



## A CAMPAIGN FOR THE SAN FELIPE DE AUSTIN STATE HISTORIC SITE MUSEUM

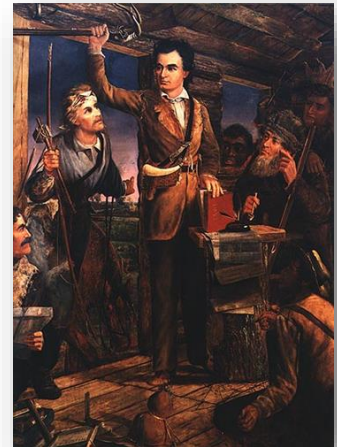
### CASE FOR SUPPORT

March 2018

*“San Felipe de Austin! The shibboleth that flings the door of memory wide; the spell that bids the tide of years roll back, and from the ashes, where it has lain these sixty years and more, conjures up the old town which formed the nucleus of the movement that eventuated in the extension of the great American Union in an unbroken plane from the Atlantic to the Pacific.”* – Noah Smithwick, San Felipe de Austin’s most famous story-teller (1900)

### Real Places Telling Real Stories

Texans and visitors to our state have traditionally viewed the revolution story through a narrow prism that focuses on the seven months of battle and political upheaval that began at Gonzales in October 1835 and culminated in victory on the San Jacinto battlefield in April 1836. But the people and actions that set the revolution in motion were part of a larger and longer story – one that began in the early 1820s at the headquarters of *empresario* Stephen F. Austin’s colony, **San Felipe de Austin**. Founded in 1823, San Felipe de Austin played a pivotal role in events leading up to the Texas Revolution. Yet its story is not as well known or understood as others in the chronicles of Texas history, including the Alamo and San Jacinto.



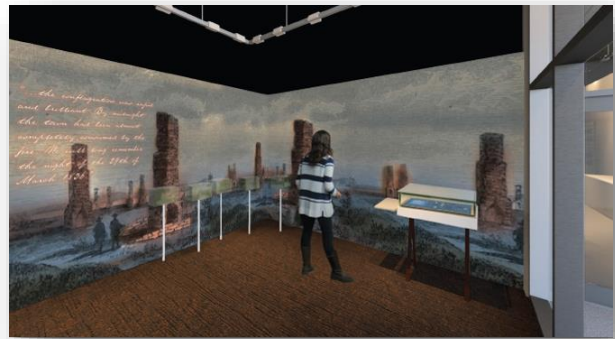
From the first call to the “people of Texas” to convene in 1832 through the third “representative convention” three years later, San Felipe de Austin stood at the epicenter of the Texas Revolution. The story of this community is not only the story of Mexican Texas but also the vital missing piece in the larger chain of events that led to the rise of the Lone Star Nation. Residents of San Felipe shaped and participated in all the events of the Revolution, directing actors and actions on the grand stage that led to the forging of the new nation. It is time for the story of this town and its major role in the birth of the Lone Star State to be told in its entirety.

To elevate understanding and appreciation of the significance of San Felipe de Austin in the history of Texas, the Texas Historical Commission is developing a new **museum and visitor center at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site**. Hands-on indoor and outdoor exhibits will allow visitors to explore the actual footprint of where the town once stood. San Felipe is an active archaeological site, and in-the-field presentations by archaeologists will highlight discoveries with visitors as they are uncovered.

The **Friends of the Texas Historical Commission** (FTHC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports the mission and work of the Texas Historical Commission, has launched a \$12.56 million capital campaign for the development of a Museum at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site. The State of Texas has committed \$7.49 million to this effort, leaving approximately \$5.1 million to be raised from philanthropy. The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission request your support in this campaign to preserve this crucial piece of history, offering Texas citizens and visitors new insights into the events leading to the creation of the Texas Republic.

## A Small Settlement with a Big Story

For 500 years, Texas' contemporary history has been shaped by the arrival of Europeans in the New World. For three centuries, Spain ruled over the lands we call Texas today. In 1820, Moses Austin convinced the Spanish government that something heretofore not considered could change Texas for the better: an influx of emigrants to settle the *frontera* that missions and presidios had failed to tame. Moses Austin died before he was able to implement his plan, but his son Stephen F. Austin decided to finish what his father had begun – and with an *empresario*'s contract awarded by the newly formed Mexican government, Austin set out to find land for his colony.



*The All That Remains Gallery – Conceptual Rendering*

In 1823, armed with land granting contracts with the Mexican government, Stephen F. Austin brought 300 families (later known as the “Old Three Hundred”) to settle in a new territory in the rich river bottom between the Brazos and Colorado Rivers, south of the El Camino Real. Austin dreamed big when laying out the site for the town that became known as San Felipe de Austin, and while his original 1,000-acre plan for the site was never fully realized, the town was second in population only to San Antonio at the time. Austin’s land grant office would eventually grant more than 5 million acres of land to 1,500 families in a vast area that covered all or part of 31 present Texas counties.

Stephen F. Austin surrendered his United States citizenship to help establish “Austin’s Colony,” and it was the only Texas home he called his own. Of this frontier territory (and future Republic and State) he claimed: *“My property, my prospects, my future hopes of happiness, for myself and family, and for the families I have brought with me, are centered here. This is our adopted Nation.”* Texas politician, diplomat, and soldier Mirabeau B. Lamar wrote of Austin: *“He was not only the founder of our Republic, but there is scarcely a blessing which has flowed to the country that may not fairly be attributed to his untiring efforts for its welfare.”* Due to his role in the State’s birth and formative years, Stephen F. Austin became known as the “Father of Texas.”

In its time, San Felipe de Austin was a vibrant hub of commerce, expansion, diplomacy, and government. The town’s residents included hardscrabble pioneers, enterprising businessmen, surveyors, tavern shopkeepers, militiamen, and visionary revolutionaries. William B. Travis established his law practice there, and in local homes and taverns, colonists debated whether or not to rebel against the government of Mexico. Delegates from across the territory met in conventions in San Felipe in 1832, 1833, and 1835 to discuss grievances with Mexican policies.

