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Stephen F. Austin

Stephen Fuller Austin, known as the "Father of Texas," was no stranger to the streets of Nacogdoches. Following the death of his father, he carried out his father's plans to establish an Anglo-American colony in Texas. This act set in motion the series of events that culminated in Texas becoming an independent nation and eventually a state in the Union. Never marrying, he exhausted himself by his efforts on behalf of his colonists and of all the people of Texas. Weakened by a long imprisonment in Mexico City where he had gone to deliver the petitions of the Texans, he never fully recovered. Following Texas independence, he was appointed the Republic of Texas' first Secretary of State, but died in office on December 27, 1836. In 1923 the Texas Legislature established the present Stephen F. Austin State University as Stephen F. Austin State Teachers College and, after strong lobbying by the local population, located the new institution of higher learning in Nacogdoches.

The University erected Austin's statue in 1986 as a Texas Sesquicentennial Project. It is located in Sesquicentennial Plaza in the center of the university campus directly in front of Steen Library. The sculptor was Richard Dawson McDonald.

1



Father Margil

Antonio Margil de Jesus was a Franciscan missionary and founder of the Franciscan missionary College of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe de Zacatecas at Zacatecas, Mexico. Father Margil was instrumental in the founding of Spanish missions in East Texas. He was personally involved in founding Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe de los Nacogdoches on the site of present Nacogdoches, Texas, Nuestra Senora de los Dolores de los Ais near present San Augustine, Texas and San Miguel de Liranes de los Aclas near present Robeline, Louisiana. Although not in East Texas for a very long period of time, Father Margil had a strong influence in establishing the authority of the church and the government in the eastern provinces of New Spain. His establishment of Mission Guadalupe in Nacogdoches in 1716 marked the first formal European occupation of the site of the present City of Nacogdoches.

Father Margil was well respected by both the local Indian inhabitants and the Spanish settlers. Legend says that once, during a particularly dry spell, he took his staff and struck a rock on the banks of Lanana Bayou producing two springs of bubbling water. This source of water became known as the "Eyes of Father Margil" and may still be seen today on the banks of Lanana Creek below Oak Grove Cemetery.

In 1722 Father Margil returned to the college he founded at Zacatecas. He died in Mexico City on August 6, 1726. Sacred Heart Catholic Church erected the statue commemorating his work in East Texas in 1976. Its sculptor was Antonio Mendozza of Leon, Mexico. It is located on the grounds of Sacred Heart Church at 2508 Appleby Sand Road. The statue stands in front of and just to the right of the entrance to the church.

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### Nacogdoches' Statue Trail

Nacogdoches played a significant role in the history of Texas. El Camino Real, or the King's Highway, ran from Natchitoches, Louisiana to Saltillo in the Spanish province of Coahuila y Tejas. Never a highway in the sense that we think of highways today, it was more or less a series of well traveled Indian trails that traversed the land following ancient trade routes. With the coming of Europeans, these trails were connected to form a line of communication between the seat of the government of New Spain in Mexico and the far-flung Spanish settlements and missions in eastern Texas. Because the route reached to Natchitoches in Louisiana it also provided the poorly supplied Spanish settlers in East Texas with access to highly desired, but forbidden, contraband trade goods supplied by the French. Since the route also proceeded directly through the center of the Spanish settlement at Nacogdoches, it was virtually assured that almost everyone of any significance to the history of Texas, whether Spanish, Mexican, Anglo, or Native American, traveled through the town. For this reason Nacogdoches received the title of "The Gateway to Texas."

To commemorate these individuals and their roles in the development of the state, a series of five statues has been erected at various locations within the city. Each one is the work of an accomplished sculptor. They provide visitors and townspeople alike with an understanding of some of the people and events that have played central roles in the city's history.

2



Antonio Gil Ybarbo

Antonio Gil Ybarbo (sometimes spelled Ybaro, yBarbo, y Barvo, and, currently, Ybarbo) was the son of Spanish colonists from the province of Andalucia, Spain. These colonists were sent in 1725 to establish a Spanish presence in East Texas. His family lived on Rancho Lobanillo on Lobanillo Creek in present Sabine County. After France ceded Louisiana to Spain following the French and Indian War, it was no longer necessary for the Spanish government to maintain the costly settlements in East Texas as a barrier against French incursions. Accordingly, all of the settlers on the far eastern frontier of Spanish Texas, including Ybarbo, were relocated to San Antonio as a cost saving measure. Ybarbo soon became the spokesman of the displaced colonists, pleading with the government to allow them to return to their homes and lands in East Texas. Finally, in 1774, they were allowed to return as far as the Trinity River where they established the town of Bucareli in present Madison County. A series of natural disasters led to the abandonment of Bucareli in 1779 and the resettlement of the colonists at the site of the old Spanish mission at Nacogdoches. His leadership in bringing the settlers back to East Texas led to his being acknowledged as the founder of modern Nacogdoches. Ybarbo was named Lieutenant Governor, Civil and Military Captain of Militia, and Judge of Contraband for the little municipality. He constructed a stone house, now known as the "Old Stone Fort," on the central plaza as his place of residence and business. Accusations of dealing in contraband and illegally trading with the Indians led to his removal from office, despite the fact that he was later cleared of all charges. He died in 1809 at his home on the Atoyac River, Rancho La Lucana. His direct descendants still live in the Nacogdoches area where the Ybarbo surname is commonly found.

His statue, erected by Historic Nacogdoches in 1997, is located on the Plaza Principal to the east of the Nacogdoches Visitor's Center on Main Street and just across the Plaza from the original location of his stone house. The sculptor was Ernest Roberge.

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Thomas J. Rusk

Thomas Jefferson Rusk came to Texas in 1834 in pursuit of men who had embezzled the funds of a mining company in which he had invested in his native Georgia. Although unsuccessful in finding the swindlers, he soon became active in the affairs of the day, becoming a citizen of Mexico. As the Texas Revolution heated up, Rusk joined the army and was named inspector general for the Nacogdoches District. He served as a delegate from Nacogdoches to the Convention of 1836, signed the Texas Declaration of Independence and participated in the defeat of Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto April 21, 1836. He succeeded Sam Houston as commander in chief of the Texan army when Houston left to seek treatment for the leg wound he received in the battle. Later, Houston, as first president of the Republic of Texas, appointed Rusk secretary of war. Rusk later represented Nacogdoches in the Republic of Texas Congress and served as chief justice of the Texas Supreme Court. Following statehood, Rusk, along with Sam Houston, was elected to represent Texas in the United States Senate. In April 1856, while Rusk was attending a session of Congress, his wife died of tuberculosis. Despondent over her death and suffering from a tumor at the base of his neck, Rusk committed suicide in 1857 on the front porch of his home on the west side of North Street across from the present entrance to the campus of Stephen F. Austin State University. Both he and his wife are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery on Lanana Street.

Historic Nacogdoches, Inc. erected the statue commemorating Rusk's contributions to Nacogdoches and the State of Texas in 1999. The sculptor was Paula Devereaux-Kurth. It is located on what remains of the old Spanish Church Plaza on the southeast corner of North and Main streets directly across from the Nacogdoches County Courthouse.