

Empresarios and Tejanos

Main Ideas

1. Under Mexico's Federal Constitution of 1824, Texas was united with the state of Coahuila.
2. New colonization laws in Mexico allowed *empresarios* to receive contracts to bring settlers to Texas.
3. Many Tejanos supported immigration to Texas from the United States, though relations later became strained.

Why It Matters Today

Texas experienced a population boom in the 1820s and 1830s. Use current events sources to find information about areas experiencing population booms around the world today.



TEKS: 2D, 2E, 8A, 11A, 11B, 17C, 19A, 19B, 21B, 21C, 21E, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the role of *empresarios* in Texas and the reactions of Tejanos to them.

Key Terms and People

- **Federal Constitution of 1824**
- **republic**
- **Coahuila y Texas**
- **State Colonization Law of 1825**
- *empresarios*
- **Green DeWitt**
- **Martín de León**

The Story Continues

The news spread through Texas that the Mexican Congress had approved a new constitution. Stephen F. Austin had advised the officials who had written the document, and Erasmo Seguín had represented Texas at the constitutional assembly. Texas farmers had donated corn to cover Seguín's expenses. The people of Texas had done their part. They now waited to learn how the constitution would affect them.

★ A New Constitution for Mexico

After Mexican leader Agustín de Iturbide lost power, the Mexican people wanted a change of government. They called a constitutional assembly to draft a new constitution. Representing Texas was Erasmo Seguín of San Antonio. On October 24, 1824, the assembly officially adopted the **Federal Constitution of 1824**.

Under the new constitution, Mexico became a **republic**, a government in which people elect their leaders. Power was divided between the national government, headed by a president, and individual state governments. This division of power between levels of government is called federalism. As part of the division, the constitution also reorganized Mexico into 19 states and five territories. In this reorganization, Texas was united with the province of Coahuila into the new state of **Coahuila y Texas**.

As a state, Coahuila y Texas had its own immigration policy. The Baron de Bastrop and other well-to-do Tejanos wanted to see Texas grow. They hoped U.S. settlers and other immigrants would provide protection against American Indians. They also believed that new settlement would raise land values in the region and provide new markets for Tejano merchants. These beliefs led the Mexican Congress to pass the **State Colonization Law of 1825**. This law further opened Texas to settlement and immigration.

Under the new colonization law, many people followed in the footsteps of Stephen F. Austin and became **empresarios**. These businesspeople promoted settlement in Texas. Each *empresario* received 67,000 acres of land for every 200 families he brought to Texas. The head of a household could receive 4,428 acres of land for just pennies an acre. New settlers would not have to pay taxes for 10 years. The law's only requirements were that settlers become Catholics and Mexican citizens of good character. The *empresarios* introduced a huge wave of U.S. immigration to Texas.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea Who were *empresarios*, and what role did they play in settling Texas?



BIOGRAPHY

Martín de León

(1765–1833) Martín de León was born to a wealthy family of aristocrats. Although his father offered to send him to Europe for an education, Martín chose to go into business instead. When the Mexican government opened Texas to colonization, he jumped at the chance. The ranch he and his wife Patricia established near Victoria helped provide a model for many later Texas ranches. When he died, De León left behind a fortune of more than half a million dollars—the equivalent of \$13 million today. **How did Martín de León contribute to the beginning of the Texas cattle industry?**

★ The *Empresario* Colonies

Between 1825 and 1832 the Mexican government gave *empresario* contracts to some two dozen individuals. Most *empresarios* were American, but a few were Europeans. Scotsman Arthur G. Wavell and his partner Benjamin Milam received a contract to settle in northeast Texas. Irishmen James Power, James Hewetson, John McMullen, and James McGloin also founded colonies, though none were terribly successful. In the end, only a few *empresarios* managed to create lasting colonies.

One of the successful *empresarios* was **Green DeWitt**. In 1825 he received a contract to settle 400 families in Texas. DeWitt's colony was located along the Guadalupe River. Gonzales was its main town. You can see the location of DeWitt's and other colonies on the map on page 177. The settlement's location exposed it to American Indian attacks, and the people had few comforts. Despite these hardships, more than 525 people lived there by 1831.

In hopes of increasing Mexican migration to Texas, officials sought out Tejano *empresarios*. Tejano colonies received privileges, such as the first choice of available lands. Despite these privileges, only a few Tejano leaders accepted contracts. Tejano leader **Martín de León** was the only *empresario* to found a colony of primarily Mexican settlers. In 1824, even before Coahuila and Texas had been joined, he and his wife Patricia began a colony on the lower Guadalupe. The town of Victoria was its main settlement.

