



# Texas General Land Office

Jerry Patterson, Land Commissioner

## *Three Centuries on the Land:* The Archives of the Texas General Land Office



*The story of Texas is  
told through the history  
of its public lands*



# Texas General Land Office

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# Introduction

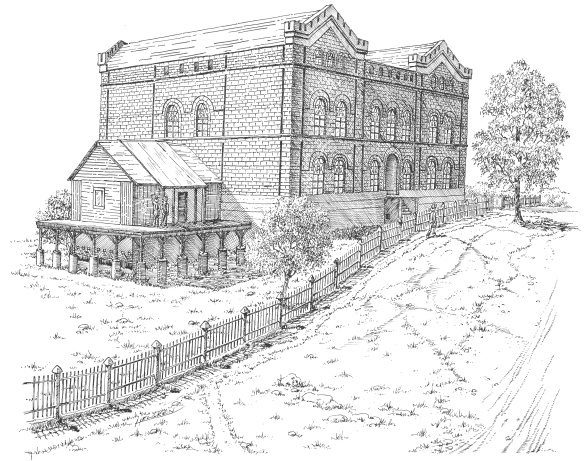
The Archives and Records Program Area of the Texas General Land Office (GLO) is an important resource for both public and governmental use. The program is responsible for preserving and providing access to 35.5 million documents containing information about land grants and land transactions dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The land office staff is the primary user of these records, but they hold valuable information for members of the general public, particularly genealogists, surveyors, attorneys, petroleum landmen, and historians.

The Archives and Records Division is located in Room 130 of the Stephen F. Austin Building. The archive file vault is the principal repository for agency archival material. This vault is a humidity controlled, fire-resistant storage facility protected by an FM 200 Fire Suppression System.

Archives and Records is also responsible for the management of the Office of Veterans Records (OVR), the records retention arm of the Veteran's Land Board. OVR documents are stored in a fire-resistant facility in the basement of the Stephen F. Austin Building. Other agency archival material, including administrative copies of all land patents issued by the Republic and state of Texas, are also stored in this vault.

Archives and Records provide public access to all records stored within the agency's collection. Among these resources are records relating to the earliest settlement of Texas by Spain and Mexico.



*Old Land Office Building built in 1854 by Christoph Conrad Stremme*

The general public can examine the agency's collection in a research room provided for this purpose. Internal General Land Office employees are welcome to check out files for use in their own program areas. A comprehensive file management and retrieval system expedites this process for agency employees.

The importance of the archives of the Texas General Land Office cannot be overstated. The documents contained in this collection are an invaluable, irreplaceable resource. The story of Texas and its heritage of public lands is told through these records. Archives and Records staff are committed to preserving these vital materials and providing free and open access to them.

# History of the Texas General Land Office

The Texas General Land Office was established by the First Congress of the Republic of Texas on December 22, 1836. President Sam Houston appointed John Pettit Borden to serve as the first commissioner of this new agency. Borden was a land surveyor and veteran of the Battle of Jacinto. Gail Borden Jr., an older brother, later achieved renown as the inventor of the milk condensation process and founder of the Borden Company.

As commissioner of the General Land Office, Borden was obliged by law to "superintend, execute, and perform all acts touching or respecting the public lands of Texas." He opened the first land office in Houston, then the capital of Texas, on October 1, 1837. The Constitution of both the Republic and later the state of Texas honored all valid grants issued by the governments of Spain and Mexico within the confines of Texas. As such, it became Borden's primary duty to assemble the records of land grants issued by these former governments and begin providing English translations of these documents. The act creating the land office provided the agency with a Spanish translator to help accomplish this task.

The Spanish Collection of the General Land Office contains the records of 4,200 Spanish and Mexican land grants, covering some 26,280,000 acres of land. This collection also contains a number of supporting documents, including the field notebooks of many of the surveyors who worked in Texas during the Mexican period and records of *empresario* colonization ventures in Texas.

It was Borden's job to assemble this information into a coherent format, creating



*Portion of the General Land Office Spanish Collection*

a clear understanding of where land had already been apportioned and what would now be available for granting. To meet this impending need, in 1838 Borden published the very first edition of *Abstract of Original Titles of Record in the General Land Office*, an inventory of all valid land grants issued in Texas to that date.

The newly independent Republic of Texas began issuing land grants almost immediately after the Texas Revolution came to an end. Land was granted as a way to compensate soldiers for their service and



*Surveyors, employed by Empresarios, laid out many of Texas' current towns and cities*

as a means of attracting settlement into the new nation. Many grants were made to new settlers who failed to receive land from the government of Mexico. It was also Borden's task to begin administering the process by which these grants were surveyed and registered. Frustration over job difficulties and a lack of support from Congress caused Borden to resign on December 12, 1840.

The administration of the second commissioner of the General Land Office, Thomas Ward, was interrupted by an interlude that has become known as the "Archives War." Sam Houston, first president of the Republic of Texas, had always been a supporter of his namesake city, Houston, as the capital of the new nation. However, during the presidency of Mirabeau B. Lamar the little hamlet of Waterloo, renamed Austin, was designated as the capital.

Early in 1842 a small force of Mexican troops under the command of General Rafael Vasquez invaded Texas and demanded the surrender of San Antonio. President Houston, who had been returned to power on December 12, 1841, used the Mexican incursion as an attempt to have the capital removed from Austin. On December 5, 1842 the Congress of the Republic moved the capital to Washington-on-the Brazos, and a few days later Houston ordered Secretary of War George W. Hockley to retrieve the national archives of Texas, including the papers of the General Land Office, and have them transported to the newly designated capital.

