

1) Challenges Facing the Republic of Texas 1836 - 1845

Advanced



The Republic of Texas faced a number of significant challenges during its almost ten years as a nation. It had already accrued \$1.25 million dollars in debt by 1836 as a result of borrowing money to finance the Revolution. Establishing trade with other countries was difficult and securing any more loans was impossible because of Texas' unstable finances. As a result, Texas' debt climbed to \$12 million by 1845.

Gaining diplomatic recognition from other nations also proved to be very difficult for two main reasons. First, Mexico claimed that Texas was still a Mexican state in rebellion. Second, the

Texas economy relied on slave labor at a time when anti-slavery movements were growing in strength around the world. It was very difficult for Texas to succeed as an independent nation without meaningful international partnerships.

Additionally, as more and more Anglos immigrated into the Republic, conflicts and violence often broke out between the new settlers and the American Indians in Texas. The Republic of Texas' government struggled to find a consistent policy for adequately addressing conflicts that arose between Anglos and Texas Indians throughout the era.

2) Texas' First President: Sam Houston 1836 - 1838

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The first man to serve as president of the Republic of Texas was the hero of the Texas Revolution, Sam Houston. Houston's goals for his presidency included securing peace agreements with the Texas Indian tribes, establishing diplomatic and commercial relationships with other countries, and perhaps most importantly, the annexation of Texas to the United States.

In 1836, a large majority of Texans supported annexation to the United States. The U.S., however, denied Texas' application for annexation due to disagreements between northern and southern politicians over whether to admit a new slave state into the union. Additionally, annexing Texas was almost certain to lead the U.S. into war with Mexico.

With annexation off the table, Houston focused on his other goals. He set about establishing

peace treaties with many of the Texas Indian tribes, including his adopted tribe, the Cherokee of east Texas.

Houston also worked toward his goal of establishing diplomatic relationships with other prominent countries. The U.S. recognized Texas independence in 1837, though the U.S. wouldn't lend Texas any money and charged tariffs on Texas cotton. Great Britain initially refused to recognize Texas' independence and would not trade with Texas due to its slave-based economy.

Sam Houston also moved the Texas capital to the new and undeveloped city of Houston. To save money and raise revenue, Houston ended up disbanding the Texas army and passing high taxes on Texans. By the end of his two-year term, many Texans viewed Houston's presidency as a failure.

3) The Córdova Rebellion *August – October 1838*

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During Sam Houston's presidency, a rebellion broke out in and around the east Texas town of Nacogdoches. A Tejano leader in Nacogdoches named Vicente Córdova organized and led a rebellion against Anglo settlements in the area. Córdova had not supported Texas independence during the Texas Revolution and opposed the unfair treatment many east Texas Tejanos had received from Anglo settlers.

With the support of a Mexican general named Vicente Filisola, Córdova recruited American Indians in the area to join his rebellion, promising them titles to lands in east Texas. Some members of east Texas tribes, including the Caddo, Kickapoo, and Cherokee, joined Córdova's rebellion.

In August 1838, Córdova led approximately 300 to 600 men in attacks against Anglo settlements along the Angelina River near Nacogdoches. A Texas militia led by Thomas J. Rusk forced Córdova and his men to disband without a fight.

Then in October, Córdova and his men began new attacks against Anglo settlements near the Trinity River in Cherokee territory. This time, the Texan militia under Rusk fought Córdova and his men. Córdova fled to Mexico, and the rebellion effectively ended. Rusk's militia, however, continued fights against the Caddo who had taken part in the rebellion, eventually forcing them out of Texas. This affair is known as the Córdova Rebellion.

4) Texas' Second President: Mirabeau Lamar 1838 - 1841

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In the Republic of Texas, a president could not serve consecutive terms. This prevented Houston from running again immediately following his first term. Houston's vice president, Mirabeau Lamar, ran for president on a platform that opposed nearly all of Houston's policies.

Where Houston had worked to establish peace treaties with Texas tribes, Lamar began a "war of extermination" against them. Lamar used the army and the Texas Rangers to drive eastern tribes like the Cherokee and Wichita out of Texas and to fight battles against powerful western tribes like the Comanche who had been carrying out raids against Anglo settlements along the western frontier.

While Lamar forced many American Indian tribes out of Texas with his war of extermination, his policy toward Texas Indians was incredibly

costly for the Texas government. As a result of these wars against Indians in the region, Texas' national debt climbed even higher.

One of Houston's goals that Lamar did not oppose was establishing diplomatic and commercial relationships with foreign countries. Lamar was able to establish relationships with France and Holland. He was unable to finalize a treaty with Britain because of the issue of slavery in Texas.

Lamar moved the Texas capital from Houston to the new and undeveloped city of Austin, which was on the far western edge of the Republic. By the end of Lamar's presidency, the Republic of Texas' debt had climbed to \$10 million largely as the result of the costly Indian wars and moving the Texas capital.