In addition to having the state’s first land office, postal service, and schools, San Felipe played a significant role in the history of printing in Texas. The first book published in the state came off the press of San Felipe’s Godwin Cotten in 1829. Gail Borden published the *Telegraph and Texas Register* in San Felipe during the Texas Revolution. His press chronicled the war and produced some of the era’s most famous imprints, such as Travis’ appeal from the Alamo to the “People in Texas and All Americans in the World.” **Perhaps most significantly, the Texas Declaration of Independence, adopted at nearby Washington on the Brazos, was first printed in San Felipe de Austin.**

After seeking peace between Mexico and the Texas settlers for as long as possible, Austin ultimately joined his fellow settlers in seeking independence for Texas. When the Alamo fell on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1836, Sam Houston’s army retreated past San Felipe, but the San Felipe militia refused to retreat further. Under orders from Houston, the residents burned their town to the ground on March 29, 1836, in the famous “Runaway Scrape.” San Felipe’s militia then defended the river crossing against Santa Anna’s invading army, slowing them down and forcing them to turn south in search of another crossing. Weeks later, Texas independence was won at the Battle of San Jacinto.

While San Felipe de Austin's prominence lasted only 13 years (1823-1836), *nearly every significant character and event of this era of Texas history is connected to this frontier outpost.*

### The San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site

In 1928, the town council of San Felipe, in an effort to preserve a portion of the original San Felipe de Austin town, designated six acres as a memorial park to honor Stephen F. Austin and his colonial settlement. Austin County and the Sealy Chamber of Commerce subsequently helped fund and develop the historic site, which was donated by the town to the State of Texas in 1940. The Texas Historical Commission was entrusted with the site's ongoing management and development in 2008. When the opportunity arose to expand the site to include more of the original town, THC used state funds to make an additional land acquisition. This most recent addition will be the site for the San Felipe de Austin Museum.

Over the past decade, THC archeology staff have conducted ongoing excavations and research to uncover the town. From field work on privately owned lands from 2002 to 2006, to imaging tests to identify possible excavation sites from 2008 to 2014, to active field school activities from 2014 to present day, archeology has been central to San Felipe's interpretative mission.

Today, the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site occupies a 90-acre property located approximately 50 miles west of Houston near Sealy, Texas, on the banks of the Brazos River. The San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site features a Texas Centennial monument of Stephen F. Austin, a replica log cabin, and a small 1847 mercantile ("The J.J. Josey Store") moved to the site in 1970, which serves as a temporary visitor center. The site is open to the public year-round and the visitor center is operated by the THC.

### Why San Felipe de Austin, and Why Now?

Texans are proud of their history, especially stories related to the Texas Revolution and independence. Many of these stories have attained a mythic status, shaping what it means to be a Texan. They resonate with proud native Texans and long-time residents as well as with newcomers embracing the Texas spirit.

For decades, however, the story of the birth of the Republic of Texas has been missing its central piece: San Felipe de Austin. Despite the town's pivotal role in Texas' "Road to the Revolution," its story remains largely untold for several reasons:



- ❖ **The destruction of its physical structures.** As a result of the intentional burning of the town in 1836, none of its original structures remain. ***However, the Texas Historical Commission's work over the last decade at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site continues to unearth vital links to the town's history and its role in the Texas Revolution.***
- ❖ **A lack of storytelling infrastructure.** Although the archeological research and excavations are revealing many artifacts and the town's footprint continues to emerge, the existing infrastructure at the San Felipe de Austin site does not convey the complex stories of the town, the people who settled and inhabited it, or the spirit of freedom that destroyed it. ***These stories will be lost unless we can gather and record them, and effectively preserve and interpret them for educational and research purposes.***

- ❖ **Inadequate visitor facilities.** The current State Historic Site, located in a secluded pastoral setting along the I-10 corridor between Houston and San Antonio, lacks the facilities necessary to adequately showcase the richness and significance of the San Felipe de Austin story. In its present state, the structures cannot reasonably accommodate more than the average annual visitor population of 7,000, ***but has the potential for many more if developed appropriately.***

Although San Felipe de Austin existed for only 13 years (1823-1836), it had an enormous impact on Texas history. In recent years, archival and archeological research has revealed the rich history of San Felipe and its role in the Texas Revolution. ***With the passing of time, these stories will fade from the memories of Texans unless we gather, record, and house them in a location that is connected to the characters that inhabited these stories, and use them to educate current and future Texans as well as visitors to our state***



The new San Felipe de Austin Museum will offer visitors an unprecedented opportunity to walk in the footprints of Texas' founding characters. Through state-of-the-art interpretive exhibits and displays featuring archeological finds, the Museum and Visitors' Center will allow Texans to experience their connections to this shared Texas "DNA." The San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum will take advantage of the new ways to develop and share stories. As one of the few mid-size or larger Texas museums developed in the 21st century, technological advances will allow the museum to provide compelling and immersive interactive experiences that engage visitors in the past in emotional and resonant ways. It will offer participatory experiences that allow visitors to share their insights and to ask questions, as well as public archeology experiences where visitors can share new information the moment it is uncovered. Additionally, distance learning will provide opportunities for interested supporters and far-away classrooms can tap into the knowledge and insights offered at the site even when they are not there.

The timing is opportune. In 2023, San Felipe de Austin will celebrate the 200th anniversary of its founding, and in 2036, Texas will celebrate its bicentennial. ***Now is the time to convey the depth and specifics of San Felipe's history and its pivotal role in the remarkable story of the Texas Revolution.***

### **Project Targets and Outcomes – The San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum, Exhibits, and Programming**

Today, the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site occupies a 90-acre property that features a monument to Stephen F. Austin, a replica log cabin, and a small 1847 mercantile ("The J.J. Josey Store") that serves as a temporary visitor center. The site is open year-round, and the visitor center is operated by the Texas Historical Commission.

With its short 13-year history, the town of San Felipe de Austin had an enormous impact on Texas history. The new ***San Felipe de Austin Museum***, with its state-of-the-art exhibits and interpretation, will allow the full history of the town and its significance in the Texas Revolution to be showcased in its entirety.

