THE TEXAS PRESIDENCIES: PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP IN THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS, 1836-1845

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the

University of North Texas in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Kenneth William Bridges

Denton, Texas

May, 1998

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This thesis examines the letters, proclamations, and addresses of the four presidents of the Republic of Texas, David G. Burnet, Sam Houston, Mirabeau B. Lamar, and Anson Jones, to determine how these men faced the major crises of Texas and shaped policy regarding land, relations with Native Americans, finances, internal improvements, annexation by the United States, and foreign relations. Research materials include manuscript and published speeches and letters, diaries, and secondary materials.

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CHAPTER 1

THE EMERGENCE OF THE TEXAS REPUBLIC

During the period between 1836 and 1845 when Texas existed as an independent republic, the Texian people endured numerous hardships. The presidents of the Republic of Texas, David G. Burnet, Sam Houston, Mirabeau B. Lamar, and Anson Jones, had the responsibility of guiding public policy and garnering support for their respective but often divergent programs for sustaining the nation. In their messages to the Congress and people of Texas, these presidents addressed the issues affecting the lives of the people and the welfare of the country. The chief executives of the Texas Republic had vastly different agendas, owing to sharp political differences and the shifting circumstances of the nation. This analysis of presidential messages discusses what issues mattered most to Texans of that era and the degree of success the presidents had in the implementation of those expressed goals.

The administration of the president ad interim, David G. Burnet, had but one task: the very survival of the country. On March 2, 1836, when delegates convened at Washington-on-the-Brazos and established a republic independent of Mexico, Texas lay in a near-disastrous situation. The brave bands of Texians steadily lost in battle, only to suffer vile retribution at the hands of the centralist armies of Mexican President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. The roads had become flooded with refugees fleeing eastward from Santa Anna's armies. The Texas government had no funds and few soldiers for the

defense of its territory. In these tumultuous days the Republic of Texas arose, and its new president stepped forward to meet the daunting task.

Burnet had to inspire the country to fight on despite the monumental difficulties it faced. In a proclamation to the people of Texas on March 18, he declared, "Rally, then, fellow-citizens, to the standard of freedom. Let not every idle rumour, circulated perhaps by the articles of the enemy, paralyze your hands or divide your thoughts from one grand purpose, the Independence of Texas."[1]

The impetus behind the Texas Revolution emerged in the chaos of internal Mexican politics shortly after Mexico won its independence from Spain. Without the grievances Texians had toward the Mexican government, the Texas Revolution never would have had the same ferocity or justification. Even just a few years before Texas declared its independence, many leaders still desired that their land become an equal partner in the Mexican confederation. Mexico, however, had inherited Spain's fear of American designs on its territory, even though both Spain and its successor state had realized the need to populate the area in order to build infrastructure and a more secure hold on its lands adjacent to the American border. Spain had prohibited immigration of foreigners into its American dominions, favoring the indigenous peoples and native Spaniards to populate the countryside.

Following Mexican independence from Spain in 1821, the nation enacted various measures to encourage foreign immigration. Some of these policies would later inspire

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[1] David G. Burnet to People of Texas, March 18, 1836. William C. Binkley, ed., Official Correspondence of the Texan Revolution, 1835-36, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936), 1, 516.

the presidents of the Republic of Texas when faced with the similar need to encourage population growth. In 1823, Stephen F. Austin received a generous grant allowing American families to settle in Texas. In 1825, the State of Coahuila y Texas enacted a colonization measure which encouraged foreigners to settle in the province by exempting new settlers from taxes and excise duties for ten years, provided that they would not settle within sixty miles of the border with the United States or thirty miles of the Gulf of Mexico, respect the laws of Mexico, have written proof of good character, and would assent to the Roman Catholic faith.[2]

Thousands of Americans took advantage of the colonization policy, much to the concern of Mexico. Some estimates claim that by 1830, nearly 20,000 Americans had emigrated to Texas.[3] Government policy over American immigration shifted wildly. In 1830, Mexico, alarmed by the rising number of American immigrants, banned such immigration, to the fierce objections of Anglo-American settlers. The Texan settlers, not willing to give up the rights they had enjoyed in the United States, also began clamoring for their own state government, the printed translation of laws into English, and the right to trial by jury.[4]

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[2] "The Texas-Coahuila Colonization Law, March 24, 1825," Stephen F. Austin, Translation of the Laws, Orders, and Contracts on Colonization (official trans.; Columbia, Texas, 1837), 40-45, 56-5 7, as stated in Ernest Wallace and David M. Vigness, eds., Documents of Texas History (Austin: The Steck Co., 1963), 46-50.

[3] Henderson Yoakum, History of Texas, 2vols. (Austin: The Steck Co., 1935), I, 272; George P. Garrison, Texas: A Contest of Civilizations (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903), 156.

[4] For more on life in early Texas, see Noah Smithwick, The Evolution of a State or Recollections of Old Texas Days (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

The chaotic political situation in Mexico continued to disintegrate. With wild and seemingly unpredictable power shifts, Mexico moved from a federal constitutional republic to a centralized dictatorship. In this atmosphere, Texian requests for the expansion of their freedoms found little support.

Texas settlers became further agitated in 1834 when Mexican President Santa Anna demanded restriction in local militias. This measure limited local militias to one soldier per five hundred citizens and further mandated that all citizens not in a militia surrender their arms. For a vast frontier state like Coahuila y Texas with its sparse population, this change presented a grave threat. Without the militias the settlers could not defend themselves from marauders or the continuing Indian raids.

In early 1835, Santa Anna ordered the State of Zacatecas, in central Mexico, to submit to the restrictions. Zacatecas officials refused to comply and prepared to resist the general. Stephen F. Austin, imprisoned in Mexico City since early 1834 for suspected treason as he attempted to present a petition for Texas statehood and the redress of other grievances, saw the conflagaration approaching. From his jail cell, the dejected pioneer warned David G. Burnet of an imminent civil war.[5] Austin remained hopeful for peace but an honest appraisal of the situation did not foster it.

Resistance to the dictatorship of Santa Anna in Texas may only have confirmed the long-festering suspicions of Mexican officials about Anglo settlers and American expansionism and could unite Mexico against Anglo-Texans. Santa Anna mercilessly crushed the Zacatecas resistance. Coahuila attempted to oppose the new restrictions but

also met with failure. The governor of Coahuila, forced into exile, slipped into Texas not only to fight for federalism but to avoid a break with the colonists.[6]

The summer of 1835 found Texas in a frenzy. In June, a meeting at San Felipe de Austin denounced Santa Anna. The denunciation reflected the mounting frustration of Texas over the erosion of civil liberties and the already nonexistent freedom, of religion. Similar declarations appeared throughout Texas, some demanding that Texas resist the dictatorship. Although furious with Santa Anna, most Texans could not yet commit themselves to armed insurrection. The Columbia Committee for Safety and Correspondence called for a consultation of all Texans to assemble October 15 at Washington-on-the-Brazos to discuss their options, with delegates elected from throughout Texas. The declaration recommended that delegates attempt to secure peace on constitutional terms or prepare Texas for war.[7]

By October, all hopes of peace disintegrated and fighting erupted in Texas.[8] On October 2, a small dispatch of Mexican troops, attempting to enforce the militia laws,

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[5] Stephen F. Austin to Burnet, April 1835, Jacqueline Beretta Tomerlin, comp., Fugitive Letters, 1829-1836 (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1981), 35.

[6] Josefin Zoraida Vazquez, "The Texas Question in Mexican Politics," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 89 (1986): 311.

[7] Citizens of Columbia to Citizens of Texas, August 20, 1835, Charles Adams Gulick, Jr., ed., Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 4 vols. (Austin: Texas State Library, 1921), 1, 234.

[8] For the perspective of the Mexican leaders on the Texas Revolution, see Carlos E. Castaneda, trans., The Mexican Side of the Texas Revolution (Dallas: L. P. Turner, 1928).

tried to confiscate a cannon from the town of Gonzales that Mexican officials had given the community for use against Indian raids. The citizens of the small hamlet resisted bitterly, displayed the cannon under a banner that read "Come and Take It," and fired upon the soldiers. After suffering casualties in the brief skirmish, the Mexicans retreated without the cannon. In response, an armed group of Texans followed the retreating Mexican soldiers to San Antonio.

Almost as soon as the first shots rang out, cries for independence emerged. On October 5, Austin, now back in Texas, felt any chance of reconciliation with Mexico lay in ruins. The one-time staunch defender of union with Mexico now reserved his passion for the revolution against it. He wrote to his old friend Burnet:

> I hope you will enter ardently and warmly in the cause--now is the time--no more doubts--no more submission--I hope to see Texas forever free from Mexican domination of any kind. It is yet too soon to say this publicly - but it is the point we shall end at and it is the one I am aiming at.[9]

As subsequent events would show, Burnet needed little convincing.

Texas had flown into open rebellion before the Consultation had even convened on October 11. Many felt the same rage that Austin felt toward the Mexican government, but secession remained a radical and potentially disastrous step in 1835. Sam Houston, former governor of Tennessee and now a prominent Texas resident, felt a declaration of independence remained premature and convinced the other delegates to move to a provisional declaration instead.[10] Lest the ire of the whole of Mexico crush them, the

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[9] Austin to Burnet, October 5, 1835, Tomerlin, comp., Fugitive Letters, 37.

