In New Mexico and California, between 1821 and 1845, US influence was manifested mainly through trade. In contrast, in Texas, there was substantial Anglo immigration, legal and illegal. By 1836, these immigrants had wrested control from Mexico.

Given Mexico’s economic and political weaknesses and the United States’ relentless appetite for new lands, it is hard to imagine a scenario in which Mexico could have retained Texas and the rest of the Southwest indefinitely.

Gregg Cantrell, 1999 (1)

Colonization

In 1824, the Mexican government joined Texas with its southwestern neighbor, to create a state known as Coahuila y Texas. The newly created state immediately faced strong migratory pressure from the US. Mexican officials decided to encourage this migration. With the benefit of hindsight, that decision can be criticized. However, at the time, the decision seemed justified for the following reasons:

- Iturbide felt that granting colonization rights to US citizens would make the US side with Mexico if Spain tried to re-conquer its former colony, and would encourage the US to make loans to Mexico. (2)
- At the time the US was thriving, so adopting the US practice of making land grants seemed to be a wise policy. (3)
- Many Mexican federalists fervently admired the US and felt that Mexico would benefit from the arrival of US citizens within its borders. Liberal Lorenzo de Zavala stated that nothing would be more useful to Mexico “than the knowledge of the customs, habits, and government of the United States.” He also claimed US settlers in Texas would provide an “example for other states which continue in the rut of semifeudalism.” (4)
- There was a consensus in Mexico that military force alone could not prevent foreign encroachment along the vast, sparsely populated frontier stretching from California to
Texas. Given the unwillingness of Mexicans to move north, immigrants could supply a population that would become loyal to Mexico and maintain Mexican sovereignty. Mexicans also felt Anglo settlements would create a buffer that would prevent Indians from attacking Mexican settlements. (5)

- By 1823, there were probably 3000 Americans living illegally in Texas. The roughly 200 Mexican troops there could neither expel them nor patrol the long, ill-defined border to prevent more from coming. Officials decided to legalize their presence and give them a stake in the status quo. (6)
- Mexicans realized that immigrants were contributing to the rapid increase in US population and wealth, and felt that immigrants would have the same effect on Texas. Texas’ Hispanic elite favored immigration, feeling that wealth created by US immigrants would benefit both Anglos and Hispanics. (7)
- Mexicans assumed that immigrants would be absorbed into Mexican society just as Irish immigrants had been absorbed into Spanish society. They also assumed colonists would come from Europe and Mexico, as well as from the US, so those loyal to the US would not predominate. (8)
- Colonization was a continuation of Spanish policy. The Spanish government, after failing to convince Spaniards or Mexicans to emigrate to Louisiana, had encouraged Americans to do so. Such Anglo colonization had not caused problems in Spanish Louisiana. (9)

In 1820, Moses Austin, who had made and lost a fortune in lead mining, rode on horseback from Missouri to San Antonio to file a request to colonize Texas. Antonio Martínez, the last Spanish governor of Texas, received the request and forwarded it to Monterrey, where Joaquín de Arredondo, commandant general of the Eastern Interior Provinces, approved it on January 17, 1821. The approval resulted at least in part from Austin’s having been a Spanish subject when he had mined lead in Missouri during the time it formed part of Spanish Louisiana.

After his stay in San Antonio, Austin returned to Missouri to await approval of his request. The approval finally arrived just before Austin died of natural causes in June 1821. On
his deathbed, he requested that his 27-year-old son, Stephen F. Austin, take up the colonization project he had initiated. (10)

The younger Austin had attended an exclusive Connecticut prep school, had studied at Transylvania University in Kentucky, had helped edit a newspaper in New Orleans, and had served five years in the Missouri territorial legislature, making him a learned man by the standards of the time. Moses’ Spanish government grant had no validity in independent Mexico, so Stephen F. Austin traveled to Mexico City in early 1822 to renew the grant. To give the Mexican government added incentive to approve his request, Austin offered to map Texas, remove sediment obstructing navigation on the Colorado River, and carry out an Indian pacification campaign. (11)

A government commission formed to study the colonization question during the Iturbide administration recommended that the area from California to Texas be colonized to defend against Indians and foreign powers. The commission predicted that, if the land remained unsettled, one day hoards of Americans would descend on Texas, “just as the Goths, Ostrogoths, Alans and other tribes devastated the Roman Empire.” Based on this recommendation, colonization legislation was approved in January 1823. (12)

After the passage of this legislation, the Iturbide administration gave Austin permission to move 300 families into Texas. They would pay no taxes for seven years and could import whatever they chose, including their slaves, from the US. Each family head would receive 640 acres without charge, with an additional 320 provided for a wife, 100 for each child, and 80 per slave. Austin selected the head of navigation on the Brazos River, 50 miles west of present-day Houston, to be the center of his colony. He described the land there as being “as good in every respect as man could wish for, land all first rate, plenty of timber, fine water—beautifully rolling.” (13)

Austin’s was the only colonization concession granted under the 1823 law, since, once Iturbide fell from power, the law was abrogated. The republic established under the 1824 constitution placed the responsibility for colonization in the hands of state governments.

Under the colonization law passed by the State of Coahuila y Texas in 1824, designated colonization agents, known as empresarios, would recruit and screen colonists, underwrite the
costs of moving them to Texas, allocate them lands, and enforce regulations within a designated area. Each family head brought in by an empresario would receive 177 acres for raising crops and an additional 4428 acres if he raised cattle. Empresarios received five times the land allocated to a single family for each 100 families they brought in. Individuals arriving without the assistance of an empresario were entitled to the same amount of land to farm or ranch. Indigenous people, living in Mexico or elsewhere, were specifically mentioned as being eligible for land to colonize. (14)

To entice colonists, the government excused them from paying taxes, such as customs duties, for ten years. To hasten assimilation, the colonization law stipulated that all colonists must become Catholics. For the same reason, settlers who married Mexican women were granted additional land. Finally, to keep foreigners from threatening Mexican sovereignty, no foreigner was allowed to settle within 20 leagues of the border or ten leagues of the coast. (15)

Saltillo, the capital of Coahuila y Texas, soon became what historian Ramón Ruiz described as “a mecca for American colonists and Mexican land speculators.” Many of the colonists left the US due to low agricultural prices resulting from the depression of 1819. Some had purchased land in the US on credit and were unable to make payments. In 1820, the US government had ceased selling land on credit. The cash payment of $1.25 an acre the US government demanded for an 80-acre farm, the smallest size available, was prohibitively high. Many settlers coming to Texas were fleeing either the debt collector or the sheriff. Texas’ providing a haven for so many unsavory characters led the Louisiana Gazette to comment that, if Mexico and Texas went to war, “the world would lose many bad citizens and the devil would gain some faithful servants.” (16)

While theoretically eligible for land grants, Texas’ 17,000 Indians, who far outnumbered those of European descent in the early 1820s, were in fact dispossessed by empresarios and colonists. Land inhabited by Indians would be included in empresario grants. Once the empresario bought in colonists, Indians would be driven out or exterminated. (17)

At least 24 empresario grants calling for the settlement of more than 8000 families were signed between 1825 and 1832. Seventeen of these grants went to foreigners, mostly Americans. The few Mexicans who received grants generally had foreign partners. In addition to
empresario-facilitated colonization, many Americans simply entered Texas without official permission and settled on unclaimed land. Between 1827 and 1830, Texas’ immigrant population rose from 2000 to 4200. (18)

Early Anglo immigrants established virtually autonomous communities, whose leaders enjoyed amiable relations with the few Hispanics they encountered. Empresario Green C. DeWitt reflected this sprit of cordiality by naming the capital of his colony after Rafael Gonzales, the governor of Coahuila y Texas. In 1831, the Mexicans reciprocated when they provided a six-pounder cannon to defend Gonzales against roving Indians. (19)

