

Who's Who of Early Statehood Advanced

John “Jack” Coffee Hays

John “Jack” Coffee Hays immigrated to Texas from the United States in 1836 during the Texas Revolution and served as a Ranger during the war. Hays continued his service with the Texas Rangers during the Republic of Texas era, becoming a captain and leading groups of Rangers in campaigns against Texas Indian tribes like the Comanche on the west Texas frontier. Hays and his Rangers also took part in battles against the Mexican troops who invaded Texas and occupied San Antonio in 1842.

When the United States annexed Texas in 1845, Hays was still serving as a captain in the Texas Rangers. In 1846, the United States and Mexico went to war as a result of disputes between the two countries over Texas’ southern border. Hays and his Rangers served in the First Regiment, Texas **Mounted Riflemen**¹ under General Zachary Taylor in the United States army during the U.S.-Mexico War.

Hays and his rangers acted as scouts for the U.S. army during the U.S.-Mexico War. As scouts, they learned about the Mexican lands they were traveling through in order to advise the army about the best routes to take. They also provided the U.S. army with updates on the movements of the Mexican army and acted as guides for General Taylor’s troops. Additionally, Hays and his men fought in the three-day Battle of Monterrey in 1846.

In 1847, the United States army landed by boat at the Mexican port town of Veracruz and began a nearly 250-mile march to Mexico City. During the five months that the U.S. army made its way toward Mexico’s capital, Hays and his men were ordered to protect the army’s supply lines. During that time, Hays’ Rangers earned the nickname “*los diablos Tejanos*,” or the “devil Texans,” for their fierce fighting against Mexican guerrillas, or small groups of volunteer fighters that were not directly associated with the Mexican army.

After the U.S.-Mexico War, Hays moved to California in 1849 during the California Gold Rush. He played an active role in the government of California in the years that followed, serving as the Sheriff of San Francisco, the Surveyor General for California, and a delegate to the 1876 Democratic national convention. He also helped develop the town of Oakland.

John “Jack” Coffee Hays died in California on April 21, 1883. He was buried in the Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland, California. He is one of the most well-known Rangers in Texas history.

¹ Mounted Riflemen: Armed soldiers on horseback.

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James Pinckney Henderson

James Pinckney Henderson was born in North Carolina on March 31, 1808. He studied law and became a lawyer in 1829. He served in the North Carolina militia before moving to Mississippi in 1835 and then to Texas in 1836 to join the Texas Revolution. He arrived, however, just after the final battle of the war was fought at San Jacinto.

After Texas won its independence from Mexico, Henderson played a significant role in the government of the Republic of Texas. He served briefly as attorney general in Sam Houston's first administration, then as secretary of state, and finally as the minister to England and France. While living in France, Henderson met a Pennsylvania woman named Frances Cox. They got married in England and returned to the United States, settling in San Augustine, Texas, in 1840, where Henderson opened a law office.

Henderson was a strong supporter of Texas' annexation to the United States. During Sam Houston's second administration, Houston sent Henderson to Washington, D.C., to attempt to secure an annexation agreement with the United States in 1844. Though this attempt was unsuccessful, Texas would finally be annexed to the U.S. the following year.

After Texas was annexed to the United States, Henderson was elected the first governor of the state of Texas. When the U.S.-Mexico War broke out over disputes regarding Texas' southern border with Mexico, Henderson asked permission from the Texas **legislature**² to take a leave of absence from his role as governor in order to command troops in the army. The legislature granted Henderson permission, and he took command of the Second Texas Regiment during the U.S.-Mexico War. While Henderson was in the army, his lieutenant governor, Albert Clinton Horton, served as Texas' acting governor.

During the U.S.-Mexico War, Henderson fought in the Battle of Monterrey and was appointed to negotiate Mexico's surrender of the city. From July to October 1846, he served as a Major General of the Texas volunteers in Mexico, before returning to Texas to finish out his term as governor.

When Henderson's term as governor of Texas ended, he returned to his home in San Augustine and resumed practicing law. In 1857, Henderson was elected to the United States Senate, though he was only able to serve for seven months before he died of tuberculosis in Washington, D.C., on June 4, 1858.

James Pinckney Henderson was buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C. His remains were later moved to the State Cemetery in Austin, Texas. Henderson County, Texas, was named in his honor.

² Legislature: Congress; The group of people elected to make laws in the government.