[10] Sam Houston, Life of General Sam Houston (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1964), 6.

consultation, meeting at San Felipe de Austin rather than Washington-on-the-Brazos, formed a provisional state government within the Mexican republic. The Consultation named Henry Smith provisional governor, James W. Robinson lieutenant-governor, and Sam Houston commander-in-chief of the Texas army. In addition, the Consultation provided for a General Council to serve as a provisional state legislature.

The Texians quickly won a string of surprising victories in the opening month of the war. Texas soldiers defeated the Mexican garrison at Goliad and forced the Mexicans to abandon Bexar.[11] The early promise of the Texas Revolution, however, soon vanished as the Mexican army began to reassert itself and divisions appeared amongst the colonists. The Consultation sent Stephen F. Austin, William H. Wharton, and Branch T. Archer to the United States to seek the support of that nation through gifts of munitions, recruitment of soldiers, and loans to finance the revolt. Americans received the commissioners quite warmly, many wildly supporting the Texas cause. Others left for Texas to enlist in the fight against Santa Anna. New Orleans residents loaned the Texans $250,000 in January 1836. Austin confidently reported that Texas had won the hearts of the people of the United States and the Americans awaited a positive and unqualified declaration of independence.[12] Despite the attempts of the three commissioners and the enthusiastic support of the Texian cause throughout the Union, the government of Andrew Jackson hesitated to act.

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[11] Paul D. Lack, The Texas Revolution Experience: A Political and History, 1835-1836 (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Press, 1992), 39.

[12] Austin to Burnet, March 4, 1836, Tomerlin, comp., Fugitive Letters, 39.

In San Antonio, a group of Texan led by Colonel William B. Travis prepared to defend an old Spanish Mission, San Antonio de Valero, against Santa Anna in early 1836. General Houston had known that the mission, soon to become memorialized as "the Alamo," could not withstand an assault by the Mexican forces, yet the provisional government of Texas felt the defenders should stay and sent reinforcements.

At the same time in early 1836, the provisional government neared collapse. The general council and Governor Smith disagreed bitterly over the course of events. Despite almost no money and a poorly organized military, the council repeatedly urged a campaign against Matamoros, to the strenuous objections of Smith and Houston. A faction led by William H. Wharton fervently argued the necessity of conciliating the Mexican Federalists, the enemies of Santa Anna.[13] Tired of Smith's chastisements, the council deposed him and recognized Robinson as acting governor.

On March 1, while the Alamo and its defenders attempted to withstand a bitter siege by the Mexican army under Santa Anna, delegates to the Convention of 1836 convened at Washington-on-the-Brazos, dissolved the provisional state government, and moved that a committee led by George C. Childress draft a declaration of independence. Wharton's forces now favored independence and gained sway over the convention. The next day, March 2, the convention approved the declaration, which listed among their grievances the earlier arrest of Austin, dissolution of the state congress of Coahuila y Texas, the lack of a right of trial by jury, the lack of a public education system, and the attempt to confiscate weapons under the militia restrictions. Decrying the despotism of

Santa Anna, the delegates declared "that the people of Texas, do now constitute a FREE, SOVEREIGN, and INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC, and are fully vested with he right sand attributes which properly belong, to independent nations."[14]

Shortly after Sam Houston learned of the fall of the Alamo, the general suggested, without success, to the General Convention of 1836 that the delegates draft a resolution declaring Texas to be a part of Louisiana, under the treaty of 1803.[15] Houston's reasoning in this regard had some basis. Many American felt that the purchase of Louisiana from France in 1803 had included Texas, since the French had staked a claim to the area in the seventeenth century. At the time of the Louisiana Purchase, the French remained rather cryptic as to the full extent of Louisiana; but the United States had effectively abandoned its claim of Texas to Spain as a result of the Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819. Nevertheless, when the prospect of gaining Texas emerged after the Texas Revolution, many considered it "reannexation."

The delegates at Washington then went about forming an ad interim government. On March 16, the convention selected New Jersey native David G. Burnet as president and outspoken Mexican federalist and former Mexican minister to France Lorenzo de Zavala as vice president. Burnet defeated Samuel P. Carson for the presidency by six votes. The convention quickly adjourned, fearing the advance of Mexican troops now marching through Texas.

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[13] Stanley Siegel, A Political History of the Texas Republic, 1836-1845 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1956), 24.

[14] Telegraph and Texas Register, March 12, 1836.

President Burnet, a stern and pious man, saw the war as a crusade of good against evil and beseeched his countrymen in the strongest possible terms to take up arms. In his address to the convention on March 17, he boldly asserted that the righteous cause of Texas would prevail. Burnet predicted that Texas would roll back the flood of invasion and declared that the hour had arrived for every freeman to do his duty.[16]

The organization of the independent government immediately presented some difficulties to Texas agents in America. The credentials of the commissioners had come from the government of the provisional State of Texas, not the sovereign Republic of Texas. The new government had neglected to renew the authority of the commissioners. Since the United States had not recognized Texas independence, the Texans had no official diplomatic authority. Austin relayed his frustrations, complaining that he and the other commissioners had heard nothing from the government, and the commissioners could do nothing without full diplomatic powers.[17]

At the same time, Colonel James W. Fannin had lost at Goliad. Instead of his men being shipped back to New Orleans as the victors had sworn, the Mexican commander had the Texians executed. Robinson reported to Burnet how the Mexican army had slaughtered Fannin and his men in utter contempt and violation of civilized

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[15] Houston, Life of General Sam Houston, 8.

[16] Burnet to General Convention, March 17, 1836, Binkley, ed., Correspondence of the Texan Revolution, 1835-1836, I, 511.

[17] Austin to Burnet, April 23, 1836, Tomerlin, comp., Fugitive Letters, 45.

warfare.[18] Patriotic appeals went out for volunteers and support for the cause. Houston declared to his countrymen that the enemy must be driven form Texas soil or desolation would result.[19]

Burnet issued still more appeals to the public, asking, in one address, "Texans, have you no pride?"[20] The president also asked his fellow countrymen to donate parts of their lands to help finance the cause. He appealed to the United States, as well. In a letter to United States Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky, he emphasized the common American ancestry of Texans and citizens of the United States, and declared the incalculable effect of recognition of Texas on the morale of the suffering colonists, Burnet contended that American action would save the shedding of much genuine American blood and possibly result in the addition of Texas to the Union.[21]

Austin and the other agents, meanwhile, met with many prominent citizens while in America. Among these included General William Henry Harrison, who had his eyes fixed on the White House and warmly supported the cause of Texas. Others, such as President Andrew Jackson and Vice President Martin Van Buren., remained less easily swayed. The agents issued open letters and statements pleading the Texian cause.

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[18] James W. Robinson to Burnet, April 6, 1836, Gulick, ed., Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, I, 349.

[19] Telegraph and Texas Register, March 12, 1836.

[20] Burnet to Citizens of Texas, April 6, 1836, Binkley, ed., Official Correspondence of the Texan Revolution, II, 598.

[21] Burnet to Henry Clay, March 30, 1836, ibid., I, 561.

Houston's army spent most of March and early April retreating from the advancing Mexican forces. As Houston and his forces marched eastward, thousands of families fled as well, attempting to escape the marauding Mexican armies in what became known as the Runaway Scrape.[22] The situation appeared bleak for the settlers as the few hundred volunteer soldiers of the Texas Army appeared almost helpless against a mobilized, professional army of several thousand.

The continual retreat of General Houston enraged President Burnet. As the general withdrew eastward, Burnet ordered preparations for the defense of Galveston and begged Houston to fight Santa Anna. Houston still refused. Burnet finally wrote a letter, again hoping to persuade Houston otherwise. "The enemy are laughing you to scorn. You must fight them. You must retreat no farther. The country expects you to fight. The salvation of the country depends on you doing so."[23]

At San Jacinto, Houston stopped retreating. On the afternoon of April 21, while their pursuers rested, the Texians struck, quickly routing the forces of Santa Anna. Estimates put the numbers of Mexican casualties at 630 killed, 208 wounded, and 730 captured.[24] Those Mexicans who either escaped death or capture wildly fled into the wilderness. Only a handful of Texas defenders lost their lives, while Houston himself suffered a shattered ankle as a result of Mexican gunfire.

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[22] Dilue Harris. "The Reminiscences of Mrs. Dilue Harris," The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association 4 (1901): 160-179.

[23] Burnet to Houston, April 1836, Houston Wade, ed., David G. Burnet Letters (La Grange, TX: La Grange Journal, 1936), 17.

The next day, while scouring the area for escaped Mexican soldiers, Lieutenant James A. Sylvester captured one such fugitive wearing an enlisted man's uniform. Upon bringing the prisoner to the prison camp, his countrymen identified the soldier as Santa Anna. Immediately brought before Houston, Santa Anna formally surrendered and asked for opium.[25] On the afternoon of April 23, Houston and Santa Anna drew up terms of surrender. Three weeks later at Velasco, representatives of Texas and Mexico drafted a formal treaty. These terms included the recognition of Texas independence, compensation to Texans for property damage, mutual exchange of prisoners, immediate withdrawal of all Mexican forces beyond the Rio Grande, and eventual release of Santa Anna.

Santa Anna sent out the orders to withdraw, and the remaining forces complied. The government in Mexico City, however, refused to recognize Texas independence or any other term Santa Anna had agreed to while in custody. But for the remainder of the spring of 1836 and throughout the summer, Santa Anna remained a prisoner in Texas and much discussion ensued as to whether release the general, keep him imprisoned, or simply execute him. In a later and highly controversial agreement, Texas agreed to release Santa Anna to Veracruz at an unspecified date.