Secretary Hockley dispatched a company of Texas Rangers under the command Colonel Thomas I. Smith and Captain Eli Chandler to secretly remove the documents. Under the cover of darkness the party succeeded in

loading the papers into wagons before they were noticed by the citizens of Austin. Mrs. Angelina Eberly, a local boarding house owner, reportedly fired off a cannon at the troops. Hearing the shot, members of the Austin vigilance committee rallied to the support of the "lady cannoneer."

The government forces fled from the town followed by a pursuing party under the command of Captain Mark B. Lewis.

*"...the destruction of the national archives would entail immediate injury upon the whole people of Texas."*

*President Sam Houston  
during the Archives War*

Lewis' troops managed to catch up with the government troops about eighteen miles outside of Austin. Wishing to avoid a firefight and the death of fellow Texans, the Rangers turned the crates containing the archives over to the townspeople. The papers were returned to Austin and stored in Mrs. Eberly's boarding house until 1844 when they were returned to Commissioner Ward. In 1845 President Anson Jones ordered the government offices returned to Austin.

The Archives War seriously handicapped Commissioner Ward's ability to conduct business. Nevertheless, the General Land Office and its staff remained busy. Displaced citizens were slowly trickling back to their land holdings after the revolution and new settlers were entering the region hoping to take advantage of the offer of cheap land. Veterans of the conflict began settling on the lands they were awarded as part of their compensation for service.



Even with this flurry of activity the Republic of Texas remained a wild and untamed place with a very small population. In order to stimulate settlement the government created a colonization program that would allow *empresario* contractors to bring in new settlers. Each colonist would be awarded a certain amount of land while the *empresario*



*Texas at its largest boundaries. From Jacob de Cordova's Map of Texas, 1849. GLO Map Number 7826*

would be compensated via large grants of land that could be sold off at a profit. These colonies were designed to be situated along the frontier of Texas in order to open new lands for settlement and create a buffer zone against northern tribes of Native Americans, such as the Comanches and Apaches.

Colonists from Europe and the United States immigrated to Texas. Large numbers of German immigrants made their way to the new republic under the auspices of *The Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas*, better known as the *Adelsverein*. Led by far thinking, if eccentric, personalities such as Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels and John O. Meusebach, German pioneers fanned out across central Texas leaving an indelible mark upon the cultural landscape.

In addition to the German colonization project, French immigrants made their way to Texas as a part of Henri Castro's colony and settlers from the United States territories settled in North Texas in a colony operated by the Englishman William Smalling Peters. In all, the Republic of Texas chartered four *empresario* colonies: the *Adelsverein*'s colony (also known as the Fisher and Miller colony,) that of Castro, the Peters colony, and another North Texas colony granted to Charles Fenton Mercer. Heads of families settling in the colonies were awarded 640 acres of land, while single men were eligible for 320 acres. The land had to be situated inside the confines of the colony and settlers were required to cultivate at least 15 acres in order to receive a patent.

Land grants under the Republic of Texas and then State of Texas, following annexation to the United States in 1846, served various purposes. They encouraged settlement, provided veterans with compensation for their service, funded internal improvements, raised revenue, and created a tax base. Early settlers to the republic and then state were provided with headright grants designed to encourage new settlement. The acreage granted and requirements for receiving the grant typically depended on the individual settler's marital status and date of immigration. Texas also issued bounty and donation grants in order to compensate soldiers who served in the Texas Revolution. In the 1880's the state also issued grants to disabled Texan soldiers, or their widows, who had fought for the Confederacy in the U.S. Civil War.

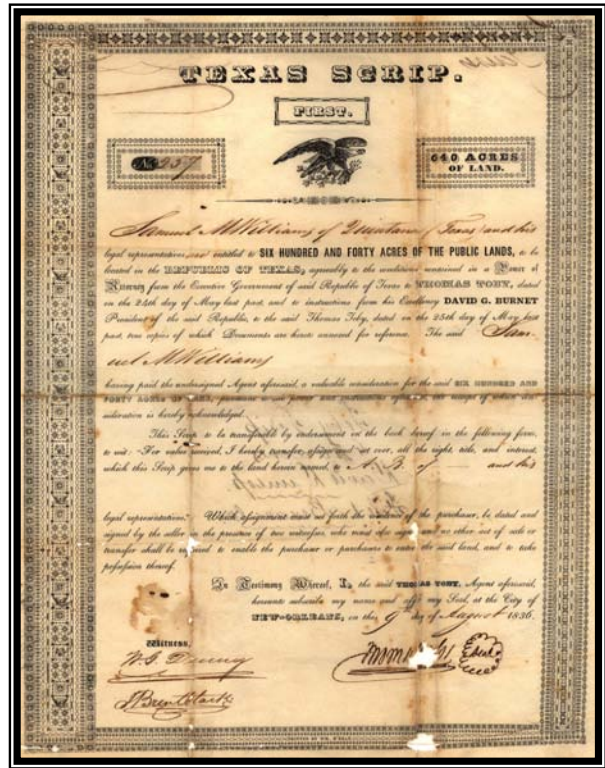
Texas had its own type of "homestead" grant in the form of the preemption land program. From 1845 to 1854 individuals could claim 320 acres of land from the unappropriated public domain. The amount

was reduced to 160 acres in 1854 and the grant program was cancelled in 1856. Preemption grants of 160 acres were reinstated in 1866 and continued until 1898. To qualify for a preemption grant, settlers were required to live on the land for three years and make improvements.

