

# Norwegian and Swiss Communities

When you think of European settlers that came to Texas, the groups that often come to mind are the Spanish, German, and Czech. Two additional groups of immigrants that had an impact on the settlement of Texas and its fight for Independence are the Swiss and Norwegians. People from Switzerland and Norway settled mostly in north Texas, and today have cultural societies across the state to teach others about their unique heritage.

In the early nineteenth century a group of Swiss merchants made plans for 10,000 Swiss to move to Texas from Philadelphia. Though these plans never materialized, other Swiss people became interested in the state of Texas. The Swiss were encouraged to settle in Texas by Stephen F. Austin because he appreciated the fact that they were opposed to slavery. Though the number of Swiss that settled in Texas is small, people like John Wahrenberger, an Austinite who in 1842 was said to have alerted the city of the upcoming removal of the archives of the republic during the Archive War, had a part in shaping Texas history.

During the time the Swiss were settling in Texas, people from rural areas of Norway brought their agricultural expertise to Texas. Although the numbers of Norwegians were not as large as other European immigrant groups, they founded several settlements, one of which is the largest Norwegian settlement in the South.

Clifton has been titled as the Norwegian capitol of Texas, and has a thriving Norwegian culture. Every year Clifton hosts the Norwegian Christmas Tour and Smorgasbord where guests can make traditional Norwegian crafts, indulge in traditional sausages, and tour historical homes of early settlers. All year round people are able to tour the Norse Historical District outside of town and visit the Bosque Museum to learn more about Norwegian culture.

Though these two groups did not number as large as other European settlers, they had a distinct impact on Texas history. Today both the Swiss and the Norwegian historical societies work to educate others about their heritage and impact on Texas history.

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