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[24] Yoakum, History of Texas, II, 146; Frank X. Tolbert, The Day of San Jacinto, (McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959), 164.

[25] Houston, Life of General Sam Houston, 11.

Most Texans angrily objected to the idea that Santa Anna would not face execution for his actions against Texas citizens during the campaign.[26] Burnet found fierce resistance to the release of Santa Anna from even within his own administration. Secretary of War Mirabeau B. Lamar avowed to Burnet and the cabinet, "Instinct condemns him as a murderer, and reason justifies the verdict."[27] Secretary of State William H. Jack felt Santa Anna's word had no worth. Jack left that Santa Anna had made those agreements only to secure his own release.[28]

Cooler heads urged against the boisterous demands for the execution of Santa Anna. Houston, agreeing with Burnet, believed that as long as Texas held the general and president, the nation could gain tremendous concessions from Mexico, and recommended holding him until the demands of Texas had been met. Houston detailed his recommendations to Secretary of War Thomas J. Rusk, who just preceded Lamar as secretary that Texas hold Santa Anna as prisoner until Mexico complied with the agreement made at San Jacinto.[29] One citizen agreed, declaring that putting Santa Anna to death cut off all hope of negotiations.[30]

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[26] Mary Whatley Clarke, David G. Burnet (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1969), 121.

[27] Lamar to Burnet, May 12, 1836, Gulick, ed., Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, I, 371.

[28] William H. Jack to Burnet and Cabinet, May 27,1836. Binkley, ed., Official Correspondence of the Texan Revolution, II, 710

[29] Houston to Thomas J. Rusk, May 3, 1836, Gulick, ed., Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, I, 369.

[30] Telegraph and Texas Register, August 30, 1836.

Burnet attempted to soothe the rage swirling his decision: "They say that Santa Anna is faithless and will not keep his bargain, to this whereas, I reply even if he be faithless he has learned that he cannot conquer and hold Texas."[31] The implication that Texas had nothing to fear from Santa Ann momentarily defused the explosive situation, and the issue festered throughout the campaign. The Texians would free the general that winter.

Despite the victory at San Jacinto and the tremendous sense of accomplishment that followed, numerous problems faced the Republic of Texas and reinforced the sobering reality. The country had already incurred huge debts to finance the war effort and had few resources with which to pay them. Crops had been damaged, and many settlers still had not returned to their homes. Most Texas leaders realized that Texas possessed a great untapped wealth in natural resources but lacked any infrastructure or sufficient finances to develop the land. Further, no other nation had recognized the independence of Texas, leaving it alone in the diplomatic world. And the threat of another invasion by Mexico loomed. On May 20 the Mexican Congress declared that it would continue the war for Texas.[32] Citizens of the infant republic watched the developments in Mexico warily. A July 13 letter from Tampico publicized throughout

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[31] Burnet to Citizen Soldiers of the Texas Army, June 11, 1836, Wade, ed., David G. Burnet Letters, 47.

[32] Joseph Milton Nance, After San Jacinto: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1836-1841 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 11.

Texas reported that General Jose Urrea, who had served with Santa Anna in the campaign against Texas, was assembling a force in Matamoros, but remained in such a condition as could not march for two to three months.[33] Burnet desperately attempted to build up the nation's defenses in anticipation of another invasion.[34]

Of all Texans, perhaps Sam Houston held the greatest chance of influencing the United States to recognize Texas. He had quickly become the front-runner in the race for the Texas presidency. In his previous political career, Houston had served as a United States congressman and governor of Tennessee before coming to Texas. He remained close to President Jackson, corresponding frequently. Jackson informed Houston in September 1836, however, that the United Sates would take no action of annexation or recognition immediately, else risking Mexican reprisals. Further, the Mexican Minister to the United States had informed Jackson of Mexico's refusal to recognize agreements made by Santa Anna, leaving Texas in peril of invasion and officially part of Mexico. Jackson, not entirely willing to give up on Texas, informed Houston of his wishes to assist Texas in what official ways he could. The president hastened to add that while the United States could not interfere, Jackson remained willing to mediate peace between Texas and Mexico.[35]

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[33] Telegraph and Texas Register , August 9, 1836.

[34] Clarke, David G. Burnet , 138.

[35] Jackson to Houston, September 4, 1836, John Spencer Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, 6 vols. (New York: Krauss Reprint Co., 1969), V, 425.

Houston undoubtedly realized by now that if the United States would not or could not annex Texas, the infant republic would need some other means to secure its safety. Peace with Mexico seemed unlikely, leaving the only alternative as recognition of its independence by other powers, along with their monetary support.

Even with the diplomatic situation between the United States and Mexico complicating the Texas issue, changing American attitudes in America made matters even more difficult. Many still enthusiastically supported Texas. Congressmen, however, most notably former president and incumbent representative from Massachusetts John Quincy Adams, hesitated to endorse the recognition of Texas originally over fears of the war spilling into the United States. The abolitionist congressman had initially applauded the Texian successes as glorious news.[36] As the days progressed, however, that fear became eclipsed by the specter of Texas slavery which would add to the power of the slavery interests, an unpalatable proposition to him. Ironically, during his tenure as secretary of state under President James Monroe, Adams had negotiated a treaty with Spanish foreign minister Luis de Onis in which the United States agreed to give up all claims on Texas in exchange for Florida.

A constitution for the fledgling republic became an issue in the summer of 1836, its disposition to lay at the hands of the voters. The proposed document mirrored its American counterpart almost exactly, with the preambles following almost word-for-word. The constitution also contained a provision banning the importation of slaves from

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[36] John Quincy Adams, May 16, 1836, Charles Francis Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, 13 vols. (Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries Press, 1969), IX, 282.

outside the United States into the Republic of Texas, incorporating an April 3 proclamation by Burnet; but slavery remained legal. Since most Texans had lived in the United States, they still retained the same strong ideas of republican government. And, since many hoped for annexation, it made little sense to deviate much from the United States. Several differences with the United States Constitution existed, however. These additions and deviations primarily attempted to deal with the unique circumstances in Texas and the attempt to maintain certain ideas of society. Ministers of the gospel could not hold office. Free blacks could not reside in the nation without the special permission of Congress. Requirements for citizenship, set at six month's residency and swearing allegiance to the nation, rested within the document as well. All citizens at the time of ratification received generous land grants, and the constitution also directed the government to form a public school system.[37]

The Texas Constitution reflected the ideas of democratic government that pervaded the United States during the 1830s, particularly the southern section. The constitution clearly shows a political system concerned over attracting settlers and populating the land as quickly as possible, but careful to protect the claims of the earlier settlers. As many of the Americans had migrated from the South, painstaking protection of slavery and the existing social order existed through constitutional dictates. President Burnet issued a proclamation on July 23 calling for an election for September 1836. The citizens of Texas would choose a new president, vice president, and

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[37] "General Provisions, Section 5," and "General Provisions, Section 10," Constitution of the Republic of Texas (Washington, TX Gates and Seaton, 1836), 17, 18-20.

members of the House of Representatives and Senate for their respective districts. In addition, voters would decide whether to accept the new constitution and the question of annexation to the United States.[38]

Immediately, citizens announced their candidacies for various offices and began organizing campaigns. By August 9, three contenders vied for the presidency: Henry Smith, the former provisional governor, and two of the recent commissioners to the United States, Stephen F. Austin and Branch T. Archer. Mirabeau B. Lamar became a candidate for the vice presidency but never drew any opposing candidates. The outcome of the annexation resolution remained readily apparent to observers, while other issues surrounding the proposed constitution, land policy, and the Santa Anna question swirled throughout the campaign.[39]

One such example of how these issues permeated the campaign involves William H. Jack, secretary of state for the ad interim government, who became a candidate for the House of Representatives from the Brazoria area. A resident posed five questions for Jack in the Telegraph and Texas Register, offering the candidate his vote based on Jacks answers. These questions included the candidate's opinion on the disposition of Santa Anna, the proposal of land grants to those who served in the Texas Revolution, whether Congress should have the power to amend the constitution, and annexation to the United

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[38] Burnet to People of Texas, Telegraph and Texas Register, August 2, 1836.

[39] Ibid., August 9, 16, 23, 1836.

States. Jack responded that he considered annexation the rock of Texas salvation and would earnestly pursue the measure, in addition to the proposed land grants.[40]

Moseley Baker, a congressional candidate for Austin County also came out strongly in favor of annexation. In a letter to the voters of that area, he decried those who desired Texas to remain an independent republic as ambitious and felt that the Republic would destabilize and wither on its own. Baker stated that while continued independence could lead to factionalism and anarchy, to ordinary Texans annexation constituted the best hope for a secure and prosperous future.[41]

Archer quickly dropped out of the presidential race. He stated that friends had placed his name in contention without his knowledge. Although grateful for the support of his friends, Archer felt that Austin deserved the presidency of the Texas Republic far more than he. He contended that Austin had devoted fifteen years of the prime of his life to the country and he would not claim Austin's offspring in its maturity.[42]

Despite the warm praise of men like Archer, the years of building Texas, and suffering directly the pains of Santa Anna's despotism, Stephen F. Austin received torrents of criticism from many of his countrymen. Although never completely unexpected when such political power is on the line, the attacks stung Austin

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[40] Ibid., August 9, 1836.

[41] Ibid., August 23, 1836.

