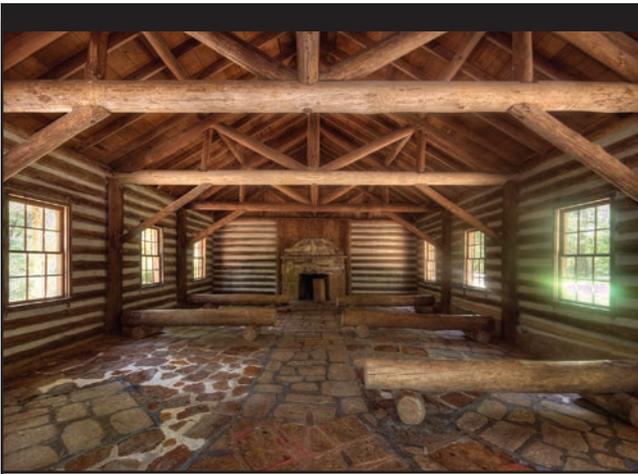


*Interpretive Guide to:*

# MISSION TEJAS

## STATE PARK



The interior of the mission building reflects the craftsmanship and style characteristic of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

FIND RUSTIC BEAUTY AND TRANQUILITY SET IN THE HILLS OF THE EAST TEXAS PINEYWOODS WHERE THE CADDO INDIAN FARMSTEADS ONCE DOTTED THE LANDSCAPE. A REPLICA MISSION AND A LOG HOUSE TAKE YOU BACK TO BYGONE DAYS. ENJOY NATURE WHILE CAMPING, PICNICKING AND HIKING AMONG TALL PINES AT THIS FORMER CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) CAMP.



### WITH HELP FROM THE CCC

In 1934 the citizens of Houston County purchased land and erected a marker to commemorate the Mission San Francisco de los Tejas. The federal government chose the site for a CCC project. Young men of CCC Company 888 spent time at the camp building the park and reclaiming the land until the company disbanded in 1935. The Texas Forest Service continued to manage the forest here until 1957. Today, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department continues to practice sound resource management to promote stewardship and provide a safe family atmosphere at a park rich in history.

### NEARBY POINTS OF INTEREST

Davy Crockett National Forest  
Caddoan Mounds State Historic Site  
Rusk-Palestine State Park  
The Texas State Railroad State Park  
El Camino Real (The King's Highway)

### PARK LOCATION

Mission Tejas State Park is located 21 miles northeast of Crockett and 12 miles southwest of Alto on SH 21 (the Old San Antonio Road). The park entrance is near Weches, where Park Road 44 intersects with SH 21. The park is open throughout the year. Call in advance to schedule school group or scout tours of the historic structures.

NOTE: Texas state law makes it unlawful for anyone to disturb in any way historic or prehistoric, archeological or paleontological sites, or any historic marker situated on lands controlled by the state of Texas.

### NUMBERS TO CALL

For all reservations, call (512) 389-8900  
For information only, call (800) 792-1112

Mission Tejas State Park  
120 State Park Road 44, Grapeland, Texas 75844  
(936) 687-2394 • [www.tpwd.texas.gov/missiontejas/](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/missiontejas/)



