

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

*An Interpretation of the
Cultural and Natural History of*

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE PARK

and

**SAN FELIPE DE AUSTIN
STATE HISTORIC SITE**





Stephen Fuller Austin

An Interpretation of the Cultural and Natural History of Stephen F. Austin State Park and San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site

With its own special blend of cultural history, plant and animal life, Stephen F. Austin State Park offers many opportunities to connect with the past, experience nature and enjoy outdoor recreation.

Stephen F. Austin State Park takes its name from Stephen Fuller Austin, considered by many to be the father of Texas. In 1823, Austin established San Felipe de Austin as the Colonial Capital of Texas at the Atascosito Road Ferry crossing of the Brazos River. San Felipe served as the social, economic and political hub for the Anglo-American colonists who followed Austin to settle Texas. Later, San Felipe became the political center for the events leading to the Texas Revolution.

The park consists of two non-contiguous tracts of land located near each other. The 14-acre state historic site, centered on Commerce Square of old San Felipe de Austin, is one of the most significant archeological and historic sites in Texas. The San Felipe Park Association dedicated the site in 1928 and donated it the State of Texas in 1940. The 473-acre state park includes mixed bottomland forest and forested swamp nestled in a scenic bend of the Brazos River.

ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES

Day-use facilities at the state park include a picnic area with 65 sites, each with a table and grill, a group picnic pavilion and a group dining hall. The group dining hall is equipped with a kitchen, tables and chairs, rest rooms and air conditioning. It seats 60 people and the picnic pavilion accommodates 30 people.

Overnight facilities include 40 full hook-up, pull-through RV sites with water, 30-amp electricity and sewer, 40 tent sites with water only, 20 screened shelters with water and electricity, a screened group recreation hall and rest rooms with showers. The screened group recreation hall has a fire ring, rest rooms, picnic tables and a kitchen. RV sites, tent sites and screened shelters are each limited to eight people per site and the group recreation hall is limited to 60 people.

The park has nearly five miles of multi-use trails for hiking and biking and a 1/8-mile self-guided, interpretive nature trail. The trail system also provides access to the Brazos River for fishing and to the undeveloped wooded areas of the park for birding and wildlife viewing. A 30-seat amphitheater, used for park interpretive programs, lies near one of the trailheads. The park has a 1 3/4-mile orienteering course. Stargazing opportunities abound in the park's rural setting, away from the glare of urban centers. The park also includes two swing sets, a basketball court, a volleyball court and a horseshoe pit.

A well-stocked Texas State Park Store offers a variety of souvenirs.

An 18-hole public golf course, operated by the Stephen F. Austin Golf Association, is adjacent to the park. Please contact the pro shop for tee times and green fees at (979) 885-2811.

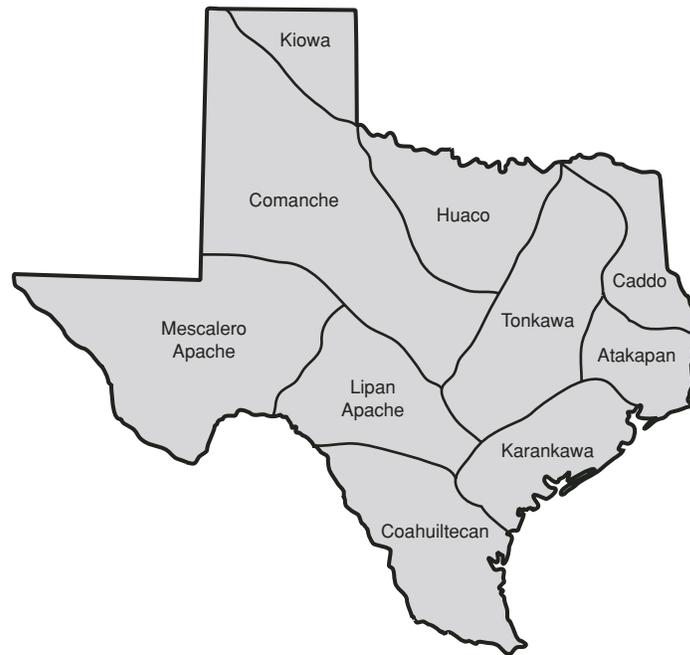
Located at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site and operated by Stephen F. Austin Park Association, the restored J.J. Josey General Store Museum, built in 1847, displays artifacts from the period of early Texas colonization. Tours of the museum and site are offered every Saturday and Sunday afternoon. The Association charges a nominal museum entrance fee.

The historic site also includes a replica of the dog-run log cabin where Austin lived and conducted the business of the early colony. The public town well, completed in 1832, is the only surviving structure from the pre-Revolutionary period of the town. A bronze statue of Austin dominates the site. New York sculptor John Angel cast the statue in 1938. It depicts Austin seated on a pink Marble Falls granite pyramid. A 1928 obelisk and numerous commemorative markers on site also celebrate the achievements of Austin and his colonists.



Cultural History

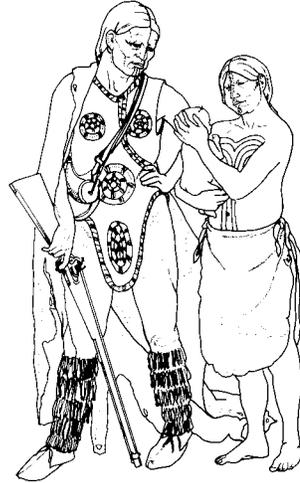
NATIVE AMERICAN OCCUPATION



Archeological evidence suggests that human habitation in the area began as early as 7400 B.C. during the late Paleo-Indian Period. The park lies in what appears to have been a zone of cultural transition between inland and coastal aboriginal peoples. During the early historic era the principal inland inhabitants were the Tonkawas, a nomadic, hunting and gathering people, who traveled hundreds of miles in pursuit of buffalo. They were regarded as friendly by Anglo settlers who moved in during the early 19th century. To the south and west, on the coastal lowlands, dwelt the more aggressive Karankawas, much feared by the settlers. San Felipe was somewhat shielded from the fierce Comanches and Apaches by settlements on the Colorado River to the west and the buffering presence of the Tonkawas to the north.