In addition to granting lands in order to encourage settlement, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the government of Texas also sold land in order to generate revenue. Scrip was also issued in order to repay loans incurred by the Republic of Texas during the revolution and to liquidate the government's public debt. Prior to the great oil boom of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Texas was often short of funds for any type of public works. It was through land scrip that Texas managed to lay the foundations of its public infrastructure. Scrip was issued as payment to railroad companies, ship builders, factory builders, irrigation ditch diggers, and for the improvement of shipping channels and the construction of canals. It even helped pay for the construction of a national road in 1844.

The public lands of Texas were also used to defray the cost of public education. As early as 1839 land was being granted to the individual counties in Texas in order to subsidize public education. Lands were eventually set aside to fund public asylums, eleemosynary institutions, public and religious schools, and even the state universities.

In 1882 some 3,050,000 acres of land were set aside for the construction of a new state capitol. These lands were surveyed in a massive reservation in the Texas Panhandle spanning ten counties. The company that was awarded the contract to build the capitol, Taylor, Babcock, and Company, created a Capitol Land Syndicate that



*Toby Scrip sold to Samuel May Williams and resold to David Dunlop. The President of the Republic of Texas, David G. Burnet, was authorized to issue scrip for the amount of 500,000 acres to be transmitted to Thomas Toby of New Orleans and sold at a minimum of \$.50 per acre. GLO File Bexar Scrip 1*

managed these lands as a massive ranch called the XIT. It took about 1,500 miles of barbed wire to fence these massive Syndicate's holdings. The ranch operated between 1887 and 1912, producing millions of heads of cattle. Although the Syndicate never managed to make a profit off of the venture the citizens of Texas received in the exchange our unique and enduring state capitol, which was at the time of its construction the seventh largest building in the world.

From 1836 until 1890 Texas disposed of 216,314,560 acres of public land, with 67,000,000 acres of this apportionment ceded to the United States in 1850 in order to settle a boundary dispute. At the close of the 19th century Texas began running out of lands to grant. In 1882 the legislature

rescinded the program of granting lands to railroad companies, fearing the state's commitment had exceeded lands available. In 1873 half of all unappropriated lands available at that time were deposited into a fund for the development of public schools. The Constitution of 1876 established this fund as the Permanent School Fund. In 1898 Commissioner A. J. Baker determined that the fund had been shorted the balance of land it was owed and refused to issue any additional patents on land

*"The influence of Education in the Moral world is like light in the physical; rendering luminous, what before was obscure."*

*President Mirabeau B. Lamar  
December 27, 1838*

requested from the General Land Office. In the landmark case *Hogue v. Baker* the Texas Supreme Court determined that Baker was correct in his estimation and that the fund was short its allotment. After a careful inventory of public lands the fund finally received its 27,767,790.78 acres. It took all of the state's remaining unappropriated lands to fill the fund, ending the era of unappropriated public land in Texas.

In 1887 the Texas Legislature authorized the sale and lease of lands that had been set aside to benefit public free schools and other public institutions such as asylums. At this time the land office began classifying state lands. The act authorizing the sale of these lands also allowed for the land to be classified as agriculture, grazing, or timber. State agents prepared plats of these lands depicting their topography and the relative locations of their resources.

Between 1876 and 1900 the state attempted to retain the mineral rights on all of its remaining unsold lands. In 1901, however, the Texas Supreme Court ruled in the case *Schendell v. Rogan* that General Land Office records must explicitly show the classification of land as "mineral" in order for the state to retain mineral rights. As a result, Texas lost the mineral rights to almost all land sold prior to 1901. In the aftermath of this ruling Commissioner Charles Rogan began classifying each section of state land as "mineral," allowing Texas to retain ownership of the mineral rights on some 7.4 million acres of Permanent School Fund land.

When the "Lucas Gusher" blew out the wellhead at Spindletop near Beaumont on January 10, 1901 the state of Texas and the General Land Office entered the "Oil Century." In 1907 the legislature allowed for the double classification of land, such that a tract could be sold for agricultural purposes with the minerals expressly reserved for the state. The state soon began leasing land for oil production and received its first royalty payment on a lease in the Goose Creek field in Harris County in May 1914.

As World War II came to an end the Texas General Land Office once again began to redefine its role. In 1946 Land Commissioner Bascom Giles went before a joint session of the Texas Legislature to urge the creation of the Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB). Based on Giles' recommendations the Legislature created the Veterans Land Program. This program would allow the VLB to lend money to veterans for land purchases. The program was approved by a three-to-one margin of Texas voters in a November 1946 constitutional amendment referendum. The referendum authorized the program and



provided for the issuance of \$25 million in bonds to pay for the purchase of land that was then resold to Texas veterans. By 1951 the program had exhausted the \$25 million generated through bond sales and in November of that year Texas voters approved an additional \$75 million in bonds to keep the loans going.

