

Texas Historical Commission

How Did *Empresarios* Attract Colonists?

Grade 4 & 7

SAN FELIPE de AUSTIN

STATE HISTORIC SITE

San Felipe, Texas

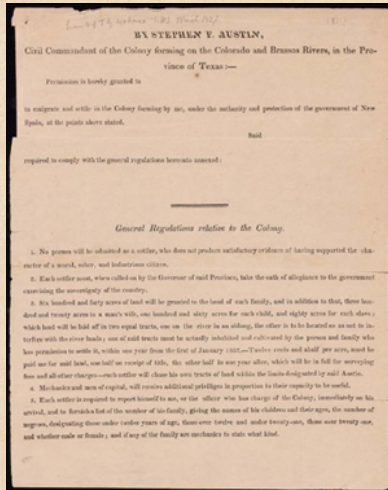


TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

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Virtual Field Trip



Austin's Regulations for Settlement, 1821. Image courtesy of San Felipe de Austin, THC.

How Did Empresarios Attract Colonists?

Overview: A New Beginning for Texas

In Part 3 in the Empresario series from the Texas Historical Commission's **San Felipe de Austin** site, learners explore the strategies Stephen F. Austin used to advertise to potential colonists interested in settling in Texas in the 19th century. The activities provide the opportunity to analyze primary source documents including Austin's letter and colony regulations related to the settlement recruitment. An introductory video is also included.

Objectives

- Demonstrate understanding of the empresario system in 19th century Texas.
- Identify the strategies empresarios used to inform and attract settlers to Texas.
- Analyze primary source documents.
- Reflect on the empresario experience.

Social Studies TEKS

4th Grade: 4.2 A, 4.2 E, 4.14 B, 4.21

7th Grade: 7.2 C, 7.2 E, 7.2 F, 7.20 A, 7.21

Resources

- Video: [How Did Empresarios Attract Colonists?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dO9Wtl7vwTc&feature=youtu.be) (THC YouTube) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dO9Wtl7vwTc&feature=youtu.be>
- Activity 1: Move to the Texas Frontier! activity resource
- Activity 2: A Letter from Stephen F. Austin activity resources (adapted and full)
- Activity 3: Regulations for Settlement activity resource
- Activity 4: Empresario Advertisement activity resource
- Activity 5: Journal Reflection activity resource
- Primary Source Letter, Stephen F. Austin: July 19, 1823 extract from the Mirror newspaper, Fincastle, VA (images and adapted and full transcriptions)
- Primary Source Document: Stephen F. Austin's Regulations for Settlement, 1821 (image and transcription)



Vocabulary

empresario (ehm preh SAH ree oh) noun: a person who was contracted by the Mexican government to bring colonists to settle in Texas

incentive (in SEN tiv) noun: something that encourages a person to try or work harder toward achieving a goal

labor (LAY buhr) noun: unit of land used for farming in Mexican Texas; one unit was equivalent to 177 acres

land grant (lahnd grahnt) noun: land given to an empresario to settle colonists

land title (lahnd TY tuhl) noun: deed that showed a colonist owned a certain section of land

league (LEEg) noun: unit of land used for raising stock in Mexican Texas; one unit was equivalent to 4,428 acres, also known as a *sitio*

tythe/tithe (TYthuh) noun: expected contribution to the Catholic Church; usually one-tenth of total earnings

Historical Context

In the early 19th century, the Mexican government was looking for ways to increase the population, build the economy, and provide better defense in its Texas region. One strategy used to accomplish this was to invite people from the United States and other locations to move into the frontier area. Land agents called empresarios made the arrangements for bringing settlers to a new colony.

Empresario Stephen F. Austin needed to let prospective colonists know that coming to Mexican Texas was possible. While Austin never formally created ads in newspapers, he and others wrote letters to friends and acquaintances that promoted the settlement. These letters, which were published in newspapers, described the advantages to moving to Austin's colony, which included more generous grants of inexpensive fertile land than were available in the United States. The letters also demonstrated the political system used at the time.



