



Henry Hilton Leigh (d. 1910), landowner and pioneer cotton planter in Peru

Leigh, Henry Hilton (d. 1910), landowner and pioneer cotton planter in Peru, was born in Old Ross, County Wexford, the son of John Leigh and Elisa Whitney.

Together with his brother John, in 1853 Henry Leigh emigrated to Chile and in 1855 to Paita, Peru. In Paita, Leigh was employed by British merchants, but when he settled in Piura, he opened his own business, H.H. Leigh & Co. Henry Leigh was the first to export cotton from Piura to Europe, and he established the first cotton press in the region.

In 1857 Henry Hilton married Carmen Cortés del Castillo. They had no children. She was a cousin of Miguel Cortés del Castillo, a hero in the Battle of Junín against the Spanish forces. In 1886, Leigh married his wife's sister Mercedes Jesús Cortés del Castillo and their children were George Edward, Benjamin, who was a doctor and lived in England, Federico, who was an engineer and lived in England, Carlos and Guillermo/William. They adopted Mercedes Leigh Cortés del Castillo.

One of Leigh's contributions to the production of cotton in the region was the creation of a new measurement, the *carga*. The market in Piura and the planters of the region used *carga* as the standard unit for growing and marketing cotton in the city. Henry Leigh also installed the first telephone line, from his house in Lima street to the 'Bigote' plantation. By 1910, he was one of the wealthiest landowners in Piura, as a producer of cotton and cattle.

In 1891-1905, Leigh was the first president of the Piura Chamber of Commerce and Production. He was a generous supporter of the Belén hospital, located in the Plaza de Armas up to the earthquake of 1912.

Henry Leigh died in 1910 in Santo Domingo (Piura) and was buried at the San Teodoro Cemetery.

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References

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