[42] Ibid., August 16, 1836.

nonetheless. Mostly the charges stemmed from not supporting independence early enough and his leaving Texas during the revolution. Critics charged that while Texas bled, Austin resided in the comfort of the United States, even though the Consultation had ordered him to do so in November 1835. Austin had written to Burnet in the spring, predicting that such criticism would emerge. In a letter printed in the Telegraph and Texas Register, Austin fiercely defended his record, stating that he labored arduously for Texas and asserted that "all I have done since I came to Texas in 1821, will bear the test of the most rigid scrutiny."[43]

That same week, citizens had nominated Sam Houston, the Hero of San Jacinto, for the presidency. In a letter signed by some six hundred residents in and around Columbia, residents lauded Houston for his leadership, the admiration amongst the people, and his rapport with Andrew Jackson, the president of the United States. These citizens, inspired by his leadership during the Texas Revolution and his lengthy list of accomplishments, clearly counted on Houston's respect in the United Sates to encourage that nation's support of Texas. The letter proclaimed that no man stood so high in the eyes of the Jackson administration or in the esteem of the people of Texas.[44]

Burnet wrote to Lamar in early August his belief that voters would elect Austin. This prediction did not hold true. On the first Monday in September, voters overwhelmingly chose Houston as president. Smith finished a distant second, while Austin placed third. Lamar became vice president without opposition, while Moseley Baker won his election to Congress. Branch T. Archer became the representative for the

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[43] Ibid., August 23, 1836.

Brazoria area, defeating William H. Jack. Voters approved the constitution by an overwhelming margin, while only ninety-three voted against annexation.[45] The new legislators would take their seats on October 3, while the inauguration of the executive officers would take place three weeks later.

After the First Congress convened, the ad interim president spoke warmly of the tremendous possibilities that awaited Texas, and urged the assembly to enact measures to develop the resources of the country. He noted the great difficulty that existed in the task but there lay much more potential to animate the hopes of the country.[46] Burnet hastened to add that the nation's finances remained a subject of considerable concern and beseeched the legislators to adopt a plan providing a stable source of revenue for the republic. The problem of finances would continue to plague Texas for the remainder of its period as an independent nation. With only days remaining in his presidency, Burnet had no time to enact any major legislation effecting financial stability or internal improvements. These actions would remain for his successors.

Burnet had few occasions for any major addresses during his short administration, His position had consisted of caretaker at best after the end of the war, as the constitution lay far from ratified. No Congress existed to enact programs. Burnet instead concentrated on securing recognition for Texas independence through his agents in

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Rupert N. Richardson et al., Texas: The Lone Star State, 6th ed., (Edgewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993), 126.

[46] Telegraph and Texas Register, October 4, 1836.

Washington and preparing for the transition to a constitutional regime. Recognition, however, would not materialize until after Burnet's presidency.

In some respects, the ad interim presidency of David G. Burnet represents a success. Texas had won the war against Santa Anna and established the foundations for a republican government. In addition, his decision eventually to release Santa Anna held sway despite vociferous opposition. Burnet's influence, however, remained moderate at best. Rival Sam Houston had already come to dominate the politics of Texas he carried far greater influence with Jackson and the people revered his leadership for the victory at San Jacinto. Burnet remained active in Texas politics for decades more but never commanded the same admiration and influence as Houston.

Texas had lost a great deal in the uprising against Mexico. The war left its land ravaged and many of its people displaced or killed. Texas became quite defensive of its reputation and proud of the freedom it had won. Naturally, the desire to prevent another such conflict with Mexico and protect its democratic institutions led it to seek the help of other nations. The United States represented the best choice, as it had the wealth, population, and infrastructure necessary to defend itself and Texas. And most of the citizens of the Republic of Texas could still identify with the Americans, their former countrymen. Most looked on the United States as the promised land, feeling that their addition to the Union constituted their best hope of salvation from conquest by Mexico and losing all for which they had fought.

The attempts to secure annexation and the continuing financial difficulties would frustrate and irritate the proud young nation to such an extent the difficulties almost completely derailed it. Opposition to expanding slavery threatened Texas annexation, despite the popular groundswell for a union that existed in the Republic of Texas. As hearty frontiersman, the Texians could not simply wait for the United States to grant them deliverance. The sense of invincibility that arose in the wake of San Jacinto directed national policy and served to inspire outlandish and impractical schemes. As these efforts faltered, in the enduing years, Texans would look to the support of European powers to help build up their nation.

CHAPTER 2

SAM HOUSTON AND THE NEW REPUBLIC

The capitol of the Republic of Texas consisted of a small, dilapidated wood building in Columbia. The tiny community had barely managed to provide enough buildings for the Congress of the new republic to conduct properly its official business and for living quarters. Columbia remained the seat of government for the nation only briefly before officials moved it to the city of Houston. Yet, in this setting, on October 22, 1836, the first elected president of the Republic of Texas, Sam Houston, took the oath of office and formally assumed the presidency. In his inaugural address, the new chief executive touched on the many issues that concerned the people of Texas.

Houston advocated the establishment of a system to govern land claims, a tax system to provide fiscal security to the republic, and peace with Mexico as well as amity and trade with the Indian tribes. He pledged diligence in those pursuits but hastened to add his support of an organized defense. The issues the new president faced in his first administration also included the nation's boundary with Mexico and establishing relations with other nations. Emboldened by the results of the September referendum in which Texans overwhelmingly supported annexation to the United States, Houston also pursued annexation to the United States during his presidency.

The new president discussed few issues at length but did extol the virtues for which the nation fought in the spring. Despite the bold pronouncements of conviction,

Houston remained fully conscious of the difficulties facing the nation, not the least of which included the financial difficulties of a government with only $500 in cash on hand.[1]

Texas had scarce developed resources, infrastructure, or available money as the elected government assembled. All that the country could point to in great abundance consisted of debts and land. Land represented the only readily accessible source of wealth that Texas had. The nation's leaders hoped that the great promise of the Texas soil would attract throngs of settlers to the frontier and transform the country into a thriving and prosperous country. Many had romantic visions of Texas as a great yeoman republic. As the constitution had promised veterans huge tracts of land in exchange for their service in the war and offered tracts to citizens who had stayed in Texas during he invasion of Santa Anna, and Houston wished to ensure that Congress would pass legislation to fulfill these promises efficiently and justly.[2] In addition, the government meted out land in 320 and 640-acre tracts to settle the private claims against it.[3] The problem that remained, however, lay in administering the land claims.

Houston, as well as many others, saw land sales as the best opportunity to pay the

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[1] Sam Houston to Congress, November 21, 1837, Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, 8 vols. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1939), II, 154.

[2] Ibid., II, 118-121; General Provisions, Section 10, Constitution of the Republic of Texas (Washington, TX: Gales and Seaton, 1836), 18-20.

[3] H. P. N. Gammel, comp., The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, 10 vols. (Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), I, 260.

nation's debts. He had agreed with Congress that agents in the United States would sell Texas land for as little as fifty cents per acre.[4] To centralize land sales, titles, and survey records, Congress voted to establish the General Land Office in December 1836. The legislation, however, left Houston with great reservations, and he vetoed it, angering many Texans.[5]

The president objected to the great expense and apparent inefficiency of the office and believed that the law as it stood would not allow veterans to have a choice of reasonable lands. He demanded that Congress reconcile the claims established under Mexican law. In his veto message of December 21, Houston argued that the proposed land office multiplied officers and expense without any necessity or utility to the country.[6] He would not tolerate extravagance while the government teetered on the edge of bankruptcy. He also feared a mania of speculation that would damage the nascent economy and thereby would allow Mexico an opportunity to conquer a distracted Texas, especially if rampant speculation and extended debt left the nation without the financial resources to mount an effective defense.

Houston and Congress wrestled with the shape of the General Land Office until the national legislature passed new legislation mid-1837, only to again meet with

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[4] Ibid., 1, 76-77.

[5] Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, I, 519; Charles Taylor to Robert Irion, July 17, 1837, Irion Family Papers, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.

[6] Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, I, 519.

Houston's veto. Houston decried the glaring lack of protections against fraudulent land claims and recited instances in which Americans crossed into Texas and lied under oath that they indeed had become Texas citizens and thus secured land titles meant for true Texans.[7] Congress essentially ignored the president's protests and overrode the veto.[8]

In his annual message to Congress on May 5, 1837, Houston reported that the plan to use land scrip to help finance the government had met with extended difficulties with agents failing to deliver their accounts. Houston now wished to end the land sales. He noted that despite repeated requests, the land agents made no response nor gave any reason for protesting the drafts which had been drawn upon them.[9] As a result, the government had not received enough money from the land sales; and the president requested that Congress suspend the issue of land scrip.

The opposition to Houston's stance on the land issues prompted the president to travel to parts of the country to explain his position. In many cases, the president managed to soften the hard feelings that had arisen and convinced many citizens of the justice of his stand. A resident of Nacogdoches, Charles F. Taylor, wrote to his old acquaintance, Secretary of State Robert A. Irion, in July 1837, and commented on a journey Houston had made through the area. Taylor reported Houston had some success,

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[7] Houston to congress, June 8, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 119-120.

[8] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, I, 216.

