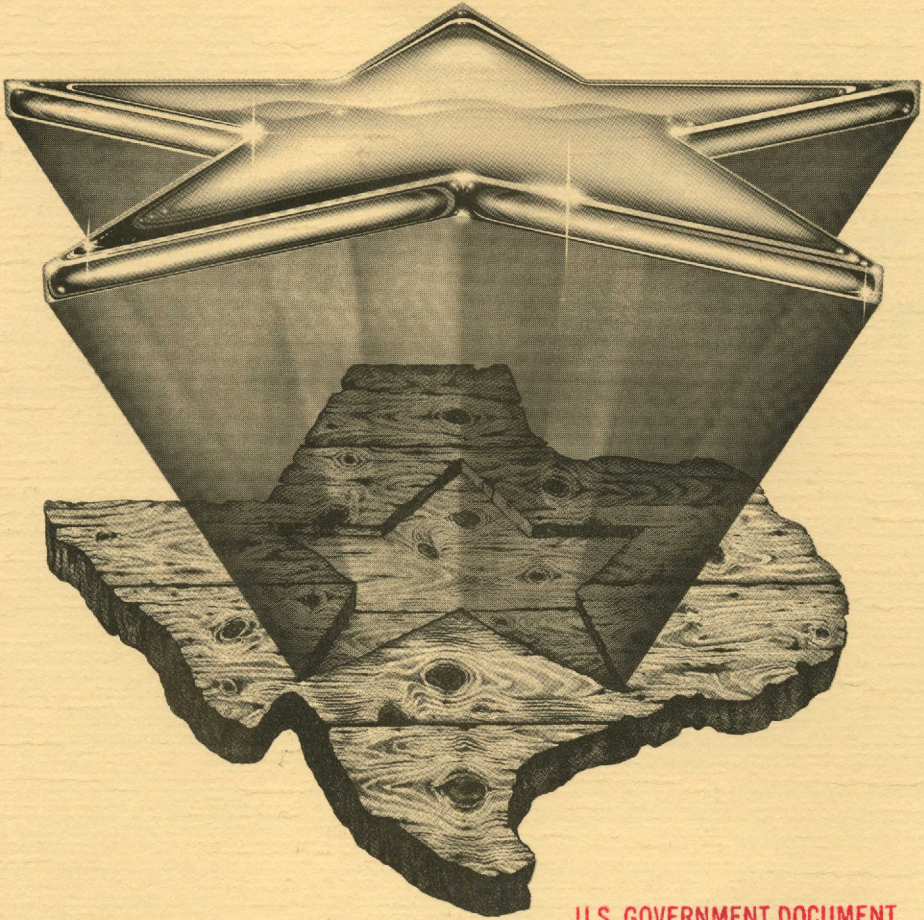


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THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

TEXAS STATE LIBRARY

Celebrating Texas' Sesquicentennial
1836-1986

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THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS

The ten-year period of the Republic of Texas was marked by futile attempts to gain Mexican recognition of Texas independence, frequent efforts to join the United States, Indian wars and invasions from Mexico, and a completely unstable economy.

On May 14, 1836, President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna signed two treaties at Velasco. In exchange for his freedom, he agreed to a cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of Mexican troops from Texas, recognition of Texas independence, establishment of a mutually agreeable boundary, and favorable reception of a Texan delegation to negotiate treaties of amity and navigation. Neither the Texas Senate nor the Mexican Congress would agree to the terms, and the Republic remained in constant fear of invasion from the south.

The United States, tied to Mexico by treaties of neutrality, hesitated to recognize the new nation. Finally, on March 3, 1837, as his last official act as president, Andrew Jackson signed the executive act acknowledging Texas independence. France was the first European country to recognize Texas,

signing treaties on October 2, 1839. On September 17, 1840, a treaty was negotiated with the King of the Netherlands, and treaties with Great Britain were concluded in November of the same year.

Texans overwhelmingly chose Sam Houston, the hero of San Jacinto, as their first president. At the same time, they voted in favor of immediate annexation to the United States. Thus, Houston's presidency was dedicated to maintaining peace at home and negotiating with the United States government. As he took office, Houston was confronted with an overgrown and restless army under the leadership of the flamboyant Felix Huston. The problem was solved when Huston came to the Texas capital to lobby in Congress. President Houston quickly furloughed all but 600 men. These 600 men were formed into ranging units to patrol the nation.