TONKAWAS

The Tonkawa Indians were actually a group of independent bands. The remnants of these tribes migrated from the high plains as late as the 17th century and united in the early 18th century in the Central Texas region. The name Tonkawa is a Huaco Indian term meaning “they all stay together.”



The Tonkawas had a Plains Indian culture, subsisting on buffalo and small game. When pushed from their hunting grounds, they became an impoverished culture, living off what little food they could scavenge. Unlike other plains tribes, the Tonkawas ate fish and oysters. They also gathered and ate a number of herbs, roots, fruits, seeds, acorns and pecans. When Anglo settlers moved into their region, pecans became an item of barter.

Adult males wore a long breechclout, supplemented with buckskin or bison moccasins and leggings. Women wore short skin skirts. Both men and women tattooed their bodies. In aboriginal days the Tonkawas lived in short, squat tepees covered with buffalo hides. As the buffalo became scarce, brush arbors replaced the tepee.

Cabeza de Vaca may have been the first European to encounter the Tonkawas during his trek through Texas, but it was La Salle at Fort St. Louis that gave the first definite information concerning the tribe in 1687. A period of regular Spanish contact with the Tonkawa groups began in 1690. Between 1746 and 1749 the Spanish established three missions for the Tonkawas on the San Gabriel River. The Tonkawas suffered several devastating epidemics and Apache raids during the life of the missions. By 1756 the Spanish abandoned the San Gabriel missions.

Following Tonkawa participation in the 1758 destruction of the San Saba Mission, built for the Apaches, Spain regarded the Tonkawas as enemies. Not until 1770 did the Spanish attempt to reestablish cordial relations. Tonkawas and Spanish settled into a period of uneasy peace and relations with the Mexicans followed a similar period of friendly relations. The Tonkawas often

aided their new Anglo allies against the Comanches. The Tonkawas remained staunch allies of the English-speaking settlers in Texas. They continued to help Texas, and later the United States, during their wars with other Indian tribes until 1859, when they were removed to a reservation in Indian Territory. Tonkawas soon intermarried with other Indians to the extent that they were no longer distinguishable as a separate tribe.

KARANKAWAS

The Karankawa Indians inhabited the Gulf Coast of Texas from Galveston Bay southwestward to Corpus Christi Bay. The name Karankawa is generally believed to mean “dog-



lovers” or “dog-raisers.” The Karankawa were nomadic people who migrated seasonally between the barrier islands and the mainland. They obtained food by a combination of hunting, fishing and gathering. Fish, shellfish and turtles were staples of the Karankawa diet, but a wide variety of animals and plants contributed to their sustenance.

Always on the move, their principal means of transportation was the dugout canoe. These primitive watercraft, unsuited for deep open water, were used primarily in the shallow waters between the islands and the mainland. The Karankawas traveled overland by foot, and were often described as powerful runners. A portable wigwam provided shelter for the coastal people. Karankawas were known for their distinctive physical appearance. The men, described as tall and muscular, wore deerskin breechclouts. They painted and tattooed their bodies. Women wore skirts of Spanish moss that reached to the knees.

The Karankawa’s entrance into the historical record in 1528 by Cabeza de Vaca represents the first recorded contact between Europeans and Texas Indians. After this encounter, the Karankawas were not visited again by Europeans until La Salle established Fort St. Louis in 1685 near Matagorda Bay, in the heart of Karankawa country. After La Salle set out for Canada to find help for the struggling colony, Karankawas attacked, killing nearly all of the colonists.

In the early 18th century, Karankawa country again became the center of Spanish-French rivalry. The Spanish established a presidio and mission near the site of La Salle's failed Fort St. Louis. The Spanish continued their efforts to missionize the Karankawas for more than a century with little success. By the end of Spanish rule in Texas, the Karankawa population had been greatly reduced by epidemic diseases.

Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821 and the new government encouraged Anglo-American immigration to the sparsely populated province of Texas. As settlers entered Karankawa territory, confrontations became frequent. Mexican authorities attempted to protect the colonists by making peace with the Karankawas, but their efforts were unsuccessful. The colonists, spurred by empresario Stephen F. Austin, banded together to rid themselves of the Indian threat. In 1824, Austin personally led an expedition of some 90 men that drove the Karankawas to seek sanctuary in La Bahia mission. An armistice was arranged but the Karankawas continued to range east of the Lavaca River and conflicts were frequent.

The tribe's population steadily diminished as they fought the growing Anglo-Texan population, as well as hostile Tonkawas and Comanches. When Texas became an independent republic in 1836, the Karankawas had been so reduced that they were no longer considered a formidable enemy. In 1858, a Texan force attacked and annihilated the small remaining band of Karankawas, and after this last defeat, the coastal Texas tribe was considered extinct.

EARLY SPANISH AND FRENCH EXPLORATION

During the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, Texas was part of a vast arena of imperial competition between Spain and France. Although no definitive archeological evidence exists, it is highly likely that the area of Texas the park lies in was surveyed by two well known explorers, one Spanish and one French. In addition, the Spanish constructed the Atascosito Road, some time before 1767, linking Refugio and Goliad with Atascosito, a fortified settlement on the lower Trinity River near the present site of Liberty. Stretching through what is now southern Austin County, the Atascosito Road crossed the Brazos River at an ancient site used by Native Americans for centuries to ford the river. The area to the west of this crossing would soon become Stephen F. Austin's Colonial Capital, San Felipe de Austin.

CABEZA DE VACA

Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, an early Spanish explorer, was a member of the 1527 expedition to found a Spanish colony in Florida. The expedition landed in the Gulf coast of Florida in April 1528 and began to march up the interior. Faced with hostile conditions, the expedition left Florida by sea. Hugging the coast, the small flotilla passed the mouth of the Mississippi River and a storm soon beached the battered craft on an island off the Texas coast, probably San Luis (now known as Follet's Island), in November 1528. Cabeza de Vaca was among some 80 survivors who were perhaps the first non-Indians to set foot on Texas soil.