Benjamin McCulloch

Benjamin “Ben” McCulloch was born in Tennessee on November 11, 1811. The McCulloch family moved often, living in North Carolina, Alabama, and then Tennessee. While living in Tennessee, two of Benjamin’s brothers briefly attended the school of a neighbor and family friend named Sam Houston. His family later became friends with another neighbor, David “Davy” Crockett.

When David Crockett left Tennessee for Texas in November 1835, Ben McCulloch decided to follow his friend. McCulloch, however, arrived in Texas after Crockett died at the Battle of the Alamo in March 1836. McCulloch then joined the Texas army under Sam Houston and took part in the Runaway Scrape and the Battle of San Jacinto during the Texas Revolution.

After the Texas Revolution, McCulloch worked as a surveyor and joined the Texas Rangers under John “Jack” Coffee Hays. In 1839, McCulloch was elected to the House of Representatives for the Republic of Texas. He was among the men who volunteered to fight against the Mexican invasions of Texas in 1842, and he took part in the Somervell Expedition. McCulloch returned to Texas, however, before many of the other men on the expedition continued on to the disastrous fight at the Mexican town of Mier.

In 1845, Texas was annexed to the United States and McCulloch was elected to the First **Legislature**³ of the state of Texas. When the United States and Mexico went to war in 1846, McCulloch led a company of Rangers serving under John “Jack” Coffee Hays and became one of General Zachary Taylor’s chief scouts. McCulloch gained national recognition for his excellent scouting abilities, especially during the bloody Battle of Buena Vista. One of the Rangers in McCulloch’s company later wrote a book called *The Scouting Expeditions of McCulloch’s Texas Rangers*, which helped propel McCulloch to national fame.

After the U.S.-Mexico War, Ben McCulloch left Texas to migrate to California during the Gold Rush, where he was elected sheriff of Sacramento. In the 1850s, he returned to Texas and was appointed United States marshal for the Eastern District of Texas under presidents Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan. As a U.S. Marshal, McCulloch was responsible for enforcing federal laws, carrying out arrest warrants, maintaining public safety, and capturing **fugitive**⁴ slaves.

As sectional divisions over the issue of slavery grew in the United States, McCulloch left his position with the federal government as a U.S. Marshal. He joined the Confederate Army, or the army of the southern states who seceded from the Union after the election of President Abraham Lincoln in 1860, and fought in the American Civil War on the side of the South.

³ Legislature: Congress; A group of people elected to make laws.

⁴ Fugitive: A person who has escaped and is in hiding, especially to avoid arrest or persecution.

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Santos Benavides

Santos Benavides was born to a prominent Tejano family in Laredo, Texas, on November 1, 1823. His great-great grandfather, Tomás Sánchez de la Barrera y Garza, founded Laredo in 1755 during Spanish colonial rule. Santos' uncle, Basilio Benavides, served as the *alcalde*, or mayor, of Laredo three times while Texas was part of Mexico.

During the civil war that began in the 1830s in Mexico between centralists and federalists, the Benavides family supported the federalist side like many other Anglos and Tejanos in Texas. As a young man, Santos fought on the side of the federalists in this civil war.

In 1842, Santos Benavides married a woman named Augustina Villareal and the couple eventually adopted four children. Benavides worked as a merchant and rancher and played an active role in the government of Laredo. He also took part in several campaigns against the Lipan Apache Indians and other Indian tribes along the Texas frontier.

Benavides was a young man of 22 years when Texas was annexed to the United States in 1845. The U.S.-Mexico War began the following year, and Benavides worked to cooperate with Mirabeau Lamar's U.S. troops who were stationed in Laredo.

After the U.S.-Mexico War, Benavides was elected mayor of Laredo in 1856, and then chief justice of Webb County in 1859. As the United States became more and more divided over the issue of slavery, Benavides would go on to play an active role supporting Texas in the developing conflict between the North and the South. He fought in the Confederate Army, or the army of the southern states that seceded from the United States, during the American Civil War.

Benavides continued his political career in Laredo after the American Civil War. He died in his home in Laredo on November 9, 1891, at 68 years old.

Chief Potsanaquahip or “Buffalo Hump”

Buffalo Hump is the English name that was used by some Anglos to refer to a prominent Penateka Comanche chief, whose Comanche name has been recorded as *Potsanaquahip* and *Ko-cho-naw-quoip* in various historical documents. Most of what is documented in the historical record about Buffalo Hump has been recorded from various Anglo points of view.

