

---

Stephen F. Austin founded a colony in Texas in the area of what is now known as the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site. The Texas Historic Commission (THC) tasked Lord Aeck Sargent with constructing a museum on the site that would create a unique and educational experience for guests of all ages and occasions, helping visitors, in some form, understand the context and history of the site during the revolution and beginning of Texas. Designers built a structure with outdoor exhibits that serve multiple purposes — a layout for a guest experience reminiscent of that historic period, but with strategically placed shaded areas and climate-controlled structures to account for the high temperatures of the Texas summer.

The new project comprises a museum and visitor center, site infrastructure and interpretive elements that reveal the significance of the site and its relationship to the story of Texas independence. The building was designed to be light on the land and integrate with its surroundings through forms and materials similar to vernacular farms from that era. The site is also an active archaeological dig with individual properties excavated at various times. With versatility of use and guests in mind, LAS designed specific areas indoors and in open areas that could be closed off or expanded. Events range from weddings and parties to educational exhibits and archaeological research projects.

The greatest challenge the museum and visitor center faces is for guests to interpret the historic site when no visible historic remnants have survived, so LAS turned to materials and design style to mimic what the town would have been like at the time of the Texas Revolution. For example, in 1836 during the Texas Revolution with Mexico, residents burned the original structure to the ground to prevent it from falling into the hands of General Santa Ana. LAS used a charring technique to create a burnt effect on the wood used in the exterior and interior of the building to pay tribute to the historical event.