With three school districts just minutes from the site, and the Houston, Katy and Spring Branch ISDs along the Interstate 10 corridor, ***a combined enrollment of more than 200,000 students will have access to the new museum with its high-tech indoor exhibits as well as period-specific artifacts*** (such as a log cabin from the Revolutionary era). The Museum will offer students and other visitors an unprecedented opportunity to walk in the footprints of Texas' founding characters. Through state-of-the-art interactive interpretive exhibits and displays featuring archeological finds and archival research, the museum will



allow visitors to experience their connections to this shared Texas story. The museum will also provide exciting opportunities to bring to life the stories of the many different ethnicities of San Felipe de Austin. A variety of cultures intersected in Mexican Texas, and San Felipe was ground zero for those multicultural engagements.

As one of the few mid-size or larger Texas museums developed in the 21st century, **advanced technology will allow the museum to provide compelling and immersive experiences that engage students and visitors** with the past. At the same time, it will offer participatory experiences that allow students and visitors of all ages to share their insights and to ask questions. Experiences will be designed with today's students in mind – focusing on a digital learning environment – and will include multimedia exhibits (e.g., touchscreen wall), interactive tabletop exhibits, and digital film media.



*San Felipe de Austin Museum: Rendering of Front Elevation*

Experiences will be designed with today's students in mind – focusing on a digital learning environment – and will include multimedia exhibits (e.g., touchscreen wall), interactive tabletop exhibits, and digital film media.

The site will also offer **public archeology experiences** where students and visitors can learn from “in-the-field” lectures presented by archeologists who will emphasize up-to-the-minute discoveries and share new information the moment it is uncovered. Educational programming for students will also include traditional lectures, intensive workshops that allow them to participate with the archaeological crew, context programs with archival and traditional stories about the real people associated with archaeological sites and artifacts. Additionally, **distance learning programs** will provide opportunities for interested supporters and far-away classrooms and researchers to tap into the knowledge and insights offered at the site, even when they are not there. Specifically, the new **10,000 square-foot museum**, with its galleries, learning hall, interpretive spaces and amenities, will include:

- ❖ **State-of-the-art interactive exhibits** focused on the history of the founding of the town;
- ❖ **A core exhibit – showcased in seven galleries**, exploring Austin's life and his roles in populating Texas and securing its independence, the story of the colony and its diverse people, and the complete story of the personalities and events that shaped the Texas Revolution;
- ❖ **Educational programs** for 200,000+ students in the three independent school districts within 50 miles from San Felipe. This programming will include curriculum-aligned tours, interactive activities, camps, continuing education, and after-school programs that bring the history of San Felipe alive;
- ❖ **Outdoor interpretive exhibits** focused on stories of San Felipe residents, archeology, exploration, and research;
- ❖ **Public archeology programs, and research opportunities** for archeology and historic preservation students, archeologists, and others in academia;
- ❖ A **map plaza** that lays out the town as it stood in 1836, allowing visitors a glimpse at the physical elements of the town and life as it may have been almost 200 years ago; and

**Heritage tourism opportunities** related to site's role as a gateway to the Texas Independence Trail.

The Texas Historical Commission's mission is to protect and preserve significant cultural resources on behalf of Texans, and it is the aim of the Commission to help realize the tremendous historical potential of San Felipe de Austin. With a state-of-the-art museum that will offer visitors opportunities to engage in the past in ways that are personal and emotional, and with the participatory and archeological experiences that are so central to its interpretive mission, the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site will realize that potential. The San Felipe de Austin Museum is scheduled to open in April 2018.

## Population benefitted and Expected Impact

The San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site is a destination for public and private school students, researchers of Texas history, heritage travelers following the Texas Independence Trail, visitors to the nearby Stephen F. Austin State Park, and history aficionados. While a significant number of the site's visitors are from the Houston metro area, others come from across the state, as well as from other parts of the United States and beyond, to explore and learn about the story of the Texas Revolution. The expected impact of this museum goes well beyond the expected visitor-ship. The museum, and the story it will tell, will change and enhance the way generational Texans, as well newcomers to the state, view and understand our history. The stories of the Alamo, San Jacinto, Washington on the Brazos and San Felipe will be share in a cohesive, connected narrative, making them richer and long-lasting.

However, in order to more specifically measure the impact and success of the project, the Texas Historical Commission will use the following measures for evaluating the success of the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum project:

Facility construction: As a capital project, the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum project's success is directly based on the timely completion of the construction project, the timely opening to the public, of the museum and exhibits.

- ❖ Construction start date October 2016; Construction completion by April 15th, 2018
- ❖ Exhibits installation completion – April 15th, 2018
- ❖ Completion of project within budget – The San Felipe Museum project is budgeted at a cost of \$12,559,684. The museum project is completed within or at 100% of budgeted cost.

Visitor-ship: In 2014, the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site had about 7,000 visitors – much lower than that at other Texas Revolution sites. The proposed development of a museum at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site **has the potential to increase annual visitor-ship to up to 60,000 or more in the next three years, with up to 20,000 school students of Texas History visiting the site on educational trips over the next three years.**

- ❖ Overall site visitor-ship will increase from 7,000 in 2017, to a total of 60,000 (15,000 in 2018, 20,000 in 2019, and 30,000 in 2020) by December 2020.
- ❖ Increase in number of 4th and 7th grade school students, to a total of 20,000 (3,000 in 2018, 6,000 in 2019, and 11,000 in 2020) by December 2020.
- ❖ Achieve a 90% or greater “highly satisfied” rating from post-program surveys of school groups as well as other visitors by 2020.

In addition, web-based programming and digital media will also exponentially expand the reach of the site. With this anticipated increase in visitation as well as the outreach from the site through the web-based programming, San Felipe de Austin will, over time, rival Revolution-related visitor traffic to both Washington-on-the-Brazos and San Jacinto.

Above all, ***an improved and developed San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site offers all Texans and other visitors a story of the birth of the Lone Star Nation that is complete for the first time.*** The people and places connected to the Revolution and Texas independence continue to resonate with Texans and lovers of Texas history. These universal stories of love and loss, struggle and sacrifice, and the will to overcome, are sewn into the fabric of our collective being. As Texans, we are invited to visit these places and reflect on those who accomplished so much for the Texas we love today and who inspire us to improve the Texas of tomorrow. It's time for ALL Texans to get to know San Felipe de Austin and for us to offer this gift to Texans of the *next* 200 years.

