

# **Did you know that many people from Alabama immigrated to Brazil after the Civil War**

**by Donna R Causey**



*(After the Civil War, many residents of the south were faced with bankruptcy after losing most of the land and property in the war and some even faced imprisonment. Brazil offered the opportunity for them to start over in Brazil. The following includes many names of the immigrants to Brazil from Alabama and other southern states.)*

“In 1865 at the end of the American Civil War a substantial number of Southerners left the South; many moved to other parts of the United States, such as the American West, but a few left the country entirely. The most popular country of Southerners emigration was Brazil.”

**Southern Migration to Brazil**

“Whether or not the political unrest incident to the changed conditions following the surrender of the Confederate Armies in the spring of 1865, prompted the consideration of a large number of former leaders in the South to emigrate to Brazil, is not yet established. Economic conditions, no doubt played a large part in the arrival at a determination to go to this foreign country.

### **Lost much of their property**

Many of the men who went had (formerly served in the Confederate Army, and had lost much of their property through the results of the War. They had accumulated their fortunes through that business popularly known as “planting”, and they sought to begin life anew. For the most part they were men of families, and their surviving descendants, at least, credit them with feeling that they wished to re-establish themselves on the social scale which had so characteristically surrounded them in the South Atlantic and Gulf States.

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The Southern Colonization Society, with headquarters at Edgefield Court House, South Carolina, Major Joseph Abney, late Colonel of the 22nd September, 1865. Major Robert Meriwether and Dr. H. A. Shaw were sent to the Empire of Brazil by this organization. They left Augusta, Georgia, on the 18th of October.

### **Men took a trip to survey Brazil**

They secured passports at Washington City and took passage on the “North America” a steamer of the United States and Brazil Line. Leaving New York City on October 30th, they arrived at Rio de Janeiro November 26th. Their report states that they met several gentlemen from the South who had been in Brazil several months on the same mission, notably, to examine conditions and report as to climate, productions, laws, religion, etc.

Dr. J. McF. Gaston of South Carolina, had prior to that time, made an extensive tour into the interior of San Paulo. About the end of the year 1865, two Texans, Frank M. Mullen and William Bowen, visited Brazil.

They made an extensive survey and their report is dated Rio de Janeiro, May 24, 1866. The Rev. Ballard S. Dunn of Louisiana was in Brazil on the 9th of November, 1865 on a similar mission.

### **Two men already purchased land in Brazil**

Major Meriwether's report makes the characteristic reference that at the date of his visit: "Two gentlemen from the States, one from Alabama and the other from Louisiana, have already purchased and settled here." It will subsequently develop that the two men referred to were Charles Gunter of Montgomery and Reverend Dunn of New Orleans. However, it is established that while they may have purchased and were considered as established, they had not at the time removed there. No date is given, but it would seem that this was prior to the 1st of January, 1866.

***"Did you know that religious persecution occurred in early America? Read about it in this historical series by Alabama author Donna R. Causey"***

### **Enthusiastic response from Brazilians**

A statement sent from Rio de Janeiro and entitled "History of Southern Immigration to Brazil" about the latter part of January, 1866, says: "Before the War large numbers of southern planters and efficient artisans premeditated a pioneer visit to Brazil. Collapse of Confederate States intensified this feeling, elicited much correspondence and associations for emigration formed in many communities. Associations put their fortunes in the hand of General William Wallace Wood of Mississippi. Enthusiastic receptions in Rio de Janeiro, music, church bells and crowds in streets, Dixie played for Wood, and special privileges given, land offered at 22cts an acre."

### **Steady emigration of southern families followed**

Lansford W. Hastings published in Mobile, in the spring of 1867, an Emigrant's Guide to Brazil."Mr. Hastings was a California pioneer, a

member of the Constitutional Convention of that State in 1849, and is said to have served in the Confederate Army. It is claimed that he had made two trips to Brazil and had secured a large grant of land, and died either on board ship or soon after its arrival at Para.

The Rev. Dunn published "A Practical Account of What the Author and Others who Visited that Country for the same Object, saw and did while in that Empire." He called it "Brazil, the Home for Southerners." It is known that he resided in Sao Paulo in 1869, though how much later cannot be said. Major Robert Meriwether who went out in 1865, was residing in the Empire many years later.

The flattering reports of these advance agents doubtless had much to do with the large and steady emigration of southern families to Brazil over the period extending to 1871 and 72. However, it is known that as late as the year 1890 families were still settling in Brazil "from the States."

### **General Wade Hampton wanted them to wait**

That there was no universal determination to go is evinced by the attitude of such men as General Wade Hampton of South Carolina, who advised "his late companions in arms to tarry a season and endeavor to right up the State and improve the conditions here before they abandon the lands and scanty possessions, and seek for new homes under brighter skies and serener heavens of the far South."

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Although conditions in Alabama were equally as deplorable (so far as the corruption of politics was concerned) as those in South Carolina, there were many in Montgomery who counseled against this move. To offset this many men of the temperament of [Colonel Charles Gunter](#) who were classed as "irreconcilables" insisted on going to Brazil.



*Col. Charles Gunter served in the Alabama House of Representatives from 1847 to 1850. After the Civil War, he moved to Brazil, bought slaves, and had a plantation.*

“The writer is not convinced that the statement sent out from Rio de Janeiro in 1866 that “before the War large numbers of southern planters and efficient artisans premeditated a pioneer visit to Brazil is true. Certainly not for the purpose of residing in Brazil was there any “large number of southern planters” anticipating this move.

Social conditions were too roseate up to 1860 to have caused such thoughts. It is true that political conditions were beginning to agitate the

minds of the leaders in the cities, but the southern planter was not a city dweller. The emancipation of slaves and the inability of men of means to secure labor to carry forward their plans, was without doubt, the fomenting cause for such widespread preparation to move, after the reports of these emigrant agents.”



*Eliza Adams Gunter, wife of Charles G. Gunter – ca. 1858 – According to notes written on the back of the photograph, Eliza Gunter was born May 4, 1816, and died October 10, 1860, she had auburn hair and blue eyes. The notes also say that this carte-de-viste was copied from an older photograph.*

### **Government of Brazil encouraged immigration**

The government of Brazil appears to have immediately grasped the opportunity and to have encouraged in every possible manner, the bringing of foreigners to their country. Under a “Favors to Emigrants” statement is:

“The Government will sell lands in any of its colonies or in the localities that the Emigrants prefer; and will give them gratuitous transports from Rio de Janeiro to the seaport to which they wish to proceed.

On the choice of the lands and the respective measurements being made, the definite title-deeds to the property shall be delivered to them upon payment of the price of the sale of 1 or 2 Reis each square braca (52.5 feet English)



*Early American family in Brazil (Wikipedia)*



The owners of the lands purchased from the States are subject to the following onus. 1st, To cede the lands necessary for roads 2nd, To give free transit to their neighbors to the public road, town or port of embarkation. 3rd, To allow the taking away of unneeded water. 4th, To subject the discovery of any mines to the legislation governing the case “



*House of first Confederate family in Americana, Brazil – Casa dos Norris House – Note: This may be Robert Norris' house mentioned above (Wikipedia)*

**(To be continued)**

## **SOURCES**

1. *Excerpts come from the article written by Peter A. Brannon in The Alabama Historical Quarterly Summer -1930) "Embodying the Diary of Jennie R. Keyes Montgomery, Alabama. This study was made at the request of Dr. Wyatt H. Blake a zealous member of the Board of Trustees of the Alabama State Department of Archives and History since its creation in 1901.*
2. [Wikipedia](#)