

Adventures on the American Frontier

BRAVE MEN OF EARLY TEXAS

Part Three
The Austins Come to Texas



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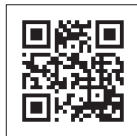
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During the late 1600s and the first half of the 1700s, Texas belonged to Spain. Now and then the French would try to move into Texas, coming from their settlements in the east along the Mississippi River, but Spanish soldiers would march up from Mexico and drive them back.



After 1763, the Spanish no longer had to worry about the French trying to take their land. Following the French and Indian War, the entire Louisiana Territory was owned by the Spanish.

Even so, few Spaniards came to Texas to build homes. Even the mission stations were often left with only one or two priests to manage them. All through the 1700s, there were almost no white people in Texas. But by the turn of the century, Americans began to see a new frontier there—and with



it, promises for the future.

Far away to the east, in the Appalachian foothills of southwestern Virginia, there was a man named Moses Austin. He had opened some lead mines and started a new town for the people who came to work for him. He had done well with the mines and had built the first lead rolling mills in America. Before coming to Virginia, he had been in business in Connecticut and Pennsylvania. But by 1796, most of the lead was gone from his Virginia mines.

"It's no use, Maria," he told his wife.

"It is time to move on."

Maria turned from stirring soup in the kettle that hung in the fireplace. "But Moses, we're just beginning to get this place civilized."

Moses crossed his legs as he sat in the fine Windsor chair the Austins had brought with them to the frontier. Little three-year-old Stephen Fuller Austin seated himself on his father's foot for his daily "pony ride." His eyes sparkled as Moses reached



for the boy's hands and began the game.

The little boy, who had the same deep-set eyes and wavy brown hair as his father, had been born in the small Virginia lead-mining settlement. "Spittin' image of his father," people said, "and just as smart, too."

Maria went over to the cradle where baby Emily was sleeping. For a moment or two, she rocked the cradle with her back turned to her husband. When she turned around, she was smiling. "Where will it be this time?" she asked.