Chief Buffalo Hump's exact date of birth is unknown, though he was likely born around 1790. Buffalo Hump first came to prominence in the historical record during the Republic of Texas era after the Council House Fight in San Antonio in March 1840, when more than 30 Penateka Comanche men, women, and children were captured or killed by Texas military leaders. In retaliation for the Council House Fight, Chief Buffalo Hump led approximately 500 to 1000 warriors in raids on the south Texas towns of Victoria and Linnville in August 1840. These raids were the largest American Indian attacks on Anglo settlements in the history of the American southwest. Following these raids, a Texas militia fought Chief Buffalo Hump and his warriors at the Battle of Plum Creek. Buffalo Hump and his people were defeated at Plum Creek, but managed to escape.

Chief Buffalo Hump worked to lead the Comanches in resisting Anglo encroachments into Comanche lands in the Great Plains region along the western frontier of Texas. As Anglo settlers migrated west into Comanche lands, Buffalo Hump led raids against the settlers in an effort to maintain his tribe's control of the region. He also led his tribe in several conflicts with Texas Rangers along the frontier.

As more and more Anglo settlers continued to move west into Comanche lands, Chief Buffalo Hump worked to protect his tribe's access to Comanche hunting grounds in other ways as well. On March 19, 1840, he took part in negotiations with the U.S. government to establish the Council Springs Treaty in which the government promised to prevent further Anglo encroachments into Comanche lands, although the U.S. government would ultimately be unable to enforce its promise. In 1847, Chief Buffalo Hump also played a significant role in establishing the Meusebach-Comanche Treaty. This treaty allowed for peaceful relations between German immigrants who settled in and around Fredericksburg and Buffalo Hump's Penateka Comanches.

In 1856, Chief Buffalo Hump's tribe lived on a U.S. government reservation in Texas, before migrating to the Wichita Mountains in present-day Oklahoma in 1858. While camped in the Wichita Mountains, the U.S. army attacked Buffalo Hump's tribe, killing 80 Comanches. In 1859, Buffalo Hump settled the survivors of his tribe on the Kiowa – Comanche reservation in present-day Oklahoma. Chief Buffalo Hump died in 1870.

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José Antonio Navarro

José Antonio Navarro was born into a prominent Tejano family in San Antonio on February 27, 1795. He supported the Anglo colonization of Texas during the Mexican National Era and became close friends with Stephen F. Austin. Navarro also served on the state **legislature**⁵ of Coahuila y Tejas. In 1825, Navarro married Margarita de la Garza, and they had seven children.

During the Texas Revolution, Navarro was a prominent Tejano leader in the fight for Texas independence. He was one of the three Mexican signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Navarro also played an active role in the Republic of Texas government, serving in the new nation's congress, where he advocated for the rights of Tejanos in the young republic. He took part in the Santa Fe Expedition in 1841 and was captured and imprisoned in Mexico for fourteen months before escaping and returning to Texas.

During the Republic of Texas era, Navarro was a strong advocate for Texas annexation to the United States. He took part in the Convention of 1845, which voted to accept the U.S. proposal of annexation. At the Convention, Navarro also helped author Texas' first state constitution.

Navarro was elected to the Texas state Senate twice during the era of early statehood. As sectional divisions over slavery intensified between the North and South, Navarro was a strong advocate for states' rights and supported the southern states' secession from the Union following the 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln.

When the American Civil War between the North and the South broke out in 1861, Navarro was 66 years old. Though he was too old to serve in the military, his four sons all fought in the war on the side of the South.

Navarro County was named in honor of José Antonio Navarro and the contributions he and his family made to Texas' development. The town of Corsicana in Navarro County was named in honor of his father's place of birth in Corsica, France.

⁵ Legislature: Congress; A group of people elected to make laws.

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Sarah A. Bowman

Not much is known about Sarah A. Bowman before the U.S.-Mexico War. She was born Sarah Knight in 1812 or 1813 in either Tennessee or Missouri. She was married several times, and as a result, there have been several last names recorded for Sarah throughout history. She was six feet two inches tall, which was an exceptional height for any person at the time, especially a woman.

