The Colonization Laws

- The Mexican government tried to encourage more Mexicans to move to Texas:
  - The Colonization Law of 1823 allowed settlers to buy large amounts of land at very low cost. They also didn’t have to pay taxes for 6 years.

- In 1824, Mexico passed a new constitution establishing a federal system like the U.S.
  - Texas was merged with the Mexican state of Coahuila to form a new state, Coahuila y Tejas.
  - The Colonization Law of 1824 gave the state governor the right to set the rules for colonization.
The state flag of Coahuila y Tejas, formed in 1824.
The Empresario System

- Under the colonization laws, **empresarios** (Spanish for “contractor”) were responsible for settling Texas.
  - **Empresarios** acted as **land agents**, recruiting a certain number of people to move to Texas.
  - They **provided** settlers with **loans and supplies**. They also acted as the colony’s **representative** to the Mexican government.
  - For their services, the empresarios were **paid** with large **grants of land**.
The Empresario System

- Most settlers in empresario colonies came from the United States.
- To obtain permission from the Mexican government to own land in Texas, these settlers had to agree:
  - To become loyal citizens of Mexico;
  - To become Catholic; and
  - To actually live on the land.
Moses Austin

- The first Anglo empresario in Texas was Moses Austin, a failed businessman who had once helped the Spanish government settle parts of Missouri.
- He proposed settling Anglo-Americans in Texas.
- Fearful of filibusters, the Spanish at first rejected his proposal in 1820.
- Before he could gain final approval, he died in June 1821. His dying request was that his son, Stephen, would continue his work.
Moses Austin, the first Anglo empresario to receive permission to colonize Texas.
Thanks largely to the help of a prominent Tejano, Erasmo Seguin, the new Mexican government allowed Austin to succeed his father as empresario.

For his colony, he chose a spot between the Colorado and Brazos Rivers that offered ideal farming land.

Austin was careful to recruit only honest, hard-working settlers with the key skills needed to establish the colony.
Stephen F. Austin, the “Father of Texas.”
Life in Austin’s Colony

- The first Anglo-American families of Austin’s colony became known as the “Old Three Hundred.”

- Life in the colony was hard at first:
  - Colonists lived in log cabins.
  - They had to make their own clothes, soap and tools.
  - They fought with hostile Karankawa Indians.
  - They didn’t even have schools!

- However, by 1825 the colony’s population had grown to about 1,800 people.
  - Almost 450 of them were African slaves.
Life was rustic in Austin’s colony.
A replica of a settler’s home near San Felipe de Austin, the capital of Austin’s Old Three Hundred colony.
Austin’s success prompted other empresario attempts to settle Texas.
Other Empresarios

- **Martín De León**
  - Only empresario to found a colony in Texas using **Mexican** settlers.
  - Established the current city of **Victoria**.

- **Green DeWitt**
  - Received a contract to settle 400 families along the Lavaca, **San Marcos** and **Guadalupe** Rivers.
  - Founded the town of **Gonzales**.
Martin De Leon, the only Mexican empresario.

Green DeWitt, probably the most successful empresario besides Stephen Austin.
The Karankawas wanna see our building permit!!!
Other Empresarios

- **Haden Edwards**
  - Received a contract to bring 800 families to an area near **Nacogdoches** in 1825.
  - Came into **conflict** with **settlers** already in the area.
  - Edwards declared Texas an **independent nation**, calling it the **Republic of Fredonia**.
  - **Soldiers** from Mexico and **militia** from Austin’s colony helped **end** the revolt quickly.
Haden Edwards, founder of the short-lived “Republic of Fredonia.”

The Republic’s flag.
The Empresario System Ends

- The **empresario** system dramatically increased the population of Texas:
  - Less than 3,000 people in 1820
  - About 25,000 by 1835 (including 2,000 slaves)

- Mexico was worried, however, about settlers’ loyalty.

- By the mid-1830s, Texas was divided between Anglo settlers in the north and east and Tejanos in the south.
Statue of Stephen F. Austin near San Felipe de Austin.