For over three years Cabeza de Vaca ranged inland, as well as along the coast, becoming the first European merchant in Texas, carrying sea shells and mesquite beans to the interior and returning with skins and red ochre. In 1532, Cabeza de Vaca reluctantly left the Galveston area and traveled along the inner Texas coast toward Mexico. He eventually rendezvoused with three other expedition survivors at what they called the river of nuts, probably the Guadalupe River. Crossing the lower Rio Grande near the present site of Presidio, they continued to the Pacific Coast of Mexico, arriving in early 1536.

Cabeza de Vaca's Relacion reported his experiences in Texas. Biotic, ethnographic and physiographic information contained in his narratives provides clues as to where he spent nearly seven years in Texas and what he saw. Cabeza de Vaca's experiences provide valuable data on Texas Indians, landforms, flora and fauna. Cabeza de Vaca deserves recognition as the first geographer, historian and ethnologist in Texas. He was the only Spaniard to live among the coastal Indians of Texas and survive to write about them.

LA SALLE

Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, an early French explorer, obtained royal support in 1683 for a voyage to the Mississippi through the Gulf of Mexico to establish a colony. He envisioned a port, fortified against Spanish and English incursion, on the Gulf to serve his commercial empire stretching throughout the Mississippi Valley, or Louisiana, as La Salle named the territory drained by the great river.

La Salle missed the mouth of the Mississippi and landed at Matagorda Bay on the Texas coast on Feb. 20, 1685. From his Fort St. Louis, on Garcitas Creek in what is now Victoria County, he explored westward possibly as far as the Pecos River and eastward beyond the Trinity River, in an effort to establish his location. On his second eastward journey, La Salle was slain by a disenchanted follower on March 19, 1687, “six leagues” from the westernmost village of the Tejas Indians. Of the 200 colonists he landed, barely 15 remained alive five years later.

Although La Salle’s projects ended in failure, his explorations were landmarks. His entry into the Gulf of Mexico sparked a renewal of Spanish exploration in the entire Gulf region. His fruitless colony gave the French a claim to Texas causing the Spaniards to jump start the Anglo-American colonization of eastern Texas. Because of La Salle, the United States was able to register a claim to Texas as part of the Louisiana Purchase.

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN AND ANGLO COLONIZATION

During the early 1800s, Spain set the stage for Texas freedom by enacting policies to help fend off its takeover by French and British rivals. As a last-ditch defense of its unpopulated territories, the Spanish Crown opened up lands between the lower Trinity and Guadalupe rivers to American immigrants. Lured by lands as cheap as four cents an acre, as opposed to \$1.25 per acre for public land in the United States, the influx of homesteaders grew from a trickle to a flood.

In January 1821, Moses Austin, founder of the American lead mining and smelting industry, was granted permission by the Spanish governor in San Antonio to settle 300 Roman Catholic families in Texas, but he died in Missouri in June before he could realize his plans. Stephen F. Austin accepted his father’s deathbed request to administer the Texas Venture and traveled to San Antonio in August 1821, where he met with the Mexican governor, who acknowledged Stephen as the successor of his father’s legacy.

Stephen Fuller Austin, the Father of Texas, son of Moses and Maria (Brown) Austin, was born in southwestern Virginia on Nov. 3, 1793. At the age of ten, his father sent him to school in Connecticut, from which he spent two years at Transylvania University in Lexington, Ky. After his return from Transylvania in the spring of 1810, Stephen was employed in his father’s

general store and subsequently took over the management of his father's lead mining business in Missouri. He served the public as adjutant of a militia battalion and for nearly five years was a member of the Missouri Territorial Legislature. In December 1820, Stephen was in New Orleans, where he had made arrangements to study law.

Stephen was expecting to accompany his father to San Antonio when he learned of Moses Austin's death. He proceeded to San Antonio, where he arrived in August 1821, just as news came of Mexico's independence from Spain. After almost a year of unremitting attention to the Mexican governor, Austin gained permission from the Republic of Mexico to continue the colonization enterprise under his father's original Spanish grant. Stephen F. Austin was named an empresario. These land agents were to promote immigration to and colonization of Texas, and for their services, were to receive personal land grants and financial compensation. Austin was permitted by the governor to explore the coastal plain for the purpose of selecting a site for the proposed colony.

Austin returned to New Orleans, published his terms, and invited colonists, saying that settlements would be located on the Brazos and Colorado rivers. Land grants were issued by the empresario in measurements of labors (177 acres of cropland), leagues or sitios (4,428 acres of grazing land) and haciendas (five leagues). The well-timbered, rich, alluvial bottomlands of the Brazos were major attractions for settlers, especially the prized tracts that combined woodland with prairie. By November 1821, the first colonists began to arrive in Texas by land and sea.

As early as May 1823, John McFarlan settled at the Atascosito Road crossing of the Brazos River and began to operate a ferry. In December 1823, Austin, with the assistance of the land commissioner, Baron de Bastrop, decided to establish his colonial capital on the west bank of the Brazos near where McFarlan operated his ferry. McFarlan later received a lifetime license from Austin and Bastrop to officially operate the ferry for the colony. The site chosen was a high prairie on an easily defensible bluff overlooking broad, fertile bottomlands. The location offered a number of advantages. It was centrally located within Austin's colony. Several sources of fresh water, independent of the Brazos, were nearby, including Arroyo Dulce or Sweet Creek (now known as Bullinger's Creek). The site was protected from periodic flooding by its elevation, yet it was in close proximity to the river.

Several gullies cut the bluff allowing for easy access to the river from high ground. And finally, the river at this location was wide and straight, slow moving, and had a level bed which made crossing fairly easy. The town's name, San Felipe de Austin, was proposed by the Mexican governor to honor the empresario and the governor's own patron saint.

From late 1823 through early 1824, surveyor Seth Ingram was consumed with the task of defining the boundaries of the five league expanse of prairie and woodland encompassed by the municipality and platting the town proper. Planned on the basis of the prevailing Mexican town model, lots were arranged on a rectangular grid of avenues and streets dominated by five large public plazas (Commerce Square, Military Square, the cemetery and the hospicio). Despite this elaborate plan, San Felipe soon developed into a village with no coherent plan and houses scattered at random, sprawling westward from the Brazos for more than a half mile along both sides of the Atascosito Road. Eight roads would soon link the colonial capital with the rest of the colony, with San Antonio and with the coastal ports of Louisiana and Texas. Among these roads, the Atascosito Road ran from Goliad through San Felipe and on to Liberty, the Gotier Trace ran from San Felipe to Bastrop and the San Felipe Road ran from San Felipe to Harrisburg.