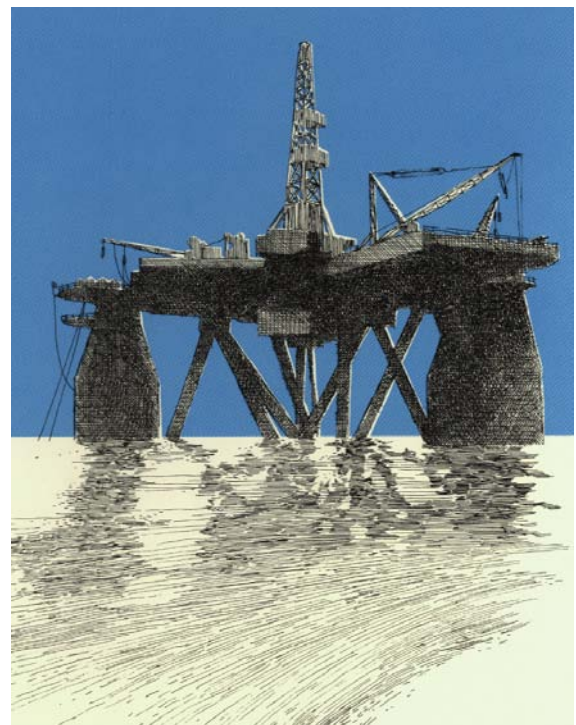


*Cover page from a 1940's-era Veterans Land Program illustrated brochure*

Although plagued by scandal during the Giles administration, the Veterans Land Program was quite successful and provided Texas veterans with the funds necessary to have land of their own. At various times throughout its history the Veterans Land Program has been reformed and expanded to improve the service provided to Texas veterans. Since its inception, more than 120,000 Texas veterans have taken advantage of this self-supporting program without costing the taxpayers a single penny. The program continues to be funded by issuing bonds authorized by the voters. The bonds, as well as the cost of administering the program, are paid for by the veterans who participate in the program. In 1983, the Legislature created the Veterans Housing Assistance Program to assist Texas veterans in purchasing a home. Texas voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment authorizing the issuance of bonds to fund the program. In 1986, the VLB expanded the Veterans Housing Assistance Program, adding the

Veterans Home Improvement Program to provide below-market interest rate loans to qualified Texas veterans for repairs and improvements to their existing homes.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Texas General Land Office has continued to revise and expand its overall mission. On May 31, 1960 the United States Supreme Court settled thirty years of controversy over the state's ownership of the tidelands in the Gulf of Mexico. The court ruled that Texas had the right of ownership to submerged lands extending into the gulf for three marine leagues (10.3 miles), allowing royalties generated by offshore drilling to remain in the Permanent School Fund. Since this ruling coastal issues and environmental protection have become a major part of the GLO mission. From dune stabilization to oil spill cleanup and response the Texas General Land Office continues today to uphold its original mission of 1837: to "superintend, execute, and perform all acts touching or respecting the public lands of Texas."



*Texas' first offshore oil permit was issued in 1922*

# Categories of Land Grants in Texas

The successive governments of Texas, the Crown of Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the State of Texas, all issued land grants in Texas under their various laws governing distribution of the public domain. As a result, understanding the land grant process can be confusing. The following provides a quick, easy reference to the categories of land grants in Texas.

Please note that while we have attempted to provide as much information as possible there were always special circumstances under which land was granted in Texas that may not appear on the list below.

## Useful Definitions

**Certificate:** A document issued by the government of the Republic and State of Texas, usually by a County or District Board of Land Commissioners, the General Land Office, the Texas Court of Claims, the Adjutant General, or the Secretary of War, entitling a grantee to a certain number of acres of land in the unallocated public domain. No specific parcel of land was connected to this document—it was the responsibility of the grantee to find their own land and have it lawfully surveyed. These certificates could be sold or transferred. The right to locate, survey, and patent the land passed to the assignee, although for the purposes of reference the name of the original certificate holder is retained as a means of identifying the surveyed tract. For some types of grants two certificates were issued—a conditional and an unconditional. A conditional certificate was issued in order to give the grantee the right to occupy a portion of the public domain, while the unconditional

certificate was issued only after the completion of certain requirements (i.e., the land had to be lived on for three years, a portion of the land had to be cultivated).

**Title:** Document by which land was conveyed from the public domain into private ownership. Titles were issued by the governments of Spain and Mexico.

**Patent:** A form of land title by which land was transferred from the government to the private sector. Patents were issued by the Republic of Texas and continue to be issued by the state.

**Empresario:** An individual who contracted with either the state of *Coahuila y Tejas* (Mexico) or the Republic of Texas to introduce colonists.

## Texas Land Measures

The basic unit of measure for surveying in Texas is the vara, which is equal to 33 1/3 inches; 36 varas = 100 feet

League: 4428.4 acres

Labor: 177.1 acres

## Spanish and Mexican Land Records, 1720 - 1836

The Spanish Collection of the General Land Office contains the land titles issued by Spain (1720-1821) and Mexico (1821-1836) in Texas, along with associated documents such as character certificates, registers of families, and field notes. See the GLO handout, "Spanish and Mexican Records in

the Texas General Land Office" for a description of these materials.



The "Blood Title" Title issued by the Crown of Spain to Andres Bautista and Jose Manuel Pereda. The large reddish/brown blemishes on the left hand side of the document are believed to be drops of blood. GLO Spanish Collection Box 135, File 10

## Headrights, Republic of Texas, 1836 - 1845

In order to build a tax base and encourage settlement in the new Republic of Texas, immigrants were granted land by the government. The amount of acreage issued was based on the time period in which an immigrant arrived in Texas.

**First-class headrights** were issued to those who arrived before the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836. Heads of families were eligible for one league and one labor of land (4605.5

acres) and single men were eligible for 1/3 of a league (1476.1 acres).

**Second-class headrights** were issued to those who arrived between March 2, 1836 and October 1, 1837. Heads of families were eligible for 1280 acres and single men were eligible for 640 acres.

**Third-class headrights** were issued to those who arrived between October 1, 1837 and January 1, 1840. Heads of families were eligible for 640 acres and single men were eligible for 320 acres.

**Fourth-class headrights** were issued to those who arrived between January 1, 1840 and January 1, 1842. The amounts issued were the same as for a third class headright with the added requirement that ten acres be cultivated.