After Texas was annexed to the United States in 1845, President James K. Polk sent the U.S. army under General Zachary Taylor to the disputed border between Texas and Mexico at the Rio Grande. Sarah's husband at the time was a soldier in the Eighth United States Infantry serving under General Taylor, and Sarah accompanied her husband to the border. This was not uncommon at the time. Soldiers' wives would often travel with the army and serve as cooks and laundresses, or people who did the laundry. They would also often care for sick or injured soldiers.

Sarah quickly became known for her courage and participation in encounters with the Mexican army. During the bombardment of Fort Brown in 1846, Sarah refused to take shelter with the other women and instead continued to cook and serve food for the soldiers for nearly a week in the midst of the bombardment. Her fearless service during this attack gained her the nickname: the Heroine of Fort Brown. During one of the bloodiest battles of the war – the Battle of Buena Vista – Sarah carried wounded soldiers from the battlefield and loaded rifles for the men engaged in the fight.

After the U.S.-Mexico War, the historical record is not as clear about many of the details of the events of the rest of Sarah's life. At some point, her husband died, and she ran a hotel in Saltillo for a short time. In the years that followed, Sarah moved often. In 1848, she traveled to California, then moved to El Paso in 1849, where she established and ran another hotel. Next, she moved to New Mexico, establishing another hotel with a German immigrant named Albert J. Bowman, who she married some time before then.

By the 1860s, Sarah and Albert were no longer married, though it is not clear exactly what ended their relationship. Sarah once again traveled with the U.S. army, serving as a cook and laundress during the Civil War. After this service, she moved several times in the years that followed, establishing restaurants and hotels in San Antonio and Yuma, New Mexico.

The exact date of Sarah's death is unknown, but it was likely sometime in 1863. It was reported that she died by tarantula bite. She was buried at the Fort Yuma cemetery in Arizona in December 1866, with full military honors. In 1890, Sarah's remains, along with the remains of 158 others at the Fort Yuma cemetery, were moved to the presidio at San Francisco, California.

San Jacinto “Cinte” Lewis

San Jacinto “Cinte” Lewis was born into slavery in the 1820s or 1830s in Fort Bend County near Houston. Cinte claimed that he was named San Jacinto because he was born during the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836, though that may not be his actual date of birth. In 1937, more than 100 years later, Cinte was interviewed for the Slave Narrative Project created by the Library of Congress. The purpose of this project was to record interviews of people who had been enslaved in the United States before slavery was abolished in 1865.

In his interview, Cinte described learning to work alongside his enslaved mother, Maria Simmons, in the cotton fields of the plantation of a man named Dave Randen near Richmond, Texas. Cinte’s father, Lewis, also worked at the same plantation. Cinte said that enslaved children at that plantation helped their mothers or other adults in the fields when they were young, until they were considered old enough to work on their own. Cinte stated that he began to work in the fields himself at 15 years of age.

Cinte explained that enslaved people on his plantation would sometimes run away to the nearby woods. Some, however, would return because they had no food and became hungry, or others would be caught and brought back to the plantation. Upon their return, Cinte said that they would be beaten as punishment for leaving.

The enslaved people on plantations were not allowed to learn to read or write, and at Cinte’s plantation they also were not allowed to go to church. Cinte described how he and the other enslaved people would secretly hold their own church services anyway, knowing that if they were caught, they would be beaten. Cinte recounted how Black men, women, and children who died at the plantation would be put in a box and buried without a funeral.

In the interview, Cinte stated that for Christmas, the plantation owners gave him and the other enslaved people good clothes, “*two bits*,” and extra food. He said they sometimes even got up to a week off for the Christmas holiday. Occasionally, Cinte said that there would be dances at which he would play the fiddle for “White folks and Colored folks both.”

Slavery was abolished in the United States in 1865 after the Civil War. Cinte married a woman named Lucy, and they worked as tenant farmers on the plantation where Cinte had once been a slave. Tenant farmers rented land from a landlord, typically paying their rent with the crops they grew. It was a challenging way to make a living because of the high cost of renting the land. When describing his time as a tenant farmer, Cinte stated “They puts us in debt and makes us work so many years to pay for it.” To make additional money, Cinte also hauled sugar and molasses to Brazoria and Columbia.

Cinte and his wife, Lucy, had children and grandchildren. Cinte died on December 15, 1941 in Brazoria, Texas. Though his age at the time of his death is not certain, it was recorded that he died at 116 years old.