Indian pacification was another major concern. In spite of raids like the one on Parker's Fort in 1836, Houston pursued a policy of negotiation with the Indians and tried unsuccessfully to gain congressional approval of the Cherokee Lands Act.

Unable to succeed himself, Houston was followed by Mirabeau B. Lamar, who desired a strong, independent Texas. He opened peace negotiations with Mexico, allied Texas with the rebel state of Yucatan, and stepped up negotiations with the European governments for national recognition. Furthermore, he attempted to extend Texan influence within the boundaries claimed by

the Texas Congress in 1836. Included within these boundaries was the wealthy trade city, Santa Fe. On June 19, 1841, an expedition left Austin to complete Santa Fe's integration into the new nation. Insufficiently provisioned, set upon by Indians, and finally captured by the Mexican authorities, the survivors were marched to Mexico where they were imprisoned for several years, the last man escaping in 1845.

Lamar considered the Indian tribes as separate and conflicting nations, and when he learned that Chief Bowles of the Cherokees had joined Vicente Cordova in a short-lived rebellion in the Angelina River area, Lamar launched a program of expulsion for all Indian tribes. Bowles was killed in the Battle of the Neches on July 16, 1839. The surviving Cherokees were driven across the Red River. Other eastern tribes—except the Alabama and the Coushatta—followed. In 1840 the Comanche threat was considerably reduced after the Council House Fight on March 19 and the Battle of Plum Creek on August 12. The conquest of the Indian tribes during this period was materially aided by the Texas Rangers' adoption of the Colt revolver.

By the end of Lamar's term, Texas debt stood well over \$3 million. The Indian war alone had cost approximately \$2.5 million. The establishment of a permanent capital at Austin and the expansion of the national government had further added to the expense. In addition, the treaties with European nations allowed them virtually free trade status, and a severe depression in the United States shut down many potential markets for Texas goods.

Reelected, Houston established a strict austerity program. Unnecessary government offices were abolished, the postal system abandoned, and the Texas Navy placed

in ordinary. The expensive Indian wars were terminated. The Republic signed the Treaty of Bird's Fort in September 1843 and the Treaty of Tehuacana Creek on October 9, 1844.

The military establishment, affected by the budget cutbacks, was reduced to a handful of ranging companies when General Rafael Vasquez and 700 men attacked San Antonio on March 5, 1842. Goliad and Refugio were also invaded. The Mexicans remained only a few days, retreating with whatever could be carried away. On September 17, General Adrian Woll also captured San Antonio. At Salado, his army was confronted by a volunteer force commanded by Matthew Caldwell. The ensuing battle was of little importance, but a company of Texans led by Nicholas Mosby Dawson were surrounded by the Mexican forces and were either killed or captured.

To retaliate, an expedition of 750 men under General Alexander Somervell marched for Laredo. Ordered to return to Gonzales, a part of the group rebelled. They set out under the leadership of William S. Fisher, arriving in Mier on Christmas Day. They surrendered to General Pedro Ampudia on December 26. After an abortive escape effort, the surviving prisoners were forced to draw beans to determine who among them would be executed. The survivors remained in Perote Prison.

Houston also allowed a second attempt to capture the Santa Fe trade. Led by Jacob Snively, an expedition set out in January 1843. Although not so tragically terminated as the earlier Santa Fe Expedition, it accomplished little and wound up being arrested by U. S. soldiers who maintained that the Texans were trespassing on United States territory.

A liberal land policy made Texas attrac-

tive to immigrants, and newcomers from the United States poured in. To further encourage settlement, the Republic copied the old Mexican empresario system, offering tracts of land to immigration companies. Contracts were authorized for W. S. Peters and Associates (the Texas Emigration and Land Company); Charles Fenton Mercer; Henry F. Fisher and Burchard Miller (who sold their grant to the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, whose commissioner general was Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels). The most successful of these empresarios was Henri Castro. Eventually he introduced 2,134 European colonists into Texas.

The fate of the Santa Fe and the Mier Expedition prisoners reawakened interest in

the old question of Texas annexation. Texans had voted strongly in favor of annexation in September 1836. The Republic's formal offer of annexation was made on August 4, 1837. Initially rejected, the offer was debated by the U. S. Congress in the fall. Again the proposal was refused, and on January 23, 1839, the Texas Congress withdrew the offer.