## Colonization Laws of the Republic of Texas

Four empresario colonies were established under contracts with the Republic of Texas: Peters' Colony (1841), Fisher and Miller's Colony (1842), Mercer's Colony (1844), and Castro's Colony (1842). Heads of families were eligible for 640 acres of land, while single men were eligible for 320 acres. The land had to be located within the confines of the colony and settlers were required to cultivate at least 15 acres in order to receive a patent.

## Preemption Grants, Republic and State of Texas

From 1845 to 1854, individuals could claim 320 acres of land from the unappropriated public domain. The amount was reduced to



160 acres in 1854 and the grant program was cancelled in 1856. Preemption grants of 160 acres were reinstituted in 1866 and continued until 1898. To qualify for a preemption grant, settlers were required to live on the land for three years and make improvements.

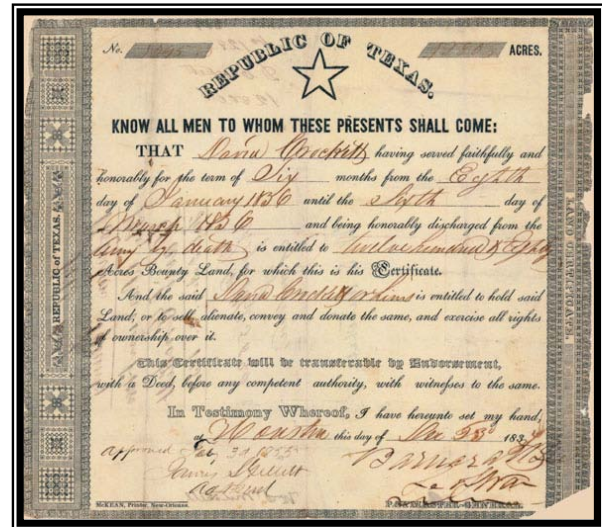
## Military Land Grants, Republic and State of Texas

The Republic and State of Texas both issued land grants as additional compensation for those who served Texas in the military. The government of Texas, for most of the 19 century, had very little cash with which to pay soldiers, so our most abundant resource—land—was used to supplement the meager military pay.

**Bounty grants** for military service were issued by the Republic of Texas to soldiers who served in the Texas Revolution and to those who enlisted in the army before October 1, 1837. The amount of land granted varied depending on length of service. Each three months of service provided 320 acres, up to a maximum of 1280 acres. Often the heirs of a soldier who died in battle would be granted the full 1280 acres on the assumption that the fallen soldier would have served for the duration of the war. Under a separate law, the Republic of Texas extended bounty grants from 1838 to 1842 to soldiers guarding the frontier.

**Donation grants** were issued by the Republic of Texas for participation in specific battles of the Texas Revolution. Soldiers who fought in the Siege of Bexar and the Battle of San Jacinto, including the baggage detail at Harrisburg, received certificates for their service. The heirs of those who fell at the Alamo and Goliad also received certificates. It must be noted that the Congress of the Republic continually

changed the acreage allotted under these grants, so there were Donation grants for differing acreages, although most certificates were issued for 640 acres. In addition, donation grants were also provided



*Bounty Warrant number 1295 for 1280 acres issued to the heirs of David Crockett for service in the Texas Revolution. GLO Land Grant Collection, File Robertson Bounty 609*

by the State of Texas, under an act of the legislature passed in 1879, to surviving veterans of the Texas Revolution and signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. To qualify for this type of donation grant, a veteran must either have received a bounty grant or been eligible for one. The donation law of 1879 provided 640 acres of land and required proof of indigence. This law was amended in 1881 and increased the donation amount to 1280 acres and dropped the indigence requirement. This donation program was repealed in 1887.

**Military headrights** were issued to those volunteer soldiers who arrived in Texas after March 2, 1836 and before August 1, 1836 and who received an honorable discharge from service. This program insured that those who arrived and served during this time period received the same amount of land as the original Texas colonists—that is, the same amount of land as allotted by a first-class headright. Military headrights



were also issued to the heirs of those who fell with Fannin, Travis, Grant, and Johnson. The confusing nature of the law, passed in 1838, seems to have limited the number of such headrights actually issued.

**Confederate Scrip Certificates** were provided by the State of Texas to Confederate veterans from Texas who were permanently disabled, or to their widows. These grants were in the amount of 1280 acres of land. The law providing for this land grant program was passed in 1881 and repealed in 1883.

## **Loan and Sales Scrip, Republic and State of Texas**

Loan scrip was a land certificate issued to provide for or repay loans made to the government of Texas. Sales scrip programs were a means of selling off the public domain to generate revenue. Most of the scrip issued was done in order to cover the costs associated with the Texas Revolution and as a way to pay off the debts incurred by the Republic of Texas.

**Bryan Scrip, December 6, 1836.** Scrip issued to William Bryan equal to the amount of debts owed to him for the loans made during the Texas Revolution.

**Sam Houston Scrip, December 10, 1836.** President Sam Houston was authorized to negotiate a loan for \$20,000 to purchase ammunition and munitions of war by issuing land scrip at a minimum of \$.50 per acre.

**Toby Scrip, December 10, 1836.** The president of the Republic of Texas was authorized to issue scrip for the amount of 500,000 acres to be transmitted to Thomas Toby of New Orleans and sold at a minimum of \$.50 per acre.

**White Scrip, December 10, 1836.** David White was authorized as an agent of the Republic of Texas in the city of Mobile, Alabama to sell land scrip at a minimum rate of \$.50 per acre.

**Erwin Scrip, June 3, 1837.** Issued to repay a \$50,000 loan to Texas made on January 20, 1836, when Stephen F. Austin, Branch T. Archer, and William Warton contracted with James Erwin and others in New Orleans.