Video: How Did Empresarios Attract Colonists?

To introduce some of the methods empresarios used to advertise to potential colonists interested in settling in Texas, have learners watch the **How Did Empresarios Attract Colonists?** video. Discuss concepts after viewing.

Activity 1: Move to the Texas Frontier!

In this activity, learners assume the role of the Mexican government to analyze what the best incentives might be to entice colonists to settle in Texas. Have learners circle the best strategies on the **Move to the Texas Frontier!** activity resource. Share responses when completed.

Answer Key:

- **Give land away for free:** The federal Mexican government gave away frontier lands at no cost initially, but later the state government of Coahuila y Tejas imposed some fees.
- **Sell land for low prices:** Moses Austin originally wished to sell land in Spanish Texas at 12.5 cents an acre. This was 1/10th the price set on frontier land being sold in the United States during the same period.
- **Invite citizens of your nation to colonize your frontier lands:** Mexico asked its own citizens to move to Texas and offered them incentives, such as equipment to help them settle the new land.
- **Invite people from foreign nations to move to Texas:** Mexico and Spain both did this after seeing there was a strong desire among some citizens from the U.S. to move into Texas. Mexico did not give any of the equipment offered to its own citizens to those U.S. citizens who moved to Texas.
- **Offer an exemption from paying taxes for 10 years:** Colonizing land was expensive because the colonists had to build everything they needed to survive and to succeed. As a result of this, it would take a long time to get a home built, start a successful farm, and begin making money.
- **Offer large plots of land:** Mexican had a large amount of land to offer in Texas. Distributing large amounts of that land would be more attractive to potential colonists.
- **Allow colonists to import any goods to build the colony tax-free for 3 years:** Settling a colony was expensive and sometimes required special equipment. Allowing colonists to bring this equipment into the country without an extra cost helped speed the growth of the colony.
- **Allow colonists to choose what businesses/industries to participate in:** Colonists could continue to work in the same fields they had worked in before arriving in Mexican Texas, or they could start working in any other business or industry.



Activity 2: A Letter from Stephen F. Austin

In this activity, learners will analyze a published letter from Stephen F. Austin regarding his colonization recruitment. Preview the **transcriptions* of his letter** in the *Mirror* newspaper and the **primary source images**. Discuss any challenges in dealing with transcriptions of primary source materials.

Preview the comprehension questions at the bottom of the activity resource. Share responses when completed.

*There are two transcriptions of Austin's letter published in the *Mirror* newspaper: an adapted, shorter version, and the full transcription. The language of the text is the original in both. Assisting learners in understanding the meaning of the text may be helpful and/or necessary.

Answer Key:

Adapted version

- In what U.S. state was this letter from Stephen F. Austin published? In what year?
Virginia, 1823
- Austin guaranteed each new settler to Texas a league of land. Based on the definition of league, how many acres was that? **4, 428 acres**
- At the time this letter was published, how many families were already living in Texas?
100
- At the time he wrote this letter, how many additional families was Austin trying to persuade to move to Texas? **200**

Full version

- At the time Austin wrote this letter in 1823, what action had just been ordered by the government of Mexico? **the election of a new Congress in August, to meet in October**
- In addition to receiving a large sum of land, what were potential colonists freed from?
paying taxes and tythes/tithes for six years
- At the time he wrote this letter, how many additional families was Austin trying to persuade to move to Texas? **200**
- If the land Austin was offering cost _____ cents an acre, and the potential colonist could receive a league of land (_____ acres), what was the total cost? **12.5 cents an acre x 4,428 acres (a league) = \$553.50 total**

Activity 3: Regulations for Settlement

In this activity, learners will analyze the regulations set out by Stephen F. Austin in 1821 required of potential colonists. Preview the **transcriptions* of the document** and the **primary source image** and discuss any challenges in dealing with transcriptions of primary source materials. Note that the amounts of land granted to settlers was changed in 1823 from what is on this document, and that the Republic of Mexico abolished slavery in 1829.

