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TORREY TRADING HOUSES. The firm of **Torrey** and **Brothers** traded widely with the Indians for about ten years, from John F. **Torrey's**^{qv} arrival in Houston in 1838 until 1848, when the **Torreys** sold the major trading house to George Barnard.^{qv} The **Torreys'** trading activities were a vital part of Sam Houston's^{qv} peace policy and acted as a civilizing agent for the Indians. The **Torreys** conducted a significant fur trade, assisted in the establishment of New Braunfels, recovered stolen horses and captives from the Indians, and established what was perhaps the first regional bank in the United States. John **Torrey** and his **brothers** David K. and Thomas S. **Torrey**^{qv} built the first frame house in Houston and used it as a trading post and as a supply center for their other posts. David purchased goods in Boston and New York. George Barnard and Sam Houston may have been stockholders in the enterprise. The **Torreys** operated a trading house on the Bosque River in 1842 and established houses at Austin, San Antonio (1844), New Braunfels (1845), and Fredericksburg. Barnard opened a branch store on the Navasota River in 1843, and, at Houston's request, the firm opened a branch at the falls of the Brazos. The Brazos post, on Tehuacana Creek in McLennan County, received a license in December 1843 after the **Torreys** made bond for \$10,000. With its official status under a law of the Republic of Texas^{qv} passed in 1843, the post had a near monopoly of the Texas Indian trade. In 1846 Dr. Ferdinand von Roemer^{qv} made a trip from New Braunfels to the Brazos post with John **Torrey** and described the trading house as standing in a post oak grove on a high, pebble-covered hill overlooking Tehuacana Creek. The post comprised six or seven houses built of rough-hewn logs. The largest house held pelts, another contained trade goods for the Indians, and the remaining served as living quarters. In 1846 Paul Richardson built an additional building for a fee of \$100. The post traded goods to the Indians and, for a price, recovered stolen horses, runaway slaves, and captured Mexicans from the Indians. Indians frequently met at a council ground some four miles west of the trading post. In May 1845 about 1,000 lodges, or 4,000 persons, camped near the post. On November 16, 1845, Thomas I. Smith and George W. Terrell^{qv} made a treaty with the Kichai, Tawakoni, Waco, and Wichita groups at the post. In 1844 the **Torrey brothers** furnished Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels^{qv} with weapons for the Adelsverein.^{qv} The **brothers** contracted with John O. Meusebach^{qv} to provision and

transport German immigrants from the coast inland.

The **Torreys** had an unusual banking and credit system. The Tehuacana post served as a clearinghouse for the notes of rangers and Indians in the immediate area and for the entire border from the western edge of what is now Hood County almost to New Braunfels. The trading company sometimes paid advances to Indians for deerskins; the debts could then be paid at the posts on the Navasota River, at the falls of the Brazos, or at New Braunfels. Debts were sometimes paid by supplying six shaved skins for each dollar borrowed. Sam Houston signed and witnessed receipts for the **Torrey** Company at New Braunfels in 1846 and 1847. From 1844 to 1853 the trading house handled at least 75,000 deerskins. William N. P. Marlin and Leonard Williams,^{qv} freighters, traveled an estimated 15,000 miles collecting and delivering pelts to Houston at \$1.50 a hundred pounds in 1846 and \$2 a hundred pounds in 1848. Williams was the Indian agent assigned to the post in April 1845. Grant and Barton, commission furriers in New York, sold at auction for **Torrey** and **Brothers** and later for George Barnard more than seventy-five lots of skins. Barnard bought the Brazos post and moved it to Comanche Peak in Hood County in 1849. **Torrey** and **Brothers** entered into a partnership with the J. C. Spencer Company of Robinson County and dissolved this alliance in 1846. By 1849 the **Torrey Brothers** had sold their remaining interests to Barnard and moved out of Texas toward California.

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Henry C. Armbruster

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