## **The Campaign for the Development of the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site**

With its mission to preserve and promote significant cultural resources on behalf of Texans, the THC is committed to realizing the tremendous historical potential of the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site. The timing of this project is opportune, because San Felipe de Austin will celebrate the 200th anniversary of its founding in 2023, and Texas will celebrate its Bicentennial in 2036.

The total cost to design this state-of-the-art museum, and furnish and equip the space with quality educational exhibits is \$12.56 million. The State has already committed \$7.49 million to support the project. In October 2016, the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, guided by a campaign committee led by Honorary Co-Chair Senator Lois Kolkhorst, launched a capital campaign to fund the remainder of the project, which primarily includes the indoor exhibits and interpretation, as well as the town-site interpretative exhibits.

Once the improvements have been completed, the THC will fund the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site's annual operations through its biennial legislative appropriation for historic sites. As always, THC will also rely on innovative public-private partnerships with our local friends and stakeholders to support and accomplish objectives not funded by the legislative budget.

## **Dedicated Leaders and Stakeholders**

The San Felipe de Austin Site enjoys strong support from several highly invested groups of stakeholders who will play important roles in the project and in the capital campaign.

**The Texas Historical Commission (THC)** manages 21 State Historic Sites, including San Felipe de Austin, providing leadership and direction for its programs. The THC commissioners are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Texas Senate. Current commissioners are Chairman John L. Nau III (Houston), Vice Chairman John Crain (Dallas), Secretary Robert Shepard (Weatherford), and Commissioners Earl Broussard (Austin), Thomas Hatfield (Austin), Wallace Jefferson (Austin), Tom Perini (Buffalo Gap), Gilbert Peterson (Alpine), Judy Richardson (Caldwell), and Daisy Sloan White (Houston).

**Friends of the Texas Historical Commission (FTHC)** is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to expand philanthropic support for the THC and to secure private support for THC projects not fully funded through state appropriations. Over the past two decades, FTHC has helped to secure more than \$9 million in support for THC projects and programs. FTHC is governed by a 22-member Board of Trustees, chaired by Lareatha H. Clay, who foster support for historic preservation state-wide. THC's chief development officer serves as Executive Director of FTHC, coordinating the Board and managing the Friends' development process and activities.

**Friends of the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site**, is the local auxiliary of the Texas Historical Commission that is focused exclusively on the San Felipe de Austin State Historical Site. The group was organized in 1928 when the historic site was founded. In 2007, the group led the legislative effort to place the San Felipe de Austin Historic Site with the Texas Historical Commission. Long-time Austin County Judge Carolyn Bilski is the current President. Other board members reflect strong support in their local communities, particularly San Felipe, Sealy, Wallis and Bellville. This group organizes volunteer efforts and provides supplemental financial support for the Site's operations and programs.

**The Descendants of Austin's Old Three Hundred** is an organization dedicated to preserving the spirit, courage, and character of the men and women who belonged to Stephen F. Austin's colony. The Old 300 encourages and fosters research which leads to the preservation and publication of the history and records of this first group of Texans. They also assist in the preservation and protection of historic places and artifacts, including old cemeteries and other sites where Old Three Hundred colonists are buried.

## Conclusion

The story of San Felipe de Austin is a story of leadership, vision, and tenacity that demands to be more fully told. For decades, the story of the birth of the Republic of Texas has been told piece by piece. Until now those pieces have formed an incomplete whole, with a key piece – San Felipe – missing. To truly understand the birth of Texas as a nation and the depth and complexity of our State's rich history, one must understand and appreciate the role that Stephen F. Austin and San Felipe de Austin played in Texas' earliest days as well as on its journey to independence from Mexico.

An improved San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site, with its museum, enhanced exhibits, educational programs, and archeological opportunities will offer visitors a powerful opportunity to understand how many of the State's most revered people and events can be traced back to this place on the banks of the Brazos River where the story began.

These improvements depend on the success of the capital campaign for the development of the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site. *Please join us in bringing this important chapter of Texas history to life for future generations by supporting this campaign.*

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**Proposal to the XXXXXXXXXXXX Foundation  
Campaign for  
San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site  
November 20, 2017**

The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission (FTHC) respectfully requests a grant of \$XXXXXXX from the XXXXXXXXX Foundation to support the development of the new San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum, including the development and installation of the educational and interpretive exhibits that are part of the museum's overall interpretive plan. The following proposal outlines the details of the museum project and interpretive exhibits, which will be integral to telling the full story of this historic town, and its significance in the history of Texas.

**History of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission**

Founded in 1953, the Texas Historical Commission (THC) preserves "real places telling real stories" of Texas history. Founded in 1996 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, *the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission (FTHC) was established to support THC's efforts to identify, research, document, and promote the cultural heritage of Texas by developing and securing private resources to assist the Commission in establishing a lasting legacy.*

The Friends of the THC secure private funding support for THC projects not provided for in the state budget. Special emphasis is placed on building public-private partnerships for capital support, and for empowering community-based preservationists through education, training, consultation, and professional support.

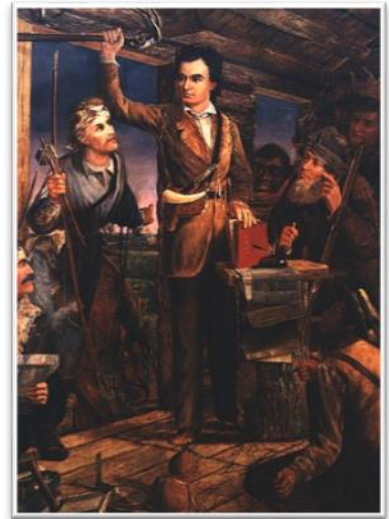
Over the past two decades, FTHC has helped secure more than \$12 million to support THC projects and programs, including the excavation of the 17th century La Belle shipwreck in Matagorda Bay, the Fort St. Louis excavation, the Red River War Battle Sites Project, excavation of Bernardo Plantation, Texas in the Civil War and World War II Initiatives, the THC Preservation Scholars program, the Texas Archeology Stewardship Network, the Texas Courthouse Stewardship Program, Historic Cemeteries Program, Texas Archeological Stewardship Network program, the restoration of the Fulton Mansion, educational programs to train volunteer preservationists around the state, restoration of 23 historic Texas flags, the First Lady's Texas Treasures Main Street Award, and other recognition awards for excellence in Texas history and preservation.