Preview the comprehension questions at the bottom of the activity resource. Share responses when completed.

Answer Key:

- Where was Austin proposing to form his colony? **along the Colorado and Brazos (Brassos) Rivers**
- According to the terms in this document, how many total acres would a family of a husband, wife, and four children receive in 1821? **640 man, 320 wife, 160 per child (x4) = 1,600 acres**
- What requirement must be fulfilled for one of the tracts of land a colonist receives? **It must be inhabited and cultivated within a year from January of 1822.**
- How could a colonist receive “additional privileges”? **by being a mechanic or a man of capital (a person with money)**

Activity 4: Empresario Advertisement

Using the **Empresario Advertisement activity resource**, learners will create a designed ad with graphic and print elements encouraging people to move to Texas in the early 19th century. Discuss with learners what details would be helpful to include in the ad, such as location of the colony, amount and price of land, unique colony features, etc. Share ads when completed.

Activity 5: Journal Reflection

Using the **journal reflection activity resource**, learners will write in response to the advertisement they created in Activity 4.



Activity 1 Resource: Move to the Texas Frontier!

The Mexican federal government in the early 19th century needed to decide how to attract people to settle the Texas frontier. **Circle the incentives** that you think would help a potential colonist decide to move to Texas.

Give away land
for free

No tax
exemptions

Sell land at high
prices

Invite citizens
of your nation
to colonize your
frontier lands

Invite people
from foreign
nations to move
to Texas

Offer an
exemption from
paying taxes for
10 years

Ban all foreign
immigrants
from settling
frontier lands

Offer large plots of
land

Offer small
plots of land

Tax all imported
items needed to
build the colony

Allow colonists
to import goods
to build the
colony tax-free
for 3 years

Place restrictions
on the types of
businesses and
industries colonists
can participate in

Allow colonists to
choose what businesses
and industries
colonists can
participate in

Write **two** additional facts you learned in this video.



Activity 2 Resource: A Letter from Stephen F. Austin (adapted)



Extract of a letter from Stephen F. Austin to a citizen of this State, dated Texas, July 9, 1823.

After great delay I finally succeeded in getting my business satisfactorily arranged, and shall immediately begin to lay off the Land. My Grant was made by the Emperor's Urbidee agreeably to the colonization Law, and after his fall, was confirmed by the Sovereign Congress, and Supreme Executive power. This was done on the 10th April and the colonization Law at the same time repealed as regards all others. Capt. ——— was in Mexico and had presented a petition to Congress for the introduction of six hundred families which on the 1st June, my last intelligence had not been acted on. The whole nation has proclaimed the Federal Republic System. The four Eastern provinces will form one State for the present. A new Congress is ordered by the present one, the election to be next month and Congress to meet in October. Now is the time to move to this Country. There is no longer a doubt as to having a free government, the nation unites unanimous Settlers who establish themselves under me will have more privileges than ever will be granted again, the smallest quantity of Land they are to receive one League square, and are free from all kind of taxes and duties for six years. As far as yet unlimited as to the number which I may introduce into the interior of the province near the ancient settlement; there are about one hundred families on the Colorado and Brazos, the other two hundred I am determined shall be of a better kind. The crops of this year will be immense, eighty bushels of corn to the acre; it is calculated will be raised in many places in the settlement, the rains have been plentiful throughout the summer. I want settlers of respectability, and if you or your friends will join me, I will allow you all the privileges in my power. The Land will cost twelve and a half cents an acre, in two yearly instalments for the greater part, some must be paid on receiving titles. This province presents the most brilliant prospects under the Federal System. The people are anxious for the next settlement to succeed, that we may form a state separate from the other three provinces. General Trescastros is removed from the command of this province, and a new Governor appointed ere long, the people will in all probability elect their own Governor and receive no more civil officers from Mexico.