By the end of 1824, Austin had completed issuing the majority of his original 300 titles. At this time most of the Old Three Hundred (the first group of Anglo-American families) were in Texas. The majority of the Old Three Hundred were from the trans-Appalachian South. Most were farmers, and many already had substantial means before they arrived. Their plantation, arrayed along the rich, coastal river bottoms, constituted the heart of the burgeoning cotton empire in antebellum Texas.

San Felipe quickly became the political, economic and social hub of the colony, which stretched northward from the Gulf of Mexico as far as the Old San Antonio Road and extended from the Lavaca River in the west to the San Jacinto River in the east. By 1836, San Felipe, the first true urban community to develop within Austin colony, ranked second in Texas only to San Antonio as a commercial center. At its peak, San Felipe contained more than 45 buildings and 600 residents.

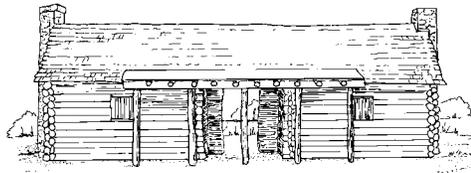
By the late 1820s, industry and agriculture were flourishing in the colony. The Cumings family constructed a water-powered grist and lumber mill

near the mouth of Palmetto Creek (now known as Mill Creek), probably the first mill of its kind in Texas. Not long thereafter, the first cotton gins were established. The more prosperous settlers established large cotton plantations emulating the example of Jared Groce, who settled on the east bank of the Brazos above San Felipe, and in 1822, raised what was probably the first cotton crop in Texas. By 1830, small herds of cattle were being driven from San Felipe to market at Nacogdoches.

Regular mail service in the colony was inaugurated in May 1826, when Samuel May Williams, the Colonial Secretary, was appointed postmaster in San Felipe. Within seven separate postal routes converging here, the town remained the hub of the Texas postal service until the Texas Revolution. One of the earliest newspapers in Texas, the *Texas Gazette*, began publication in San Felipe on Sept. 25, 1829, under the editorship of Godwin B. Cotten. It is considered the first enduring newspaper in Texas. Cotten also printed the first book published in Texas, *Translation of the Laws* by Austin. Gail Borden, Jr. first published the *Telegraph and Texas Register*, which became the unofficial journal of the Revolution, in San Felipe on Oct. 10, 1835. As early as 1823, Stephen F. Austin began organizing a militia with which to defend the frontiers of his colony. He hired experienced frontiersmen to ride the range in punitive expeditions against Indians. Austin's Ranging Company of Riflemen would later evolve into the modern Texas Rangers.

The first school in the town, and the first English school in Texas, was established by Baptist layman Thomas J. Pilgrim in 1827, with an initial enrollment of 40 boys. By 1830, four schools were reported in the community, with a combined enrollment of 77. Although the settlement, like the rest of Austin's colony, was Catholic by law, no priest resided in San Felipe until the April 1831 arrival of Father Michael Muldoon, a liberal Irish Catholic priest. Not until after the Revolution were the town's first churches built.

Austin first settled on town lots 13, 14 and 15 (now within the state historic site). By 1824, he built a two-room log cabin with a dog run connecting the rooms. In 1829, Austin moved a mile west of town near Sweet Creek to garden lot 29 or 30 (near the entrance to the state park). Here he built another cabin resembling his



town home. At both locations, Austin operated the land office from one room while maintaining his living quarters in the other.

Aside from the primary business of inducing immigrants to come to his colony, Austin labored most on the establishment and maintenance of the land system. This involved surveying and allocating land to applicants with care to avoid overlapping, thereby keeping conflicts to a minimum.

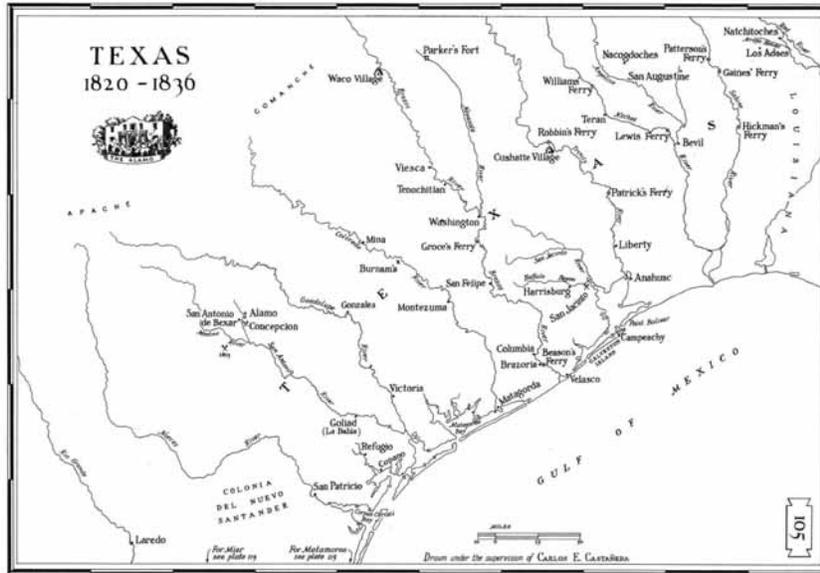
Austin held complete civil and military authority over his colonists for the first four years, subject to rather nominal supervision by the officials at San Antonio. He wisely allowed the colonists to elect militia officers; and, to assure uniformity of court procedure, he drew up forms and a simple civil and criminal code.

In November 1827, Austin seized the opportunity to relieve himself of responsibility for the details of local government by hastening the organization of the *ayuntamiento*. This Spanish form of municipal government consisted of *regidores* (aldermen), was presided over by an *alcalde* (judge and mayor) and supported by a *sindico procurador* (city attorney). This governing council was the first machinery of democratic government in Austin's colony. By virtue of experience, Austin continued to exercise strong influence over the *ayuntamiento* in relations with the Mexican state and federal governments.