FTHC's vision is that every community in Texas has a culture that supports history and historic preservation, so that we may pro-actively protect, preserve and learn from our collective past. Our goal is that no part of Texas history is unprotected or untold. To that end, our organization builds philanthropic support for the Texas Historical Commission so that the Commission can:

- ❖ Preserve, protect, and promote historic resources for the use, education, and enjoyment of present and future generations;
- ❖ Tell the story of Texas through place-based educational opportunities;
- ❖ Increase visitation and enhance the visitor experience to historic locations across Texas; and
- ❖ Empower the current and future Texas preservation community by building capacity through technical education, training, and mentoring by THC experts.

### Description of the San Felipe de Austin Museum Project

San Felipe de Austin, a town founded by Stephen F. Austin in 1823, played a pivotal role in events leading up to the Texas Revolution. Yet this story is not as well known or understood as others in the chronicles of Texas history, including the Alamo and San Jacinto. Texans and visitors to our state have traditionally viewed the revolution story through a narrow prism that focuses on the seven months of battle and political upheaval that began at Gonzales in October 1835, and culminated in victory on the San Jacinto battlefield in April 1836. However, the people and the series of events that set the revolution in motion were part of a larger and longer story – one that began in the early 1820s at the headquarters of *empresario* Stephen F. Austin's colony, San Felipe de Austin.



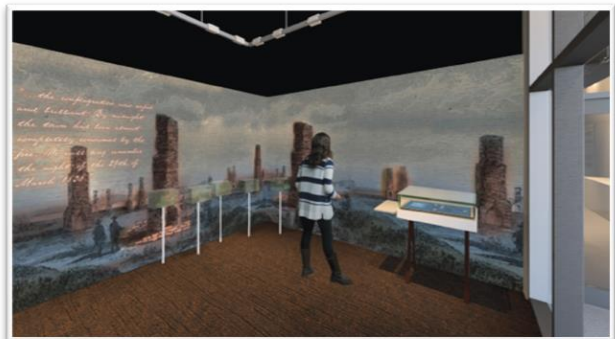
From the first call to the “people of Texas” to convene in 1832, through the third “representative convention” three years later, San Felipe de Austin stood at the epicenter of the Texas Revolution. The story of this community is not only the story of Mexican Texas but also the vital missing piece in the larger chain of events that led to the rise of the Lone Star Nation. Residents of San Felipe shaped and participated in all of the events of the Revolution, directing actors and actions on the grand stage that led to the forging of the new nation.

To elevate public understanding and appreciation of the town's history and significance in the history of Texas, the THC is implementing a detailed interpretive plan at the museum – including a series of interactive and static educational exhibits, educational audio and video content, outdoor interpretive panels, and a map plaza with a three-dimensional town-site model at the new San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site. These exhibits, focused on the site's history and archeology, will not only provide educational and research resources, but will also play a critical role in telling the full story of the Texas Revolution.

The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission has launched a \$12.56 million campaign for the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum, and the State of Texas has already committed \$7.49 million towards this project. **The Friends of the THC respectfully requests a grant of \$300,000 from the XXXXXXXXX Foundation to develop and implement the educational exhibits and related programming within the museum.**

### A Small Settlement with a Big Story

For 500 years, Texas' contemporary history was shaped by the arrival of Europeans in the New World. For three centuries, Spain ruled over the lands we call Texas today. In 1820, Moses Austin convinced the Spanish government that something heretofore not considered could change Texas for the better: an influx of emigrants to settle the *frontera* that missions and presidios had failed to tame. Moses Austin died before he was able to implement his plan, but his son Stephen F. Austin decided to finish what his father had begun – and with an *empresario's* contract awarded by the newly formed Mexican government, Austin set out to find land for his colony.



*The All That Remains Gallery – Conceptual Rendering*

In 1823, Stephen F. Austin, armed with land grant contracts with the Mexican government, brought 297 families (the “Old 300”) to settle in the rich river bottom between Brazos and Colorado Rivers, south of the El Camino Real. This new colony, known as San Felipe de Austin – near Sealy and approximately 50 miles west of Houston, and second only in size to San Antonio – became a bustling hub for commerce, government, and diplomacy and was the site of the state’s first land office, postal service, printing press, and schools. The town’s residents included hardscrabble pioneers, enterprising businessmen, surveyors, tavern shopkeepers, militiamen, and visionary revolutionaries. William B. Travis established his law practice there, and in local homes and taverns, colonists debated whether to rebel against the government of Mexico. Delegates from across the territory met in conventions in San Felipe in 1832, 1833, and 1835 to discuss grievances with Mexican policies.

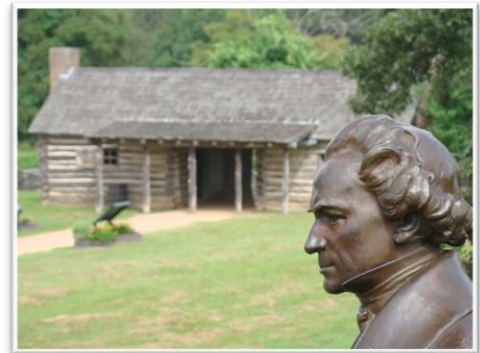
After seeking peace between Mexico and the Texas settlers for as long as possible, Austin ultimately joined his fellow settlers in seeking independence for Texas. When the Alamo fell on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1836, Sam Houston’s army retreated toward San Felipe. Houston ordered San Felipe de Austin’s residents to burn their town to the ground on March 29, 1836, and the town’s militia defended the river crossing against Santa Anna’s invading army, slowing them down. Weeks later, Texas independence was won at the Battle of San Jacinto.