**First Loan Scrip, May 24, 1838.** The president of the Republic was authorized to issue land scrip to stockholders as payment for the first loan to Texas "...to fulfill and carry into effect the contract of compromise made on April 1, 1836 between the [interim Texas government] and the stockholders in the first loan [for \$20,000] negotiated in New Orleans on January 11, 1836."

**Funded Debt Scrip, February 5, 1841.** Any holder of promissory notes, funded debt, or any other liquidated claims against the government of Texas could "surrender the same, and receive in lieu thereof, land scrip." The scrip was issued at a rate of \$2.00 per acre.

**General Land Office Scrip, February 11, 1850.** The commissioner of the Texas General Land Office was authorized to issue land scrip at \$.50 per acre for the liquidation of the public debt of the late Republic of Texas.

**Sales Scrip, February 11, 1858.** The commissioner of the Texas General Land Office was authorized to issue land scrip in certificates of not less than 160 acres at \$ 1.00 per acre for the sale of the public domain.

## Internal Improvement Scrip, Republic and State of Texas

Internal Improvement Scrip was issued as a means of paying for infrastructural development in Texas. Land was granted in lieu of payment in cash to contractors and investors. All legislation authorizing internal improvement scrip was repealed in 1882.

### The Central National Road Scrip, 1844,

Scrip certificates issued in various amounts to road commissioners, surveyors, and contractors for building a road from the Red River to the Trinity River in what is now Dallas County.

**Scrip for building steamboats, steamships, and other vessels.** Certificates for 320 acres were issued for building a vessel of at least 50 tons, with 320 acres for each additional 25 tons. Sixteen ships were built taking advantage of this 1854 law.

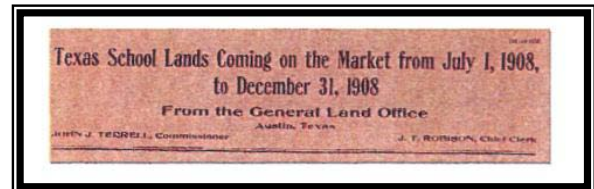
**Railroad scrip.** Several laws providing scrip for building railroads were passed, beginning in 1854. Although the exact provisions varied, generally a specified amount of land was provided for each mile of rail constructed. The Constitution of 1876 provided 16 sections (640 acres to a section) per mile. Railroads were required to survey an equal amount of land to be set aside for the state (later designated for the use of funding the public schools).

**Scrip for building factories.** Enacted by the legislature in 1863, certificates for 320 acres of land were issued for each incremental \$1,000 valuation of the completed factory

**Navigation scrip for the building of ship channels and the improvement of rivers and harbors.** Beginning in 1854, scrip certificates were issued to pay for the construction of ship channels and other waterway improvements. Various amounts of land were issued for each mile of improvement made. For example, 320

certificates for 620 acres each were issued for the building of a ship channel eight feet deep and 100 feet wide across Mustang Island.

**Irrigation canal scrip.** Certificates were issued to companies for the construction of irrigation canals under laws passed in 1874, 1875, and 1876. The amount of acreage given was based on the class of ditch constructed.



*School Lands Advertisement Distributed in 1908*

## School Land, State of Texas

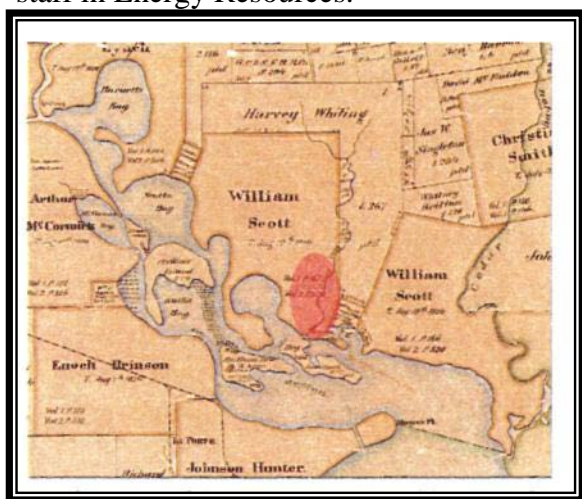
Sale of lands to fund the school system of Texas began in 1874. Until 1905 the amount of land that could be purchased as well as the price, method of purchase, and eligibility requirements varied a great deal. Legislation in 1905 required that the school lands be sold through competitive bidding. Purchasers could buy a maximum of four sections with residence required in most counties, or eight sections with no residence required in other designated (western) counties.



*Certificate 5/892 issued to the Houston and Great Northern Railroad Company. Bexar Scrip 8968*

# Mineral Files

The General Land Office Program Area houses its collection of mineral files in the Archives and Records vault on the first floor of the Stephen F. Austin Building. Archives and Records staff are not specifically trained in the nuances of these files, but can assist customers in pulling them and obtaining photocopies of the documents contained within them. Detailed inquiries regarding the mineral file collection are always directed to the expert staff in Energy Resources.

