



Along The Waterways

European politics of the 18th century paved the way for the settlement of Texas. Rivalry between Spain and France in colonizing North America played a strong part in drawing the boundaries of the area we now call Texas. The Spanish established forts (presidios) to counter the ever encroaching French. The clergy, interesting in converting the Indians to Christianity, connected missions to the presidios and between these forts they staked out roads called caminos reales or King's Highways. The road connecting Saltillo, San Antonio and Natchitoches was the major camino reale (The Old San Antonio Road). A southern alternative route ran from La Bahia (Goliad) to join the San Antonio Road at the Trinity River.

Following these two passageways and the water routes of The Brazos River, the Colorado River, the Navasota River, the Yegua Creek and New Year's Creek, the first settlers of The Old Three Hundred selected the land in the northern area that they would clear and defend. Most settlers preferred to live near the river or other waterway. The map of the land grants issued in 1824 show the row of grants marked with each settler's name stacked along the Brazos River like a row of dominoes with a few scattered along New Year's Creek and one off the Yegua on Cataract Creek.

In the summer of 1821 Stephen F. Austin traveled along the camino reale checking possibilities for land settlement between the Brazos and the Colorado River. On his way back to New Orleans, he met with fifty families near Nacogdoches eager to move into the unclaimed territory. In November of 1821, the first of these families, that of Andrew Robinson, arrived at the Brazos River at the point where it intersected the La Bahia Road. The Kuykendall brothers arrived a few days later. Soon, the Kuykendalls moved away from their riverside camp, exploring the area about ten miles southwest and on New Year's Day, 1822, they established a home site on the northern branch of a creek they appropriately named New Year's Creek. Horatio Chriesman was employed by Stephen F. Austin to survey the Brazos District. On October 10, 1823, Chriesman surveyed the first grant in the northern area which was given to William Gates. Then, he followed the river to mark off tracts for other settlers: Byrd, Lynch, Robinson, Whitesides, Brown, Millican and more. In the summer of 1824, the long awaited grants were awarded. John P. Coles received his huge grant of eight and one half leagues along Cataract Creek, crossing the Yegua and extending up along the Brazos. Kuykendall, Allcorn and Walker received their grants on the branches of New Year's Creek.