

THE OLD 300 – LAND IN THE AUSTIN COLONY

 **Economics and History** ★  ★ **Activity 3**

Land Costs in Austin's Colonies

DIRECTIONS: Use the chart about land costs in 1823 to answer the following questions.

1. How much did 960 acres cost a Texas settler in 1823?



2. How much would a farmer pay for the same amount of acreage in the United States?

3. How much more did 960 acres in the United States cost than 960 acres in Texas?

4. Stephen F. Austin included expenses for surveying and gaining title to the settlers' lands in his fee of 12.5 cents an acre. It cost Austin about \$70.00 to survey a league and about \$38.00 to obtain the legal title. What was his profit on the sale of 4,426 acres, or a league of land (cost of land – Austin's expenses = profit)?

5. After 1820 the United States no longer would accept credit for the purchase of land. Austin, on the other hand, gave his settlers three years to pay for their land. If you were a settler, would you prefer a cash-only policy for land or three years to pay? Why?

6. Why were so many Americans eager to risk the hardships of coming to Texas rather than buy land in the United States?

The Cost of Land in Austin's Colony and in the United States in 1823	
1 ACRE	
Austin's Colony	12½¢ 
United States	\$1.25 

DIRECTIONS: Use the chart about land costs in 1824 to answer the following questions.

7. How much did a settler have to pay in fees for land in Austin's colony in 1824?

The Cost of Land in Austin's Colony After 1824	
Fees	Amount
Fee to the local government	\$30.00
Fee to <i>Empresario</i> Austin	\$42.00
Fee to the land commissioner	\$85.00
Fee to the surveyor	\$27.00
Fee for the title to the land	\$ 8.00

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8. How much of a settler's land fees went to the local government?

DIRECTIONS: Use the chart about land costs in 1825 to answer the following questions.

9. How much did a settler have to pay in fees for land in Austin's colony?

10. How much did Austin charge settlers for surveying their lands and registering their titles to the property?

11. How much did Austin earn from the 500 settlers that he registered that year?

12. How much did S. M. Williams charge for the clerical work?

13. Besides collecting fees for his work as a clerk, Williams also received an annual salary of \$1,000.00 as Austin's secretary. How much did Williams make from his salary and from processing 300 land titles?

The Cost of Land in Austin's Colony After 1825	
Fees	Amount
Fee to the local government	\$30.00
Fee to <i>Empresario</i> Austin	\$60.00
Fee to the land commissioner	\$15.00
Fee to S. M. Williams for handling the necessary paper work	\$10.00
Fee for stamped paper	\$ 2.00

CRITICAL THINKING

The law of 1824 removed Austin's right to collect the 12.5 cents per acre fee that he had originally set when he contracted with the earliest settlers. At first, officials were not going to allow Austin any fee at all, but he at last was allowed \$42.00. This small amount, however, barely met his expenses, and Austin was very short on cash.

Though the *empresario* was not making a financial profit at that time, he continued to acquire land. When a settler was unable to pay the land fee, Austin would pay the fee in exchange for half the colonist's land. This meant that the colonist paid nothing for 2,213 acres, or half of a league of land. Nevertheless, many colonists complained that Austin was getting rich on others' inability to pay because he required 2,213 acres of land from each of these poorer settlers.

What do you think? Defend in a paragraph or two either Austin's or the colonists' viewpoint. Write your paragraph on a separate sheet of paper.