Proud Sponsor of Texas Parks  
and Wildlife Programs

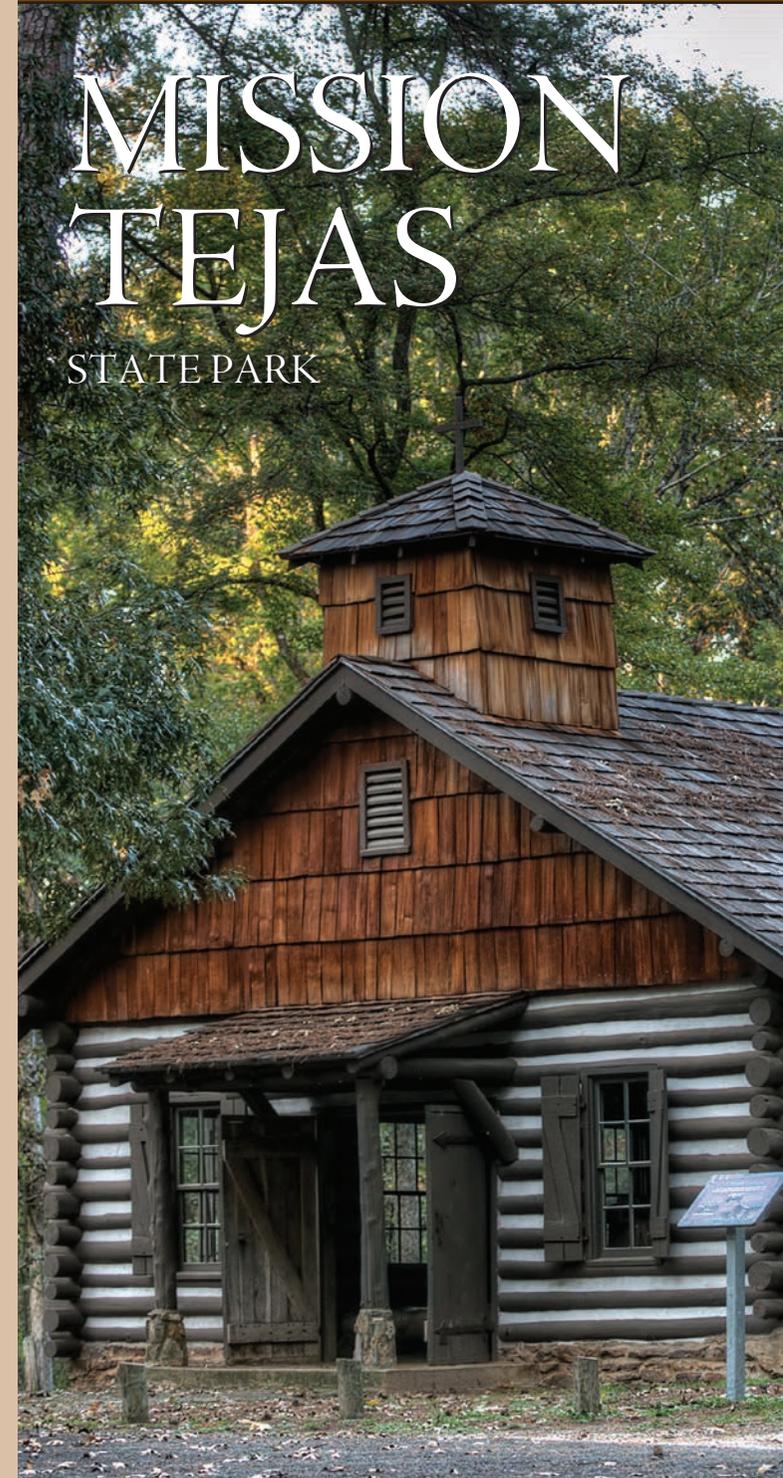
Life's better outside.®

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HELP US CONSERVE  
PLEASE TURN IN FOR REUSE





The Rice family home is a good example of pioneer log housing and remains as one of the oldest structures in the area.

## EARLY SETTLEMENT

Various Caddo tribes established full-time, agricultural societies in East Texas. The Nabedache Caddo settlements here dated from 1690 to the 1830s. These Caddo communities consisted of farmsteads stretching over an area that spread as far as 78 miles. The Caddo people lived in thatched huts grouped together in hamlets, spaced between farm fields and natural areas. The Nabedache Caddoans were known for raising crops of corn, beans, melons, squash, sunflowers and tobacco. They were also skilled at hunting and fishing in the forests and streams of the area. Evidence of their skill at pottery-making may be seen nearby, at Caddoan Mounds State Historic Site. They used utilitarian pottery for everyday cooking and eating and created more decorative pieces for ceremonial use. The lives of this society changed when French and Spanish explorers passed through these lands.