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### **Why San Felipe de Austin, and Why Now?**

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For decades, however, the story of the birth of the Republic of Texas has been missing its central piece – San Felipe de Austin. Despite the town’s pivotal role in Texas’ “Road to the Revolution,” its story remains largely untold for several reasons:



- ❖ **The destruction of its physical structures.** As a result of the intentional burning of the town in 1836, none of its original structures remain. However, the **Texas Historical Commission’s work over the last decade at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site continues to unearth vital links to the town’s history and its role in the Texas Revolution.**
- ❖ **A lack of storytelling infrastructure.** Although the archeological research and excavations are revealing many artifacts and the town’s footprint continues to emerge, the existing infrastructure at the San Felipe de Austin site does not convey the complex stories of the town, the people who settled and inhabited it, or the spirit of freedom that destroyed it. **These stories will be lost unless we can gather and record them, and effectively preserve and interpret them for educational and research purposes.**
- ❖ **Inadequate visitor facilities.** The current State Historic Site, located in a pastoral setting along the I-10 Corridor between Houston and San Antonio, lacks the facilities needed to display the richness and significance of the San Felipe de Austin story. In its present state, the structures cannot reasonably accommodate more than the average annual visitor population of 7,000, but has the potential for many more if developed appropriately.

Although San Felipe de Austin existed for only 13 years (1823-1836), it had an enormous impact on Texas history. The new **San Felipe de Austin Museum**, with its state-of-the-art exhibits and interpretation, will allow the full history of the town and its significance in the Texas Revolution to be showcased in its entirety.

In recent years, archival and archeological research has revealed the rich history of San Felipe and its role in the Texas Revolution. **With the passing of time, these stories will fade from the memories of Texans unless we can gather them, record them, and house them in a location that is connected to the characters that inhabited these stories, and use them to educate current and future Texans.**



### **The San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum, Exhibits, and Programming**

Today, the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site occupies a 90-acre property that features a monument to Stephen F. Austin, a replica log cabin, and a small 1847 mercantile (“The J.J. Josey Store”) that serves as a temporary visitor center. The site is open year-round, and the visitor center is operated by the THC.

The new San Felipe de Austin Museum, **located near three major school districts, with an enrollment of 200,000+ students**, will offer an unprecedented opportunity to walk in the footprints of Texas’ founding characters. Through state-of-the-art interpretive exhibits and displays featuring archeological finds, the museum will allow students and visitors to experience their connections to this shared Texas story. The Museum will also provide exciting opportunities to bring stories of the many different ethnicities of San Felipe de Austin to life. Many cultures intersected in Mexican Texas, and San Felipe was ground zero for those multicultural engagements.

As one of the few mid-sized or larger Texas museums developed in the 21st century, **advanced technology will allow the museum to provide compelling and immersive experiences that engage students and visitors** with the past. At the same time, it will offer participatory experiences that allow students and visitors of all ages to share their insights and to ask questions. Experiences will be designed with today’s students in mind – focusing on a digital learning environment – and will include multimedia exhibits (e.g., touchscreen wall), interactive tabletop exhibits, and digital film media.

The site will also offer **public archeology experiences** where students and visitors can learn from “in-the-field” lectures presented by archeologists who will emphasize up-to-the-minute discoveries and share new information the moment it is uncovered. Educational programming for students will also include traditional lectures, intensive workshops that allow them to participate with the archaeological crew, context programs with archival and traditional stories about the real people associated with archaeological sites and artifacts. Additionally, **distance learning** will provide opportunities for interested supporters and far-away classrooms to tap into the knowledge and insights offered at the



*San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum:  
Rendering of Front Elevation*



site even when they are not there. Specifically, the new 10,000 square-foot museum, with its galleries, learning hall, interpretive spaces and amenities will include:

- ❖ **State-of-the-art interactive exhibits** focused on the history of the founding of the town.
- ❖ **A core exhibit** exploring Austin’s life and his roles in populating Texas and securing its independence, the story of the colony and its diverse people, and the complete story of the personalities and events that shaped the Texas Revolution.
- ❖ **Educational programs** available to 200,000+ students in the three independent school districts within 50 miles from San Felipe, including curriculum-aligned tours, interactive activities, continuing education, camps, and after-school programs that bring the history of San Felipe alive.
- ❖ **Outdoor interpretive exhibits** focused on stories of residents, archeology, exploration, and research.
- ❖ **Public archeology programs and research opportunities** for archeology and historic preservation students, archeologists, and others in academia.
- ❖ **A map plaza** that lays out the town as it stood in 1836, allowing visitors a glimpse at the physical elements of the town and life as it may have been almost 200 years ago.
- ❖ **Heritage tourism opportunities** related to site’s role as a gateway to the Texas Independence Trail.

### **Population Benefited and Expected Impact**

The San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site is a destination for public and private school students, researchers of Texas history, heritage travelers following the Texas Independence Trail, visitors to the nearby Stephen F. Austin State Park, and history aficionados. While a significant number of the site’s visitors are from the Houston metro area, others come from across the state, the United States and beyond, to explore and learn about the story of the Texas Revolution.

In 2014, the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site had about 7,000 visitors – much lower than that at other Texas Revolution sites. The proposed development of a museum at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site has the potential to increase annual visitor-ship up to 70,000 or more in the next 2-3 years, with up to 20,000 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students of Texas history visiting the site on educational trips. Web-based programming and digital media will also exponentially expand the reach of the site. With this anticipated increase in visitation as well as the outreach from the site through web-based programming, San Felipe de Austin will, over time, rival Revolution-related visitor traffic to both Washington-on-the-Brazos and San Jacinto.

### **Leaders and Stakeholders**

In addition to being a historic site of statewide and national significance, the San Felipe de Austin Site enjoys strong support from several highly invested groups of stakeholders who will play important roles in the project and in the capital campaign. These stakeholder groups include the Texas Historical Commission, Friends of the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site, and the Descendants of the Old Three Hundred. In addition, the project enjoys the partnership and philanthropic support from several statewide and Houston area foundations. **Attachment 2**, with list of sources of support for the San Felipe de Austin State Museum is provided for your review.

