

Episode 14 (Chapter 3) – Here Come The Anglos (1821 to 1830) Part 1

Howdy folks, welcome to another chapter of The Hidden History of Texas.

I've told you about how Mexico achieved independence from Spain, and some of the ramifications that Mexico's independence held for Texas. In this episode I want to talk about some of the things going on in Texas between the year 1821 after independence and 1832. What takes place during this period has a direct affect on what will happen later and actually lays some of the groundwork for the colonists revolt against Mexican rule.

If you remember from my last discussion, both Spain and Mexico wanted a limited number of immigrants from the United States. They wanted an economic boost and they also wanted a buffer between established settlements and the native tribes that roamed throughout the territory.

To accomplish this the Imperial Colonization Law was passed in January 1823, inviting Catholic immigrants to settle in Mexico. It provided for the employment of agents, called empresarios, to introduce families in units of 200. One of the sections of The Imperial Colonization Law from Spain had declared that all colonists must be Catholic, so that meant that Austin's first 300 families were affected and that included my ancestors, the Gates. Now that changed with the

1824 National Colonization Law and the 1825 Coahuila and Texas State

Colonization Law which said that foreigners must be Christian, and not necessarily Catholics and that they had to live by the laws of the nation. What this meant was that they essentially agreed that they would be members of some established church. There were times when Protestant preachers (circuit preachers) would occasionally visit Texas, but it was rare that they held a service in public.

Families were allotted land according to the purpose, either farming or ranching. Settlers were not taxed for six years and made only half payments for another six years. Families could import materials for their own use up to \$2,000. Married, self-supporting settlers automatically became naturalized citizens after three years. An empresario might receive premium land for three haciendas and two labors (roughly 66,774 acres) for settling 200 families.

Immigrants were permitted to bring slaves into the empire, but children of slaves born in Mexican territory were declared free at age fourteen. Domestic slave trading was not allowed. Mexicans hated the slavery that was allowed in the United States, but politicians, being politicians, closed their eyes to the system because they wanted to have the Anglos produce cotton in Texas. While national and state laws banned the *African* slave trade they did allow Anglo-Americans to bring their family slaves with them when they moved to Texas. In 1827 the state did hint that it might free slaves even, and to fight that, some of those who owned

slaves, took the precaution of signing indenture contracts with their illiterate servants. These contracts bound the slaves for ninety-nine years to work off their purchase price, upkeep, and transportation to Texas. The most serious threat to Anglo slaveholders occurred when President Vicente Ramón Guerrero emancipated all slaves on September 15, 1829, in commemoration of independence. However, Austin's Mexican friends quickly secured an exemption from the law for Texas. This would prove to be one of the issues that helped lead to the final revolt of the Anglos against Mexican rule in the 1830s.

Austin, as the pioneer empresario in Texas, was burdened with more duties than later contractors. With no published compendium of the Mexican laws, administrative and judicial authority rested with Austin, and the result was a mix of Mexican decrees with pragmatic Anglo-American implementation. Local settlements within his colony elected alcaldes, similar to justices of the peace, and constables. Austin sat as superior judge until 1828, when sufficient population permitted the installation of an ayuntamiento (the general term for the town council, or sometimes for the municipality itself). At San Felipe, the capital of the colony. This council, with elected representatives from the settlements, had authority over the entire Austin colony and acted like a county government. As population grew, other settlements within the colony qualified for ayuntamientos. These councils settled lawsuits, regulated the health and welfare of the residents by

supervising doctors, lawyers, taverns, and ferries, surveyed roads, and sold town lots. Capital cases were referred to the authorities in Monterrey and later Saltillo. The remoteness of the court disturbed Anglo-Texans, who wanted accessible courts.

Other men besides Austin wanted empresario contracts in Texas, and a few were in Mexico City in 1822. Because of the changing political scene and the slow passage of the colonization laws, they had to wait until 1825, after the passage of national and state colonization laws passed in August 1824 and March 1825. The national law prohibited foreigners from settling within twenty-six miles of the Gulf of Mexico or within fifty-two miles of the Sabine River border without special executive permission. To encourage immigration, settlers were free from national taxes for four years. Land ownership was limited to eleven leagues. Owners had to be residents of Mexico. Preference was given to native Mexicans in the selection, and the national government could use any portion of land needed for the defense and security of the nation.

The state colonization law detailed how to apply for land, how much would be given to heads of families, including females or single persons, and the fees to be paid. The law granted freedom from tithes and the *alcabala*, an internal excise tax,

There are no accurate figures detailing the number of Anglo-Americans who settled in Texas between 1821 and 1835. Although Mexican law required an annual census of all residents, the Anglo-Texans resisted such bureaucratic demands. Existing tallies reveal that in 1826 Austin had 1,800 people, including 443 slaves; DeWitt counted 159 whites and 29 slaves; and the lower Trinity River, then outside of any empresario grant, was populated by 407 settlers with 76 slaves. Subsequent extant records show Austin's colony with 2,201 people in 1828, 4,248 in 1830, and 5,565 in 1831, while DeWitt had only 82 persons, including 7 slaves, in 1828.

Unaware of the colonization grant to De León in San Antonio, the state assigned the same area of the Guadalupe valley with specific boundaries to DeWitt in April 1825. When DeWitt's settlers arrived, trouble was inevitable. Because the colonization laws gave preference to native Mexicans, De León petitioned the state for redress, and the authorities told DeWitt in October 1825 to respect De León's prior claims but failed to establish boundaries. The state named land commissioners for both De León's and DeWitt's colonies. The commissioners issued titles in 1831, the year DeWitt's six-year contract expired permanently. The boundaries remained unresolved. Eventually sixteen non-Hispanic families, some of whom were Anglo-Americans with Irish roots, received headrights in De León's otherwise Hispanic community.

De León also quarreled with neighboring empresarios James Power and James Hewetson, natives of Ireland and residents of the United States and Mexico. They received a state contract in June 1828 to settle 200 families-half Mexican and half Irish-in the twenty-six-mile coastal reserve between the mouth of the Guadalupe and the mouth of the Lavaca River, an area that received approval from the president. In 1829 their boundary was extended south to the Nueces River. Two hundred titles were issued to Europeans, but because many were single men the colonial contract was left incomplete, since the law specified families. Nearby, two other Irish natives, residents of Matamoros, secured a contract in 1828 to bring 200 European families to the Nueces above the Power-Hewetson grant. [John McMullen](#) and [James McGloin's](#) colony was known as the Irish Colony; most of its residents clustered around San Patricio, where the land commissioner issued eighty-four titles.

That's going to wrap up this episode, next time, I want to go deeper into detail about life in Texas between 1832 and 1836 how Anglos showed little or no desire to actually cooperate with the authorities. The settlers showed little interest in Catholicism and other aspects of Mexican culture. The expansion was a quest for a better chance and more living room and in many ways the Americans kept their culture.

So until then Remember you can follow me on Twitter @arctxs, or facebook

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