

Section

4

Agriculture and Society

Main Ideas

1. Farming and ranching were the main industries in Texas.
2. Conflicts arose over the issue of slavery in Texas.

Key Term

- plantations

Why It Matters Today

Farming and ranching were major economic activities in early Texas. Use current events sources to find information about agriculture in the state today.

The Story Continues

Once in Texas, Austrian immigrant George B. Erath realized that he lacked several important items. Looking through his belongings, Erath selected some with which he was willing to part. Approaching other settlers, he traded his clothes for cattle and hogs. To obtain corn, he gave up his horse. Erath's partner, who was in a similar position, traded his ox for a pig and his feather bed for three cows. In Texas, livestock and corn were more important than luxuries.



TEKS: 2D, 2E, 10A, 21B, 21D, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on agriculture and its effects on society in Texas.

★ Farming and Ranching

Agriculture dominated the Texas economy during the 1820s and 1830s. Most Texans during this time lived on small family farms. Families worked hard to prepare fields, harvest crops, and perform household tasks. Few people lived near stores, and even those who did had little cash. As a result, families had to produce many of the items they needed, such as tools and clothing.

A few wealthy Texans established **plantations**, large farms that specialized in growing one crop. One of the first plantations in Texas was established by Jared Groce, the wealthy settler who had arrived with Stephen F. Austin. Called the Bernardo Plantation, it was located south of present-day Hempstead. Like many plantations, it resembled a small community. In addition to a large house, Bernardo included a kitchen, smaller homes for visitors and a doctor, a dairy, and quarters for slaves.



Interpreting Visuals

Farming. Farm life in this period was difficult. Each member of the family, including children, had many chores to perform. **What kind of chores do you think people had to do on a farm?**

Slaves were the main labor force of the plantation, both in the house and in the fields. Field slaves often worked from dawn to dusk performing backbreaking labor.

On both small and large farms, cotton became the main crop grown for profit. Although Caddos and Tejanos had grown small amounts of cotton for centuries, Anglo settlers brought large-scale cotton farming to Texas. They made the lower Brazos, Colorado, and Trinity river valleys the center of cotton production.

While cotton farming was a major economic activity for the Anglo settlers of Texas, ranching was more popular among Tejanos. First introduced to Texas by Spanish settlers, ranching had been a key component of Spanish settlement in the area. It is not surprising, then, that the descendants of these Spanish settlers would continue to run ranches during the Mexican period.

Texas is well suited to ranching. The mild climate, open prairies, and river valleys provided good pasture for livestock. In addition, ranching was a clever lifestyle choice in a region with a small population and the dangers of Indian attack. It took only a few men to tend a lot of animals, and the open range offered some safety from complete destruction.

During the 1820s and 1830s prominent Tejanos such as Martín de León and Erasmo Seguin were able to expand their ranching operations by taking over pastures that had once belonged to missions. Family, friends, and hired hands typically all lived together on the ranch, which resembled a small community. A visitor in 1834 described the Seguin ranch: "It consists of a square, palisaded [walled] round, with the houses of the families residing there forming the sides." The De León ranch covered some 22,000 acres and was home to thousands of cattle.

Reading Check Comparing How did the cotton farming and ranching populations of Texas differ during the Mexican period?

The Issue of Slavery in Texas

The introduction of large-scale cotton farming to Texas also led to the expansion of slavery. Cotton farming requires a great deal of labor. In the United States, where most Texas cotton farmers came from, that labor was performed by slaves. When these farmers moved to Texas, they brought their slaves with them.

As you may recall, some Tejanos, especially in Coahuila, were opposed to slavery. The Mexican government viewed the matter the same way. In 1829 President Vicente Guerrero—himself of African ancestry—outlawed slavery in Mexico. However, officials in Texas warned the government that the ban violated their colonization policies. As a result, slavery temporarily continued in Texas.

Even with the exception, some Texans feared that the government would one day ban slavery. They worried that the possibility of such a ban might keep new settlers from moving to the area. A letter from an Alabama farmer to Stephen F. Austin expressed these concerns.

TEXAS VOICES

"Our most valuable inhabitants here own [slaves]. I am therefore anxious to know what the laws are upon that subject. . . . Our planters are not willing to remove without they can first be assured of their [slaves] being secured to them by the laws of your Govt."

—Charles Douglas, quoted in *Westward Expansion*, by Sanford Wexler

When Austin's Old 300 settled in Texas, they brought more than 400 slaves with them. By 1836 some 5,000 slaves lived in Texas—about 13 percent of the population. Although slavery was not totally outlawed in Texas, it remained a divisive issue. As time passed, tensions between Anglos and Mexican officials over slavery and other issues rose.

Reading Check Making Generalizations and Predictions How do you think U.S. settlers' unwillingness to adopt Mexican ways affected Texas?

Analyzing Primary Sources

Identifying Points of View

Do you think the writer would go to Texas if he could not keep his slaves? Why or why not?



Section 4 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- plantations

2. Locate on a Texas map:

- Brazos River
- Colorado River
- Trinity River

3. Comparing and Contrasting

Copy the graphic organizer below. In each column, write three sentences to describe agricultural activity in Texas.

Farming	Ranching

4. Finding the Main Idea

- What factors made Texas a suitable place to develop a ranching industry?
- Why did the issue of slavery cause increasing tensions in Texas?

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Drawing Conclusions By the 1830s, some Mexican officials were concerned about the number of Anglo settlers in Texas. Write a paragraph explaining their concerns.

Consider the following:

- tensions about the issue of slavery
- differences between Tejanos and Anglos