

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Composed and dramatized by BOB HEINONEN

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF STEPHEN F. AUSTIN

Part 20: The Father of Texas

by Bob Heinonen

Stephen F. Austin died on December 27, 1836, less than nine months after his Texas had become a nation. He died in the national capital of The Republic of Texas, Columbia. Mirabeau B. Lamar said he had worked himself to death. Since his imprisonment in Mexico City, Austin certainly had not taken the opportunity to regain his strength and health.

Sam Houston, the President of the new Republic of Texas, immediately sent out a broadside (flyer) across Texas that read:

THE PATRIARCH HAS LEFT US.

WE perform a most painful duty in announcing the death of GENERAL STEPHEN F. AUSTIN, who departed this life, yesterday, at half-past 12 o'clock, P. M. at the house of judge McKinstry. His friends and relations have sustained an irreparable loss; his country, just merging in existence, the best and tenderest of fathers; the sons and daughters of Texas have now full cause for mourning, with one solitary consolation, that they will meet the just man above.

His remains will leave for Peach Point, for interment at twelve o'clock to-day.

Columbia, December 28, 1836.

“The Patriarch”....”the best and tenderest of fathers”....the Father of Texas. This is the first time we see this title.

“On the morning of December 29 [1836], Austin’s body was carried on board the steamboat *Yellowstone* at Columbia for the short trip down the Brazos River to Peach Point [his sister Emily’s plantation]. Sam Houston, members of the cabinet, a military escort, Moses Austin Bryan and assorted friends accompanied the remains. From James Perry’s river landing the mourners traveled the two miles to the family burial plot, where the empresario was laid to rest. Houston threw the first handful of dirt on the coffin.”

Stephen F. Austin remained buried at Peach Point for 75 years. In 1851, when the State Cemetery was opened in the state capital of Austin (named after Stephen F.), the family was asked if his remains could be moved to the highest point in the new cemetery. For their own reasons, the family decided to let Stephen rest where he was.

“In 1910, the Texas legislature made arrangements for Austin’s remains to be exhumed from their resting place at Peach Point plantation in Brazoria County and buried with high honors in the State Cemetery in Austin. On October 18 a group of legislators and Austin relatives opened Austin’s grave and found the empresario’s bones “in a state of complete preservation.” Services were held in Houston, and then the bones were brought by train to Austin, where a military

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escort accompanied them to the state capitol. From there they were taken to the State Cemetery and reinterred on the highest point on the grounds.” You may visit his gravesite in the State Cemetery today.

The Father of Texas has completed his journey.

Finis

*Quotes are from Gregg Cantrell’s Stephen F. Austin – Empresario of Texas
Bob Heinonen is the founder of **Texas Heroes** and has been portraying Stephen F. Austin since
1993. See www.TexasHeroes.net/StephenFAustin.html . Copyright© by Bob Heinonen 2009.*