

Czech and German Communities

If you look at a map of the region between San Antonio and Houston, you will find town names that reflect the diversity and culture of this changing landscape. Names like Weimar, La Grange, Praha, Dubina, Schulenburg and Seguin reveal the tapestry of various cultures that have settled here. This heritage is also reflected in the foods, festivals and music that can still be found here.

When the railroad came to this region in the early 1870's, new communities sprang up along the route. Older towns like Columbus and Seguin were linked by rail to these new communities and to the larger cities of San Antonio and Houston. With the completion of the railroad, these communities had a faster way to transport people and goods to further destinations.

The landscape between San Antonio and Houston changes fairly dramatically. From San Antonio, the land goes from semi-arid mesquite covered terrain to rolling hills covered in oak and pecan trees to the piney woods and bayou lands near Houston. The Guadalupe, Colorado and Brazos rivers run through this area of central Texas bringing fertile soils that have sustained the communities and small farms dotting the landscape. The people of these communities brought traditions and lifestyles from their native homelands, yet adapted them to the various environments found here.

The area around Weimar, Columbus, La Grange and Shiner has some of the largest concentrations of Czech and German ancestry in the state of Texas. Here you can still find "kolaches" a Czech pastry, or German sausage or beer brewed in the Czech tradition. These foods and drink can still be found at social gatherings, festivals or the parish church picnics in this region. Those of German ancestry make up the second largest ethnic group here in Texas. Like many cultures living close to each other, some elements of one culture have been adopted by other cultures.

The polkas and waltzes, and the musical instruments used by Czechs and Germans, such as the accordion, so impacted the culture of Texas that the sounds crossed over into the Mexican culture, becoming part of the norteno sound and blending into conjunto bands. It is a legacy that reaches into Tejano music today. This crossing of cultures and the creation of new musical genres is a distinct outcome of the mixture of ethnic groups in this country. You can enjoy the richness of the American heritage by tuning your radio while traveling through these towns or by downloading the songs by the many bands that today continue to play and celebrate the contacts of cultures through their music.

Source(s):

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