

Looking Ahead: Trouble in Texas *Advanced*

Unit 4: The Mexican National Era

Name:

Date:

Period:

On the Road to Conflict

1825	The Anglo-American empresario, Green DeWitt, established his colony and founded the town of Gonzales, Texas, about 70 miles east of San Antonio.
1831	<p>Gonzales had grown to a population of about 377 people. The people of the small town requested a cannon from the Mexican government for protection against raids carried out by tribes like the powerful Comanche.</p> <p>Mexico granted the request and provided a cannon to the people of Gonzales under the condition that they return the cannon if Mexico ever required it.</p>
1835	<p>President Antonio López de Santa Anna had been in office for two years at this point. During that time, he joined the Centralist rebellion that overthrew his own Federalist government and abolished the Federal Constitution of 1824.</p> <p>Several states throughout Mexico erupted into civil war as federalists led rebellions against the centralists who had taken over the government. Many Anglos and Tejanos were concerned about what this could mean for Texas.</p> <p>In the Fall of this same year, the Mexican government sent word to the people of Gonzales informing them that they must return the cannon they had borrowed four years earlier.</p> <p>The people of Gonzales refused to comply with the order, however. The centralist government sent a small contingent of the Mexican military to ensure that the residents of Gonzales return the cannon. When the military arrived, the people of Gonzales still refused to return the cannon, and sent out a call for armed support from the surrounding areas ...</p>

Shots Fired! The Battle of Gonzales

Nearly two weeks after the Anglo residents of Gonzales encountered the Mexican troops sent to retrieve the cannon, the *Telegraph and Texas Register* printed an account of the event as told by an Anglo reporter named David B. Macomb who arrived after the encounter had occurred.

Read the following excerpts from his article to determine what happened and why it was significant.

Excerpt 1

<p>“The Mexican commander, [Castañeda], then demanded the cause of our troops attacking him, and the reply by colonel Wallace, was that he had been ordered to demand our cannon, and had threatened, in case of a refusal, to take it <i>by force</i>.”</p> <p>“that this cannon had been presented to the citizens of Gonzales for the defence of the <i>Constitution</i>, by the <i>constitutional</i> authorities, under the confederation, and that none but constitutional authorities should be obeyed,”</p> <p>“that [Castañeda] was acting under the orders of Santa Ana, who had broken down all the <i>state</i> and <i>federal</i> constitutions, except that of Texas; and we would fight for our rights under that until the last gasp.”</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to this excerpt, which side of the conflict attacked first? What reason was given for this attack? 2. Why did the Anglo residents of Gonzales say that they didn’t have to obey the request to return the cannon? 3. What did the Anglo residents promise to do? Why?
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Excerpt 2

<p>“[Castañeda] then replied that he himself was a republican, and two-thirds of the Mexican nation were such, and that he was still an officer of the federal government, although that government had undergone considerable changes;”</p> <p>“that the majority of the states having decided upon that change, we, the people of Texas, were bound to submit to it, that he did not want to fight the Anglo-Americans of Texas;”</p> <p>“that his orders from [General] Ugartachea were simply to <i>demand the cannon</i>, and if refused, to take up a position in the vicinity of Gonzales until further orders.”</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the article, what were Commander Castañeda’s own views on the centralist government? 2. Did Castañeda and the Mexican troops have orders to use force against the Anglo residents?
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3. Based on the account given so far, does an armed conflict between the Anglos in Gonzales and the Mexican army under Commander Castañeda seem likely? Explain your reasoning.

Excerpt 3

<p>“Colonel Wallace immediately ordered the cannon to fire on [the Mexican troops], and our troops advanced in double quick time, and perfect order, and when within about three hundred yards, the cannon still playing away upon them, the Mexicans fled, and continued to fly until entirely out of sight, on the road to San Antonio . . .”</p> <p>“The reason assigned by [Castañeda] for flying without giving battle, was that we had cannon, and he had none; but that when he should receive a reinforcement, colonel Ugartechea would bring on cannon sufficient to burn and reduce the whole town to ashes.”</p> <p>“We therefore look for another attack soon, in considerable force, and if our troops arrive soon enough, they will enable us to repel the attack successfully, and even . . . to take up the line of march immediately for San Antonio.”</p> <p>“We hope and trust that our citizens are now of one mind as to the intentions of Santa Ana. “The <i>other</i> states have submitted,” and the people of Texas <i>must</i> embrace centralism – So says their commander.”</p> <p><i>“We object to the premises, and of course, to the conclusion.”</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly summarize what happened at the Battle of Gonzales. What was the result? 2. According to this article, how will the Mexican Colonel Ugartechea respond to the events that took place at Gonzales? 3. According to the author, what is likely to happen next?
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