### **The Campaign for San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site**

With its mission to preserve and promote significant cultural resources on behalf of Texans, the THC is committed to realizing the tremendous historical potential of the San Felipe de Austin State Historic



Site. The timing of this project is opportune, because San Felipe de Austin will celebrate the 200th anniversary of its founding in 2023, and Texas will celebrate its Bicentennial in 2036.

The total cost to design this state-of-the-art museum, and furnish and equip the space with quality educational exhibits is \$12.56 million (please see **Attachment 1**, the San Felipe Museum project budget, for details). The State has already committed \$7.49 million to support the project. In October 2016, the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, guided by a campaign committee led by Honorary Co-Chair Senator Lois Kolkhorst, launched a capital campaign to fund the remainder of the project, which primarily includes the indoor exhibits and interpretation, as well as the town-site interpretative exhibits. **Attachment 3**, a list of the campaign committee members, as well as **Attachment 4**, a list of the board of directors of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission are provided for your review.

**To date, a total of \$8.76 million has been committed to support the project (including state funding), leaving approximately \$3.79 million to be raised.** The construction and exhibit installation is expected to be completed by spring of 2018. THC has arranged interim financing so that donors may make their pledge payments over up to a three-year period if they so choose.

Once the museum is open to the public in April 2018, THC will fund the site's annual operations through its biennial legislative appropriation, supplemented by public-private partnerships, efforts of local volunteers, and income from the endowment.

Selected renderings and a site plan are attached for your review.

## Conclusion

The important stories of people and events at San Felipe de Austin are a missing piece of Texas's past. Understanding what happened here will redefine the Texas Revolution story for generations of Texans and for future visitors to our great state. We hope the XXXXXXXX Foundation will join us in bringing this important chapter of Texas history to life for future generations by supporting this campaign. We are deeply grateful for your consideration of our request.

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***SITE PLAN***

**EXTERIOR ELEVATION**  
**EXTERIOR ELEVATION – WEST**



*San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum:  
Rendering of Front Elevation*



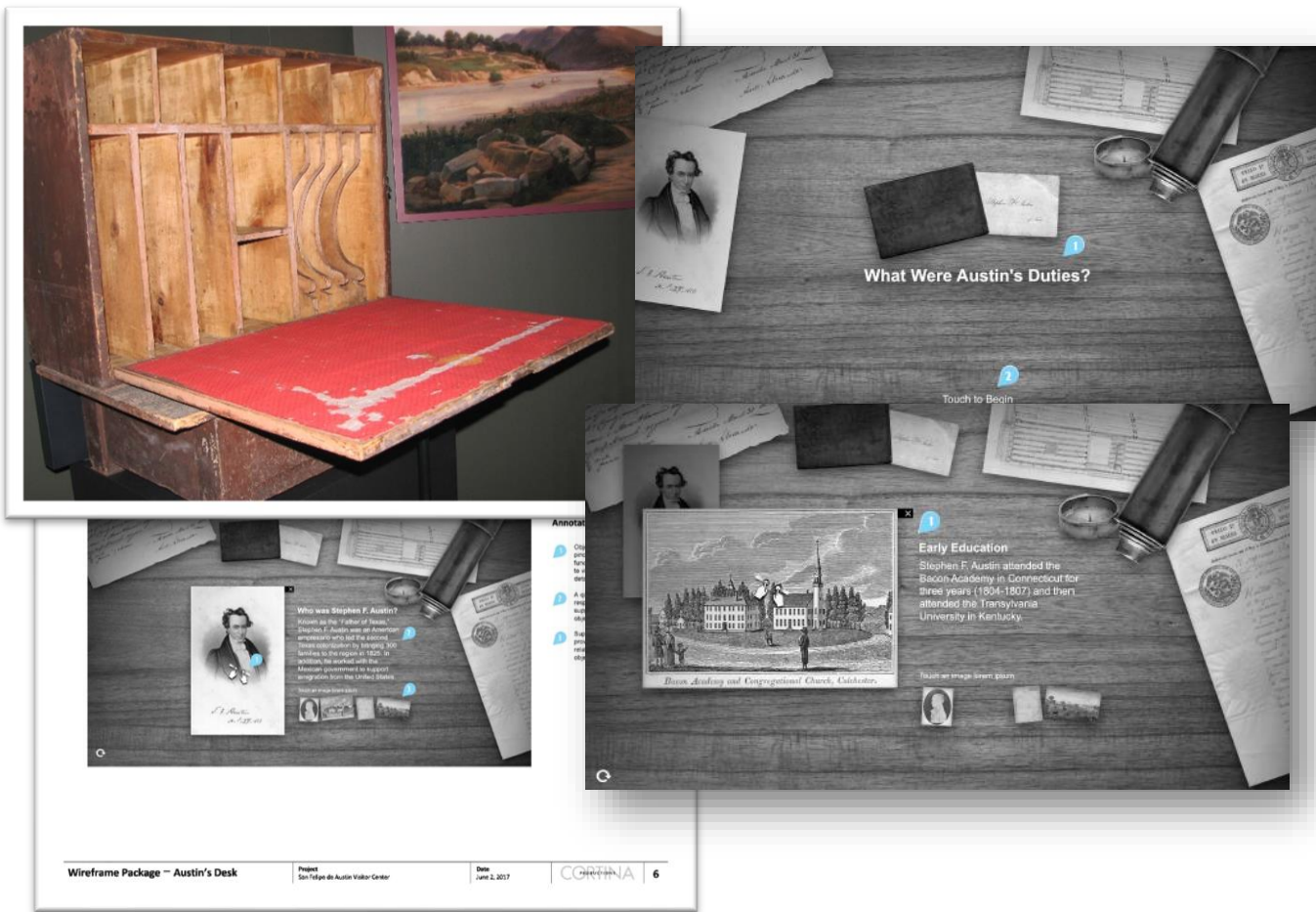
*San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site Museum:  
Rendering of Map Plaza*