TEXAS REVOLUTION

Harmony with Mexican state and federal authorities was indispensable to the success of the Texas colonies. Austin clearly realized this fact and never allowed the settlers to forget the solid benefits they received through the liberal colonization policy or their obligation to become loyal Mexican citizens. But the seeds of discontent between the Mexican rulers and the Anglo-American colonists of Texas, known as Texians, were planted long before in their differing social and political habits and experiences.

By 1832 Austin's various colonies comprised 8,000 persons, and other empresarios, though less successful, had brought in a great many more. Anglo-American immigrants vastly outnumbered Mexican Texans, known as Tejanos. Naturally, it became more and more difficult for Austin to reconcile the colonists to his cautious leadership. On the other hand, the rapid



growth of the colonies, in addition to persistent efforts of the United States to buy Texas, increased the anxiety of Mexican leaders and resulted in their consequent attempts to safeguard the territory.

Due to the significance of San Felipe in the life of the colony, it was inevitable that the colonial capital would play an important role in the events leading to the Texas Revolution. Citizen delegates from throughout Texas met at San Felipe Town Hall in October 1832 and again in April 1833 to hold the Conventions of 1832 and 1833 and asked for a number of privileges and reforms, of which three were the most important. First, in 1823, Mexico had given the colonists certain tariff exemptions. This liberal law expired in 1830. Both conventions adopted petitions asking for extension of the tariff exemptions. Second, when the Mexican federal system was instituted in 1824, Coahuila and Texas were united as a single state, with the somewhat indefinite assurance that the union might be dissolved when Texas was qualified for statehood. Both conventions declared that Texas was able to maintain a state government and asked for separation. The Convention of 1833 went further and framed a state constitution in anticipation of sovereignty apart from Coahuila. And thirdly, apprehension over heavy Anglo-American colonization led Mexican authorities to pass a law in April 1830 forbidding immigrants to settle in territory adjacent to their native country. Though this law was subsequently interpreted to permit

continued settlement in Austin's colony, it remained a menace to the development of Texas and the convention petitioned for its repeal.

Resolutions of the Convention of 1832 were never delivered. But Austin, though he thought the movement ill-timed, was elected to present the petitions of 1833 and argue for their approval. Austin arrived in Mexico City in July 1833. Responding to the Convention's petitions, the Mexican Congress repealed the immigration restriction law, held the tariff plea in postponement and took no action on the petition for statehood. On his way home, Austin was arrested under suspicion of trying to incite insurrection in Texas and taken back to Mexico City.

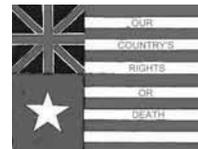
During Austin's imprisonment, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna overthrew the Mexican Constitution of 1824 and seized control of Mexico, establishing a dictatorship. He extended iron-handed rule to Texas. By 1835 Santa Anna's attempts to stop immigration, prohibit weapons and impose high tariffs turned most Texans against hopes of staying Mexican ruled. Austin was freed in July 1835 and at the end of August returned to Texas.

Upon his return, he learned a group of colonists had published a call for a consultation in October to meet again in San Felipe. Convening in November, the delegates of the Consultation of 1835 voted to remain loyal Mexican citizens, but also voted to establish provisional Mexican state government. San Felipe was named as the state capital. General Sam Houston was named commander-in-chief and ordered to raise an army to defend the Mexican Constitution of 1824 and to offer armed resistance against the dictator Santa Anna. From this time forward, only a spark was necessary to set off an explosion. On Oct. 9, 1835, at the battle of Gonzales, the first shot in the Texas Revolution was fired.

In late November 1835, the provisional government elected Austin to serve as one of three commissioners to the United States. He arrived in New Orleans in January 1836. The business of the commissioners was to solicit loans and volunteers, arrange for munitions and equipment, outfit warships and do whatever they could to commit the United States to recognition, and eventual annexation, if Texas should declare independence from Mexico. Austin and the other commissioners were fairly successful in accomplishing this program, except in the effort to obtain assurances regarding annexation.

Santa Anna crossed the Rio Grande shortly after the 1836 New Year and headed toward San Antonio. His plan was simple and direct; he would crush the insurgency in Texas. While the few Texans held their position behind the inadequate defenses of the Alamo, the Convention of 1836, meeting at Washington-on-the-Brazos from March 1 to March 17, formally voted for independence on March 2, signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, drafted the first constitution for the Texas nation and set up its first government. The convention also appointed General Sam Houston as commander of the Texas army. While the convention at Washington was still in session, the Alamo fell to Santa Anna.

About three weeks before the fall of the Alamo, the militia at San Felipe was presented a flag. The red English jack on a field of blue showed the origin of the Anglo-Americans; 13 red and white stripes represented that most Texas colonists were from the United States; and a white star on a field of green was for Texas, the only state in Mexico showing the last spark of liberty.



Houston, arriving in Gonzales on March 11, heard of the fall of the Alamo and decided to withdraw northeast toward the Colorado River. Then as news of the massacre at Goliad spread, the withdrawal became a retreat and he turned northward toward the Brazos River and Jared Groce's plantation. Fleeing from the advancing Mexican army, throngs of refugees fled from their homes across Texas toward the safety of Galveston and the United States border in what became known as the Runaway Scrape. By March 19, 1836, most San Felipeans had joined this mass flight.

As Houston's army retreated through what is now Austin County, he camped briefly at San Felipe on March 26, 1836, near Sweet Creek before continuing north to Groce's plantation. On March 31, 1836, the small 100-man garrison under Captain Moseley Baker, a San Felipean, ordered the town evacuated and then burned to keep its resources from falling into the hands of the advancing Mexican army. Baker had refused to retreat any further so Houston ordered his detachment to remain at San Felipe to defend the Brazos crossing. After a brief skirmish with Baker's detachment at San Felipe on April 7, Santa Anna was forced to march his army 16 leagues downstream to ford the Brazos at Fort Bend. John Bricker was the only Texan killed at this engagement.