## FRANCE AND SPAIN STAKE THEIR CLAIM

Because of early contact and explorations, Spain held claim to a vast area of land including present-day Texas. Other nations also sought to establish colonies in this area. Under the leadership of René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, a group of French colonists landed on the Texas coast in 1685 and began constructing a settlement. News of this settlement prompted a series of Spanish expeditions whose purpose was to seek out and remove the French intruders.

Captain Alonso de León, accompanied by Fray Damián Massanet and three other Franciscan priests, led such an expedition. They established the first mission in the province of Texas among a village of the Nabedache Indians. The Spaniards called them "Tejas," the natives' term for "friends," and called this area "Land of the Tejas," later shortened to "Tejas," or "Texas."

The original San Francisco de los Tejas mission church and living quarters were built hastily among a Nabedache settlement, in only five days. Three Spanish priests, three soldiers, and supplies remained at the new mission on June 1, 1690, when the cluster of crude wooden buildings was dedicated. Friars Miguel de Fontcuberta, Antonio Bordoy, and Francisco de Jesus Maria Casañas were to fit into the agricultural life of the village, teach new ways of farming, learn the language and teach Christianity to the Nabedache.

A smallpox epidemic in the winter of 1690 killed almost 300 people living near the mission and nearly 3,000 others in the surrounding area. The Nabedache associated the disease with the Spaniards, specifically with their Holy Water of Baptism. Adding to growing hostilities, Casañas challenged the established Nabedache religious leaders, ridiculed their sacred items and practices, and earned powerful enemies. For the next 40 years, the friars, soldiers and settlers attempted to maintain a successful community.

Fray Damián Massanet remained to help when reinforcements and supplies arrived in August after the summer drought of 1691. Most of the cattle died, and the missionaries became desperate for relief after more droughts in 1692. The once-friendly Nabedache became disenchanted with the priest's efforts to change their religious beliefs and way of life. Father Massanet learned of a planned attack and received a personal warning on October 6, 1693. Within two weeks the Spaniards loaded supplies, buried heavy items, and burned Mission Tejas. Under cover of darkness the Spaniards began their retreat to Monclova, Mexico.

The Spanish never achieved the level of success in East Texas that they desired. Friars Francisco Hidalgo and Manuel Castellanas returned to consecrate San Francisco de los Neches on July 5, 1716. Renewed conflict between France and Spain caused them to abandon the mission in 1719.

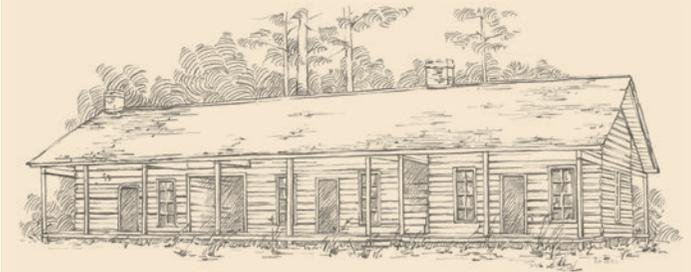
Fray Jose Guerra reestablished San Francisco de los Neches in 1721. Nine years later, the French were no longer a threat, but there were few Indian converts. It was difficult to transport supplies such a great distance from Mexico, so this mission was also abandoned.

## TEXAS INDEPENDENCE

Texas was a land of opportunity in the 1820s, and many ambitious people came seeking land. Among those arriving in the Mexican colony were Joseph and Willie Masters Rice. In 1828 the young couple built a one-room log home near the King's Highway, or El Camino Real, which ran from San Antonio to Nacogdoches. The Rice home became known as a place to lodge or take meals for people traveling on the San Antonio Road. Joseph Rice and his children added on to the home over the years, and it remained in use as a home and business until 1919.



In 1973, the Rice family donated the old log home to the State of Texas, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department moved the historic structure to its present location at Mission Tejas State Park. The home originally stood 16 miles southwest of the park, near Crockett.



Although it has been modified during the past 160 years, the log form remains original.