5) The Council House Fight *March 19, 1840*

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The Comanche dominated the Texas Great Plains region throughout much of this period. Comanche raids on frontier settlements happened frequently, and in some cases Comanches would kidnap Anglo settlers and keep them as prisoners. Texas militia groups often gathered to confront the Comanche, but local militias often could not stop the raids.

Then, in January 1840, during Mirabeau Lamar's presidency, several Comanche chiefs traveled to San Antonio and offered a peace treaty. The Comanche population was decreasing due to disease, Anglo attacks against them were increasing, and other Plains tribes had been pressuring them to make peace with the Anglo Texans. Texas leaders in San Antonio accepted the offer on the condition that the Comanche bring all of their Anglo captives with them to the peace negotiations.

On March 19, 1840, approximately sixty Comanche men, women, and children arrived at the Council House in San Antonio for the meeting with the Texas Rangers and military. The only prisoners they brought with them, however, were a few Mexican children and one teenaged Anglo girl named Matilda Lockhart, who told of the torture she had experienced while she was a prisoner of the Comanche.

A fight broke out when the Anglo leadership stated they would hold all of the Comanches as prisoners until the remainder of the Anglo captives were returned. All of the Comanches were either killed or captured. In retaliation for the Council House Fight, a thousand Comanche warriors later mounted the largest Comanche raid in the history of the American southwest against the south Texas towns of Victoria and Linnville.

6) The Santa Fe Expedition *June – October 1841*

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At the end of Mirabeau Lamar's presidency, Lamar had the idea to send a commercial expedition to Santa Fe – a city in the state of New Mexico and a prominent trading center between Mexico and the United States. Although Santa Fe was within the borders of Texas as stated in the Treaties of Velasco, the reality was that Santa Fe was the capital of the Mexican state of New Mexico. Lamar hoped to establish trade with Santa Fe and to convince the government of New Mexico to officially join the Republic of Texas.

When Lamar proposed this idea to the Republic of Texas' Congress, they rejected the proposal. Despite this, Lamar pushed forward with his plan, gathering people and supplies to make the 700-

mile journey. Lamar sent a letter in advance to the New Mexico government announcing his intentions for the expedition. When the governor of New Mexico received Lamar's letter, he requested instructions from the president of Mexico – Antonio López de Santa Anna. Yes, *that* Santa Anna.

President Santa Anna ordered the governor of New Mexico to capture and arrest the members of the expedition when they arrived. The expedition finally arrived in mid-September after experiencing a very difficult journey. They were arrested and marched over 1,400 miles to Mexico City, and then imprisoned in Veracruz. The Santa Fe expedition was a complete disaster and an embarrassment for both Texas and the Lamar administration.

7) Sam Houston's Second Presidency 1841 - 1844

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Sam Houston ran for president again in 1841, promising to provide stability to the Republic of Texas. After the embarrassment of the Santa Fe expedition and the rapidly increasing debt of Mirabeau Lamar's presidency, many Texans wanted to give Houston another chance. Providing stability to the young republic was easier said than done, however.

The Mexican military invaded Texas twice in 1842, briefly occupying San Antonio both times. In response, a Texas military force invaded the Mexican town of Mier, where they fought the Mexican army. The Texans were defeated and imprisoned in Mexico. This caused fear, embarrassment, and great concern for Texas.

Considering the many challenges facing Texas, Houston believed the best options for Texas' survival were either a strong commercial partnership with Great Britain or, more preferably, annexation to the United States.

The U.S. was still reluctant to annex Texas because that would mean adding another slave state to the union, but most Americans were also opposed to Great Britain having a significant role in Texas affairs. Houston hoped the U.S. would annex Texas in order to prevent Britain from gaining power in Texas. Yet when the U.S. Congress took a vote in 1844 on whether to annex Texas, Congress voted against annexation just as it had the first time.

8) The Last President of Texas: Anson Jones 1844 - 1846

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A man named Anson Jones was the last president of the Republic of Texas. Jones had been Sam Houston's Secretary of State during Houston's second presidency. Under Jones' administration, the Texas congress continued many of Houston's policies, including Houston's goal of Texas' annexation to the United States.

Although the U. S. had just denied Texas' second application for annexation in 1844, many Americans were beginning to favor the idea of annexing Texas in order to prevent the British from gaining any more influence in North America. As a result, many Americans opposed British involvement in Texas more than they opposed adding a new slave state to the union.

With only a few months left in his term, U.S. president John Tyler took advantage of the

growing public support for Texas annexation, and pushed Congress to finally admit Texas into the Union.

Under the annexation agreement, Texas entered the union in 1845 as a U.S. state with full representation in the government. Texas still had to pay off its own debt, but the state was allowed to keep all of its own public lands, rather than surrendering them to the U.S. government. The U.S. promised to enforce the Rio Grande as the southern border of Texas despite objections from Mexico. Finally, Texas had the power to split into five different states if it chose. Under these conditions, the Republic of Texas accepted annexation into the United States and ceased to exist as an independent nation.