



Perilous Voyages: Czech and English Immigrants to Texas in the 1870s (Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas A&M University)

Lawrence H. Konecny, Clinton Machann

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Lawrence H. Konecny and Clinton Machann take readers beyond the bare facts to the human stories of immigration from the point of view of English and Czech immigrants whose tales provide fascinating counterpoints to each other and to the glowing claims about Texas made in William Kingsbury's pamphlet. *Perilous Voyages* combines the original text of Kingsbury's 1877 pamphlet, a private diary kept by an Englishman named William Wright, and oral histories by descendants of Moravian immigrants to allow modern readers to experience some of the lure that brought people to the state in earlier days.

The first part of the book includes a complete reprint of Kingsbury's pamphlet, today a rare document, giving insight into the historical context and rhetoric of Texas immigration. The realities faced by the early settlers stand in sharp relief to Kingsbury's sometimes extravagant claims. In the second part, the experiences of the immigrants themselves are illuminated through Wright's private diary. His 1879 journey began with a shipwreck off the coast of Spain, but, undaunted, he continued in another ship and eventually was able to record his first-hand impressions of the land and people of Texas. The third section of the book narrates the story of a group of thirty-six men, women, and children that left their rural Moravian homeland in 1873 to pursue dreams of prosperity and the good life in Texas. Their ship ran aground in the Bahamas, and they were left to ride out a terrible hurricane before continuing to Galveston and, finally, to the peaceful farmlands of central Texas.

The experiences of the English and Czech immigrants are vividly recounted here; the two stories share hopes and perils, hardships and enthusiasms. Kingsbury's pamphlet gives insight into the sparsely settled region and the dreams that led not only to the cultivation of the land but eventually to the cities that now rise from once-barren plains of Texas.

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