⁶ Two bits: A bit was an amount of money that equaled about 25 cents.

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Sam Houston

After Texas joined the United States in 1845, Sam Houston was elected to the U.S. Senate and served from 1846 to 1859. During that time, Houston considered running for president of the United States for several different political parties, but ultimately was not chosen as the candidate for any party.

As sectional divisions over slavery increased between the North and South during this era, Houston stood out as a devoted Unionist. A Unionist was someone who supported the United States remaining together, rather than separating over the growing sectional issue of slavery. Houston firmly opposed the idea of Texas willingly giving up its place in the nation that it had worked so hard to join.

Although Houston himself was a slaveowner who supported the rights of the states to pass their own laws regarding slavery, he also supported laws like the Missouri Compromise, which limited the westward expansion of slavery. Houston's Unionist opinions upset many White Texans and other Southerners, whose economies were based on slave labor and whose loyalty to their own states was often stronger than their desire to maintain unity with the rest of the country.

As debates between the North and the South over the expansion of slavery intensified, Houston stood firm in his position supporting states' rights to make their own laws about slavery, while strongly opposing disunity or secession. He supported the Compromise of 1850 which admitted California as a free state, and he opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which allowed the people of those territories to decide the issue of slavery themselves by a vote. These stances made Houston unpopular with many white Texans, but he stood his ground on what he believed was right for the United States. Houston ran for governor of Texas in 1857, but was defeated by the Democratic candidate, Hardin R. Runnels. In 1859, his term as a U.S. Senator came to an end, and Houston was not reelected.

Despite Houston's Unionist views, he managed to be elected governor of Texas in 1859. As the presidential election of 1860 approached, the Constitutional Union Party nearly nominated Houston to run as their candidate because he was a Southerner with strong pro-Unionist views, though they ultimately chose a man named John Bell instead.

When a Northern, anti-slavery Republican named Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 presidential election, many states in the South were greatly upset. Some states, like South Carolina, had even threatened to secede from the Union if Lincoln were elected. Many supporters of secession in the Texas government pushed Houston to call a special session of the Texas legislature. At this special session, Houston tried to convince his fellow Texans that secession would undoubtedly result in great harm to Texas and the rest of the South.

Most southern states went on to secede from the Union, forming the Confederate States of America. When Houston refused to take the oath of loyalty to the Confederacy, he was removed from office as the governor of Texas. Meanwhile, the North and the South moved closer and closer to civil war.

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Thomas Jefferson Rusk

Thomas Jefferson Rusk was born in South Carolina in 1803. Rusk moved to Georgia to study the law in 1825, where he met and married Mary F. "Polly" Cleveland. Rusk and his wife then moved to Nacogdoches, Texas in 1835. During the Texas Revolution, Rusk signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, served as the Texas Secretary of War, and served in Sam Houston's army at the Battle of San Jacinto.

Rusk played an active role in the government of the Republic of Texas, serving in the administration of Sam Houston and leading the volunteer troops that subdued the Córdova Rebellion in east Texas. He continued to practice law and was elected to serve as the Chief Justice of the Republic of Texas Supreme Court in 1838 and later went on to form one of the most prominent law partnerships of the time with the future Texas governor, James Pinckney Henderson. Rusk was instrumental in establishing Nacogdoches University (which no longer exists), serving as the university's first vice president in 1845 and then president in 1846.

Rusk was a strong advocate of Texas annexation to the United States. He served as the president of the Convention of 1845, which accepted the terms of annexation. His expertise in the law allowed him to play a central role in writing the state constitution that brought Texas into the United States.

In 1846, Thomas J. Rusk and Sam Houston were both elected to serve as the first two United States senators from Texas. Rusk was a vocal advocate of the U.S.-Mexico War and supported Texas' border claims, which included the Rio Grande as the southern border and land as far west as present-day New Mexico and Colorado, and as far north as present-day Wyoming as the state's western border.

After the U.S.-Mexico War, Northern and Southern congressmen debated the issue of slavery in the western territories the United States had gained in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, known as the Mexican Cession. Anti-slavery congressmen from Northern states wanted Texas, a slave state, to cede much of its western land in order to limit the amount of new slave territory entering the Union. Rusk strongly opposed the cession of Texas' western lands to the U.S. government, especially without compensation. As a result, he was instrumental in securing a payment of \$10 million from the U.S. government to Texas in exchange for the disputed western territory as part of the Compromise of 1850.