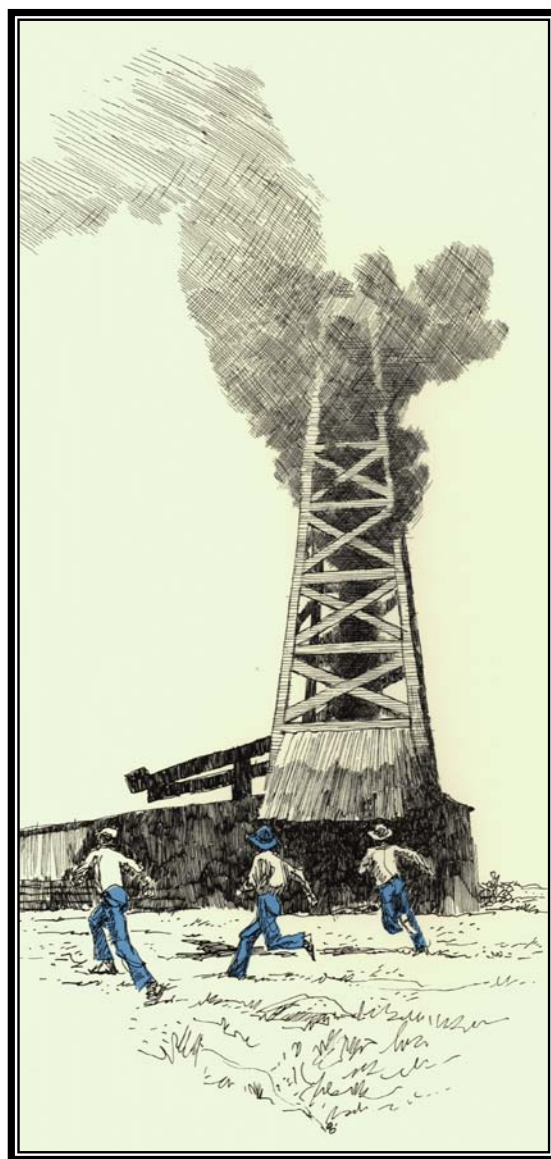


*The location of the Goose Creek Field, situated in the William Scott labor, along Goose Creek in southeast Harris County. Image from the 1896 GLO map of Harris County, GLO Map Number 4675*

The mineral files stored in the Archives Vault contain information relating to oil, gas, and hard mineral leases issued by the GLO on lands owned by the state of Texas. The files contain the leases themselves, along with correspondence, reports, and instruments associated with the particular lease. The oldest state oil and gas lease is Mineral File number 951, which was issued on August 18, 1913 by Land Commissioner J.T. Robison. Oil was discovered on the lease, known as the Goose Creek Field, in April of 1914. At that time the price of crude oil was \$.65 per barrel

To date, the work performed under the TGLO Archives and Records

contracts housed within the GLO's mineral files has generated over \$9 billion for the Permanent School Fund, the single largest revenue source for the fund.



*Spindletop, the most famous Texas oil field, began gushing in January 1901. The gusher remains the symbol of an industry that continues to boom*



# Digital Preservation Project

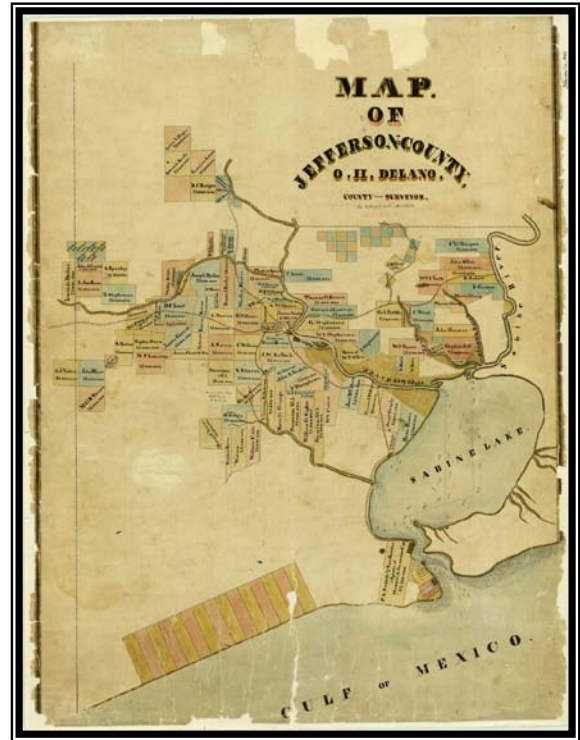
The Texas General Land Office maintains a massive archival map and document collection stored in three file vaults located in the Stephen F. Austin State Office Building. The collection consists of more than 80,000 maps and more than 35.5 million individual documents dating from as early as the 1720's. The archival holdings of the GLO include all original land grants issued by one of the governments of Texas, important maps and sketches reflecting these grants, and a massive Special Collection containing rare and important documents relating to the history of our state.

The archival collection of the Texas General Land Office represents over 173 years of creation and accumulation. Today, the GLO is engaged in a monumental preservation program to ensure that these documents and maps will be available for future generations. The entire archival holdings of the GLO are being digitally scanned in order to allow for the original documents to be preserved and removed from constant use.



*GLO employees scanning a very large Harris County Map*

The General Land Office's Scanning Project addresses the pressing need to preserve the agency's unique historical collection. Under the initiative of former Land Commissioner



*Map of Jefferson County, 1840, by O.H. Delano, Jefferson County Surveyor. GLO Map Collection Map Number 3726*

(now Lieutenant Governor) David Dewhurst, the 77th Texas Legislature appropriated funds to begin this process. Commissioner Jerry Patterson has maintained and enhanced this commitment by allowing Archives and Records to establish an "in-house" scanning laboratory.

