

Grade 07 Social Studies Unit 05 Exemplar Lesson 03: The Empresario's Office

Hill County Component

Based on Heart of Texas Tales Website

Content Delivery:

[Teacher can read the following to class in the form of a lecture, or project the document in front of the classroom for a group reading, or provide individual copies and have students 'buddy read.' If some of the material has already been covered in the general textbook lesson, then it can be edited out from here, leaving just the specific Hill County-related material.]

In the late 18th century, Spain stopped allocating new lands in much of Spanish Texas, stunting the growth of the province. The policy was reversed in 1820, when Spanish law allowed not only Catholic colonists but those of any religion to settle in Texas. Only one man, Moses Austin, was granted an *empresarial* contract under Spanish law. But Moses Austin died before he could begin his colony, and Mexico achieved its independence from Spain in September 1821. At this time, about 3500 people lived in Texas, mostly congregated at San Antonio and La Bahia. Stephen F. Austin, son of Moses Austin, was given permission to take over his father's colonization contract.

After Mexico got its independence from Spain, the Mexican government continued the immigration policies and granted to **Sterling C. Robertson** an empresario contract to settle 800 families in Texas.

The first group of colonists, known as the "Old Three Hundred," arrived in 1822 and settled along the Brazos River, ranging from the Gulf of Mexico to near present-day Dallas. The area was about 100 miles wide and 200 miles long, centered on Waco, comprising all or some of thirty present-day counties in Central Texas. Immigration was approved on a wider basis in 1824 when the General Colonization Law of 1824 was passed. This law enabled all heads of household who were citizens of or immigrants to Mexico to be eligible to claim land. After the law passed, the state government of Coahuila y Tejas was inundated with requests to allow foreign speculators to establish colonies within the state. There was no shortage of people willing to come to Texas. The United States was still struggling with the aftermath of the "Panic of 1819," and soaring land prices within the United States made the Mexican land policy seem very generous.

The governor of Coahuila y Tejas cancelled the Austin-Williams contract on May 22, 1834, and granted a new contract to **Sterling C. Robertson**, to complete the contract of 800 families before April 29, 1838.

The contract set Robertson's payment as empresario to be five leagues and five labors, (23,027 acres), of premium lands for every 100 families introduced into the colony. [\[HoTT website: Places: Carver Homestead \(§ 2\) & Carver Homestead Mary Beacham's Head Right Land Grant supplement in the HoTT Teacher Resources for this unit.\]](#)

Due to the outbreak of the Texas Revolution, the provisional government of Texas shut down all colonial Land Offices on November 1835. Robertson succeeded in introducing 600 families to the colony before 1838. He filed a lawsuit in Travis County District Court in November 1837, to receive his payment of premium lands for the families he did introduce. In 1841, the District Court found in his favor. Robertson died in 1842.

In 1835, empresario Robertson formed his own Texas Rangers company to deal with Indian troubles at Robertson's Colony. [\[Sterling Robertson's Texas Ranger supplement in the HoTT Teacher Resources for this unit\]](#) Robertson was a delegate to the convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos and he signed both

the Texas Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the Republic of Texas. He was also a Senator at the first two sessions of the Congress of the Republic of Texas.

Citations:

- Blackmar, Frank Wilson (1891). *Spanish institutions of the Southwest*. The John Hopking Press.
- Barker, Eugene Campbell (1969). *The Life of Stephen F. Austin, Founder of Texas, 1793–1836*. University of Texas Press. ISBN 978-0-292-78421-5.
- Sutherland, Anne H (2006). *The Robertsons, the Sutherlands, and the Making of Texas*. TAMU Press. ISBN 978-1-58544-520-2.

TEKS:

7.2 History. *The student understands how individuals, events, and issues through the Mexican National Era shaped the history of Texas. The student is expected to:*

- 7.2E Identify the contributions of significant individuals, including Moses Austin, Stephen F. Austin, Erasmo Seguín, Martín De León, and Green DeWitt (*and Sterling C. Robertson*), during the Mexican settlement of Texas.

7.8 Geography. *The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze, and interpret data. The student is expected to:*

- 7.8A Create and interpret thematic maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases representing various aspects of Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

- 7.8B Analyze and interpret geographic distributions and patterns in Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

7.19 Culture. *The student understands the concept of diversity within unity in Texas. The student is expected to:*

- 7.19B Describe how people from various racial, ethnic, and religious groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture.

7.21 Social studies skills. *The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:*

- 7.21D Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.