

**CHAPTER 13 Section 2 The Changing Face of Texas**

13.2A

Henri Castro
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pp. 290–293

Henri Castro (1786–1865) founded a colony in Texas near San Antonio. He brought many French settlers to the region and worked hard to make sure that his colony and his colonists were strong.

Henri Castro was born in France in July of 1786. His family was Portuguese and Jewish, and they escaped during the Spanish Inquisition. They settled in France and accumulated a great deal of wealth and status.

Castro was well educated and received many benefits from his upper-class status. When Castro was only 19, the governor of Landes appointed him to a committee to welcome Napoleon on a visit to the region. Castro was also a member of Napoleon's guard of honor when the dictator's brother was crowned King of Spain in 1806. Castro married a wealthy widow, Amelia Mathias, in 1813.

Immigrating to the United States Castro immigrated to the United States after the fall of Napoleon and was appointed the French consul in Providence, Rhode Island, in the late 1820s. During his time there, he learned English and in 1827 became a U.S. citizen.

Castro returned to France in 1838 and joined a banking house named Lafitte and Company. One of his banking projects was the negotiation of a loan for the Republic of Texas. It was during this project that he became interested in Texas. The president of Texas, Sam Houston, appointed Castro consul general for Texas in Paris.

The Land Grant in Texas In February of 1842 the Texas government gave Castro a land grant on the Medina River in southwest Texas. He was promised more than a million acres of land if he settled 600 families and/or single men on the grant within three years. The colonists were given 640 acres per family or 320 acres per single man, and each was required to build a home, cultivate at least 15 acres, and remain on the land at least three years.

Castro went to work recruiting potential colonists all over France. Between 1843 and 1847 Castro brought 485 families and 457 single men to his colony.

The first group of families arrived in 1844. Because of the War with Mexico, organizing the immigration had been difficult. Castro arrived later that same year to find 700 colonists impatiently waiting for the land that had been promised to them. Castro scouted out the colony and, to calm the settlers, offered each a free town lot and 40 acres outside of town in addition to the land already set aside for them.

The Founding of Castroville Once everything was prepared, Castro led a party of 27 men onto the grant. On September 12, 1844, the town was named Castroville and public officials were elected. Castro went on to settle three other towns: Quihi in 1845, Vandenburg in 1846, and D'Hanis in 1847.

Castro was a fair and kind leader. He made large personal investments to keep the colony strong, spending more than \$200,000 for cattle, medicines, seeds, and other items. He made many maps of the region that were distributed around France, enticing more people to immigrate to the New World.

Henri Castro became ill in Monterrey, Mexico, and died there on November 31, 1865, at the age of 78. He was buried there, but today the exact location of his grave is unknown. Castro County, in the Texas Panhandle, was named in his honor.

Review Questions

1. How did Castro become interested in Texas?
2. How did Castro support his colony?

Critical Thinking

3. **Understanding Cause and Effect** Why do you think it might have been difficult to recruit settlers at this time and to plan their safe arrival in Texas?