Read the **Primary Source adapted transcript** of the letter from Stephen F. Austin that was published in the *Mirror* newspaper.

Write answers to the questions.

- ★ In what U.S. state was this letter from Stephen F. Austin published? In what year?
- ★ Austin guaranteed each new settler to Texas a league of land. Based on the definition of league, how many acres was that?
- ★ At the time this letter was published, how many families were already living in Texas?
- ★ At the time he wrote this letter, how many additional families was Austin trying to persuade to move to Texas?

Activity 2 Resource: A Letter from Stephen F. Austin (full)



Image of Stephen F. Austin courtesy Portal to Texas History via Palestine Public Library. Newspaper image courtesy Genealogybank, researched by Michael Rugeley Moore.

Extract of a letter from Stephen F. Austin to a citizen of this State, dated Texas, July 9, 1833.

"After great delay I finally succeeded in getting my business satisfactorily arranged and shall immediately begin to lay out the land. My Grant was made by the Emperor-Mexico agreeably to the colonization Law, and after his fall, was confirmed by the Sovereign Congress, and Supreme Executive power. This was done on the 10th April and the colonization Law at the same time repealed as regards all others. Capt. ——— was in Mexico and had presented a petition to Congress for the introduction of six hundred families which by the 1st June (my last intelligence) had not been acted on. The whole nation has proclaimed the Federal Republic System. The four Eastern provinces will form one State for the present. A new Congress is ordered by the present one, the election to be next month and Congress to meet in September. Now is the time to move to this Country. There is no longer a doubt as to having a free government, the nation seems unanimous Settlers will establish themselves under me will have more privileges than ever will be granted again, the simplest grant of

ty of land they are to receive one League square, and are free from all kind of taxes and duties for six years. I am as yet undecided as to the number which I may introduce into the interior of the province near the ancient settlements there are about one hundred families in the Colorado and Brazos, the other two hundred I am determined shall be of the best kind. The crops of this year will be immense, eighty bushels of corn to the acre; it is calculated will be raised in many places in this settlement, the rains have been plentiful throughout the summer. I want settlers of respectability, and if you or your friends will join me, I will allow you all the privileges in my power. The Land will cost twelve and a half cents an acre, in two yearly instalments for the greater part, some must be paid on receiving titles. This province presents the most brilliant prospects under the Federal System. The people are anxious for the next settlement to succeed, that we may form a state separate from the other three provinces. General Trespaños is removed from the command of this province and a new Governor appointed ere long, the people will in all probability elect their own Governor and receive no more civil officers from Mexico."

Read the **Primary Source full transcript** of the letter from Stephen F. Austin that was published in the *Mirror* newspaper

Write answers to the questions.

- ★ At the time Austin wrote this letter, what action had just been ordered by the government of Mexico?
- ★ In addition to receiving a large sum of land, what were potential colonists freed from?
- ★ At the time he wrote this letter, how many additional families was Austin trying to persuade to move to Texas?
- ★ If the land Austin was offering cost _____ cents an acre, and the potential colonist could receive a league of land (_____ acres), what was the total cost?