[9] Houston to Congress, May 5, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 83.

noting some individuals who opposed the president's views became convinced of the policy of them.[10]

Houston knew that these speeches would not deter his political enemies. He only became more determined to end corruption in land claims. He wrote his friend Henry Raguet in November 1837, explaining his conviction that he would prevail. Houston asserted that, although his opponents on the land issue may have had it in their power to establish all the fraudulent land claims which corruption originated, he trusted they would fail in their attempts.[11]

In late September the government delayed the opening of the General Land office. In December the government suspended the sale of land scrip, as the president had suggested.[12] Soon afterward, a new act reorganized the land office, dealing with land obtained under the old colonial laws of Mexico. A fee schedule for surveying land also went into effect, requiring that landowners pay $3 for the survey of any land less than a thrid of a league (or 1,476 acres) in size. Landowners would pay a fee of $5 to survey a league and a labor of land, or approximately 4,605 acres.[13]

Despite the reorganization of the land office, fraud began to haunt land transactions. It had grown to such an extent that Houston began to refuse to execute land

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[10] Charles Taylor to Robert Irion, July 17, 1837, Irion Family Papers.

[11] Houston to Colonel Henry Raguet, November 11, 1837, E. W. Winkler, ed., Manuscript Letters and Documents of Early Texians, 1821-1845 (Austin: The Steck Co., 1937), 209-210.

[12] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 58.

[13] Ibid., I, 62-76.

patents.[14] In the spring of 1838, Congress demanded the reason, to which the president replied that so much fraud and inefficiency pervaded the system in both civilian headright certificates and military bounty certificates that he could not continue the system in its present form Houston relayed instances in which two individuals received claims to the same land and cases in which poor surveying resulted in overlapping land claims. The president suggested in a letter to Congress on May 4 that the adoption of modifications in the law might save the government from the unpleasant prospect of lending its name and patent to fraudulent, unsound, or spurious claims.[15]

Congress and Houston continued to wrestle with the specifics of the General Land Office as the national legislature passed a considerable amount of legislation that attempted to modify the efficiency of the office. The Texas government continued to struggle with land issues during its entire existence as a republic.

Houston hoped that improved methods of registering land ownership would encourage immigration and land sales, both of which would aid economic development for the republic. Inspired by the efforts of these policies, both enterprising land speculators and community leaders made an aggressive effort in this regard. Growing communities attempted to attract settlers, especially the industrious sort, by offers of land plots and extolling their area's resources and natural beauty.[16] Often these communities

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[14] Houston to Congress, May 4, 1838, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 212.

[15] Ibid., II, 216.

[16] Telegraph and Texas Register, January 11 and 18, 1837.

attempted to convinced potential residents that their climes remained healthy, as contrary rumors that had floated for years had hindered the growth of Texas.[17] Glowing advertisements filled the nations' newspapers, attempting to draw settlers.

An advertisement for the city of Houston in late 1836 highlighted the vast resources and salubrious environment the area provided. Boosters noted the community's status as the capital of the country as well as the city's favorable position to capitalize on sea trade."There is no place in Texas more healthy having an abundance of excellent spring water, and enjoying the sea breeze in all its freshness. No place in Texas possesses so many advantages for building, having Pine, Ash, Cedar, and Oak in inexhaustible quantities."[18] Many felt that the community of Fayetteville, near the Colorado River, would thrive, but to no avail. City leaders nevertheless pushed for its development. A February 1837 advertisement proclaimed the availability of lost offered on such terms as would encourage the enterprising and industrious.[19]

Texans grew ever more confident at this time. Most citizens seemed to believe that fate alone would guide their fortunes to ever-higher plateaus. As the Houston administration convened and moved for the fulfillment of the pledged land grants to the citizenry.[20] Real estate prices rose steadily, boding well for investors. Moses Austin

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[17] Ibid., January 18, 1837.

[18] Ibid., December 30, 1836.

[19] Ibid., February 3, 1837.

[20] Houston to Congress, May 5, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 84.

Bryan, a nephew of Stephen F. Austin, commented to a friend how lands increased in value daily. Bryan commented that lands originally purchased at fifty cents per acre by this time could sel for as much as five dollars per acre.[21] The population continued to expand and each new wave of immigrants seemed to confirm for Texans that the bright future they dreamed of lay ever closer. Despite the rising numbers in property sales and population growth, Texas remained badly underpopulated and financially poor.

In his annual message of November 1837, Houston addressed the continuing financial difficulties of the Lone Star Republic, which remained "in a more embarrassed situation doubtless, than any other nation ever experienced."[22] He lamented that the plan to earn revenue for Texas through the sale of public lands through agents in the United States had met with difficulty. The president nevertheless remained confident that the government could rectify the difficulties and that the opening of land offices in Texas could generate the money Texas desperately needed. He also demanded a system that remained efficient, constitutional, and without fraud. Houston predicted that a boundless revenue to the country would arise from the opening of the land offices.[23] The financial upheaval in the United States as a result of the Panic of 1837 rendered his hopes of a $5 million loan in tatters. In his message Houston also endorsed a plan for Congress to fund

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[21] Moses Austin Bryan to William W. Hunter, November 5, 1836, in Gerald S. Pierce, ed., "Some Early Letters of Moses Austin Bryan," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 70 (1967): 470.

[22] Houston to Congress, November 21, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 154.

[23] Ibid.

a portion of the public debt by issuing $500,000 in treasury notes, in hopes that it would create a sound currency, relatively free from faltering American banks.

The government understood that land sales alone could not sufficiently fund the programs the country needed.[24] Congress enacted new tax measures to collect revenue for the nation. During the closing weeks of 1836, Houston approved the measures mandating import duties on all products, ranging from a 50 percent duty on silk products and 45 percent on liquor to 1 percent on bread. A direct tax went into effect in 1837, levying fees on peddlers and draft animals. In addition, each white male from age 21 to age 55 would pay the government $1 per year. According to a treasury report in 1838, however, the import duties generated only $336,000 while government expenditures reached $1 million.[25] Houston's efforts for fiscal stability had fallen far short of his goals.

Distrusting the stability of banks and fearing the effects of inflation, Congress in December 1837 passed a measure signed by Houston declaring that the government would only accept taxes paid in gold, silver, or government notes, not in bank notes.[26] Further, Houston advocated the extension of trade and establishment of trade with other nations. This met with limited success as only the United States had recognized the independence of Texas by the end of Houston's term of office.

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[24] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, I, 147.

[25] Telegraph and Texas Register, November 17, 1838.

[26] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 57.

The president also addressed the difficulties Texas face with the Indians on the frontier and suggested that the most reasonable solution lay in good faith peace overtures rather than relying solely on armed force.[27] Houston had long advocated such a policy. In February 1836 he had negotiated a peace treaty with the Cherokees guaranteeing the land claims of the tribe,[28] although Congress never ratified the pact. Years earlier the president had lived periodically among the Cherokees in the Tennessee-North Carolina area as well as in the Arkansas Territory.[29] At one point, Houston became a citizen of the Cherokee nation. From these experiences he had gained an understanding of Native Americans that many of his countrymen had not. The attempt to coexist with the Indians contrasted dramatically with the feelings of the frontier settlers who demanded an aggressive policy and would lead to stinging criticisms against Houston. Congress refused to endorse his conciliatory policies in regard to the Indian tribes in the country. In the face of continuing Indian raids on Texas communities, the Houston administration concluded several treaties with various tribes in 1838 to stem the violence pervading the frontier.[30]

Houston preached vigilance against Mexico as the difficult situation of Texas

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[27] Houston to Congress, November 21, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 158.

[28] Dorman H. Winfrey and James M. Day, eds., Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1959), 14-17.

[29] Marquis James, The Raven: The Story of Sam Houston (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1929), 127.

[30] Ibid., 30-32, 46-48, 50-52.

lingered but proposed no new actions against that nation. He knew the damage that had resulted from the last war and would not willingly subject Texas to those horrors again. In December 1836 Congress passed a law which authorized Houston to receive up to 40,000 volunteers for military service.[31] Houston spoke warmly of the measure but believed that it remained unnecessary and economically unfeasible to field a large army while the country lay in a state of relative peace, especially since Congress expected the cost of maintaining the army to reach $700,000 during Houston's first year as chief executive.[32]

He attempted to disband most of the army to save money and to prevent an angry military from renewing the war with Mexico and tried to offset the loss of defenders protecting the frontier with a new corps of volunteers. In addition, the president repealed the letters of marque granted to privateers for raiding Mexican shipping during the Texas Revolution.[33] Dissatisfied with the condition of the navy, Houston called for improvements in personnel and the possible purchase of another ship, in addition to the establishment of a navy depot, feeling that these actions would help alleviate the damage done to Texas shipping by Mexican vessels as well as the illegal smuggling of slaves into the country.[34]

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[31] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, I, 225.

[32] Houston to Congress, November 21, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 156; Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, I, 85-86.

[33] Telegraph and Texas Register, January 18, 1837.

[34] Houston to Congress, November 21, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 157.

The prickly question of the disposition of the great prize of San Jacinto, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, confronted the nation. Houston decided to release Santa Anna in the autumn of 1836, as Burnet had planned to do. Secretary of State Stephen F. Austin agrees that this constituted the best course of action, feeling that Santa Anna could not help the Texas cause at all while kept under confinement. Santa Anna had previously written to Austin, indicating his support for peace between Mexico and its former province and belief that annexation to the United States could only help matters. But only the death of Santa Anna would have satisfied most Texans at this point and many seethed at his release. James Morgan, in a letter to Vice President Mirabeau B. Lamar in December 1836, expressed his belief that the action would damage Houston's popularity and reported that a considerable clamor had already been raised against him throughout Texas.[35] Despite the protests, Houston sent Santa Anna to Washington in late 1836 to meet with American government officials.[36] The president of Texas entertained few hopes that the deposed dictator could accomplish anything for Texas while in Washington.[37] Afterward, Santa Anna returned to Mexico where he again rose to power and resumed his threats against Texas.