Colonists more than fulfilled expectations concerning wealth creation. As historian T. R. Fehrenbach noted, “In a single decade, these people chopped more wood, cleared more land, broke more soil, raised more crops, had more children, and built more towns than the Spanish had in three hundred years.” In 1834, they shipped an estimated 5000 bales of cotton worth $315,000 to New Orleans. Virtually the only items traded between the colonists and the rest of Mexico were salt and horses. (20)

In 1825, the Mexican ambassador in Washington warned that Americans who settled in Texas would retain their loyalty to the US and would remain unassimilated. He noted, “The colonists in Texas will not be Mexican more than in name.” Anglo colonists lived among themselves and had so little contact with Mexicans that they could not Mexicanize even if they had so desired. (21)

While Anglos settled and plowed land in east Texas, Texas’ Hispanic population was recovering from the havoc of the independence period, which had left Texas in economic ruins. The defeat of the tejano* force supporting independence and the subsequent royalist reign of terror, during which several hundred suspected civilian sympathizers of independence died, caused the tejano population to decline from 4000 in 1803 to fewer than 3000 in 1821. (22)

Hispanics in Texas concentrated on doing what they knew best—ranching. In 1833, 80 ranches were operating in the San Antonio–Goliad region. The prosperity of these ranches often resulted in towns appearing to be poverty-stricken, since wealth was displayed, not in urban areas, but in ranch houses. In 1828, naturalist Jean Louis Berlandier commented on these
ranches: “Various newly built ranchos proved that the inhabitants of Texas are beginning to learn that agricultural products are the wealth which Nature has reserved for them.” (23)

Unlike Texas’ Anglo population, which surged due to immigration, few Mexicans settled in Texas. Most Mexicans could not afford to travel to Texas from central Mexico. Texas lacked precious metals and had no Indian labor to exploit. Land was available in less remote places, and there were few opportunities for upward mobility in Texas. Mexicans were also unwilling to settle in areas where they would be in conflict with Lipan Apaches and Comanches. Finally, the population of central Mexico was still below the pre-Conquest level, so there was little demographic pressure propelling people north. (24)

**Conflict**

Of all the American territorial acquisitions of the nineteenth century, Texas was the purest case of demography determining an area’s destiny—not diplomacy, not luck, not even military conquest.

Walter Nugent, 2008 (25)

Coahuilans’ granting Haden Edwards a concession to settle 800 families near Nacogdoches, in far northeast Texas, illustrated their unfamiliarity with Texas. When it became apparent that Mexicans were already living on the land granted Edwards, the grant was canceled. Rather than accepting the matter as a bureaucratic error, Edwards rebelled on December 21, 1826, and proclaimed the Fredonia Republic. Even before Mexican troops could arrive from San Antonio, Edwards’ revolt collapsed due to a lack of support, and most of the rebels fled to Louisiana. Austin even offered to help the Mexicans suppress Edwards’ revolt. Militarily the revolt was a mere flash in the pan. However, it did set into motion a chain of events which that lead to Texas becoming independent from Mexico in less than a decade. (26)

If the Coahuila y Texas government in Saltillo was poorly informed about east Texas, officials of the national government were totally clueless. To close this information gap, the national government ordered Gen. Manuel Mier y Terán, a respected military engineer, to inspect east Texas. The resulting 1828 inspection by Mier y Terán provided a clear picture of
Texas—as seen by a Mexican. In Nacogdoches, the general wrote President Victoria that “as one covers the distance from Bejar [San Antonio] to this town, he will note that Mexican influence is proportionately diminished until on arriving in this place he will see that it is almost nothing.” The general described the few Mexicans he encountered in east Texas as poor and uneducated, and noted the stream of Anglo immigrants entering Texas was “unceasing” and included fugitives from justice, vagabonds, and criminals. (27)

After his inspection tour, Mier y Terán recommended that existing presidios at San Antonio, La Bahía, and Nacogdoches be reinforced, and that new ones be established. He also recommended that troops stationed on the Rio Grande be moved east and that Texas’ commercial ties with the rest of Mexico should be reinforced by increased coastal shipping. After completing his inspection, he wrote a friend, “If the colonization contracts in Texas by North Americans are not suspended, and if the conditions of the establishments are not watched, it is necessary to say that the province is already definitively delivered to the foreigners.” (28)

As a result of Mier y Terán’s report, the Mexican Congress passed the Colonization Law of April 6, 1830, which overrode state sovereignty by prohibiting further immigration from the US to Texas. This law reflected the widespread Mexican belief that the US had a plan to occupy and then take possession of Texas, just as had happened with Florida. This view was certainly plausible, although no evidence has ever been found to support it. (29)

By the time the 1830 colonization law was passed, US immigrants already outnumbered tejanos. Rather than halting immigration, the law merely put an end to the flow of settlers entering Texas legally with at least a nominal loyalty to Mexico. However, squatters with no loyalty to Mexico whatsoever continued to stream in. By 1831, 5600 immigrants had arrived, up 1400 from a year earlier. (30)

In accordance with Mier y Terán’s advice, garrisons in east Texas were strengthened to prevent smuggling and illegal entry. Anglos strongly resented this, feeling that they should be allowed unimpeded trade with the US. Settlers felt troops from Mexico were an unwelcome “foreign” presence and that their enforcement of customs regulations was despotic. (31)
The slavery issue caused friction between Anglos and their Mexican rulers. When Ramón Múzquiz, the political chief of San Antonio, received Guerrero’s 1829 abolition decree, he requested an exemption for Texas because the development of agricultural land and other tasks required “the strong and almost tireless arms of this so-called black species of the human race which has the misfortune to suffer slavery.” He also noted that he feared rebellion if he attempted to enforce Guerrero’s abolition decree. Múzquiz forwarded his recommendation to Guerrero, who granted the exemption, but prohibited the introduction of additional slaves. (32)

Anglo immigrants continued to arrive with their slaves. However, to avoid the prohibition on importing slaves, at the Texas border, they had the slaves sign contracts that converted them from slaves to indentured servants who were entitled to their freedom if they paid their former owners their purchase price. Since the “indentured servants” received very low wages and were charged for their room and board, they could never amass enough money to purchase their liberty. (33)

The hundreds of miles separating Anglos in east Texas from Saltillo caused disaffection and led colonists to repeatedly request Mexican statehood for Texas. Legal matters emphasized the remoteness of the state capital. The Mexican government required that documents be drafted in Spanish according to standards few Anglos were familiar with. Capital cases had to be appealed to distant Saltillo. Often cases were sent back for lack of information, so legal affairs dragged on for years. The lack of trial by jury made Anglos feel they were being denied fair trials. (34)

In the best style of Anglo America, in October 1832, these complaints led to the convening of a convention to address issues of concern to the colonists. The 55 delegates attending the convention, all of whom were Anglo men, met in the largest town in Austin’s colonization grant, San Felipe de Austin. They drafted petitions to the Mexican government requesting renewed legal immigration, an extension to the exemption from customs duties, the granting of land titles to illegal immigrants, and the administrative separation of Coahuila and Texas. The colonists viewed the convention as a way to address grievances. Officials in Mexico saw it as a sign of waning government control. (35)
Since their grievances remained, colonists called another convention, which met in April 1833. By this time, Anglo colonists had polarized into two distinct political tendencies. One, nominally led by Austin, favored a conciliatory stance toward Mexico. The other, where newcomers predominated, was more confrontational. As occurred in 1832, Hispanics were not represented in the 1833 convention. (36)