In 1856, Rusk accepted the position of U.S. Postmaster General, overseeing the national operations of the United States postal service. In March 1857, Rusk was elected to serve as the temporary president of the U.S. Senate. One month later, however, Rusk's wife, Polly, died of tuberculosis. Devastated by this loss, and suffering from a tumor in his neck, Rusk stepped away from his role in government. He died on July 29, 1857.

The State of Texas placed monuments at the graves of Rusk and his wife, Polly, in the Oak Grove cemetery where they were buried in Nacogdoches. Rusk County and the town of Rusk were named in his honor.

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Cynthia Ann Parker

Cynthia Ann Parker was born to Lucy and Silas M. Parker in Crawford County, Illinois around the year 1827. Sometime between 1833 and 1835, when Cynthia was about six to eight years old, she and her family moved to central Texas and settled east of present-day Waco in what was then Comanche territory along the western frontier.

Cynthia's family built their home at "Fort Parker" on a land grant of about 16,400 acres as farmers along the western Texas frontier. Then, on May 19, 1836, a band of Comanches approached the Fort as Cynthia's family was working in the fields. The Comanches killed five men, wounded two women, and took five captives, including Cynthia Ann and her younger brother John. At the time, Cynthia was about nine years old.

Cynthia Ann Parker and the other four captives were sent to different bands within the Comanche tribe. Cynthia Ann spent the next twenty-four years with the Quahada Comanches. She assimilated into Comanche culture, learned the Comanche language, and adopted a Comanche name – *Nautdah*, which meant "someone found." Cynthia married a prominent Comanche warrior named Peta Nocona and together they had two sons, Quanah and Pecos, and a daughter, Topsannah.

Over the years, Cynthia's uncle James Parker searched for his five family members who had been captured that day in May 1836. He was able to locate four of his missing family members and return them to the Parker family. On several occasions during that time, Cynthia was seen among the Comanches by Anglo traders or military troops who encountered the Quahada tribe she lived with. These Anglos attempted to return her to the Parkers, but Cynthia refused to leave her Comanche family.

In 1860, a group of Texas Rangers led by future Texas governor, Sul Ross, working together with regular army troops, led attacks against the Comanches along the frontier in response to a series of Indian raids on frontier Anglo settlements. The Rangers and army troops attacked the Quahada tribe that had become Cynthia's home, killing most of the tribe.

Cynthia's son, Quanah, was able to escape. Cynthia also tried to escape on horseback carrying her infant daughter, Topsannah, but was captured by Sul Ross. Ross realized that Cynthia was an Anglo, and brought her and her daughter to Fort Worth. Cynthia's uncle, James Parker, then brought Cynthia home to her Anglo family, but after twenty-five years living with the Comanches, Cynthia considered them her true family, not the Parkers. Though she remained with the Parkers, she never assimilated back into Anglo culture and even made several unsuccessful attempts to escape and return to her Comanche family.

In 1864, four years after her return to the Parkers, Cynthia's daughter, Topsannah, contracted influenza and pneumonia and died. She was about five years old. Cynthia was devastated by the death of her daughter and still mourning the loss of her Comanche family. Cynthia Ann Parker, who spent most of her life as *Nautdah*, died of influenza in 1870.

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Robert S. Neighbors

Robert Simpson Neighbors was born in Virginia on November 3, 1815, to William and Elizabeth Neighbors, who both died when Robert was only 4 months old. Robert was raised by a Southern planter named Samuel Hamner, who became his guardian after the death of Robert's parents. At nineteen, Robert left Virginia, living for a short time in Louisiana, before migrating to Texas in the spring of 1836 during the Texas Revolution.

Neighbors joined the Texas army after the Revolution and served from 1839 to 1841 as a quartermaster, which is the person who ensures that the troops have all the essential supplies they need including food, clothing, weapons, and ammunition. He then joined John Coffee Hays' company of Texas Rangers in 1842. Neighbors was in San Antonio during Mexico's first invasion and occupation of the city. He was captured and taken to Mexico where he was imprisoned until 1844, when he was released and returned to Texas.

