



Student Name:  
Class Period:  
Date:

## Meet the Originals

*Texas Originals* is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on Frederick Law Olmsted. Then, answer questions about it.

### Frederick Law Olmsted 1822–1903

Connecticut-born Frederick Law Olmsted is best known for his design of New York's Central Park. But his writings on the slaveholding South, including Texas, enjoyed critical acclaim in the 1850s for their detailed descriptions and keen social commentary.

The *New York Times* sent Olmsted to the South to record his observations. On his second trip, he and his brother John arrived in Texas on Christmas Day, 1853.

The brothers traveled two thousand miles on horseback through the state. Their journey took them through the East Texas swamps, the coastal plains, and cities such as Austin and Houston, but Olmsted was most impressed by the German settlers in towns like New Braunfels and Sisterdale, calling them “free-thinking, cultivated, brave men.”

Olmsted recorded local slang, the prices of various commodities, and what he called the “bewildering beauty” of the landscape. But he also described the cruelty and economic inefficiency of slavery.

While he did not identify himself as an abolitionist, Olmsted found slavery morally repugnant and hoped to encourage non-slaveholding immigrants to settle in Texas.

Olmsted was so taken with this land of “inexpressible” beauty that he and his brother John briefly considered settling near one of the German colonies he so admired. Although his plan never came to fruition, Olmsted’s writings remain some of the most thorough and engaging nineteenth-century travel accounts of the state.

**Check for Understanding:** Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Frederick Law Olmsted. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. Frederick Law Olmsted and his brother traveled over 2,000 miles across Texas in the 1850s. Identify three areas they visited.
2. For what is Olmsted best known?

**Going Further:** Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Making Inferences.** What might Olmsted have been trying to accomplish with his plan to encourage non-slaveholding immigrants to settle in Texas? Explain.