

Describing Texas

(Based on the Mexican Colonization Law every immigrant to Texas could receive: 177 acres of farming land; 4428 acres of pasture land; freedom from taxation for six years; permission to import all of their belongings tax-free. However, empresarios did not believe that just presenting these facts would be enough of an enticement to colonization, so they ran advertisements that painted Texas in a very favorable light. The following passages, adapted from *The Evolution Of A State Or Recollections Of Old Texas Days* by Noah Smithwick, a book considered by many to be among the best about early days in Texas, show the contrast between the promise and the reality of life in early Texas.)

Excerpt 1

...[there was] an abundance of game, wild horses, cattle, turkeys, buffalo, deer, and antelope by the drove. The woods abounded in bee trees, wild grapes, plums, cherries, persimmons, hews, and dewberries, while walnuts, hickory nuts, and pecans were abundant along the water courses. The climate was so mild that houses were not essential; neither was a superabundance of clothing or bedding, buffalo robes and bear skins supplying all that was needed for the latter and buckskin the former. Corn in any quantity was to be had for the planting....

Excerpt 2

The colonists were living...huddled for security against the Karankawas....The rude log cabins, windowless and floorless, [were only partial protections against rain and sun] [and] were absolutely devoid of comfort...Game was plenty the year round, so there was no need of starving...Men talked hopefully of the future, children [enjoyed the newness] of the present, but the women...talked sadly of the old homes and friends left behind [and] of the dangers and privations that surrounded them. They didn't even have the comfort of being constantly busy. There was no poultry, no dairy, no garden, no books, or papers – and if there had been, many of them could not read – no schools, no churches, nothing to break the dull monotony of their lives, save an occasional [fight] among the children and dogs. The men at least had the excitement of killing game and cutting bee trees.

Passages adapted from
<http://www.oldcardboard.com/ljsi/olbooks/smithwic/otd.htm>
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