

CATEGORIES OF LAND GRANTS



LAND GRANTS FOR IMMIGRATION TO TEXAS

In order to build a tax base and encourage settlement in the new Republic of Texas, the government instituted a liberal policy of distributing the public domain to incoming settlers. Land grants were contingent upon certain conditions; the amount of acreage issued was based on the time period in which an immigrant arrived in Texas.

- ❖ **FIRST CLASS HEADRIGHTS:** Settlers who had arrived prior to the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836, and had not yet received a land grant from Mexico were entitled to a First Class Headright. Heads of families were eligible for one league and one labor of land (4,605.5 acres) and single men were eligible for 1/3 of a league (1,476.1 acres). Those who already received a grant from Mexico could apply for an augmentation to bring the total land received up to the appropriate amount. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, I, 1079-80]
- ❖ **SECOND CLASS HEADRIGHTS:** Settlers who had arrived between March 2, 1836 and October 1, 1837 were entitled to a Second Class Headright. Heads of families were eligible for 1,280 acres and single men were eligible for 640 acres. Second class headright recipients were required to reside in the Republic for three years. A conditional certificate was issued first, and an unconditional certificate was issued after residency conditions were met. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, I, 1414]
- ❖ **THIRD CLASS HEADRIGHTS:** Settlers who had arrived between October 1, 1837 and January 1, 1840 were entitled to a Third Class Headright. Heads of families were eligible for 640 acres and single men were eligible for 320 acres. The residency conditions and certificate process for third class headrights were the same as for second class headrights. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, II, 35]
- ❖ **FOURTH CLASS HEADRIGHTS:** Settlers who had arrived between January 1, 1840 and January 1, 1842 were entitled to a Fourth Class Headright. The amounts granted were the same as for a third class headright with the added stipulation that Fourth Class headright recipients were required to settle and reside on the land for three years and cultivate at least ten acres. Fourth class headrights are filed under the third-class heading. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, II, 554]
- ❖ **PREEMPTION GRANTS:** The Preemption land grant program allowed settlers to claim land on the vacant public domain and provided a process through which settlers could title the land once they met the established criteria. The first preemption act was passed by the Republic of Texas in 1845 and allowed for the settlement of up to 320 acres of vacant public land. An 1854 act reduced the preemption amount to 160 acres and the first preemption program was canceled in 1856. Preemption grants of 160 acres were reinstated in 1866 and continued until 1898. Preemptions are their own class of land grant, but some early preemption grants are filed under the third class heading. ¹[Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, II, 1073-75; III, 1550; IV, 474; V, 1121-2]
- ❖ **COLONY GRANTS:** There were four empresario colonies established under contracts with the Republic of Texas: Peters' Colony (1841), Fisher and Miller's Colony (1842), Castro's Colony (1842), and Mercer's Colony (1844). Heads of families were eligible for 640 acres and single men were eligible for 320 acres. The land had to be located within the confines of the colony. Colony grants are filed under the third class heading, with additional supporting materials existing in the Special Collections. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, II, 555; 785-86]

SIX HUNDRED AND FORTY ACRES OF DONATION LAND,

ACT OF CONGRESS, PASSED DEC

CATEGORIES OF LAND GRANTS



LAND GRANTS FOR MILITARY SERVICE

Rewarding veterans with land is a tradition that dates back to the Roman Empire. The Spanish Crown introduced this tradition to Texas and it has continued throughout the state's history. From offering bounty land to encourage military service in the Texas Revolution, to rewarding Confederate veterans or their widows, land was one of the original benefits to being a veteran in Texas.

- ◆ **MILITARY HEADRIGHTS:** Volunteer soldiers who had arrived in Texas after March 2, 1836 and before August 1, 1836 were entitled to a special Military Headright. This program ensured that those who had served during this period received 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. A separate act granted one league of land to individuals who were permanently disabled in the service of Texas. Military Headrights are filed under the First Class heading. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, I, 1414; 1435-36; 1520]
- ◆ **BOUNTY GRANTS:** The Republic of Texas issued Bounty land grants to soldiers who had served or enlisted in the army of the Republic of Texas prior to October 1, 1837. Prior to independence, Texas promised land, which had not yet been won, to induce service in the revolution against Mexico. The amount of land granted varied depending on length of service. Volunteers were entitled to 320 acres for every three months of service, up to a maximum of 1280 acres. The heirs of soldiers who died in service were entitled to an additional 640 acres of land. Under a separate law, the Republic of Texas issued 240 acre bounty grants to soldiers guarding the frontier from 1838 to 1842. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, I, 1367-68; II, 688-89]
- ◆ **DONATION GRANTS:** The Republic of Texas issued Donation land grants for participation in specific battles of the Texas Revolution. Soldiers who fought in the Siege of Béxar and the Battle of San Jacinto, including the baggage detail at Harrisburg, received donation certificates for their service. The heirs of those who fell at the Alamo and Goliad also received donation certificates. The acreage allotted for these donations changed several times, but most certificates were issued for 640 acres. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, I, 1450-51]
- ◆ **VETERAN DONATION GRANTS:** An act of the Texas legislature passed in 1879 granted Veteran Donation grants to surviving veterans of the Texas Revolution and signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. To qualify for this type of donation, a veteran needed to have either received or been eligible for a bounty grant. The donation law of 1879 provided 640 acres and required proof of indigence. This law was amended in 1881, increasing the donation amount to 1280 acres and dropping the indigence requirement. The veteran donation program was repealed by an act of the Texas legislature in 1887. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, VIII, 1475-76; IX, 127-28]
- ◆ **CONFEDERATE SCRIP GRANTS:** An act of the Texas legislature passed in 1881 provided land grants to Confederate veterans from Texas who were permanently disabled in service to the Confederacy, and to the widows of Confederate soldiers who died in service. These grants were in the amount of 1280 acres of land. The *scrip* classification included an additional requirement to locate an alternate survey of the same amount of land, to be set aside for the Permanent School Fund. The law providing for the Confederate scrip program was repealed in 1883. [Gammel, *Laws of Texas*, IX, 214-15]