Sam Houston, a recent arrival to Texas, soon assumed leadership of the confrontational faction. Houston, a former US senator and governor of Tennessee, was a strong proponent of US expansionism and had visited with President Andrew Jackson, his friend and former comrade-in-arms, before coming to Texas. The Tennessean, a tall extrovert who was fond of liquor, soon became one of the most influential figures in the colony. (37)

Despite their factional split, convention members united in support of the demands made by the 1832 convention and emphasized the need to divide Coahuila y Texas into separate states. To facilitate the creation of a new state, convention delegates selected a commission to draft a constitution for Texas. The resulting document was based on a 1780 Massachusetts charter that happened to be on hand. (38)

After the convention, Austin carried the draft Texas constitution to Mexico City where he lobbied for statehood, renewed immigration, and an extension of duty-free trade with the US. Upon his arrival in Mexico City, Austin reported to Mexico’s minister of interior and foreign affairs that Texas had a population of 46,500 and abundant resources, so qualified for statehood according to the 1824 decree that united Coahuila and Texas. (39)

Austin arrived at an inauspicious time. A cholera epidemic was scourging Mexico, and the government was not stable. Inaction on his requests depressed Austin, who in frustration wrote the San Antonio city government on October 2, 1833, stating the municipal governments of Texas should “place themselves in communication with each other without a moment’s delay, for the purpose of organizing a local government for Texas as a state of the Mexican federation.” He continued: “There is no longer any doubt that the fate of Texas depends upon itself and not upon this government.” (40)

Eventually Austin met with Santa Anna, who responded favorably to the Texas empresario. The president promised Austin that immigration from the US would again be
legalized and that he was “willing to support” statehood at the appropriate time. Austin also negotiated a three-year extension to duty-free imports. (41)

Austin was satisfied with this response and left Mexico City on December 10, 1833. When he reached Saltillo, Mexican authorities arrested him and brought him back to Mexico City. The letter he had written the San Antonio city government was intended for Múzquiz, one of Austin’s confidants. However, Múzquiz was absent from San Antonio and his replacement forwarded the letter to the state government. The governor regarded it as a sign of criminal disloyalty, even though, rather than calling for Texas’ independence from Mexico, it only advocated unilateral separation of Texas from Coahuila. (42)

The reaction to the letter showed the degree to which Hispanic and Anglo political views diverged. Another sign of this divergence was the San Antonio city government’s having criticized the Anglo-called conventions as mere smoke screens to prepare for independence from Mexico. (43)

While Austin languished in Mexico City, Mexicans responded to many Anglo demands. Anglos were allowed to purchase land in Texas. The number of Texas representatives in the Coahuila y Texas legislature was increased to three, of whom two were to be Anglos. English became an official language of the state. Trial by jury was approved, as was the creation of four new municipalities. (44)

In 1835, the Mexican government allowed Austin to return to Texas as part of a general amnesty, without his ever having been formally charged with a crime. His confinement in Mexico ended his loyalty to his adopted country. Until this point, he had sincerely tried to smooth over disputes between Anglo colonists and Mexico. However, after his return, he sought to separate Texas from Mexico. Pausing in New Orleans on his way back to Texas, Austin wrote a cousin that the “great law of nature—self preservation—operates, and supersedes all other laws.” He also noted, “A great immigration from Kentucky, Tennessee, etc., each man with his rifle or musket, would be of great use to us—very great indeed.” (45)

In the fall of 1835, Austin wrote that he had come to believe that Texas “must, and ought to become a part of the United States.” It is unclear if this political shift occurred due to
personal resentment resulting from his imprisonment or if Austin felt that Mexican instability, which he had witnessed first hand, would inevitably harm Texans. (46)

In a second attempt to gain information concerning its distant province, the federal government ordered Gen. Juan Almonte to Texas. In mid-1834, based on a nine-month stay, he reported that the few Mexicans in east Texas were still in the same conditions of poverty found by Mier y Terán. He accused the US government of using Houston and its ambassador in Mexico City to incite Anglos to separate from Mexico. However, he found no overt threat to Mexican sovereignty. Almonte stated the best way of reasserting control over Anglos was to send a well-equipped military force—a course of action that was impossible due to Mexico’s economic and political conditions. (47)

While Austin was imprisoned in Mexico, the political split among Anglos in Texas became more pronounced. One group, the peace party, wanted to end Texas’ unfortunate union with Coahuila, but was generally content to remain a part of Mexico. Its members rejected any decisive action as possibly being prejudicial to Austin’s case. Generally they were older, married, had been in Texas a longer time, had more ties to Mexico, had roots in the northeastern US, and owned few if any slaves. (48)

The other group, the war party, was more confrontational. Its members compared the Texans’ struggle to throw off despotism with the struggles of the Poles and Greeks to free themselves from their oppressors. War party members claimed the abrogation of the 1824 constitution had dissolved the social compact uniting them with Mexico, leaving Texans in a state of nature, free to choose from a number of political options. Austin’s release and his disavowal of Mexico strengthened the war party, which was attractive to recent immigrants who had never identified with Mexico. Its leaders often advocated independence from Mexico and tended to be ambitious and sometimes angry young men, such as William Barret Travis, who a few years earlier had abandoned a wife and a law practice in Alabama. War party members were often slave-owning native Southerners. (49)

Events south of the Rio Grande soon began to complicate Texans’ political decisions. In 1834, Coahuila y Texas suffered from rival governments, one in Monclova supporting federalism and another in Saltillo supporting centralism. Santa Anna’s coming to power and the
abrogation of the 1824 constitution left Texans with three courses of action: 1) simply accepting whatever government ruled in Mexico City, 2) rebelling against Santa Anna’s government, as Zacatecas, New Mexico, Sonora, and California had done, or 3) seeking independence from Mexico. Most Texans, diligently planting their crops, were overwhelmed by the uncertainty. As historian Paul Lack noted, “The Texas reaction to the advent of a centralist government in Mexico was anything but forceful, wise, uniform, or confident.” (50)

Anglo colonists continued to be disaffected with the Santa Anna administration, despite positive responses to many of their grievances. Legal immigration from the US to Texas was re-established, effective May 1834. That year the Coahuila y Texas government increased the number of local courts and established an appellate court so litigants could avoid travel to Saltillo. (51)

In August 1835, Anglo Texans agreed they would meet in October for what they termed a “consultation.” Each of the political factions felt that such a meeting would further its cause. Pacifists felt that the pacific will of the majority would prevail at such a meeting. Similarly war party members saw the consultation as a way to unite colonists behind them. (52)

After the call for the consultation, but before the actual event, the arrival in Texas of Mexican Gen. Martín Perfecto de Cos, Santa Anna’s brother-in-law, produced a major shift in public opinion. Cos, the commandant general of the Eastern States, had just sent troops to Monclova to arrest its pro-federalist governor, Agustín Viesca, and impose Saltillo as the capital of Coahuila y Texas. In mid-September 1835, he landed with 500 troops at Copano Bay, just north of the present site of Corpus Christi, and marched on to San Antonio. His orders were to expel troublemakers and disarm all colonists. Mexican government officials felt they were simply deploying troops to reassert national sovereignty over an area where their influence was waning. (53)

The colonists viewed Cos’ arrival as the imposition of a military dictatorship. They did not reflect that all nations, including both the US and Mexico, deployed troops on their own soil. Rather, Anglos began to call forth their grandparents’ spirit of 1776. Until Cos’ arrival, the war party had remained a decided minority, its actions repudiated by most Texans, Anglos and Hispanics. With Cos’ arrival, the balance shifted to its favor. (54)
As had been agreed to the previous summer, representatives met in San Felipe de Austin for the consultation. Delegates had lived in Texas for an average of more than seven years and therefore represented the long-term residents of Texas. Their actions reflected the lack of consensus among Anglos. They did form a provisional Texas government, which publicly displayed adhesion to Mexican federalism. Fifty-four Anglos and one Mexican, Lorenzo de Zavala, signed a declaration proclaiming the people “will continue faithful to the Mexican government, as long as that nation is governed by the Constitution.” Since those in attendance knew it was unlikely the 1824 constitution would soon be reinstated, that enabled them to avoid taking a stand on the issue of independence. (55)