In 1845, after Texas was annexed to the United States, Neighbors took a position with the federal government as Indian agent to Texas. Indian agents were responsible for overseeing the relationship and interactions between the government, settlers, and Indians. Some of their responsibilities included settling disputes, regulating trade, and attempting to assimilate American Indians into U.S. society.

In his role as Indian agent, Neighbors took an active role in building relationships with Indian tribes along the west Texas frontier. Most Indian agents remained at their field office and waited for tribal members to come to them with issues or concerns. Neighbors made it a point to visit individual tribes and address any issues or concerns in each tribes' home territory. He spent a great deal of time among the various Indian tribes along the frontier, and was able to establish significant relationships with many of the tribes he worked with. He took part in several Indian councils to establish peaceful relationships between Indians and Anglo settlers along the frontier, including the meeting with the German immigrants which established the Meusebach-Comanche Treaty in 1847.

Due to ongoing clashes between frontier Indians and White settlers, in 1849 Neighbors proposed the establishment of reservations where frontier Indian tribes would be taught how to live within U.S. society. The reservation system Neighbors envisioned would not be established until 1854, and was largely unsuccessful as a result of disease, Anglo opposition, and Indian disinterest.

Meanwhile, violent clashes between Anglos and Indians along the frontier had continued, and Neighbors' work to advocate for the protection of Texas Indian tribes caused him to receive death threats from angry Americans who opposed any Indian presence in Texas. As a result, in 1859 Neighbors worked to relocate many Texas Indians north of the Red River into Indian Territory, or modern-day Oklahoma. Upon Neighbors' return to Texas, he stopped at Fort Belknap. While in conversation with a man named Edward Cornett, who was most likely unknown to Neighbors, Cornett shot and killed Neighbors on September 14, 1859. Robert S. Neighbors was buried in the civilian cemetery at Fort Belknap.

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Juan Cortina

Juan Nepomuceno Cortina was born to Estéfana and Trinidad Cortina on May 16, 1824, in Tamaulipas, Mexico. His aristocratic mother was heir to a large land grant in the lower Rio Grande valley, which included the present-day city of Brownsville. Juan and his family moved to that land when he was a young boy.

During the U.S.-Mexico War, Cortina served in the Mexican army under General Mariano Arista of the Tamaulipas Brigade, fighting in the battles of Resaca de la Palma and Palo Alto along the Rio Grande. Following the war, he returned to his home in Brownsville on the Texas side of the Rio Grande.

In the years that followed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Cortina advocated for the civil rights and property rights of Tejanos in south Texas. On July 13, 1859, Cortina witnessed the Brownsville city marshal, Robert Shears, carry out a violent arrest of a Tejano man. Cortina shot Shears and fled town with the man Shears had been attempting to arrest. This event began a conflict that would come to be known as the "Cortina War."

Cortina gathered a force of about 40 to 80 men, returned to Brownsville, and seized control of the town on September 28, 1859. At the request of several town leaders, a Mexican official from Matamoros came to Brownsville to negotiate with Cortina and his men, getting them to leave the town on September 30, 1859. Cortina and some of the men then took refuge at his family ranch and tensions in the town remained high.

Within a few days of Cortina's initial attack, a group of townspeople formed a militia called the Brownsville Tigers. Together with a militia from Matamoros, they attempted to launch an attack against Cortina and his men at his ranch, though Cortina was able to repel this attack. Then, in November, a small group of Texas Rangers under William G. Tobin attempted to mount a similar attack on Cortina's men at the ranch, but they were also unsuccessful.

As word spread of Cortina's success, he became something of a folk hero to groups of Mexicans and Tejanos who supported his defiant stand in support of the rights of Mexicans. Many more men joined Cortina and by December his ranks had grown to approximately 400 volunteers. A second, larger group of Texas Rangers led by John Ford and an army company under Major Samuel P. Heintzelman led an attack against Cortina and his men on December 27, 1859, south of Rio Grande City. Cortina and his men fought in the Battle of Rio Grande City, but were forced to retreat across the Rio Grande into Mexico.

By this time, another military leader, Colonel Robert E. Lee, commander of the Eighth Military District of Texas, arrived with a military force as well, to put additional pressure on Cortina and his men. Cortina retreated to the Burgos Mountains and remained there for a year. Cortina later went on to fight against the French intervention in Mexico in the 1860s and served as governor of Tamaulipas and General of the Mexican Army of the North. Juan Cortina died in Mexico on October 30, 1894.