



Stephen F. Austin

Stephen F. Austin was born into a well-to-do family with a father that pushed the frontiers. In 1798, at 5 years of age, Stephen and his family moved to the Spanish owned territory of Missouri to operate a lead mine. The family did well and Stephen became an educated, responsible young man. But then, in the economic panic of 1819, his father, Moses Austin, lost the entire family fortune.

Moses came with up a plan to recover the family fortune. He proposed to bring colonists to the Spanish owned province of Texas, and the Governor of Texas approved the empresario contract. But Moses died before he could begin carrying out the contract and, as his final wish, asked Stephen to fulfill it.

For the next 15 years, Stephen F. Austin used his knowledge and strength of character to develop Texas in spite of the continual political turmoil in Mexico, which had gained its independence from Spain. In the 1830's, trouble started between the colonists and the Mexican authorities, however, Stephen was able to keep the peace for many years. But then, in 1834, he was jailed by the Mexican government as a revolutionary; when he was released from prison, his attitude had changed and in 1835 a war for Texas independence started.

On April 21, 1836, Sam Houston lead the Texas Army against Mexican President Santa Anna.....and beat him. Texas was now the Republic of Texas. Less than nine months later, Stephen F. Austin's died. During the eulogy, Sam Houston gave Austin the title "The Father of Texas."

A TEKS supportive Curriculum Guide for pre-and post-performance studies and activities is provided to teachers for visits from Stephen F. Austin.

Portrayed by Bob Heinonen