War

Due to its members’ late arrival, the consultation did not begin meeting until November 3, 1835. By that time events had spun out of the control of deliberative bodies in San Felipe, Saltillo, and Mexico City. Rather than deliberating, Anglos, who numbered 32,000 to 35,000 (along with their slaves), formed ad hoc military units to promote their interests. (56)

The first confrontation came on October 2, 1835, after Mexican troops marched 60 miles east from San Antonio to Gonzales to recoup the cannon that had been presented to colonists there. Some 168 settlers gathered to keep the cannon in Anglo hands. The Rev. W. P. Smith, a Methodist minister, delivered a sermon replete with references to the American Revolution. He reminded those gathered there that “the same blood that animated the hearts of our ancestors in ’76 still flows in our veins.” The Anglos, waving a flag inscribed with the legend “come and take it,” defiantly fired on the Mexican force. The Mexicans, lacking artillery, prudently returned to San Antonio. (57)

On October 10, emboldened by their success at Gonzales, roughly 125 Anglo volunteers assaulted Mexican-held Goliad, 58 miles to the south, forcing its surrender. The rebels captured 10,000 pesos and two artillery pieces there. The victory at Goliad, the colonists’ first, cut Cos’ supply lines to the coast. (58)

After the victory at Goliad, the nature of the rebel force changed dramatically. Local colonists who had turned out to defend Gonzales’ cannon and take Goliad went home. By
November, nearly all the 225 men in arms were volunteers recently arrived from the US. The issue of Texas’ future was clear for them. They did not want Texas to remain a part of Mexico under any constitution. (59)

Feeling that Cos’ force in San Antonio posed a threat to the weak Texas government, the rebel force besieged the city. On December 5, after several weeks of inclusive siege, they attacked. Five days of bitter hand-to-hand combat followed. Finally Cos surrendered, after which his men were allowed to march back to Mexico with their guns to protect themselves from Indian attack. By the standards of warfare, things remained civilized. (60)

The US continued to play a major role in the conflict. “Texas Committees” in New Orleans, New York, and other cities funneled arms, volunteers, and money into Texas. Austin, who had been commanding rebel forces, was sent to the US to spearhead the support effort there. (61)

At the beginning of 1836, the rebel cause was more successful militarily than politically. The already weak interim government established by the consultation was further weakened when its members decided to impeach Gov. Henry Smith, and Smith refused to accept that he had been legally impeached. Governance took on an almost farcical air when Viesca, the federalist governor of Coahuila y Texas deposed by Cos, escaped from jail, made his way to Texas, and declared he was the legitimate governor. (62)

Many Anglos, who felt that the war had ended following Cos’ departure, underestimated Mexican resolve, and Santa Anna’s. He took Cos’ defeat in San Antonio as an affront to the Mexican nation and to his family, since Cos was his brother-in-law. He described his decision to recapture Texas in his autobiography, “With the fires of patriotism in my heart and dominated by a noble ambition to save my country, I took pride in being the first to strike in defense of the independence, honor, and rights of my nation.” (63)

Santa Anna began assembling an army, a task at which he repeatedly excelled during his career. The lack of support from the federal government forced him to rely on his own ingenuity and skill at finding men and resources. He took mortgages on his own property and arranged loans to finance a 6000-man force to march to Texas. The trek north was fraught with difficulties involving desertion, scarcity of food, inclement weather (including snow), and the
presence of some 2500 women and children who accompanied his force. Eighteen-hundred mules pulled four-wheeled wagons laden with war matériel. In addition, there were more than 200 two-wheeled carts drawn by oxen. Santa Anna’s force crossed the Rio Grande above Laredo on February 16, 1836. A second Mexican force, led by Gen. José de Urrea, crossed the Rio Grande at Matamoros the next day. (64)

In an attempt to stem the flow of volunteers streaming into Texas from the US, the Mexican government declared such volunteers would be considered as pirates, subject to execution. To maximize the decree’s effectiveness, Mexican agents had the decree published in US newspapers. It stated, “These acts, condemned by the wise laws of the United States of North America,” had caused the Mexican government “to treat and punish as pirates all foreigners who enter with arms and hostile intentions, or who introduce arms and munitions through any port of the Mexican Republic.” (65)

Upon entering Texas, Santa Anna decided to march to San Antonio, rather than hugging the coast and going directly toward Anglo population centers. For Santa Anna, San Antonio had symbolic value as the political center of Texas and as the place one of his family members had been defeated. Its submission became a point of honor. (66)

Santa Anna soon moved his force, which had dwindled to 2600, to San Antonio, where Texas rebels had remained since defeating Cos. The rebels had fortified an old Franciscan mission now known as the Alamo. At that time, the Alamo included not only the remaining chapel, still venerated by Texans, but also an adjacent, walled enclosure. The enclosure had served well for Indian defense, since the Comanche had no artillery. However, its walls provided little defense against Santa Anna’s cannons. The Alamo, built as a mission, also lacked firing ports and strong points that could be used to oppose an assault. (67)

The defenders of the Alamo, roughly 180 Anglos and seven Hispanics, had considered withdrawing in the face of Santa Anna’s numerically superior force. The defenders’ belief that they would be reinforced by other rebels influenced their decision to stay. One of the last messages the Anglos sent out of the Alamo, directed to James Fannin, the rebel commander at Goliad, stated, “We have but little Provisions, but enough to serve us till you and your men arrive.” The defenders of the Alamo were also reluctant to abandon some 20 cannons that Cos
had assembled at the Alamo. Had they retreated, the rebels would have been forced to leave these cannons, the largest assembly of artillery west of the Mississippi, since they had no draft animals to pull them. (68)

Santa Anna laid siege to the Alamo. His force performed that task well, especially considering that many of his men were Mayan conscripts who spoke no Spanish and had little training. Gen. Vicente Filisola, Santa Anna’s second in command, wrote, “Most of them fired their first volleys at the enemy.” They had never fired a gun before, even in training. Mexican soldiers, armed with smooth-bore brown Bess muskets, with a 70-yard effective range, were at a distinct disadvantage compared with the defending riflemen, whose weapons had a range of 200 yards. (69)

On March 6, after submitting the Alamo to a 12-day siege, Santa Anna ordered his troops to storm the mission walls. Santa Anna rejected his officers’ advice to maintain the siege and limit casualties, since he felt a successful assault would build morale in his force and that a simple capitulation would bring no glory. (70)

Mexican assault forces approached the Alamo in four columns. After suffering heavy casualties from the defenders’ rifles and cannons, they entered the walled enclosure, using scaling ladders and crawling through holes in the perimeter wall. The quarter-mile-long defense perimeter was far too long to be successfully defended by the limited number of rebels. Once inside, the assault forces swung open the gate, allowing others to enter. They then turned the cannons Cos had abandoned on the remaining defenders, who had taken refuge in the barracks and chapel, and soon overwhelmed them. (71)

All the Alamo’s Anglo defenders, including such legendary figures as William Barret Travis, James Bowie, and David Crockett, died. Strong evidence suggests that Mexican troops captured Crockett and half a dozen others and then executed them. Survivors included the women and children who had taken refuge in the Alamo and Joe and Sam, black servants of the Alamo commanders. During the battle, which lasted less than an hour, the Alamo defenders inflicted at least 33 percent casualties on the attackers, killing or wounding some 600 men, including members of Santa Anna’s best battalions. Santa Anna justifiably praised his forces at the Alamo, observing, “They did their duty as brave men and they are worthy of every
consideration by the supreme government and of the gratitude of their fellow countrymen.”