The Texans reached the confluence of the San Jacinto River and Buffalo Bayou before the Mexicans. On the marshy plain, flanked by heavy foliage, Houston's small army surprised Santa Anna's resting forces on the afternoon of April 21. In the 20-minute battle and its aftermath, virtually the entire Mexican army was killed, scattered or captured, including Santa Anna. Many Texans wanted Santa Anna's life but Houston, aware of the Mexican general's value alive, spared him. The war was concluded by the Treaty of Velasco. By its terms, Texas independence was recognized, hostilities were ended and the Mexican army retreated beyond the Rio Grande.

Somewhat hesitantly, Stephen F. Austin consented to offer himself for the presidency of the Republic of Texas. He was defeated in the election of September 1836, but accepted the office of Secretary of State from President Sam Houston. Austin died in service on Dec. 27, 1836, at the untimely age of 43, near West Columbia.

In May 1836, as news of the victory at the battle of San Jacinto spread, residents began returning to what remained of their homes at San Felipe. A semblance of community life was soon restored, yet many families never returned. San Felipe was incorporated in 1837 and became the seat of the newly established Austin County. Even as such, the town never achieved the glory of its former stature. By late 1846, the community of Bellville, near the geographical center of the country, succeeded San Felipe as the county seat heralding the continued decline of San Felipe.

In 1879, San Felipe sold 11,635 acres of its original five leagues to the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad for establishment of the deport township of Sealy. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, development was still slow and occurred away from the original town site, to the south near the railroad and major roadways. In 1972, a highway bridge crossing the Brazos River was constructed near the old ferry crossing, which had ceased to operate in the 1940s. Not until 1990 did the towns surpass its 1836 peak population.

J.J. JOSEY GENERAL STORE MUSEUM



Built in 1847 by John Crutcher, this general store was in continuous operation in San Felipe for 95 years. Originally constructed to replace a general store razed in 1836, it was one of the few commercial buildings built soon after the town was burned. Crutcher sold the store in 1854 and it passed through several owners to come to rest with Dr. J.J. Josey in 1867. He continued to operate the building as a general store and post office until 1880 when it was moved south, near the Texas Western Narrow Gauge Railroad as it passed San Felipe. Dr. Josey remained in business until his death in 1893 at which time the building passed to W. J. Fredericks, Sr., a former employee of Dr. Josey. Fredericks operated the store until his death in 1942. The building was sold and relegated to use as a barn for many years. The Stephen F.

Austin Park Association acquired the building in 1962. Some restoration was necessary; however, considering the age, the building was well preserved. The bricks used to rebuild the flue, walk and foundation were made in 1860 for buildings of the Crump plantation. The lighting fixtures, counters and shelves are from several historic buildings throughout Austin County. In 1970 the building was moved to the state historic site, near its original location on Commerce Square.

In a 1923 journal, S.O. Eidman, Sr. writes of immigrating to Texas in 1846. After entering the port of Galveston, he was forced to stop at San Felipe on his way to New Braunfels due to illness in his family. The town was still decimated from the 1836 razing. In September of that year, Eidman was hired to haul cypress lumber by ox team for John Crutcher from the steamboat landing on the Brazos River for use in constructing the future J.J. Josey General Store.

The museum houses a model of San Felipe de Austin and a collection of 19th century farm implements and household goods. In addition, old documents, ledgers, newspapers and books are on display. The showpiece of the museum is Stephen F. Austin's 1825 personal desk, which he used as empresario of colonial Texas and later as Secretary of State of the fledgling Republic of Texas.



Natural History

LOCATION AND CLIMATE

Stephen F. Austin State Park encompasses 487 acres of Brazos River riparian woodlands in southeast Austin County. Park headquarters are located at 29° 48' 51" N latitude, 96° 6' 32" W longitude. Elevation at park headquarters is 125 feet.

Austin County lies on the boundary between the Post Oak Savanna and the Gulf Coastal Prairie regions of Texas. From southwest to northeast, across the county's midsection, stretches a five-mile-wide band of oak-hickory forest intermixed with tall-grass prairies. To the south of this band, the coastal prairie exhibits wide expanses of open grassland fringed by stands of oak and elm.

The park lies on the southern edge of the heavily wooded central section of the county, just north of the coastal prairies, in a forested floodplain. The Brazos River forms the eastern border of the county and the north and east boundaries of the park. With the exception of the far west corner, the entire recreational tract lies within the 100-year floodplain of the Brazos. A number of creeks flow southeastward across the county, traversing the timber belt, to the Brazos. One such creek, Bullinger's (formerly known as Arroyo Dulce or Sweet Creek), cuts across the park's interior to its confluence with the Brazos River.

Typically, the climate of the park provides visitors with mild winters and hot, humid summers. The average annual rainfall is 40.7 inches. The temperature ranges from an average August high of 95 F to an average January low of 41 F. Prevailing winds flow from the south to southeast most of the year with winter winds being more variable.

BRAZOS RIVER AND BULLINGER'S CREEK

The Brazos River rises at the confluence of its Salt Fork and Double Mountain Fork and runs more than 840 miles across Texas to its mouth on

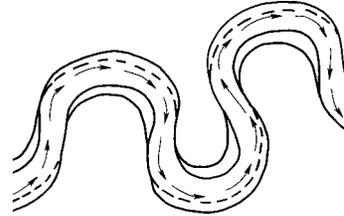
the Gulf of Mexico. The river flows through most of the major geophysical regions of Texas. The Brazos River watershed covers nearly 45,000 square miles, about 1/6 the area of the state. It is the longest river in Texas and the one with the greatest discharge, over 5.5 million acre-feet per year. Several major reservoirs are located on the main stream, including Possum Kingdom Lake. A number of reservoirs, including Lake Somerville, lie on major tributaries of the Brazos.

Many legends have grown up explaining how the river got its name, but probably the earliest is that as the Spanish explorer Francisco Vazquez de Coronado was wandering up the Llano Estacado and was about to perish from lack of water sometime in 1541, local Native Americans guided him and his men to a small stream, which they named Rio de los Brazos de Dios or River of the arms of God.

The Brazos River, throughout the lower sections, is a very scenic coastal river. Here, the stream slowly meanders to the Gulf between wide, steep banks across broad, low-sloping floodplains. The banks are lined with hardwood trees and many scenic bluffs and sand bars exist.



