

THAT FIRST TEXAS BOTANIST

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Winkler¹, in his useful account of botanical investigations in Texas, states (p. 5) that Jean Louis Berlandier, a French botanist in the employ of the Mexican Government, was the first to explore Texas botanically, while connected (1828) with the *Comision de Limites* under General Mier y Terán. In the present writer's own published studies², this statement was repeated, since the collections of Dr. Edwin James while a member of Long's Rocky Mountain Expedition (1819-20) were made in territory not a part of the historic province of Texas, but of Chihuahua, as maps of the period will show. In the modern sense, however, it would appear a punctilio to exclude Dr. James from consideration on such grounds; and the present writer finds himself in agreement with Studhalter's³ contention that Berlandier is not to be considered the first botanist who worked in Texas.

But, on the other hand, the facts compel one to disagree with Studhalter's further statement that Edwin James was the first botanical explorer in Texas. Unless the data gathered by the well-known Louisiana historian⁴, Charles E. A. Gayarré (1805-95) are mistaken, that palm belongs to the West Indian botanist, Nicolas Antoine Monteil (1771-1833.) Monteil was born in present Haiti; left his native country for New Orleans in 1800; and for many years

¹C. H. Winkler, "The Botany of Texas: an Account of botanical Investigation in Texas and adjoining Territory," in *Bulletin Univ. Texas*, 1915, No. 18, 1915.

²S. W. Geiser, "Naturalists of the Frontier, VIII. Audubon in Texas." *Southwest Review* 16: 108-35, 1930. [p. 131.]

³R. A. Studhalter, "Mrs. Young's 'Familiar Lessons in Botany, with Flora of Texas' . . .," in *Texas Tech. College Bull.*, Vol. 7, No. 6, pp. 28-53, 1931. [p. 33.]

⁴[Charles E. A. Gayarré], in *Appleton's Cyclop. Amer. Biogr.* 4:365, 1888.

studied the botany of Louisiana. In 1817, he left New Orleans with Baron General Charles F. A. Lallemand's company of French emigrants to help found the Champ d'Asile on the lower Trinity River, near Galveston Bay, in Texas⁵. When the colony was broken up by the Spanish, Monteil joined the pirate, Jean Laffite, at his "commune of Campeche" [present Galveston Island]. When, in turn, Laffite was driven out of Galveston Island, Monteil, who had become his principal agent, returned to France (1824). Settling at Versailles, Monteil devoted himself for the rest of his life to science, and published "Flore de la Louisiane" (3 vols., Paris, 1828); "Études sur les Légumineuses arborescentes de l'Amérique du Sud" (1830); "Traité de la culture de la canne à sucre en Louisiane" (1831), and other works. Thus Gayarre in the work above cited. I cannot find, however, in the catalogues of the printed books in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, the library of the British Museum and of the Royal Society of London, the Peabody Library of Baltimore, rich in scientific works, nor in the Library of Congress, copies of the titles. Nor has it been possible to find biographies of Monteil in contemporaneous French biographical works. In the absence of files of *Comptes Rendus*, *Annales*, and other French scientific journals and transactions of the period, one surmises that the works cited by Gayarré were published in the periodical literature, and distributed in reprint form; but of this I cannot be at present sure.

Investigations now under way to ascertain to what extent Monteil in Texas made and sent to France botanical collections, are proceeding but slowly in view of the almost complete ignorance of Monteil and his work, on the part of American botanists, and dearth of data and sources in American libraries. The studies will be completed and the results published elsewhere.

⁵In Hartmann and Millard's *Le Texas, ou Notice Historique sur le Champ d'Asile . . .*, Paris, 1819, no reference is made to Monteil, in what is purported to be a complete list of the settlers.