Most of those who died defending the Alamo were fighting for a borrowed cause, since the majority had only recently arrived from the US to fight for Texas independence. News of the Anglo defeat increased the flow of aid from the US and galvanized Anglos in Texas into taking up arms, just as they had at Gonzales and Goliad. The battle for the Alamo did not resolve the question of who would control east Texas, home to thousands of Anglos who had arrived during the previous decade.

After the fall of the Alamo, Texas rebels had two remaining military forces, one commanded by Fannin at Goliad and another commanded by Houston at Gonzales. Houston, as commander-in-chief, ordered Fannin to retreat so the two forces could be joined for a possible stand at the Colorado River.

Fannin had remained in Goliad, rather than going to aid the Alamo’s defenders. Had he abandoned Goliad, he would have left Anglo east Texas open to Urrea, who was advancing north through the Texas coastal plain. However, Fannin’s remaining in Goliad resulted more from his lack of resolve than from strategic considerations. He actually started out to relieve the Alamo defenders on February 28, but when an ox cart broke down less than a mile out, he returned to Goliad. Then, on the advice of his officers, he called off the expedition.

Houston also could have sent reinforcements to the Alamo defenders. Presumably Houston’s inaction resulted from his feeling that Travis’ desperate appeals for reinforcements reflected his desire to remain in the limelight rather than military necessity. Houston told other delegates at the Washington-on-the-Brazos convention that Travis was engaging in political grandstanding. Some even began to question if Travis was writing the appeals that arrived with his signature. Houston’s decisions were likely influenced by Travis being a member of Austin’s political faction and not his own.

In any case, Anglo rebels had little time to reflect on the Alamo, since Urrea’s force was approaching from the south. Rather than immediately retreating to avoid Urrea’s force, Fannin procrastinated and then ordered a withdrawal from Goliad. Urrea’s cavalry soon caught up with Fannin’s retreating force. Fannin ordered his men into a defensive square. Urrea then brought
up his infantry and artillery and surrounded Fannin’s force. Outnumbered seven to one and without food and water, Fannin surrendered after an inclusive exchange of fire with Urrea’s force. (77)

Santa Anna had ordered the execution of all prisoners taken at Goliad as pirates. Urrea questioned the order, and Santa Anna repeated it. The order was then reluctantly obeyed. An estimated 342 rebel prisoners were killed, with 28 escaping. Santa Anna defended the execution, declaring, “These foreigners are bandits that have attacked the territory of the Republic to steal part of it ...; that is why the Supreme Government has declared, with reason, that they are pirates, and orders that they are treated and punished as such.” (78)

Regardless of whether one wished to consider Fannin’s men as pirates or prisoners of war, executing them was a major public relations blunder. It converted the rebels into martyrs and greatly increased sympathy for the Texas cause in the US. Had Urrea taken the moral high ground and simply disarmed and released the prisoners, the Mexicans would have been in a far stronger position. The Mexicans, who continued to see the rebellion in Texas as being orchestrated by the US, could not anticipate the effect the executions would have there. (79)

While Santa Anna’s army besieged the Alamo’s defenders, rebel representatives met at Washington-on-the-Brazos, 40 miles upstream from San Felipe de Austin, to formalize the goals of the rebellion. The entry into Texas of forces commanded by Urrea and Santa Anna removed any Anglo doubts about the desirability of independence from Mexico. On March 2, 1836, the declaration of independence issued at Washington-on-the-Brazos presented the struggle in Texas as being against tyranny and spoke of “a scared obligation to their posterity.” The overwhelming majority of the signers were Anglo immigrants. However, two, José Antonio Navarro and José Francisco Ruiz, were Texas-born Hispanics. The convention created a new, independent government with David G. Burnet and Lorenzo de Zavala serving as president and vice-president respectively. (80)

Houston, whose forces were vastly outnumbered by the Mexicans, decided to retreat east, trading land for time. The further east he and the Mexicans pursuing him went, the more trees there were to provide cover for Anglo riflemen. As they left the prairie, Santa Anna’s cavalry, his greatest military asset, became less effective. (81)
As the rebel army retreated east, virtually the entire Anglo population of Texas began to flee toward Louisiana and the safety offered by the US. They formed a stream of women and children, and some men, with wagons, carts, and pack mules. Santa Anna’s brutal oppression of Zacatecas following its revolt against centralism was common knowledge. “Uncle” Jeff Parson, a slave at the time, recalled the massive flight, known as the Runaway Scrape: “People and things were all mixed, and in confusion. The children were crying, the women praying and the men cursing. I tell you it was a serious time.” (82)

Santa Anna, following the victories at the Alamo and Goliad, concluded the war had ended and that he only needed to mop up rebel stragglers. He divided Mexican forces into four units, one of which remained at the Alamo. The remaining three marched east, burning whatever Anglo-owned buildings were encountered, if indeed they had not already been burned by retreating Anglos to prevent them from falling into Mexican hands. (83)

Santa Anna personally commanded one of these units, which he ordered east toward the seat of the rebel government in Harrisburg, whose site is now within the Houston city limits. The desire to capture rebel vice president de Zavala, a long-time political rival of Santa Anna, provided a special incentive to take Harrisburg. (84)

Houston’s force, as Santa Anna had surmised, was heading toward the coast. However, it was no longer in flight mode. Rather, after withstanding strong pressure to make a stand, Houston decided to attack Santa Anna. Through a captured courier, the rebels learned that Santa Anna had separated his men from the main force of Mexican troops—the mistake Houston had been waiting for. (85)

On April 20, Houston’s forces camped along Buffalo Bayou where the San Jacinto River joins it. A few hours later, Santa Anna’s forces camped nearby. During the night of the twentieth, a force commanded by Cos joined Santa Anna, raising the Mexican strength to 1200 men, compared with the rebels’ 910. (86)

By the afternoon of the twenty-first, Santa Anna assumed that if Houston was going to attack, he would have already done so. Since his force was exhausted from constructing barricades the entire night and Cos’ was equally tired from a forced march to join Santa Anna, Santa Anna relaxed his vigilance and ordered the troops to stand down. (87)
Between 3 and 4 p.m., the rebel army advanced in two parallel lines. A slight rise covered by high grass concealed their approach from the Mexicans. Upon seeing the rebels, some Mexican officers attempted to rally their men, but it was too late. As Mexican Capt. Pedro Delgado recounted, “I saw our men flying in small groups, terrified, and sheltering themselves behind large trees. I endeavored to force some of them to fight, but all efforts were in vain—the evil was beyond remedy: they were a bewildered and panic stricken herd.” The Texans flooded over the barricades, and the defenders fell back. The actual battle only lasted 18 minutes, but the slaughter continued much longer. Determined to avenge the losses at the Alamo and Goliad, the bloodthirsty rebels committed atrocities as least as beastly as the Mexicans had committed. The wanton killing of defenseless Mexicans continued despite rebel officers’ ordering a halt. Rebels killed some 650 Mexicans that afternoon. (88)

The Mexican troops who had fought so well at the Alamo had become demoralized. They were hungry and appeared to have lost all confidence in their commander. Also, after having left the familiar semi-arid prairie and Hispanic atmosphere of San Antonio for lush east Texas, they no longer felt they were defending Mexican territory. As Mexican Col. José de la Peña commented, “All was new in this war, and although it was happening on our own soil, it seemed as if it were being waged in a foreign land.” (89)