By 1834 some 300 people—mainly Mexicans but also a few Irish, Tejano, and U.S. settlers—lived in De León’s colony. Despite some hardships, including attacks by American Indians, the colony thrived. It soon developed into a major ranching center. The colony also served as an important trade center. Much of this trade was conducted through the town of Linnville. Founded in 1831, it became an important Texas port.

As the De León colony prospered, Patricia de León worked to improve social and cultural life there. She established a school and brought traditional Spanish and Mexican culture into Victoria. After her husband died, she continued to live in the De León colony for a few years.

Another Tejano who took advantage of the government’s offer was Lorenzo de Zavala. A wealthy citizen of Mexico City, he got permission in 1829 to build a settlement on the Sabine River south of Nacogdoches. Before long, though, he sold his contract and abandoned the idea.

Reading Check Evaluating After Stephen F. Austin, which *empresarios* were the most successful in establishing colonies in Texas?

★ Tejano Leadership

The *empresario* system helped lead to a population boom in Texas. By 1834 an estimated 24,700 settlers lived in the region, up from only a few thousand in 1821. Tejano *empresarios* like De León helped encourage some Mexican migration to Texas. But Mexican migration to Texas was limited, and Anglo settlers soon outnumbered Tejanos three to one.



Tejano Culture

Tejano communities enjoyed many social activities, as shown in this painting of women gathered together to make tortillas. In Tejano communities today, people have carried on many traditions while adapting to the larger culture. Neighbors and relatives still gather for dances, fiestas, and holidays. They eat Spanish-Indian foods such as corn tortillas and frijoles, or beans. Many Tejanos also preserve their Spanish Catholic heritage. Tejano traditions remain a vibrant part of the state’s diverse culture. **How have Tejanos maintained their culture?**



Image Credit: (b) © North Wind Picture Archives

In the beginning, most Tejanos were eager to increase immigration to Texas. They believed that American settlers would help improve the economy of Texas. Many Tejanos, including Erasmo Seguín, wanted to develop a cotton industry in Texas. For such an industry to succeed, they thought they would need experts and workers from the United States.

The question of cotton led to a division among Tejanos. In the United States, most labor on cotton plantations was provided by slaves. To develop an American-style cotton industry in Texas, therefore, would mean introducing slavery to Texas. Some Tejano leaders viewed slavery as necessary for the economic success of Texas. Both Seguín and José Antonio Navarro, for example, supported the idea of cotton planters bringing slaves to Texas. Others were opposed to slavery in any form.

As time passed and new settlers arrived, some Tejanos developed less favorable views of their new neighbors. Conflicts sometimes arose. These conflicts often dealt with land or property. For example, a dispute arose in 1826 between Tejano residents of De León's colony and American settlers in DeWitt's colony. Livestock that had gone missing from De León's colony was found on DeWitt's land. The dispute almost resulted in violence, but war was prevented by the intervention of two men. One was Stephen F. Austin. The other was Rafael Antonio Manchola, a son-in-law of Martín de León. Manchola was a leader of the local militia.

Although the Tejano population of Texas was outnumbered, individuals like Seguín, Navarro, and Manchola remained important figures in state affairs. Their actions helped ensure that the Tejano point of view was represented in decision making, even as more American colonists became active in Texas politics.

Reading Check Analyzing Information How did Tejano views of Anglo settlers change over time?

Section 4 Review

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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- republic
- *empresarios*

2. Identify and explain

the significance of each of the following:

- Federal Constitution of 1824
- Coahuila y Texas
- State Colonization Law of 1825
- Green DeWitt
- Martín de León

3. Comparing

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to explain the creation of the *empresario* system and the feelings of Tejano leaders.

State Colonization Law

Empresario contracts

Tejano leadership

4. Finding the Main Idea

- a. How did the Mexican colonization laws affect immigration to Texas?
- b. What regions of Texas did *empresarios* help settle during the 1820s, and what geographic factors drew immigrants to those regions?

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Supporting a Point of View Write a paragraph from the point of view of a Tejano supporting or opposing Anglo settlement in Texas.

Consider the following:

- the goals of Anglo colonies
- the relationships between other Tejanos and settlers they have encountered