The Brazos River is by no means a stationary boundary of the park as its main channel has migrated substantially in some reaches. Lateral migration of river channels, or meandering, occurs as the outside of a meander loop is eroded and sediment is deposited along the inside of a loop. Under normal flow, banks remain



stable for long periods of time. During flood stage, however, significant changes may occur with the channel being shifted laterally many tens of feet. During the Great Overflow of 1833, the swollen Brazos in some places was estimated to be 14 miles wide. More recently, major floods have occurred in May 1957, May 1965 and October 1994. Since 1958, the main channel of the Brazos adjoining the northeast section of the park has shifted approximately 1,850 feet to the south, eroding 13 acres of land into the river. Over the same period, 73 acres of new land has been deposited along the northwest section of the park as the river shifted course.

Bullinger's Creek (formerly known as Arroyo Dulce or Sweet Creek), is a spring-fed perennial stream rising three miles northwest of Sealy in south central Austin County and flowing east for eight miles to its mouth on the Brazos River, near San Felipe. The creek is named for John Bullinger, who immigrated to Texas and settled on Arroyo Dulce in the late 1830s. The five league tract of Stephen F. Austin's colonial capital followed Bullinger's Creek upstream from its mouth on the Brazos.

The soils in the park can be broadly divided into four categories: 1) loamy, well-drained recent alluvium along the river, 2) deep poorly-drained clayey soils in the camping and picnic areas, 3) the sandy terrace just above the river at the historic site, and 4) loamy soils in the upper part of the historic section.

PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE

Landscape created as the Brazos River meanders across the boundary of the Post Oak Savanna and the Gulf Coast Prairie regions, supports a diverse array of flora and fauna. The park is a game preserve and hunting is not allowed. Fishing, however, is encouraged along the banks of the Brazos River. In addition, collecting of plant and animal specimens is not allowed.



Distinctive forest communities are found in three settings in the park's recreational area; 1) mixed bottomland forest along the river and on the well-drained gentle slopes above it, 2) mixed bottomland forest in the developed recreational areas, and 3) mixed bottomland forested swamp in the level upland areas that hold water after rains. Species composition and age of the plant community is highly dependent upon its position relative to the river.

The picnic area is dominated by hackberry, water hickory and green ash. The camping area is dominated by cedar elm, gum bumelia and Osage-orange. The undeveloped bottomlands are mantled by thick stands of old growth eastern cottonwood, sycamore and box elder maple. Along the river, groves of sapling black willow stabilize sandbars. Throughout the park, forest canopies shelter dense undergrowth vegetation of American beautyberry, Coralberry, yaupon, grapevine, Alabama supplejack and Virginia creeper. Grasses include pinehill bluestem, purpletop, wild-rye and brownseed paspalum. The park's 1/8-mile self-guided, interpretive nature trail showcases excellent examples of the many tree species found throughout the park.

One tree species, common in the camping area, deserves special note. The Osage-orange (*Maclura pomifera*) is a native of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. Also known as bodark, hedge apple, Bois d'Arc (French for wood of the bow), bowwood, naranjo chino and horse apple, this tree has as many historical uses as it has names. The Osage Indians used the twisted, stringy wood to make long-lasting bows of great strength and endurance. Early pioneers planted young trees in closely spaced rows to produce a thorny, impenetrable fencing. The roots produce a thick yellow substance used to make a durable dye, which the



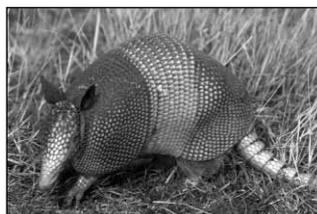
United States military used to dye uniforms during World War I. The tree has a soft grey, deeply serrated outer bark with an underlying dark red coloration. The smaller branches are covered with short, stout thorns, which can cause severe puncture wounds. These thorns most likely inspired the creation of barbed wire. The unusual globular fruit is four to six inches in diameter and resembles a rough, green orange. The fruit is inedible to humans, but is enjoyed by many wildlife species, especially squirrels.



Be aware of poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) as you wander throughout the park. While the trails and developed campsites are relatively clear, this poisonous plant abounds in the vegetation of the park. It is a highly variable plant, but readily identifiable by its triple leaflet structure extending from a single leaf stem. The plant manifests as a sturdy vine extending high into the

treetops or as a small, leafy shrub. All parts of the plant, including the stem and roots, secrete a nonvolatile oily resin that is poisonous upon contact causing a severe, itchy rash with blisters. The oil is insoluble in water, therefore, a strong soap must be used when washing affected skin and other exposed surfaces. In addition, smoke from campfires burning poison ivy will cause severe irritation to the eyes and inhalation will cause severe injury to the respiratory tract.

Although the bears, wolves, prairie chickens and buffalo that once roamed the area disappeared in the 19th century, the park's heavily wooded bottomland still is home to many wild animal species, including coyote, bobcat, skunk, raccoon, opossum, armadillos and squirrels. White-tailed deer are the most numerous and most visible of the larger mammals in the park.



The ability of wildlife populations to remain healthy and self sustaining depends on their use of seasonally dominant natural food sources, such as grasses in spring and summer, nuts and berries in fall, and buds and twigs in winter. Food provided by humans rarely meets the nutritional requirements of wildlife.

When provided food by humans, wildlife, especially white-tailed deer, are exposed to greater risks of over-crowding and increased competition for natural food sources combined with the stresses of less nutritious hand-out food. These factors increase the susceptibility of animals to parasites and diseases, such as distemper, mange and rabies, causing a slow agonizing death.

In addition, wild animals, such as raccoons and squirrels, can develop peculiar and unnatural behaviors and habits once they learn that humans who provide food are not threatening. Losing their fear of people often results in wildlife conflicts with park visitors.

The diversity of habitats within the park – small open meadows, dense thickets, wetlands and towering trees – support a large number of bird species offering some of the best woodland birding in this region. Common residents include wren, bluebirds, hummingbirds, vireo, northern harrier, black-bellied whistling duck, warbler and pileated woodpecker. The park is a viewing site (UTC 102) on the Katy Prairie Loop of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. The park's checklist currently has over 90 species and will continue to grow as visitors make valuable contributions by reporting detailed observations of bird species.