Activity 3 Resource: Regulations for Settlement

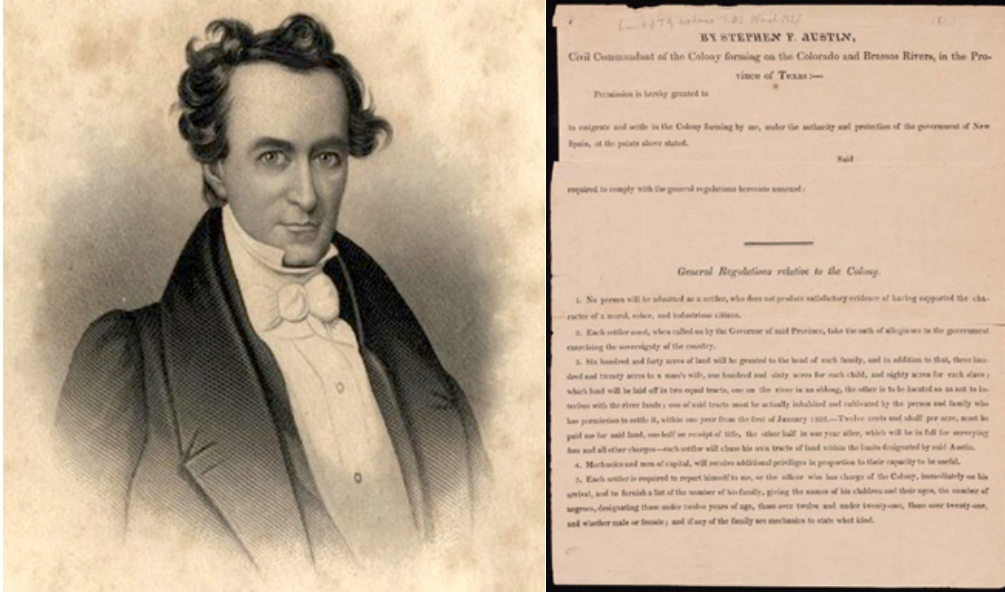


Image of Stephen F. Austin courtesy Portal to Texas History via Palestine Public Library. Austin's Regulations for Settlement, 1821. Image by San Felipe de Austin, THC

Read the **Primary Source transcript** of Stephen F. Austin's 1821 rules for colony settlement.

Write answers to the questions.

- ★ Where was Austin proposing to form his colony?
- ★ According to the terms in the document, how many total acres would a family of a husband, wife, and four children receive in 1821?
- ★ What requirement must be fulfilled for one of the tracts of land a colonist receives?
- ★ How could a colonist receive "additional privileges"?



Activity 4 Resource: Empresario Advertisement

Step into the shoes of a Texas *empresario*, and create an advertisement with graphic and print elements to convince settlers to come to your colony to live. Include details that would make your colony an attractive choice, such as the price of land, location of the colony, amount and price of land, and any unique colony features.

Activity 5 Resource: Journal Reflection

Think about advertisement you created to persuade settlers to come to your colony. How did your advertisement represent what was unique about your colony? Why did you use the design and print elements you did? What do you think is the strongest element of your advertisement? Is there anything you would change or add? Why?



Primary Resource: A Letter from Stephen F. Austin (extract)

This is an extract image from the July 19, 1823 *Mirror* newspaper, published in Fincastle, Virginia, featuring the section of the page including Stephen F. Austin's letter. Image courtesy of Genealogybank, researched by Michael Rugeley Moore.

Extract of a letter from Stephen F. Austin to a citizen of this State, dated Texas, July 9, 1823.

"After great delay I finally succeeded in getting my business satisfactorily arranged, and shall immediately begin to lay off the Land. My Grant was made by the Emperor Iturbide agreeably to the colonization Law, and after his fall was confirmed by the Sovereign Congress, and Supreme Executive power. This was done on the 10th April and the colonization Law at the same time repealed as regards all others. Capt. _____ was in Mexico and had presented a petition to Congress for the introduction of six hundred families which on the 1st of June (my last intelligence) had not been acted on. The whole nation has proclaimed the *Federal Republican System*. The four Eastern provinces will form one State for the present. A new Congress is ordered by the present one, the election to be next month and Congress to meet in October. Now is the time to move to this Country. There is no longer a doubt as to having a free government, the nation seems unanimous. Settlers who establish themselves under me will have more privileges than ever will be granted again, the smallest quanti-

ty of land they are to receive is one League square, and are free from all kind of taxes and tythes for six years. I am as yet unlimited as to the number which I may introduce into the interior of the province near the ancient settlement; there are about one hundred families on the Colorado and Brasas, the other two hundred I am determined shall be of the best kind.