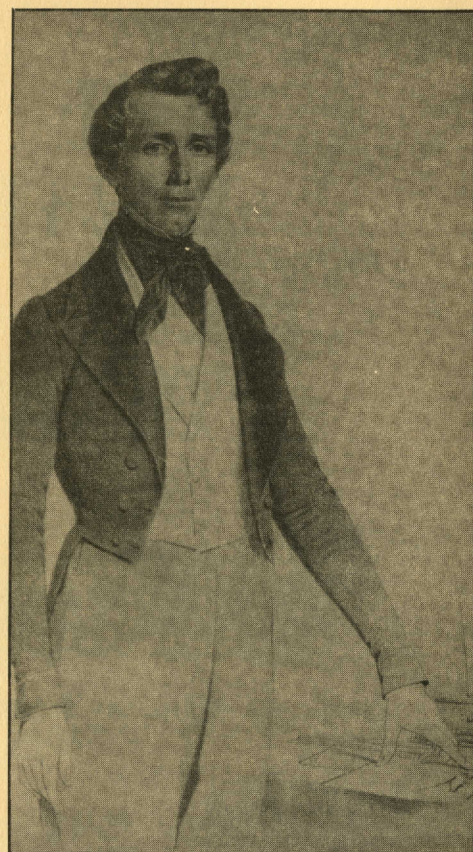
The United States, alarmed by the increasing cordiality of relations between the Republic and Great Britain, renewed negotiations for annexation in 1843. On April 12, 1844, a treaty was signed, only to be rejected by the United States Senate on June 8. But the election of James K. Polk to the U. S. presidency indicated popular support for annexation. On February 28, 1845, Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the immediate annexation of Texas. The nation would pass through no interim territorial status, it would retain its public lands (and also its public debt), and as many as four additional states could be formed from its territory.

The Texas Convention that was assembled to consider the offer had two choices to make, for Mexico had finally offered a preliminary peace treaty based on Texas' remaining independent. The Mexican offer was rejected; annexation, accepted with only one opposing vote. On October 13, Texas voters added their approval. The U. S. Congress accepted the new state constitution, and President Polk signed the act making Texas the 28th state on December 29, 1845. The formal exchange of governments took place in a ceremony at Austin on February 19, 1846. President Anson Jones lowered the Republic flag, pronouncing the validictory, "The final act in this great drama is now performed; the Republic of Texas is no more."

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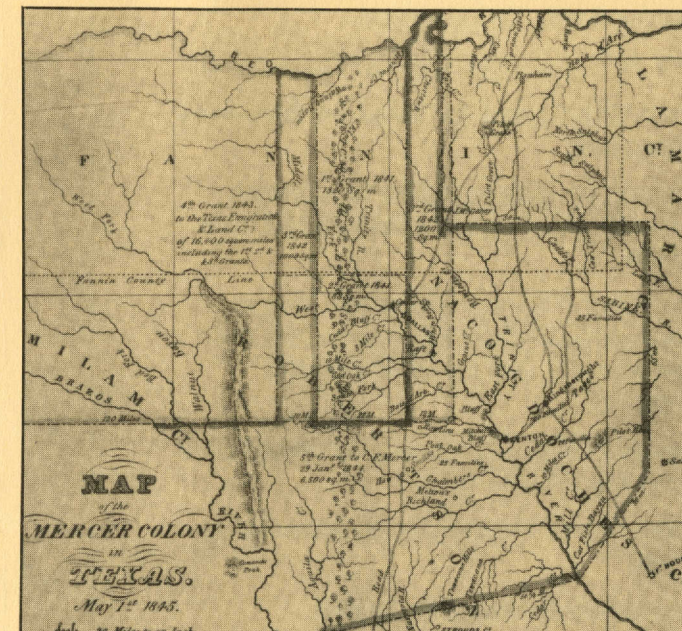
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- Illustrations
- 1 Site of first Congress meeting in Houston.
 - 2 James Pinckney Henderson, diplomat for the Republic.
 - 3 Engraving of "drawing the black bean."
 - 4 John Coffee Hays, Captain of Texas Rangers.
 - 5 Mercer Colony map showing lands granted to Charles F. Mercer.