A crucial element temporarily eluded the victorious rebels—Santa Anna. He appeared neither among the dead nor the captured. However, he was captured the next day after spending a miserable night in a marsh. Houston resisted strong pressure to execute Santa Anna for war crimes. He realized that a live Santa Anna was worth far more to the Texas cause than a dead one. On May 14, 1836, Santa Anna’s value became apparent as he signed the Treaty of Velasco, while still a prisoner. In the treaty he agreed to withdraw from the struggle, to order other Mexican forces to retreat south of the Rio Grande, and to encourage Mexico to recognize Texas’ independence. This effectively ended the rebellion, although the Mexican government later refused to accept Texas’ independence. (90)

Santa Anna’s second in command, Vicente Filisola, obeyed Santa Anna’s order to withdraw south of the Rio Grande. Urrea, who emerged as the most competent general of the war, never forgave him for that withdrawal. Even if Filisola had decided to disobey Santa Anna,
the Mexicans would have faced a severe supply shortage. As historian Stephen Hardin noted, “The retreat that followed had more to do with the collapse of Mexican logistics than with the mastery of Texian** arms.” The Mexican commanders did not feel they were abandoning the struggle. They intended to regroup for another battle, an occurrence that for years to come Mexican politicians promised would occur. However, political turmoil and the lack of funds prevented all but brief forays north of the Rio Grande. (91)

The causes of rebellion

The causes of the rebellion in Texas have been debated ever since the rebel victory at San Jacinto. The conclusions reached have changed over time, and, of course, vary depending on which side of the Rio Grande one is on. The rebellion resulted from the following conflicts.

- Intense racial consciousness brought from the US led Anglo settlers to view Mexicans with suspicion and alienation. Houston wrote: “The vigor of the descendants of the north [will never] mix with the phlegm of the indolent Mexican, no matter how long we may live among them. Two different tribes on the same hunting ground will never get along together.” Anglo prejudices were reinforced when they met the poor, uneducated Mexicans living near Nacogdoches. These were the only Mexicans many Anglos came into regular contact with. (92)

- Anglos wanted to continue using slave labor for cotton production. Even though Texas received an exemption from the 1829 emancipation decree, it was clear that the continued legality of slavery would be in question as long as Texas remained part of Mexico. In 1835, an Anglo group, the Matagorda Committee of Safety and Correspondence, warned of a “merciless soldiery” advancing on Texas “to give liberty to our slaves.” (93)

- Anglos resented having to pay customs duties on their thriving commerce with the US. The Mexicans took umbrage, feeling Anglos were unwilling to shoulder their rightful share of the cost of government. (94)

- Land speculation provided a strong motivation to separate Texas from Mexico. Mexicans viewed colonization as an orderly way to settle the land. Anglos saw that land
values would soar if real estate could be sold on the open market, something that was illegal under Mexican rule. In May 1834, the Coahuila y Texas legislature in Monclova began auctioning off 11-league tracts of public land to finance itself and defend against centralists. The central government ruled such sales invalid. Anglo owners of such titles, such as James Bowie, had a vested interest in separating Texas from Mexico, thus maintaining the validity of the titles. Even though Mexican federal and state law prohibited it, the sale of Texas land was openly advertised in US newspapers. (95)

- The shift from federalism to centralism and the abrogation of the 1824 constitution soured many Texans on continued association with Mexico. However, Anglos, by and large, did not suffer greatly from centralized control. As historian Carlos E. Castañeda observed, “Left much to themselves, the colonists ran their own affairs and modified the Mexican institutions as far as circumstances permitted to conform to those with which they had been accustomed.” While political change was widely discussed, as historian Paul D. Lack noted, Texans were “devoid of consensus about the meaning of political changes in Mexico.” (96)

- Many Texans resented outside governance of any kind. Colonists took for granted a measure of local governance greater than that of any European nation. When the federal government simply tried to exercise control, conflict ensued. (97)

- The failure to separate Texas from Coahuila united both Anglos and Hispanics in Texas. Rafael Gonzales, the governor of Coahuila y Texas, observed that due to distance and lack of mail service Texas was “almost incommunicado with the government.” (98) Mier y Terán termed the union of Texas with Coahuila a “monstrosity.” The San Antonio city government blamed the lack of responsive state government for the “paralysis” of Texas. (99)

- Some public officials had a personal financial stake in Texas’ independence from Mexico. US Ambassador Butler, for example, owned land in Texas that would increase in value with independence. Similarly Lorenzo de Zavala, while governor of the State of Mexico, received a Texas land concession. He then signed contracts with Americans, including Ambassador Butler and former Ambassador Poinsett, to bring in colonists. (100)
• Some individual US citizens viewed the conflict as a struggle for freedom and joined the Texas cause. Before coming to Texas, Houston reportedly declared, “I shall bring that nation to the United States.” (101)

• The legal system of Coahuila y Texas caused constant friction. Colonists did not learn Spanish, and the Mexican government would not provide translations of laws.

• The popularly held belief known as Manifest Destiny also contributed to Mexico’s defeat. Although the term was not coined until 1845, the sentiments it described existed well before that date. Manifest Destiny included the notion that God intended North America to be under American control to exploit its wealth and provide it with US political institutions. It also included the belief that people of European descent had a right to land that others did not use to its maximum potential, a view that dated back at least to John Winthrop, who governed Massachusetts Bay Colony at various times between 1629 and 1648. He claimed Europeans were justified in depriving Indians of their ancestral lands so that such lands could be more intensively exploited. At the national level, Manifest Destiny was largely synonymous with expansionism. However, it went far beyond that, strongly shaping individual action. As young Daniel Cloud, who traveled to Texas with David Crockett, wrote, “The tide of emigration will be onward and irresistible.” He declared that Americans must inevitably have Texas and spread on west, even beyond the Rocky Mountains. He continued: “The prospect is grand, too much so for my feeble power of description to compass. We go with arms in our hands, determined to conquer or die.” This popular, spontaneous US expansion contrasted strongly with the Spaniards’ slow, deliberate, government-sanctioned, planned, and organized expansion into what is now the US southwest. (102)

These are only some of the causes that led individuals to throw off Mexican rule. Historian David J. Weber commented on the Texas revolution as a whole: “Certainly there was less heroism, less altruism, less patriotism, less clarity of purpose, and less unity than most of us might imagine.” (103)
The various ethnic groups in Texas responded very differently to the rebellion. Santa Anna, when marching north to the Alamo, had assumed that he could form an alliance with Indians. He soon realized that would be impossible and that Indians would remain staunchly pro-Indian. The more realistic Anglos assigned Houston the task, not of seeking Indian allies, but simply of keeping them neutral. Indians responded to the independence movement, which occupied both Anglo and Mexican soldiers, by becoming bolder and wider ranging in their raids. (104)

Many Hispanic Texans, or tejanos, strongly supported efforts to fight centralism and Santa Anna early in the revolt. In 1835, Anglo leader William T. Austin commented on their contribution: “These mexicans being well acquainted with the country, were of important service as express riders, guides to foraging parties, &c.” Later, as Anglos began to openly favor independence, the involvement of Hispanics declined, since an end to Mexican rule would leave them as an ethnic minority. Often they were politically divided, even at the family level. Enrique Esparza participated in the assault on the Alamo while his brother Gregorio died defending it. At least six other Hispanics died in the Alamo. Juan Seguín led about 19 Texas Hispanics into battle alongside Anglos at San Jacinto. Each wore a distinctive piece of cardboard in his hatband to avoid being mistaken for one of Santa Anna’s troops. Other Hispanics, unwilling to live under Anglo rule, left Texas with departing Mexican troops after San Jacinto. Within a one-year period, shifting battle lines had left tejanos in a difficult situation, since any behavior pattern could make them seem like traitors from the perspective of one army, or both. Regardless of their loyalty, both armies ravaged their food and other resources. (105)

As was the case with Hispanics, the loyalties of blacks were divided. Some free blacks supported the Texas independence movement. Slaves were drafted to work on military fortifications. Other slaves left Texas with Mexican forces and served them as messengers and spies and by aiding at river crossings. On April 3, 1836 alone, 14 black slaves and their families gained their freedom by joining Gen. Urrea. Even though the Treaty of Velasco specifically called for the return of fugitive slaves, Urrea refused to honor this provision and later boasted that “all the slaves within my jurisdiction continued to enjoy their liberty.” (106)

A number of factors led to the rebel victory:
The divided loyalty of the Hispanic population in Texas.