The Brazos River bounds the park to the north and east. It contains many species of fish, reptiles, freshwater mussels and other aquatic life. Channel catfish, alligator gar, perch and common carp are some of the more common residents in the Brazos. Other species calling the river home include beaver, red-eared slider and alligator snapping turtle.



The park is also home to many other species of reptiles, amphibians and insects, including box turtles, frogs, salamanders, butterflies and dragonflies. Be especially observant for two venomous species of snake, the copperhead (*Agkistrodon contortrix*) and the eastern coral snake (*Micrurus fulvius*), although you are more likely to see one of the many non-venomous snake species in the park such as the Texas rat snake or Texas indigo racer.

The distinctive markings of the copperhead make it a very striking snake. Their body color varies from copper to pinkish-brown but all have bold chestnut crossbands, which can resemble an hourglass shape, running along the length of the body. These markings start at the tail and stop just short of the head, which is unmarked and not always a copper color. Copperheads have a yellow-green tip to their tail that helps them to hunt. Adults have a characteristically triangular head and upturned nose. Typical summer retreats for the copperhead are stone walls, piles of wood, rotting logs and large flat stones near streams. When the weather turns cooler in the fall, they return to their winter den to hibernate. This pit viper is responsible for more bites than any other venomous snake in the United States.

Although quite common, the eastern coral snake is rarely seen. This slender snake has smooth, shiny scales and is typically brightly colored with a distinctive black snout. Behind this there is a large yellow band across its head. The rest of the body has large black and red bands, separated by thinner yellow ones. The red bands are usually spotted with black. It prefers dry, secluded habitats and usually hides by day under log piles, in old tree stumps or dense vegetation. This species can be confused with the scarlet kingsnake (*Pampropeltis triangulum*), which is a harmless mimic. Even though eastern coral snakes have small mouths, they are still capable of delivering their extremely dangerous neurotoxic venom.

The highly aggressive red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*), accidentally introduced from South America in the 1920s, and has spread to infest more than 260 million acres in the southeastern United States, including the eastern two-thirds of Texas. Adult fire ant workers are reddish brown with a darker abdomen and range from 1/16 to 1/4 inch in length with the largest workers two to three times larger than the smallest. Fire ant workers are attracted to oily or greasy foods. This ant prefers to build mounds in open, sunny areas such as pastures, lawns, meadows and cultivated fields. The mound, built of soft, fluffy soil, has no opening in the center, like many other ant mounds. When a mound is disturbed, fire ants swarm and sting anything threatening the colony and, unlike most native ants, will charge up vertical surfaces such as grasses and sticks near the disturbance. The unique venom of the red imported fire ant will form a white, fluid-filled blister at the red stinging site within 24-48 hours.

CALENDAR OF PARK EVENTS

- Youth Day Camp:** Usually 3rd week in June, all day
Lone Star Legacy Festival: 3rd Saturday in October, all day
Pancake Breakfast with Santa: 2nd Saturday in December, morning
Christmas Tree Lighting and Caroling Hayride: 2nd Saturday in December, evening

FEE SCHEDULE

Entrance Fees (daily per person)	
Adults (13 and older)	\$ 3.00
Seniors (Texas residents 65 and older)	\$ 2.00
Children (under 13)	free
School Groups	\$.50

Facility Fees (daily per site)	
Tent Site (water only)	\$ 12.00
Trailer Site (water, sewer and electric)	\$ 20.00
Screened Shelter (water and electric)	\$ 25.00
Excess Vehicle (over 2 vehicle)	\$ 2.00
Overnight Group Recreation Hall	\$ 110.00
Day Use Dining Hall	\$ 125.00
Picnic Pavilion	\$ 30.00
Amphitheater	\$ 25.00

Fees subject to change. Current at printing.

DIRECTIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The park is located 3 miles north of San Felipe. San Felipe lies 47 miles west of Houston and 3 miles east of Sealy. To reach the park, take Interstate 10 to exit 723. Proceed north along F.M. 1458 for 2 miles through San Felipe. Take P.R. 38 west for 1 mile into the park.

P.O. Box 125, San Felipe, TX 77473-0125
(979) 885-3613 Office (979) 885-3383 Fax
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/sfa/

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Historic Austin County

- City of Sealy
- City of Bellville
- City of Wallis
- Other rural communities

Surrounding Counties

- Blue Bell Creameries
- Antique Rose Emporium
- Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge
- Forbidden Gardens
- Katy Mills Mall
- George Bush Presidential Library

Houston

- Museum District
 - Featuring 14 museums
 - Including Houston Museum of Natural Science
- Theater District
 - Featuring 5 venues and 17 production companies
- Space Center Houston and NASA Johnson Space Center
- Hermann Park
 - Including the Houston Zoo
- Downtown Aquarium
- Six Flags Astroworld and Waterworld
- Major professional sports
 - Featuring three venues and five teams

Texas State Parks

- San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site
- Battleship TEXAS State Historic Site
- Brazos Bend State Park
- Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site
- Huntsville State Park
- Lake Somerville State Park and Trailway

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STEPHEN F. AUSTIN'S LEGACY

Judged by historical standards, Stephen F. Austin's achievement is monumental. He began an effort, unprecedented in Texas history, to colonize Anglo-Americans in Texas under the most difficult of conditions. Yet through his efforts, some 1,540 land grant titles were issued to some 5,000 people, making him arguably the most successful colonizer in American history. Austin's original colony was the first, most famous and by far the most successful of the empresario grants from Mexico.

Through his foresight, perseverance, tactful management and unremitting labor, Austin transformed a wilderness into a nation. His methods varied with circumstances, but he never wavered from the abiding aim to promote and safeguard the welfare of Texas.

Intelligent, courageous and honorable, Austin continually worked to achieve a successful colony and when the prospects of becoming an autonomous Mexican state faded, he tirelessly worked to make Texas independence viable.

Before his death, Stephen F. Austin wrote in July 1836:

"The prosperity of Texas has been the object of my labors, the idol of my existence, it has assumed the character of a religion, for the guidance of my thoughts and actions, for fifteen years."



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