The Texas Republic

1836-46

- May 1, 1836** United States naval forces seize Texas Navy ship *Invincible* for hampering commerce.
- May 5, 1836** Sam Houston sails for New Orleans to receive treatment for his ankle wound.
- May 14, 1836** Treaty of Velasco.
- May 19, 1836** Fort Parker attacked by Indians. Cynthia Anne Parker among those captured by the Indians.
- May 26, 1839** Bird's Creek Indian fight near present-day Temple.
- May 19, 1840** Council House Fight. Thirty to 40 Comanches attending peace negotiations are killed by the Texans.
- May 24, 1841** Seventy rangers capture three Indian villages in battle of Village Creek.
- May 16, 1843** Texas Navy (all sailing ships) fight a pitched battle with Mexican steamships-of-war at Campeche. Although no decisive victory is gained, only the Texas ships attempt to carry on the fight.
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- June 3, 1836** Texas Rangers capture three merchant vessels loaded with supplies for the Mexican Army. They become known as the "horse marines."
- June 11, 1838** First theater in Texas built in Houston.
- June 5, 1841** President Lamar's proclamation announcing the Santa Fe Expedition.
- June 18, 1841** Santa Fe Expedition sets out from Austin.
- June 7, 1842** Fisher-Miller grant awarded for European settlement.
- June 28, 1842** Ratifications exchanged in London for three treaties between Texas and Great Britain.
- June 14, 1843** *Austin* and *Wharton* return to Galveston. Their commanders are summarily dismissed from service by President Houston.
- June 15, 1843** President Houston issues proclamation of armistice with Mexico.
- June 8, 1844** United States Senate rejects annexation treaty.
- June 16, 1845** Annexation Convention begins.

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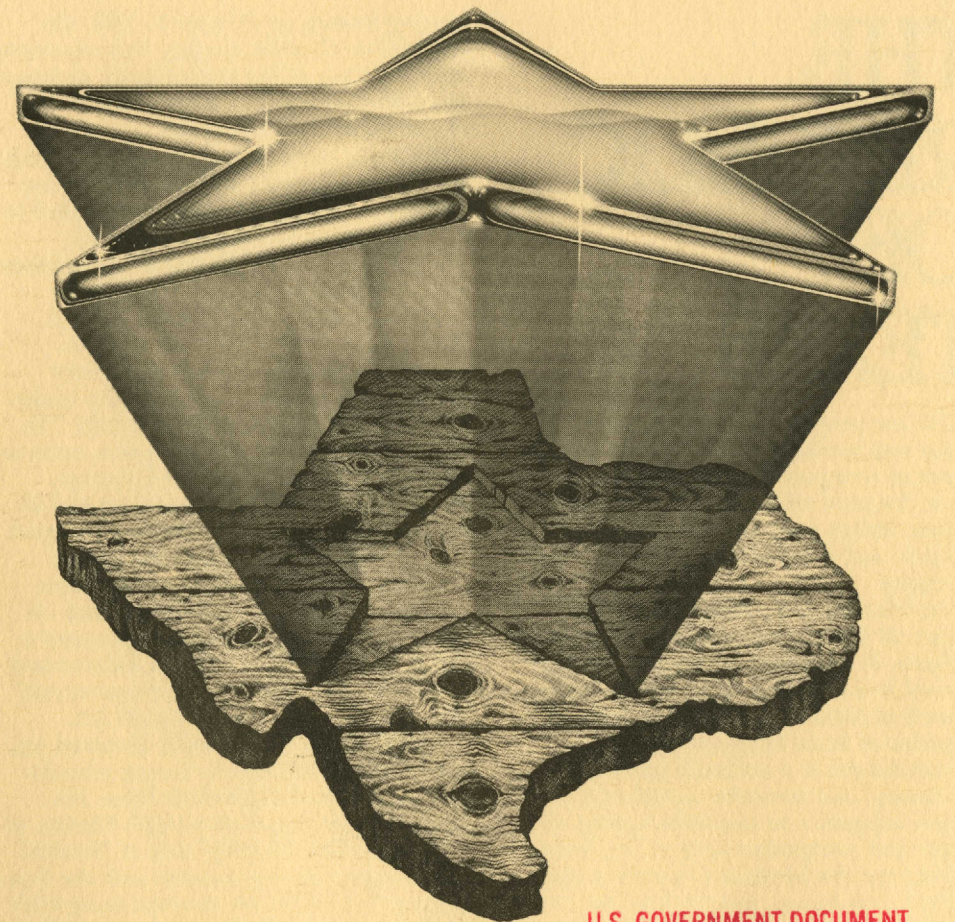
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