The Mexican cause suffered from its being led by Santa Anna. His biographer Okaha L. Jones, Jr. commented, “His strategic planning ... always seemed to omit something important.” Santa Anna’s mistakes included 1) ordering his army to take the Alamo, instead of moving directly to Anglo population concentrations, 2) separating his force from the main body of Mexican troops to chase Houston, and 3) letting his forces stand down at San Jacinto, even though he knew Houston’s force was nearby. (107)

Two generations of political instability had sapped Mexican strength and morale.

The Texans drew on the human and material resources of the US, whose population was nearly three times that of Mexico. Public relations campaigns and the promise of free land encouraged US citizens to fight in Texas. Of the men who served in the Texas army, 40 percent were US volunteers who entered Texas after October 1, 1835, that is, after combat had begun. The Jackson administration followed a stance of benign neglect regarding the flow of men, money, arms, and supplies from the US to Texas rebels. Along with his report on the battle of the Alamo, Santa Anna sent to Mexico City the battle flag of a volunteer company, the New Orleans Greys. He commented, “The inspection of it will show plainly the true intentions of the treacherous colonists, and of their abettors, who come from parts of the United States of the North.” (108)

Settling Texas’ fate

In their first election, held in 1836, Texas colonists voted 3277 to 91 to request annexation to the US, an act which reinforced the Mexican belief that the US had promoted the independence movement. To the Texans’ dismay, US President Martin Van Buren, who took office in March 1837, rejected the request. He felt that annexing Texas would extend slave territory and lead to war with Mexico. (109)

For the next decade, Texas existed as an independent republic. In 1837, the US extended diplomatic recognition to Texas. This raised the level of anti-Americanism in Mexico. Feelings ran so high that some Mexicans advocated war, not only to regain Texas, but also to attack the US. Great Britain and France both recognized Texas’ independence following
recognition by the US. The French Legation, built during the independence period, still stands in Austin. (110)

During its decade of independence, some Texans began to view Texas as a nation with a destiny separate from that of the US. They not only claimed the Rio Grande as Texas’ southern boundary, but also claimed all land east of the Rio Grande in New Mexico. Texas President Sam Houston reflected Texans’ territorial aspirations in his farewell address in December 1844: “If we remain an independent nation, our territory will be extensive—unlimited. The Pacific alone will bound the mighty march of our race and our empire.” Eventually the Texas Congress even declared California to be part of Texas. (111)

Between 1839 and 1841, Texas President Mirabeau B. Lamar attempted to persuade Mexico to recognize Texas’ independence. He offered the Mexican government $5 million if it would accept the Rio Grande as the boundary between the two nations. Mexico’s acceptance of this offer would have settled the two questions outstanding between Texas and Mexico, which were: 1) Was Texas still part of Mexico or was it an independent nation that was free to join the US? and 2) If Texas was independent of Mexico, what was the boundary between the two nations? Mexico, not surprisingly, rejected the offer, which, if it had been accepted, would have avoided the incident that touched off the Mexican–American War. (112)

Santa Anna, who became president again in 1841, was unwilling to let Mexico’s claim to Texas lapse. In 1842, a Mexican force occupied San Antonio. To prevent its falling into Mexican hands, the capital of Texas was moved from Austin to Houston. The Mexicans soon withdrew. Later that year, they returned to San Antonio and took the entire Anglo male population, 53 men, as prisoners. They withdrew again, fighting a few minor skirmishes and taking the Anglo prisoners back to Mexico City. At the time, Mexico had so many internal problems and so few resources that it could not hold San Antonio, much less advance further east. The Mexican withdrawal was certainly not due to a forceful Texas response. Henry Morfit, the agent sent to Texas by US Secretary of State John Forsyth, reported that Texas was so weak that “without foreign aid, her future security must depend more upon the weakness and imbecility of her enemy than upon her own strength.” (113)
In 1843, after failing to reconquer Texas, Santa Anna offered the Texas government peace if it would only accept inherent Mexican sovereignty. Texas President Sam Houston rejected the offer since such an action would have precluded eventual unification with the US. (114)

At this point, a new political actor entered the picture—Great Britain. The British felt that if the US annexed Texas, Britain would be even more dependent on US cotton and it would be unable to sell Texans its manufactured goods. Maintaining friendship with both Texas and Mexico would be impossible if Texas’ status remained unsettled. Settling the issue of Texas sovereignty would make it politically acceptable for Mexico to reduce military spending, thus allowing it to service debts owned to Britain. These considerations led to a British offer to mediate the dispute with Mexico, proposing that Mexico recognize Texas’ independence in exchange for Texas’ agreeing never to join the US. The British promised to guarantee Texas’ independence if the plan was accepted. (115)

Texas President Anson Jones, who succeeded Houston in 1844, expressed interest in the British offer and allowed Mexico 90 days to respond. By this time, many Mexicans had resigned themselves to losing Texas and felt it unwise to have a common border with the US. On May 19, 1845, the Mexican Congress declared that Mexico would recognize Texas’ independence, if Texas pledged not to join another nation. The declaration stated that the location of the Texas–Mexico border and other matters could be discussed later. (116)

British activity concerning Texas led the US to re-evaluate the annexation issue. Reportedly, the British would underwrite the cost of emancipation in Texas as a step toward eliminating slavery in the American south. US President John Tyler submitted an annexation proposal to the Senate. Since the Senate was unwilling to extend slave territory and took seriously Santa Anna’s threat to declare war if Texas was annexed, the annexation treaty failed to obtain the necessary two-thirds vote. (117)

This vote failed to settle the annexation question. Texas’ status became a major issue in the 1844 US presidential elections. James K. Polk, who campaigned on the slogan “All of Texas and all of Oregon!” won a bare majority of the popular vote. Annexationists then proposed that both houses of Congress should grant the president the right to annex Texas whenever he
chose. That measure, which required only a simple majority in each house, passed in February 1845. Tyler, feeling the election was a public mandate on the issue, decided to annex Texas on March 1, three days before he left office. Support for annexation came from those wanting cotton, cheap grazing lands, trade routes to Santa Fe, and easier access to California and the Pacific. The annexation of Texas demonstrated that sentiment for expansion had overwhelmed opposition to acquiring more slave territory. (118)

With overwhelming popular backing, the Texas Congress and a special convention in Texas accepted the annexation offer. At the same time, the Mexican peace offer was rejected. The people of Texas ratified annexation in October, and Texas formally entered the union in December 1845. (119)

The groundswell in favor of annexation reflected the strong ties many Texas settlers maintained with the US. In fact, the convention that voted for annexation had only one Texas-born member, José Antonio Navarro of San Antonio. Most of the settlers, especially recent arrivals, still had family and friends in the US. Three lobbyists President Tyler sent to offset British influence reinforced pro-annexation sentiment. They toured Texas, making promises as if they were politicians running for office. As Ashbell Smith, who served as Texas’ chargé d’affaires in Britain, later wrote, their promises were, among others, to clear out rivers for navigation, to deepen the entrances of our harbors, to build light-houses on our coast for commerce, to erect military works, fortifications for the defense of the coast, to execute important works of internal improvement, and to do various and sundry other good things for Texas which were beyond our means, or which they could do for us better than we, ourselves, could. (120)