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[35] James Morgan to Mirabeau B. Lamar, December 7, 1836, Charles A. Gulick, ed., Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 4 vols. (Austin: A. C. Baldwin & Sons, 1921), I, 511.

[36] Houston to Andrew Jackson, November 20, 1836, John Spencer, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, 6 vols. (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., reprint 1969), VI, 438.

[37] Llerena Friend, Sam Houston: The Great Designer (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1954), 84.

Since the only money that Texas hoped to see in the immediate future resulted from land sales, the boundaries of the nation automatically became an issue of considerable importance. Immediately after the elected constitutional government assembled, the First Congress set out to define officially the western boundary of Texas. The Treaty of Velasco with Santa Anna had stated that this boundary would extend to the Rio Grande.[38] Houston himself had for a considerable time publicly advocated establishing the border at the river. In the coming years, Texas would take a great deal of liberty and try to extend the boundaries west to California and south to Sonora.[39]

Houston's advocacy of the Rio Grande boundary met with resistance within his own administration. Secretary of State Stephen F. Austin, realizing that the Rio Grande boundary line would encroach on Mexican settlements, proposed a compromise to avoid the renewed ire of Mexico. In November 1836, Austin suggested two different boundaries just inside the Rio Grande, steering clear of Santa Fe and settlements south of the river in Coahuila, alternative suggestions which by far represented the conservative view of Texans on the question of territorial limits.[40] Congress rejected this idea and approved the Rio Grande boundary on December 19, 1836.[41]

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[38] George P. Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, 2 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), I, 418.

[39] Houston to Congress, February 1, 1842, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 463.

[40] William Campbell Binkley, The Expansionist Movement in Texas, 1836-1850 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925), 27.

[41] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, I, 132.

Texas also set out to define its border with the United States. The United States recognized Texas independence in 1837 but did not recognize a particular boundary. Although annexation appeared imminent and the 1819 treaty with Spain had defined the border of Texas when it still remained a colonial possession, the young nation could not afford any misunderstandings. Irion emphasized the importance of th issue to Texas Minister to the United States Memucan Hunt in a letter dated March 21, 1838. The secretary wrote that the boundary issue had become a very important question as he instructed his agent to take all necessary actions to secure a boundary arrangement.[42] Negotiations over the boundary between the United States and Texas began in 1838, eventually marking the border exactly as specified by the 1819 treaty but only on the northeastern boundary along the Sabine and Red rivers.[43]

Texas had not yet extended its boundary beyond the Rio Grande, but nevertheless Memucan Hunt became intrigued by the prospect while in the United States, as his American counterparts expressed their interests in California. Hunt saw that the United States had designs on California and, on his own authority, in 1838 attempted to claim territory to the Pacific Ocean. He wrote Robert A. Irion, the Texas secretary of state, and reported the desires of the United States eventually to acquire the port city of San Francisco. Hunt feared that the American Secretary of State, John Forsyth, would attempt to use the boundary negotiations to goad Texas into relinquishing its right to

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[42] Irion to Memucan Hunt, March 21, 1838, Irion Family Papers.

[43] Houston, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 237.

extend its border to California.[44]

Although some Texans shared Hunt's dreams of a greater Lone Star Republic stretching to California, the Houston administration did not. Houston publicly never any extension of the boundaries of Texas beyond the Rio Grande. Irion coolly informed Hunt that the Pacific Ocean did not interest the Texas government, at least not at that time, and suggested that the minister concern himself with more relevant tasks.[45] The secretary added that in the future Texas probably would extend its borders to the Pacific but would deal with Mexico in that eventuality.

In the early years of the republic, the British took little official notice in Texas. British interests would change dramatically in the ensuing years as Texas increasingly pursued Great Britain to enter into a trade agreement with the Lone Star Republic and mediate a peace armistice between Mexico and Texas. England had received envoy J. Pinckney Henderson in 1837 but had taken no official action toward recognition. England and Texas, however, did sign a treaty of amity and commerce in 1838, giving Texas the same trade rights with Britain as it enjoyed under Mexican rule.[46]

British diplomats had communicated with President Houston as they traveled

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[44] Hunt to Irion, April 18, 1838, Garrison, ed., Texas Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 324.

[45] Irion to Hunt, 1838, ibid., I, 326.

[46] Houston Proclamation, July 4, 1838, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 260.

through the republic, but these initial conversations remained of an unofficial nature.[47] One Englishman, Joseph T. Crawford, reported a favorable impression of the nation in 1837 in a letter to British Minister to Mexico Richard Pakenham. Crawford saw Texas as a nation at peace and strengthened to a point where he felt the still-anemic Mexico could not possibly retake it, considering the poor condition of Mexico and the rising fortunes of Texas. Crawford concluded that Texas had conquered or would ultimately conquer her independence from Mexico.[48]

In his inaugural address Houston spoke confidently of the prospects of annexation to the United States and the popular clamor for the union. Texians, the president declared, "have with an unanimity unparalleled declared that they will be reunited to the great republican family of the North. The appeal is made by a willing people. Will our friends disregard it?"[49] Officials labored to produce the president's desire for uniting with America. The responsibility for directing these efforts lay with the State Department. Secretary of State Stephen F. Austin remained confident that annexation would take place in a matter of months, certainly by March 1837.[50] But Austin knew the Texas spirit well and understood his countrymen would eventually lose patience over a

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[47] Joseph T. Crawford to Richard Pakenham, May 26, 1837, Ephraim D. Adams. ed., "Correspondence from the British Archives Concerning Texas, 1837-1846," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association 15 (1912): 209.

[48] Ibid., 212-213.

[49] Telegraph and Texas Register, November 9, 1836,

[50] Stephen F. Austin to Henry Mais, November 7, 1836, Eugene C. Barker, ed., The Austin Papers, October 1834 - January 1837, 3 vols. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1926), 451-452.

protracted annexation effort and would not at all tolerate a rebuke. Time and opportunity grew thin. He wrote that if the United States delayed annexation past March 1837, it would compel Texas to go to work on the basis of a separate and independent republic, never again to seek annexation.[51] The following March would see the end of the presidency of Andrew Jackson, one of the most powerful and outspoken champions of extending the American frontier.

On behalf of the Houston administration, Austin courted several prominent senators to help the Texas annexation effort. In a letter to Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, Austin emphasized the lopsided support annexation received in the election. Austin wrote that the vote resulted from the warm attachment of Texas to the country and government of their nativity, and their full confidence in the liberality and even munificence of that government.[52] Austin noted that of the ninety-three opponents in the referendum, roughly forty had just arrived in Texas and had as yet no permanent interests in Texas. He also tried to convince the senator that the best interests of all concerned lay with annexation. Austin argued that the true interests of Mexico, the United States and Texas demanded that the Texas war should cease, and that tje United States should annex Texas.[53]

On December 27, 1836, Stephen F. Austin died after contracting pneumonia. His

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[51] Austin to James F. Perry, October 25, 1836, ibid., 439.

[52] Austin to Thomas Hart Benton, November 19, 1836, ibid., 455.

[53] Austin to Thomas Hart Benton, November 25, 1836, ibid., 461.

countrymen lauded Austin at his death for his efforts for Texas.[54] Indeed, the nation had lost an effective diplomat who had established a rapport with prominent American politicians. His death, however, had little effect on the stagnating course of annexation. Houston appointed Doctor Robert A. Irion to succeed Austin at the State Department.

Despite the burgeoning self-confidence of the nation and its faith in its annexation prospects, Houston privately remained guarded. He relayed his fears on the state of the new republic and his deepest wish for annexation to his old friend, Andrew Jackson. Houston knew Texas remained weak, despite public proclamations to the contrary. If the enemies of Texas learned of its anemic circumstances, the Lone Star Republic's foes, namely Mexico, may have quickly pounced on it. Houston wrote:

> It is policy to hold out the idea (and few there are who Know to the contrary) that we are very able to sustain ourselves against any power who are not impotent, yet I am free to say to you that we cannot do it. . . . I look to you as the friend and patron of my youth and the benefactor of mankind to interpose on our behalf and save us.[55]

Houston's private plea went unanswered for months. On March 3, 1837, as his last act in office, President Andrew Jackson officially recognized the independence of Texas, to the jubilation of the young republic.[56]

Houston wrote to Secretary of State Robert A. Irion, expressing his deep satisfaction over the recognition of Texas independence. The president wrote that

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[54] William S. Fischer to Government Officials, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 28-29.

[55] Houston to Andrew Jackson, November 20, 1836, ibid., I, 488.

[56] Houston to Irion, March 19, 1837, Irion Family Papers.

recognition alone remained a cause of joy, but he hastened to add that annexation would rendered him truly happy and secured all for which they had contended.[57]

Opposition to annexation simmered in northern camps of the United States throughout this time, in contrast to the still enthusiastic support in the South. John Quincy Adams, the former president and now a Massachusetts congressman, spearheaded most of the opposition. In his memoirs on December 24, 1836, he wryly remarked on the Texian efforts. Adams wrote that despite the Texian contentions of struggling for freedom to elicit the sympathies of the United States, Texas actually fought for the establishment and perpetuation of slavery.[58] Adams charged that slavery was a sin before God and to admit Texas as a state would only enlarge the evil.[59]

The slavery issue haunted Texas diplomatic affairs throughout its existence as a nation. The issue left the United States increasingly divided each year and anti-slavery forces helped stall Texas annexation.[60] Great Britain had already abolished slavery. Many prominent British officials, disgusted with its continued practice elsewhere, came to entertain hopes that England's commercial and financial might eventually could lure

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[57] Ibid.