The crops of this year will be immense, eighty bushels of corn to the acre; it is calculated will be raised in many places in the settlement, the rains have been plentiful throughout the summer. I want settlers of respectability, and if you or your friends will join me, I will allow you all the privileges in my power. The Land will cost twelve and a half cents an acre, in two yearly instalments for the greater part, some must be paid on receiving titles. This province presents the most brilliant prospects under the Federal System. The people are anxious for the next settlement to succeed, that we may form a state separate from the other three provinces. General Treselacios is removed from the command of this province, and a new Governour appointed; ere long the people will in all probability elect their own Governour and receive no more civil officers from Mexico.

Primary Resource: A Letter from Stephen F. Austin (adapted)

This is a transcription of a letter written by Stephen F. Austin and published in the July 19, 1823 edition of the *Mirror*, a newspaper in Fincastle, Virginia.

Extract of a letter from Stephen F. Austin to a citizen of this State, dated Texas, July 1823.

After great delay I finally succeeded in getting my business satisfactorily arranged and shall immediately begin to lay off the land.

...

Now is the time to move to this Country. Settlers who establish themselves under me will have more privileges than ever will be granted again, the smallest guaranty of land they are to receive is one League square, and are free from all taxes and tythes for six years. I am as yet unlimited as to the number which I may introduce into the interior of the province near the ancient settlement; there are about one hundred families on the Colorado and Brasos, the other two hundred I am determined shall be of the best kind.

The crops this year will be immense, eighty bushels of corn will be raised in many places in the settlement, the rains have been plentiful throughout the summer. I want settlers of respectability, and if you or your friends will join me, I will allow you all the privileges in my power. The land will cost twelve and a half cents an acre Stephen F. Austin.

Primary Resource: A Letter from Stephen F. Austin (full)

This is a transcription of a letter written by Stephen F. Austin and published in the July 19, 1823 edition of the *Mirror*, a newspaper in Fincastle, Virginia.

Extract of a letter from Stephen F. Austin to a citizen of this State, dated Texas, July 1823.

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Primary Resource: Austin's Regulations for Settlement, 1821