**LOG CABIN EXHIBIT (CONCEPTUAL RENDERING)**

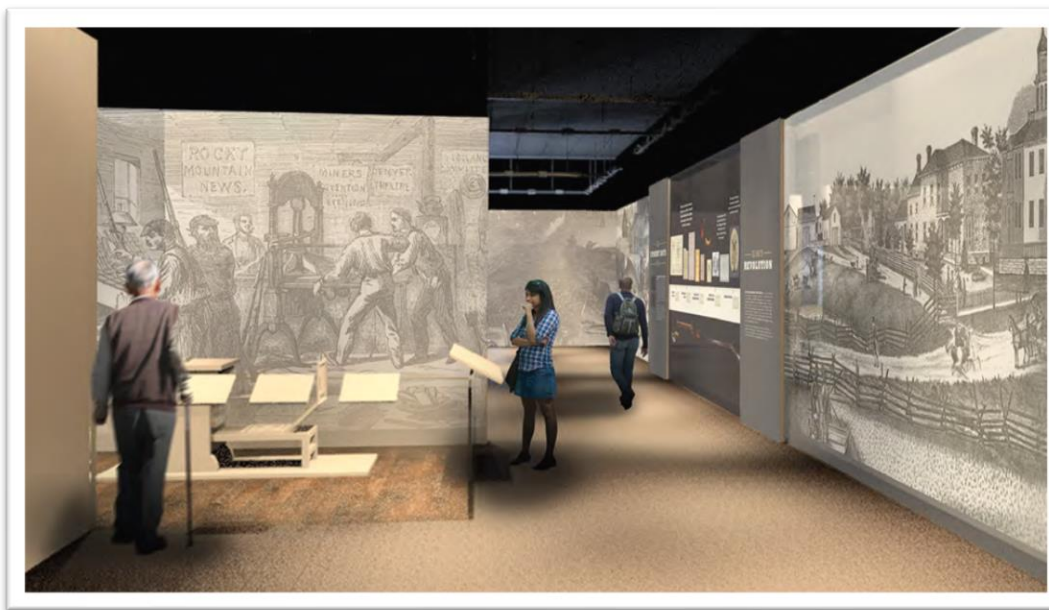




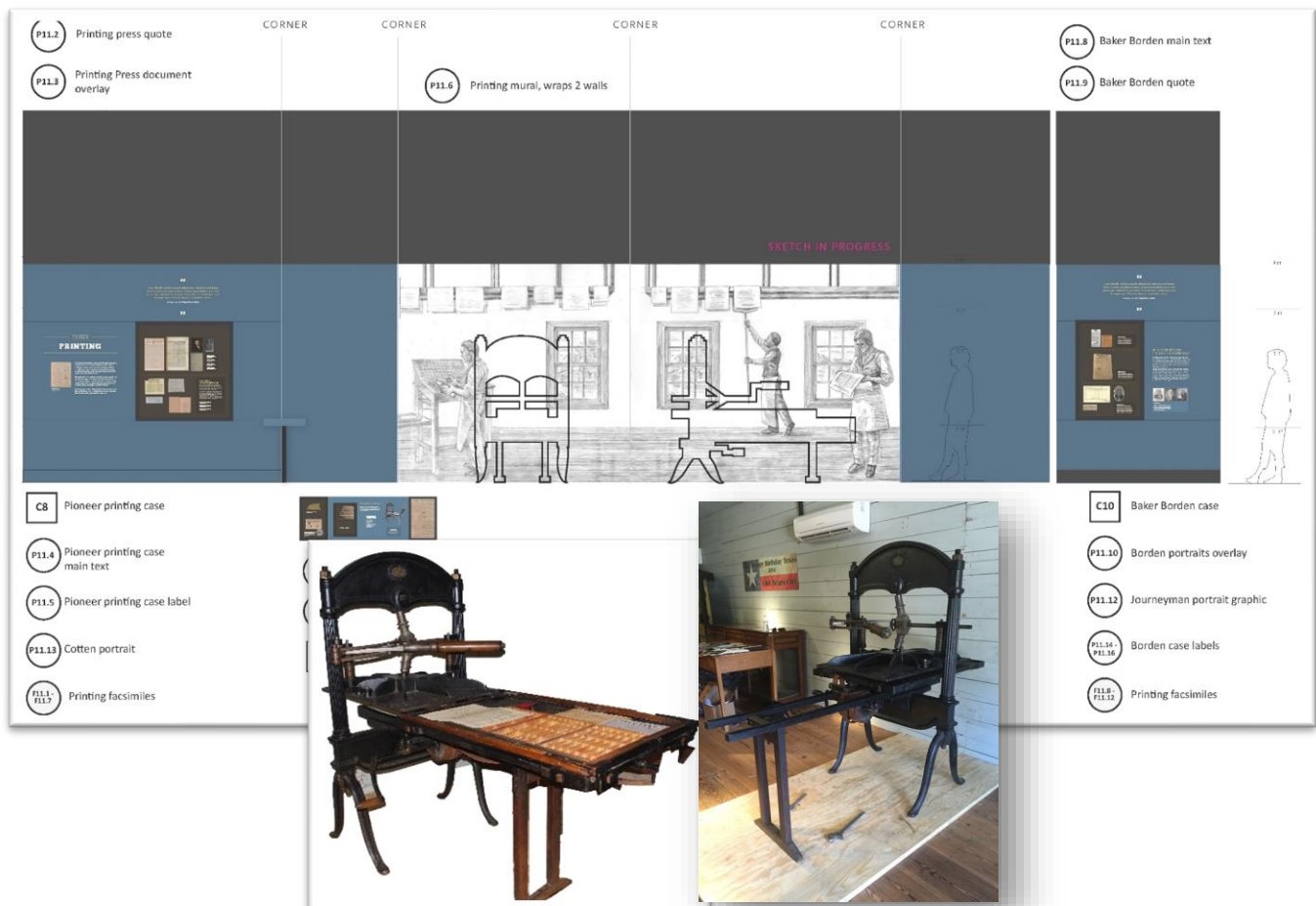
## AUSTIN'S DESK EXHIBIT



**CROSSROADS COMMUNITY EXHIBIT (CONCEPTUAL RENDERING)**



## PRINTING EXHIBIT (CONCEPTUAL RENDERING)



## "ALL THAT REMAINS" EXHIBIT – CONCLUDING EXHIBIT WITH ARCHEOLOGY DISPLAY