[58] John Quincy Adams, December 24, 1836, Charles Francis Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, 13 vols. (Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries Press, 1969), IX, 133.

[59] Paul C. Nagel, John Quincy Adams: A Public Life, A Private Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 365.

[60] Justin H. Smith, The Annexation of Texas (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1919), 67.

the near-bankrupt Republic of Texas toward abolition.[61] Most Texas residents, however, had come from the American South, many with their own slaves and many more with the same ideas about race relations.

Slavery, fully legal under the constitution of the republic, seemed not only morally justifiable to the many slavery proponents but a matter of necessity for the nation. President Houston remained a moderate on the issue of slavery as his attempts to curtail the slave trade and his later actions as a United States Senator demonstrated. Besides his condemnation of the slave trafficking through Cuba as unholy and cruel, Houston said little on the subject while president.[62]

As the Republic of Texas remained at peace during the spring of 1837, its population and confidence grew. Some began to lose interest in annexation and came to the conclusion that the republic could survive and prosper without the United States. Texas pride and deeply held national convictions seriously affected the annexation issue as the attempts faltered. As the months dragged on and annexation lagged under American political disputes, many Texans became frustrated by the delays.[63]

The prospect of not being annexed enthralled some in Texas, who saw a loss in

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[61] James Hook to Viscount Palmerston, April 30, 1841, "Correspondence From the British Archives Concerning Texas, 1837-1846," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association 15 (1912): 230.

[62] Houston to Congress, May 5, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 87.

[63] Irion to J. Pinckney Henderson, March 20, 1838, Irion Family Papers; and Telegraph and Texas Register, May 30, 1838.

either their ambitions, interests, or national prestige through annexation. One newspaper confidently stated that as the Texas experiment in self-government had gone so smoothly, and since Texans had a little breathing time to feel their time and the security of their position, the desire for annexation steadily lost ground.[64] Memories of the astounding victory at San Jacinto also shaded the great difficulty Texas had during the war. Apparently many Texans believed they could easily repel any future invasion and soon concluded that the protection of the United States had become unnecessary. Although the decline in support for annexation to the United States remained widely known, no future referendum attempted to repeal the 1836 popular mandate for annexation.

Petitions and protests from the northen parts of the United States opposing annexation steadily poured into the United States Congress. In the summer of 1837, the American Anti-Slavery Society furiously protested annexation, fearing Congress then could divide Texas into six or eight states as large as Kentucky, enabling the South to dominate the nation and take away the rights of petition, free speech, and other liberties.[65] Many annexation foes charged that the annexation effort constituted a conspiracy of southern slaveholding interests.

Annexation proponents in Texas and the United States had not anticipated the strength and fury of the opposition. When Congress recessed in October 1837, it had failed to act on annexation but still planned to pursue the measure after the recess ended

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[64] Telegraph and Texas Register, May 30, 1837.

[65] Smith, The Annexation of Texas, 67.

in December. Texas envoy. Peter W. Grayson saw the Texan prospects darkening but retained some hope despite the setbacks. He confessed that the prospects of annexation remained exceedingly doubtful but he retained hopes of a mighty feeling to burst forth, likening it to a volcanic explosion to take place in Congress, ready to sink old continents and raise up new ones.[66]

In his annual message to the Texas Congress in November 1837, Houston acknowledged the difficulties emerging in the pursuit of annexation.[67] He noted that the effort appeared postponed, at least for the moment. Conscious of the possibility of failure, he reminded Congress that the course of the nation must remain committed to gaining the respect of the other nations of the Earth. Houston stated that Texas now had the responsibility to pursue such a course of policy and legislation that would quickly command the respect and confidence of other nations.[68]

By the end of 1837, the United States Congress still had not taken action on annexation.[69] This inaction left the Houston administration steadily less confident in the measure's success. Robert Irion dejectedly wrote to Memucan Hunt on New Year's Eve, stating his regret over the presentation of so many petitions against Texas from the

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[66] Peter W. Grayson to Sam Houston, October 21, 1837, Garrison, ed., Texas Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 265.

[67] Houston to Congress, November 21, 1837, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 153.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Irion to Hunt, December 31, 1837, Garrison, ed., Texas Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 277.

northeastern states. Irion added that he had anticipated opposition from that area but did not suppose it would be so determined and uncompromising in its character.[70]

Although less than 2 percent of the electorate had voted against annexation in the 1836 plebiscite, enthusiasm waxes and waned on the issue. No polls existed at the time to gauge the level of support for annexation, but several contemporary sources report the decline. Irion noted the change in opinion in a letter to J. Pinckney Henderson in March 1838. Irion stated his belief that the people of Texas steadily grew averse to annexation, asserting that the principal cause of this desire for admission to the United States revolved around the appeal that Mexico continued to annoy Texas.[71]

Annexation lay on its political deathbed in Washington, its strength sapped through parliamentary deadlock. Although it retained support by expansionists in the United States and the Houston Administration, the American Congress no longer had the will to act on it. Jackson's successor, Martin Van Buren, never really supported annexation and remained preoccupied with the financial crisis that gripped the United States.[72] Houston had held out hope for a great while, perhaps longer than Texas popular opinion could tolerate, but he realized the gravity of the situation. To continue to hold open the petition for annexation would hamper Texan efforts with other nations by making it look only half-interests in diplomatic relations, or worse, leave the country

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Irion to J. Pinckney Henderson, March 21, 1838, Irion Family Papers.

[72] David M. Pletcher, The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 73.

belittled as only an offshoot of the United States.[73] The proud and independent Texians would not bear that embarrassment.

In the summer of 1838 Irion had informed the Minister Plenipotentiary to the United Sates, Peter W. Grayson, that if Congress did not act on annexation before the end of the session, Grayson must withdraw the Texian petition. Irion reminded him that the pendence of the question embarrassed Texan negotiations in Europe.[74] Grayson never reached Washington. Inexplicably, he committed suicide in a Tennessee tavern in July. Shocked, the administration named Doctor Anson Jones as his successor to carry out the orders.[75] The Texas government instructed Jones instead to pursue a trade agreement with the United States in lieu of annexation. At the very least, the United States could remain a friendly power toward Texas and a lucrative trading partner.

Amidst the great activity in both domestic and diplomatic affairs, the republic prepared for its second presidential election in 1838. Texas politics had already developed into a fierce arena. Although factionalism existed, primarily over sharp personality differences and certain domestic policies, no party system ever developed in the Republic of Texas. Sam Houston so dominated the political scene that the political factions that had developed had become essentially the Houston Party and the Anti-

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[73] Irion to Grayson, June 12, 1838, Texas Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 331.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Proclamation of Houston, June 25, 1838, Writings of Sam Houston, II, 255.

Houston Party.[76] Lack of a significant electorate and time for opinions to crystallize, as well as the common purpose of survival against external and domestic tribulations helped maintain unity. Memories of the violent political divisions in Mexico that had fed the Texas Revolution had also soured the Texian opinion on partisanship and fostered fears of the same chaos infecting Texas.[77]

Houston's popularity had plummeted during the course of his presidency. Faced with an almost nonexistent treasury and limited options on the diplomatic front, circumstances forced him to make some unpopular decisions. The president's austere policies had frustrated many Texans who wanted the Lone Star Republic immediately to establish itself as one of the great powers of North America. Despite his attempts at frugality, Texas sank deeper into debt; and for his vetoes of popular measures, Houston's influence fell.[78] His great care in avoiding conflicts with Mexico and the Native American tribes of the region infuriated those who saw Texian greatness in terms of military might. General Thomas J. Green later asserted that most Texans had voted for Houston in 1836 in the belief that, from his military reputation, he would pursue an active belligerent policy, which at a short period would exhort an honorable peace from Mexico.[79] The president remained fully cognizant of the damage the last war had done to

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[76] William Ransom Hogan, The Texas Republic (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), 287.

[77] Telegraph and Texas Register, November 9, 1836.

[78] Morgan to Lamar, December 7, 1836, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, I, 511.

[79] Thomas Jefferson Green, Journal of the Texian Expedition Against Mier (Austin: The Steck Co., reprint 1935), 17.

Texas, as well as the daunting scarcity of money, men, and resources that a sustained military campaign demanded. Nevertheless, criticism of the government mounted as the election of 1838 approached.[80]

The constitution dictated that the term of the republic's first elected president would last only two years. Afterward, each presidential term would last three years.[81] As Houston could not run in the election of 1838 because of constitutional term limits, the field of contention became wide open. Vice President Mirabeau B. Lamar, a bitter opponent of Houston, tossed his hat into the ring, but the efforts of Houston's allies proved a heartbreaking disaster.

Some citizens had mentioned Secretary of War Thomas J. Rusk as a candidate, but the secretary refused. The Houston forces remained torn between the chief justice of the Supreme Court, James Collinsworth, who had distinguished himself at the Battle of San Jacinto, and Colonel Peter W. Grayson, the attorney general. Tragically, in July, Collinsworth killed himself. Apparently, his health and mind had been undermined by alcohol, and he jumped from a steamer into Galveston Bay.[82] At the time, the other Houston candidate, Colonel Grayson, served as a commissioner in the United States. The shock of Collinsworth's death had not worn off when news reached Texas that

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[80] Telegraph and Texas Register, August 18, 1838.

