

A Texas Timeline: Colonization of Mexican Texas

Under Spanish authority, there were fairly strict laws regarding colonization of Mexico, including Texas. Spain was reluctant to let Anglo-Americans and Europeans settle in their territory. Populating Texas was problematic, however, and in 1820 Spain began granting empresario contracts to Anglo-Americans. The first contract was granted to Moses Austin of Missouri, who died before he could make the move to Texas.

With Mexican independence came a liberalization of colonization laws. Mexico began granting empresario contracts to Americans, Europeans and native born Mexicans. There were rules for would-be immigrants: they had to take an oath of loyalty to Mexico and convert to Catholicism. Immigrants were also expected to be of good character and contribute to the development of industry in Texas. The main attraction Texas held for immigrants was the cheap land available for settling. In the United States, as a result of a change to land policy in 1820, land was selling for \$1.25 an acre. In Texas, settlers could purchase land for around 4¢ an acre plus administrative and surveying fees. For many Americans who had faced financial ruin during the Panic of 1819, Mexican Texas represented a chance for a fresh start.

December 1820	Moses Austin travels from Missouri to San Antonio to apply for a Spanish land grant
June 1821	Moses Austin dies, Stephen F. Austin travels to Texas for first time
August 1821	Stephen F. Austin explored the lower Colorado for site for his colony
September 1821	Mexican Independence
January 1823	Imperial Colonization Law Passed (foreigners must be Catholic)
April 1823	Stephen F. Austin received contract under the Imperial Colonization Law to settle 300 American families in Texas
April 1824	Martin De León receives contract to settle 41 Mexican families along the lower Guadalupe and founds town of Nuestra Señora Guadalupe de Jesús Victoria (present day Victoria)
August 1824	National Colonization Law passed (foreigners must be Christian & abide by laws)
March 1825	Coahuila and Texas State Colonization Law passed (colonists tax-free for 10 years)

March 1825	Green DeWitt, Haden Edwards, Robert Leftwich and Frost Thorn granted empresario contracts.
August 1825	Town of Gonzales established as capital of the DeWitt colony.
October 1826	Haden Edwards contract revoked amidst growing complaints against Edwards.
November 1826	Fredonian Rebellion breaks out in Nacogdoches as Edwards and his supporters seek independence from Mexico for the Republic of Fredonia. Austin and other empresarios side with Mexican government over Edwards.
June 1828	Irish natives John McMullen and James McGloin receive contract to settle 200 European families along the Nueces River. Town of San Patricio established in this colony in 1829.
Mar 1828 - Jan '29	Mier y Terán leads expedition to Texas to explore boundary between United States & Mexico. Also reports on Anglo-Texan population size and attitudes.
September 1829	President Vicente Ramón Guerrero emancipates all slaves in Mexico, exemption granted for Texas.
April 6, 1830	Law of April 6, 1830 is passed prohibiting immigration from the United States to Texas, exemptions granted for Austin and DeWitt colonies.