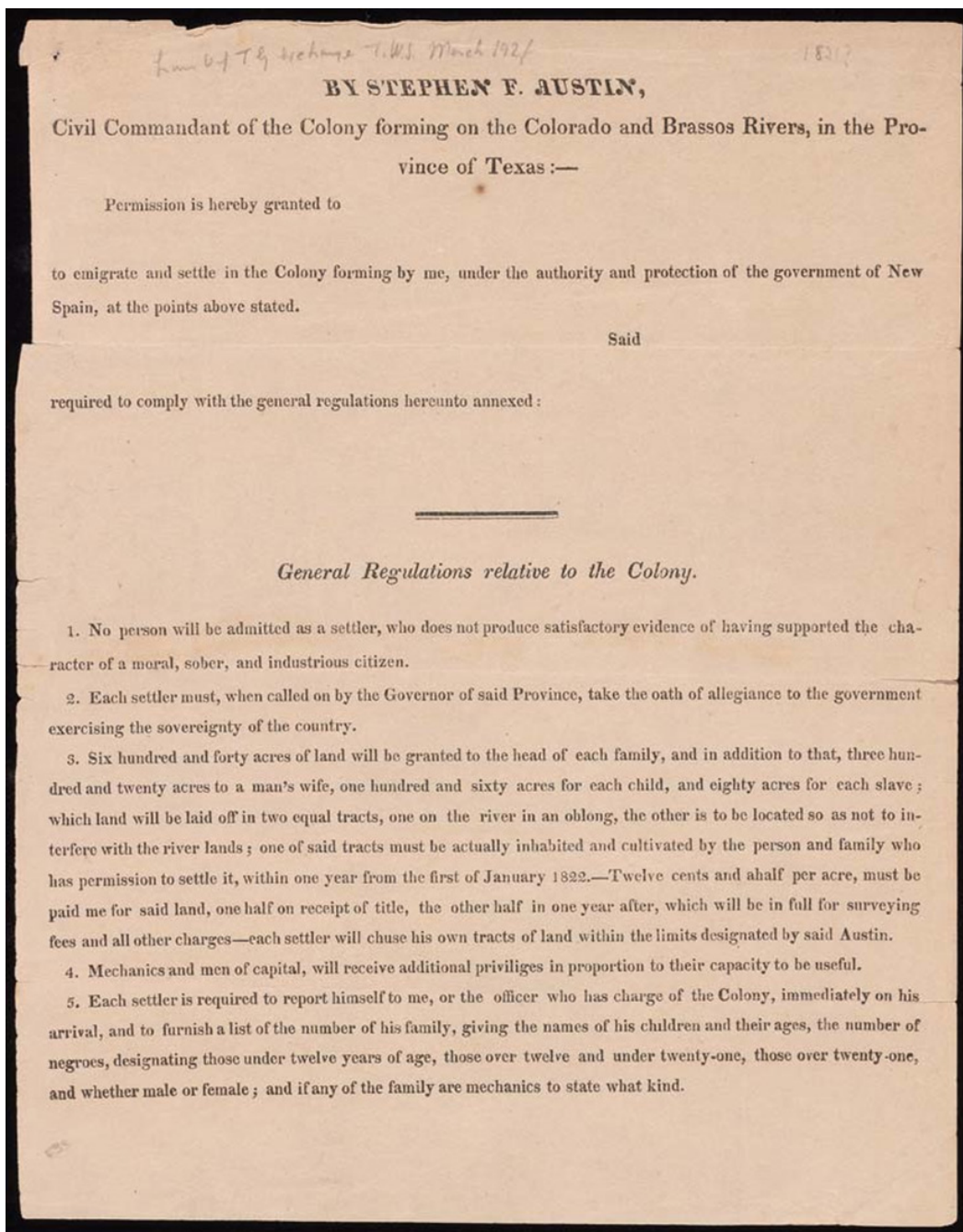


Image courtesy of San Felipe de Austin, THC.



Primary Resource: Regulations for Settlement

This is a transcription of the document written by Stephen F. Austin in 1821 settling out the rules potential colonists were required to follow for settlement.

By Stephen F. Austin

Civil Commandant of the Colony forming on the Colorado and Brassos Rivers, in the Province of Texas:--

Permission is hereby granted to:

to emigrate and settle in the Colony forming by me, under the authority and protection of the government of new Spain, at the points above stated.

Said

Required to comply with the general regulations hereunto annexed:

General Regulations relative to the Colony

- 1. No person will be admitted as a settler, who does not produce satisfactory evidence of having supported the character of a moral, sober and industrious citizen.*
- 2. Each settler must, when called on by the Governor of said Province, take the oath of allegiance to the government exercising the sovereignty of the country.*
- 3. Six hundred and forty acres of land will be granted to the head of each family, and in addition to that, three hundred and twenty acres to a man's wife, one hundred and sixty acres for each child, and eighty acres for each slave; which land will be laid off in two equal tracts, one on the river in an oblong, the other is to be located so as not to interfere with the river lands; one of said tracts must actually be inhabited and cultivated by the person and family who has permission to settle it, within one year from the first of January 1822.—Twelve cents and a half per acre, and must be paid for said land, one half on receipt of title, the other half in one year after, which will be in full for surveying fees and all other charges—each settler will chuse his own tracts of land within the limits designated by said Austin.*
- 4. Mechanics and men of capital, will receive additional privileges in proportion to their capacity to be useful.*
- 5. Each settler is required to report himself to me, or the officer who has charge of the Colony, immediately on his arrival, and to furnish a list of the number of his family, giving the names of his children and their ages, the number of negroes, designating those under twelve years of age, those over twelve and under twenty-one, those over twenty-one, and whether male or female; and if any of the family are mechanics to state what kind.*

