

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

### Hill County Component

#### The Carver Homestead: Mary Beacham's Head Right Land Grant

The earliest non-native settlers had arrived during the 18th century when Spain established a series of missions along with the cities of Goliad, Nacogdoches and San Antonio. After Spain came Mexico. On January 3, 1823, Stephen F. Austin received a grant from the Mexican government and began the process of colonizing areas along the Brazos River. Empresarios such as Austin and Sterling Clack Robertson selected colonists and allocated land to heads of families who, in exchange for a small fee, could obtain as much as a league (4428.4 acres) of grazing land and a labor (177.1 acres) of cropland. The new immigrants had to obey the federal and state constitutions of Mexico, practice Christianity, and prove their morality and good habits.

In 1824, the Constitution of Mexico established a republican form of government, but failed to define the rights of individual states. Already strained relations with Mexico deteriorated when, on June 6, 1830, Mexico forbade immigration from the United States to Texas. Texans held conventions in 1832 and 1833 to resolve their differences with Mexico, but when Stephen F. Austin presented the petitions to the government in Mexico City, he was imprisoned without charges until September 1835.

But before Texas became a state, before the Mexican-American War, came in 1830 one widow woman named Mary Beacham, who filed an application in 1838 for a Head Right Land Grant, claiming that

*"...as Widow and head of a family, since intermarried with Alonson Ferguson and entitled to One League and one labor of land upon the condition of paying at the rate of three dollars and 50/100 for every labor of irrigable land, two dollars and 50/100 for every labor of temporal or arable land and one dollar and 20/100 for every labor of pasture land."*

During this time Sterling C. Robertson brought over 600 families into the area, many at his own expense. As she staked her claim, Mary Beacham became the first in a line of strong women who would love this land, the site of the home now known as the Carver Homestead.

After Mary Beacham's death, the Probate Court of Galveston County ordered Alonson Ferguson to sell the land at public auction "to pay the debts of said estate." Thus the land passed through three owners before being purchased by Eliphas Spencer in 1845.

#### Citations:

- Lone Star Junction: Texas History Timeline-Key Events in Texas History (<http://www.lsjunction.com/events/events.htm>).
- League No. 12, Robertson County 1<sup>st</sup> Class, Head Right Certificate Mary Beacham, Texas Land Office.
- McLean, Dr. Malcolm D, *Empresario Sterling Clack Robertson, Founder of Robertson's Colony in Texas*. ([http://lonestar.texas.net/~mdmclean/SCR\\_BIO.html](http://lonestar.texas.net/~mdmclean/SCR_BIO.html))