

# Austin Establishes a Colony in TX

## Background Information

In 1821 Moses Austin (father of Stephen F. Austin) secured permission from Spain to bring American settlers to TX. Moses Austin had once lived in Louisiana and settled families there for the Spain and was familiar with Spanish laws and regulations. Moses knew that Spain was anxious to populate TX and that many Spaniards were not interested in going to TX but that Americans would jump at the idea of excellent farmland at a cheap price. At first Spain thought this was an American ploy to grab land from them. With help from an old Spanish friend, Baron de Bastrop, Austin was able to receive permission to settle 300 families in TX. On June 10, 1821 (3 months before Mexican Independence from Spain) during his journey home from Mexico City Austin caught pneumonia and died. His last request was that his son carried out the plans for settling TX. After receiving word of his father's death Stephen F. Austin traveled to Mexico City to discuss his Father's plans for colonization. Austin spent most of September exploring TX to decide where the best place to settle his colony would be. He decided that the *area between the Brazos and Colorado Rivers* would be perfect. It had abundant fertile farmland, lots of natural resources, a mild climate, and there were other settlements already there. Austin also requested land along the coast, knowing he would need a port in order for his colony to be successful.

## An account of Austin's journey through east TX

"One of our group members went out hunting and killed the fattest deer that I ever saw in my whole life. We started about nine o'clock, continued north along a large body of timber which was on our right. Prairies of the richest kind were intersected by branches and creeks of excellent fresh water- all was heavily timbered and beautifully rolling."

Austin then began advertising for his colony. Because of the similarity of the climate, the economy, and culture of the south most of his advertisements appeared in Southern newspapers. One said, "no drunkard, no gamblers, no profane swearers, no lazy people, would be allowed in the colony" The land policy offered by Austin was very generous every man would receive 640 acres for himself, 320 acres for his wife, 160 acres for each child and 80 for each slave and people special to the colony like doctors or lawyers or merchants could get even more land. Settlers were to only pay 12.5 cents (\$.125) per acre (land in the United States cost \$1.25)

and Austin allowed people to buy on credit and to pay him later. Settlers coming to the new country were required to: become citizens of their new country, take an oath of allegiance to their new country, be of good morale character and to become Catholic. Austin wanted colonists that would work hard and be loyal to the Government (who weren't filibusters pretty much).

Austin had no trouble finding colonists. The prospect of obtaining excellent farmland at such a cheap price attracted many settlers to TX. When Austin had returned home from his first trip there were 100 families awaiting him to come to TX. Austin hired a ship called the Lively to take settlers to TX, when he made his first trip on the Lively he found that settlers had already made their way to TX by the time he had gotten there. He knew that settling 300 families would not be an issue. Most early settlers brought cows and some horses to farm but some brought slaves. The wealthiest of the new colonists was Jared Groce a planter and lumberman from Alabama he brought 50 wagons and 90 slaves. In 1822 Austin learned that Mexico had been granted Independence from Spain and he knew that he had not received permission from Mexico to settle the land and he would have to travel back to Mexico City to discuss the settlement of the colony and his agreement with the Spanish Government.

In 1823 after traveling to Mexico City Austin was granted his land contract by the Mexican Government. He was not the only American seeking land contracts and Mexican Congress passed a "Colonization Law" that allowed Empresarios or land agents to bring families to TX to help colonize the land that Spain had such difficulty colonizing. Through his meetings with the Mexican Government they had become convinced that he wanted to be a Mexican Citizen and he would not cause any trouble for them in TX and he could be trusted.

By 1825 Austin had fulfilled his promise to settle 300 families in TX, the families he brought were called the "Old Three Hundred" and Austin was dubbed "The Father of Texas". Some of the members of the Old 300 had been in TX before Austin got here including Jane Long and members of the Gutierrez and Magee expedition. Individuals who fought in the army were tasked in a militia to fight against Native Americans raiding the colony. The colony was given a capital "San Felipe de Austin"