Each map or document in the collection must be carefully prepared for scanning by Land Office staff. Many of these materials are extremely fragile and require special handling in order to be run through the scanner. Once the digital image is captured it is stored to a server. After each individual image has been put through a rigorous quality control process it is burned to a digital video disk (DVD). From these DVD's the Land Office then creates an image to be posted to our on-line catalog. In addition portable data files



(PDFs) are created that enable us to print high quality, full-color reproductions of each map and document. The original DVD's are stored off-site in a secure data storage facility. As the maps and documents are scanned, the originals are being retired to dark storage where they will remain under ideal environmental conditions. In time Archives and Records staff intends to fully duplicate the agency's archival holdings in "cyberspace" via the World Wide Web. As each new collection is scanned it will be posted to the GLO's Web site for easy access by agency customers.



*Archives and Records File Vault*

## **The Campaign to Save Texas History!**

The Save Texas History campaign is a statewide initiative utilizing groundbreaking visual, print and electronic media with an aggressive outreach plan, to rally support for the preservation of historic maps and documents at the General Land Office.

Save Texas History operates through the creation of unique partnerships between the General Land Office and private entities to raise awareness and educate Texas about the program.

*"The history of Texas is what sets Texans apart, makes us who we are. It lengthens our stride, swells our hearts*

*with pride. It gives us the courage to accomplish great things. Our unique history proves Texas is a special place, with a story like no other."*

**Jerry Patterson**  
**Texas Land Commissioner**

The General Land Office's Save Texas History campaign is an opportunity to help stop the damaging effects of time. Corporations, organizations, schools and individual Texans can make a financial contribution to pay for the professional conservation and preservation of these documents.

The conservation process for these historic documents is tedious and time-consuming. For most maps, the treatment includes removal of surface dirt, water baths, deacidification, flattening, mending tears, reducing stains, removing old repair materials and replacement of old backings with a special Japanese Kozo paper.



Cheryl Carrabba of Carrabba Conservation, Inc., works on one of the agency's historic maps



# Appendix A – Commissioners of the General Land Office

## Commissioners Under the Republic of Texas

John P. Borden .....	June 21, 1837
H.W. Raglin (interim).....	December 12, 1840 - January 4, 1841
Thomas William Ward.....	January 4, 1841 - March 20, 1848

## Commissioners Under the State of Texas

George W. Smyth .....	March 20, 1848 - August 4, 1851
Stephen Crosby.....	August 4, 1851 - March 1, 1858
Francis M. White.....	March 1, 1858 - March 1, 1862
Stephen Crosby.....	March 1, 1862 - September 1, 1865
Francis M. White.....	September 1, 1865 - August 7, 1866
Stephen Crosby.....	August 7, 1866 - August 27, 1867
Joseph Spence .....	August 27, 1867 - January 19, 1870
Jacob Kuechler.....	January 19, 1870 - January 20, 1874
Johann J. Groos.....	January 20, 1874 - June 15, 1878
W. C. Walsh.....	June 15, 1878 -January 10, 1887
Richard M. Hall .....	January 10, 1887 - January 16, 1891
W.L. McGaughey .....	January 16, 1891 - January 16, 1895
Andrew J. Baker.....	January 15, 1895 - January 16, 1899
George W. Finger .....	January 16, 1899 - May 4, 1899
Charles Rogan .....	May 15, 1899-January 10, 1903
John J. Terrell.....	January 10, 1903 - January 11, 1909
James T. Robison .....	January 11, 1909 - September 6, 1929
James H. Walker .....	September 12, 1929 - January 1, 1937
William H. McDonald.....	January 1, 1937 - January 1, 1939
Bascom Giles.....	January 1, 1939 - January 5, 1955
J. Earl Rudder .....	January 5, 1955 - February 1, 1958
Bill Allcorn .....	February 1, 1958 - January 1, 1961
Jerry Sadler.....	January 1, 1961 - January 1, 1971
Bob Armstrong .....	January 1, 1971 - January 1, 1983
Garry Mauro .....	January 1, 1983 - January 1, 1999
David Dewhurst.....	January 1, 1999 - January 1, 2003
Jerry Patterson .....	January 1, 2003 - Present

# Appendix B - Sources for Further Reading

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# The Texas General Land Office ARCHIVES

## Home to the History of Texas Land

The Texas General Land Office Archives contains over 35 million hand-drafted maps and documents, some dating back to Spanish rule. These are resources of substantial historical value, and because they belong to the people of Texas, **they can be accessed by anyone free of charge.**

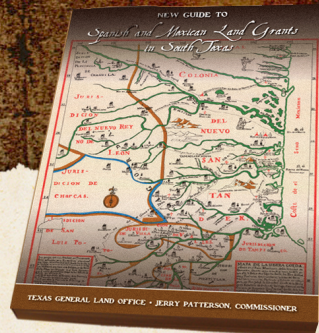
### Why Visit?

- ★ **Conduct research using primary source materials.**
- ★ **Find your ancestor's name!** *Discover hand-written documents and evidence of military service or settlement in Texas.*
- ★ **Schedule a complimentary tour.** *Please schedule in advance and inform the staff about any particular interest for a unique experience.*

### How Can You Help?

Many documents in the Archives are crumbling due to age and use. With no state appropriation for their conservation, Save Texas History™ is working to raise private funds for their protection. **The future of these documents depends on your support.**

- ★ **Buy a map reproduction.**
- ★ **Conserve a map or document in honor of a loved one.**
- ★ **Make a financial donation.**



## The New Guide to Spanish and Mexican Land Grants in South Texas

**Recipient of the 2009 Presidio La Bahia Award!** Features entries on Spanish and Mexican land grants between the Nueces River and Rio Grande. Learn about the Spanish and Mexican land grant and title process, and the unique situation in South Texas with regard to land settlement. The *New Guide* contains a name index of places, persons and ranches. **Also Available: Catalogue of the Spanish Collection, Parts I & II.**

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