar to #7****
9. 1909 Czech Literary Club - similar to #7
10. 1926 Slavonic Mutual Fire Insurance Association of Texas

*First unit in Texas 1884
**Ended Affiliation with non-Texas Organization
***Many of listed organizations also sponsored such groups
****Organized by Czechs in Texas

APPENDIX B

THE GINS OF LAVACA COUNTY*

Location	Owner/Name	Number of Gins
Breslau	F. Ladewig/W. Kubenka	1
Ezzell	Ezzell Gin	1
Fuller School	G. Branon	1
Hackberry	Hackberry Gins	2
Hallettsville	V. Gerdes G. Mueller R. Schultz	3
Rural	Hendricks	1
Henkhaus	E.&V. Darilek	1
Hope	Hope Gin	1
Koerth	Koerth Gins	3
Komensky	Kubena	1
Midway	J. Vrana	2
Mont(Monserate)	G. Wilcox	1
Moravia	E. Vrana Sr.	1
Moulton	Beran Bros Moulton Farmers Coop. Moulton Oil and Gin Co.	3
New Kinkler	R. Schultz	1
Old Kinkler (Boethel)	W. Treptow	1
Rocky School	J. Pargac	1

St John Vicinity	Brossman	1
St John Vicinity	Ehler	1
St John Vicinity	P. Sobotik	1
Shiner	Buske. Farmers Coop. Assn. John F. Kasper Kubicek & Adamek	4
Sublime	Sublime Gin	1
Sweet Home	Sweet Home Gins	2
Vienna	Teltschick Gin	1
Wied	H. G. Koether	1
Williamsburg	Williamsburg Gin	1
Witting	E. Hildebrandt	1
Worthing	Worthing Gin	1

& - two owners / - two consecutive owners

*Early twentieth century

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