Annexation benefitted the US by furthering its goal of reaching the Pacific and depriving the British of an opportunity to extend their influence in North America. An expected negative aspect of annexation, a strong Mexican response, failed to materialize. Mexico’s ambassador to the US, Juan Almonte, called the annexation “an act of aggression, the most unjust which can
be found recorded in the annals of modern history” and left Washington, severing diplomatic relations. However, Mexico did not respond militarily. (121)

Despite Anglos’ stirring rhetoric about their struggle for freedom, slavery continued in Texas for more than a generation. The Constitution of the Republic of Texas did not confer rights on individuals, but on citizens. It conferred citizenship, not on “all men,” but “all persons (Africans, the descendants of Africans, and Indians excepted) who were residing in Texas on the day of independence” and on “all free white persons who shall emigrate to the republic.” The constitution even prohibited slave owners from freeing slaves unless they had congressional permission. As with nineteenth-century Mexican constitutions, those who drafted the Texas constitution assumed the restriction of citizenship to males was so obvious that there was no need to state it explicitly. (122)

Following the Mexican model, in 1836, the Republic of Texas provided land without charge to residents who had not received a grant before independence. In contrast to the Mexican model, Indians and those of African ancestry were declared ineligible to receive such grants. (123)

Texas’ independence resulted in increased antagonism and suspicion between Hispanics and Anglos. On June 19, 1836, Hispanics suffered a reversal when Texas Secretary of War Thomas Rusk, anticipating a Mexican offensive, ordered all those living between the Guadalupe and Nueces Rivers out of that area to deny human and material resources to any invader. Hispanics suffered disproportionately from that order, since many of their ranches were located between these two rivers. Rusk’s order forced them to evacuate even if they had been loyal to the Texas cause. Some never returned, Some returned only to find others had squatted on their land. Hispanics’ loss of land was not confined to the area between the Guadalupe and the Nueces. As historian Andrew Tijerina noted, “Across the state, tejano émigrés lost their land to ‘fictitious law suits,’ sheriff’s auctions, and dubious transfer of titles.” (124)

Few if any Hispanics continued to serve as policymakers, such as judges and military officers. In the land records, they become sellers, not buyers. They were only tolerated as leaders within their own communities. As historian Jesús F. de la Teja noted, “In the newly independent Texas, tejanos became outsiders in the land of their birth.” (125)
Even though the Hispanics’ own ranching fortunes declined, their ranching culture was passed on to Anglos who began raising cattle. The south Texas roots of this culture are revealed by the prevalence of such Spanish terms as lasso (lazo), chaps (chaparreras), bronc (bronco), corral (corral), ranch (rancho), rodeo (rodeo), mustang (mesteño), and bucaroo, a corruption of vaquero. Anglo ranchers used the Spanish saddle and the bandana as had their Hispanic predecessors. (126)

Other elements of Spanish influence that remained in Texas were community property laws and laws exempting the homestead and other property from forced sale. The state’s title to 3.5 million oil-rich acres of submerged coastal land resulted from the 3 marine league (10.4 miles) claim of sovereignty that dates from the period when Texas formed part of Mexico. (127)

* “Tejano” was a term used to refer to Hispanics living in Texas.

** “Texian” was a term used to refer to Anglos living in Texas

Notes:
5. Benson (1989: 279) and Moseley (p. 133).
15. The text of the 1824 colonization law can be found in Kimball (pp. 15–23).
19. Hardin (p. 6).
20. Fehrenbach (p. 146), Weber (1982: 141), and Moyano Pahissa (A) (p. 45).
23. Tijerina (Andrés) (pp. 17–18) and Berlandier (1980: II, 556).
26. Cantrell (pp. 179–87) and Herrera (2007: 76).
31. Weber (1982: 246) and Lack (p. 6).
33. Vázquez (1997d: 38) and Cantrell (p. 204).
34. Moyano Pahissa (A) (pp. 60–61).
36. Winkler (pp. 256–57).
42. Cantrell (p. 273).
44. Cantrell (p. 291).
45. Barker (B) (p. 102).
47. Moyano Pahissa (A) (p. 97) and Vázquez (1997a: 69). For the text, see Almonte’s report cited below.
48. Cantrell (p. 298).
49. Lack (pp. 35–36), Weber (1988: 147), and Cantrell (p. 298).
50. Lack (pp. “17”, 18).
52. Lack (pp. 31–32).
54. Moyano Pahissa (A) (p. 73) and Weber (1988: 147).
57. Hardin (p. “9”).
58. Moyano Pahissa (A) (pp. 104–05) and Hardin (pp. 15–16).
59. Hardin (p. 67).
60. Hardin (p. 90).
61. Hardin (p. 90).
62. Lack (p. 60).
64. Costeloe (1993: 52) and Presley (p. 500).
66. Hardin (p. 102).
68. Hardin (p. “129”) and Davis (pp. 494, 496).
69. Presley (pp. “491,” 493) and Hardin (p. 130).
70. Hardin (pp. 137–38).
71. Hardin (pp. 131, 145–48).
72. Davis (pp. 565, 570), Lack (p. 244), Hardin (p. 155), and Costeloe (1988b: “536”).
73. Lord (p. 25) and Hardin (pp. 156–57).
74. Hardin (p. 164).
75. Hardin (p. 135).
76. Davis (pp. 548, 568).
77. Pohl & Hardin (p. 299) and Roell (p. 62–64).
79. Hardin (p. 174). Roell described the events leading up to the execution of the Goliad prisoners in detail.
83. Fowler (2007: 167), Presley (p. 506), and Pohl & Hardin (p. 300).
84. Presley (p. 507) and Hardin (p: 191).
85. Hardin (p. 199).
86. Hardin (pp. 203–6).
87. Hardin (p. 209).
90. The text of the Treaty of Velasco can be found in Martínez (pp. 17–19).
91. Hardin (pp. 240, “250”).
92. Lack (pp. 13, “86”) and Moyano Pahissa (A) (p. 55).
93. Vázquez (1976: 71) and Lack (p. “239”).
94. Lack (p. 5).
95. Davis (pp. 370, 423, 474) and Vázquez (1997a: 70). For a consideration of the importance of land speculation, see Lack (p. 270, n. 11, and 271, n. 20).
96. Castañeda (VI, 220) and Lack (p. xxii).
100. Moyano Pahissa (A) (p. 145) and Soto (pp. 21–23).
102. Moyano Pahissa (B) (p. 15), Davis (p. “417”), and Vázquez (1976: 77).
104. Presley (p. 499), Hardin (p. 110), and Lack (p. 234).
105. Hardin (pp. “28,” 209) and Lack (pp. 167, 180–84).
107. Jones (p. 157) and Hardin (pp. 157, 209, 217). Fowler (2007: 172) claims Houston’s surprise attack was successful because Santa Anna’s order to post sentries was disobeyed.
108. Lack (pp. 133, 239) and Hardin (p. “156”).
111. Van Alstyne (p. “104”) and Fehrenbach (p. 263).
113. Brack (1975: 79), Moyano Pahissa (A) (p. 138), and Manning (1939: XII, “116”).
114. Fehrenbach (p. 262).
120. Merk (p. 35).
122. Lack (pp. 250–51).
123. Miller (p. 13).
124. Lack (pp 205–6, 265) and Tijerina (Andrew) (pp. 319–20).
125. De la Teja (p. 95).
126. Raat (1992: 57), Johnson (p. 17), and Hardin (p. 248).
127. Miller (p. 12).