[81] Article III, Section 2, Constitution of the Republic of Texas (Washington, TX: Gales and Seaton, 1836), 12.

[82] Herbert Gambrell, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar: Troubadour and Crusader (Dallas, Southwest Press, 1934), 188.

Grayson had also taken his own life.

Lamar received warm support, as did the anti-Houston vice presidential candidate, David G. Burnet. Supporters hailed Burnet, praising his unshaken firmness in the hour of peril, his fidelity to the high trust which was conferred to him when the storms of invasion desolated the fairest portion of the republic, and the strict integrity with which he discharged every official duty since his first arrival in the country.[83] Lamar had won a great deal of respect in his few years in Texas and became a lightning rod for Houston's opponents. Although Lamar had little formal education, Texans considered him one of the learned men of the republic.[84]

The campaign remained quite bitter despite the lack of significant opposition. Stinging attacks came from every camp aimed at every candidate. In July, Thomas J. Green wrote to Lamar, expressing his fears of the possible election of Grayson which Green avowed would prompt him to leave Texas. He added that Texas had nothing to fear from Mexico but from herself.[85] Accusations flew that candidates bought support through promises of patronage. W. Jefferson Jones, a Lamar supporter, angrily denied such an accusation against Jones, writing in the Telegraph and Texas Register that Lamar remained under no promise to give him any office whatsoever.[86]

A Houston ally, Thomas F. McKinney, bitterly wrote of accusations against

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[83] Telegraph and Texas Register, August 11, 1838.

[84] Gambrell, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 211.

[85] Green to Lamar, July 11, 1838, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, II, 181.

[86] Telegraph and Texas Register, July 25, 1836.

McKinney in McKinney's own support of Grayson. McKinney likened his accusers to highway bandits and stated that if he had accused a man of robbing him on the highway and could not prove the crime, he would probably be guilty of a high misdemeanor for falsely accusing the other.[87] The lack of outrage against Lamar and his supporters for the attacks confounded McKinney.

The only opposition to Lamar's candidacy rested with Senator Robert Wilson. Wilson, or "Honest Bob" as his contemporaries had come to call him for his promise always to remain as honest as the circumstances permitted, had been expelled from the Senate for divulging actions taken in secret session. His district overwhelmingly reelected him in spite of this.[88] Wilson's candidacy never attracted much attention and received even less support from Texas voters. Lamar cruised to an easy victory by an astounding margin of 6,995 votes to 252. In addition to Burnet, two other candidates contended for the vice presidency of the republic, Senator A. C. Horton and Congressman Joseph Rowe. Burnet comfortably captured the vice presidency, though by a smaller margin than Lamar.

With annexation apparently dead, Texans seemingly content with the prospect of the Republic of Texas as a permanently independent nation settled on the bold idealist Mirabeau B. Lamar to guide the fate of their country. The president-elect prepared an expansive plan for his adopted home's development and establishing a position of

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[87] Ibid., August 18, 1838.

[88] Gambrell, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 189.

respectability for Texas in the world community and as a budding power in North America. The reality would prove far more difficult and more taxing on the nation's abilities and confidence than most could foresee.

The Houston administration, October 22, 1836, to December 10, 1838, had met with mixed success. In his inaugural addresses, annual messages to the nation, and other policy speeches, the first elected president of the Texas Republic had attempted to establish a pattern for peace and prosperity in the fledgling country. Houston had managed to keep the war with Mexico from renewing and stabilized the national land policy. Settlers steadily trickled in as fears of a new invasion faded. The economy began to improve but not to any extent that would prevent the nation from falling deeper into debt. The United States had recognized Texas independence, but no other nation had as yet. Despite the overwhelming electoral support by Texans, annexation efforts failed.

Throughout the public debate, Houston clearly favored annexation. He would risk an unpopular decision if he felt it served higher interest. And Houston would not easily change his mind on such a subject, given his history of obstinance and contrariness. Certainly thoughts of Texas remaining independent crossed his mind, but annexation would remain his first priority. But with all that Texas had won at stake, Houston could not afford to depend on an ambivalent United States alone, but would have to seek out the assistance of another power to help the struggling nation. Powers such as England and France saw great advantages through a more intimate relationship with Texas but would not bother if the Texians would only discard such efforts at the

first annexation offer from the United States.[89] At certain instances it may have become politically expedient for Houston to waver, but he did not. Popular passions could rarely sway Sam Houston after he had decided on a course of action. In the midst of the Texas Revolution, he had resisted the demands of many delegates to the Washington Convention to lead an offensive against Matamoros, far from the support of the Texas settlements.[90] Houston's policies toward the Native Americans of peace through commerce, almost a radical position for the day, often vexed some of his staunchest supporters and remained at odds with many who called for expulsion or even outright eradication of the Indian population. With the 1838 election an overwhelming success for Houston foes, the supporters of Lamar anxiously looked forward to advancing the ideas that Houston had resisted.

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[89] Hook to Palmerston, April 30, 1841, "British Correspondence Concerning Texas," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association 15 (1912), 239.

[90] Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas: From Wilderness to Commonwealth, 5 vols. (Fort Worth: Wortham-Molyneaux Co., 1924), III, 121.

CHAPTER 3

MIRABEAU B. LAMAR AND THE HIGH TIDE OF TEXAS NATIONALISM

On December 10, 1838, the new executives of the Republic of Texas took their oaths of office. After David Burnet assumed his post as vice president, the Texans gathered at the proceeding heard the inaugural address of President Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, replete with the bold and flowery words for which the poet and former newspaper publisher had become known. Lamar pledged to guard the nation against fraud, protect the frontier, reform taxes, and economize the nation's resources. The new president also called for Texas to expand to the Pacific Ocean and swoop further into the Mexican heartland to carve out a greater nation. Lamar pledged that as agriculture, commerce, and the useful arts formed the true basis of all national strength and glory, it would become his leading policy to awaken into vigorous activity the wealth, talent, and enterprise of the country.[1]

Lamar declared himself irrevocably opposed to the annexation of Texas to the United States, feeling it would bode disaster for Texans. He maintained that the Texas Republic had grown strong enough to thrive on its own. Although the new president

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[1] Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar to Congress, December 10, 1838, Charles A. Gulick, ed., Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 4 vols. (Austin: A. C. Baldwin & Sons, 1922), II, 318.

confessed a lingering ardor for his native United States, he proclaimed his higher duty lay in his adopted homeland, fearing the growing sectional rifts in the United States would tear Texas asunder as a part of the slave-holding American South. The president stated that as a result of annexation Texas would sacrifice its rights and dignity to become a part of a country in which it would lack proportional influence.[2]

Lamar immediately set out to build an expansive new Texas Republic, free of the depredations of both Mexico and the Indians and rich in internal improvements. The more hawkish elements in Texas hoped that the nation would feast on the hopelessly divided Mexico and add endless stretches of territory to the national domain. Lamar's plans would not disappoint this faction of belligerents. Many Texans looked to the plans of expansion with great anticipation, some anxious for a fight with Mexico to accomplish these ends.[3]

Lamar called on the honor, humanity, and patriotism of the country to defend Texas against Indian depredations.[4] This policy would expand into a full-scale war against the Cherokees and Comanches, which proved extraordinarily difficult for a nation with few available resources. The president, recalled one Texan several years later, had proclaimed a war of extermination against the Indians; an impossibility as already proven by the United States, and inaugurated expeditions against Mexico in

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[2] Ibid., II, 320.

[3] Thomas J. Green to Lamar, February 10, 1839, ibid., II, 443-446.

[4] Lamar to Congress, December 21, 1838, ibid., II, 352.

which he spent money without law and to the financial detriment of the country.[5] Battles with the Indians exploded across the long, unprotected frontier, stretching the resources of the Texas Republic to the breaking point. In late December 1838 the president called for eight companies of mounted volunteers, or approximately 470 men, to defend Texas against the Indians at a cost of $75,000.[6] Two months later Lamar called for 300 more volunteers to fight the Indians on the northwestern frontier,[7] and more calls for volunteers followed. Soon afterward, Lamar sent an icy letter to Chief Bowles of the Cherokees in May, declaring that the government would never allow the Cherokees to establish a permanent presence in the Texas Republic.[8]

The president maintained his belligerent policy against the Indians, stating that only expelling them from the country could preserve the integrity of the frontier. As Lamar called for strengthening the national military in his 1839 address, he asserted that it constituted vanity for Texans to flatter themselves that amicable relations can be preserved with the Indians.[9] Texans and Cherokees fought a fierce battle on the Neches

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[5] Lucy A. Erath, ed., "Memoirs of George Bernard Erath, II," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 26(1923): 274.

[6] H. P. N. Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, 1822-1897 10 vols., (Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), II, 11.

[7] Ibid., II, 15.

[8] Lamar to Chief Bowles, May 26, 1839, in Dorman H. Winfrey and James M. Day, eds., Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1959), 61-66.

[9] Lamar to Congress, November 12, 1839, Gulick, ed., Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, III, 166.

River in July 1839, which killed Chief Bowles and destroyed Cherokee resolve in Texas, forcing them to flee to Arkansas.[10] Lamar's war against the Indians only served to inflame the tense situation on the frontier. In March 1840 a group of Comanches met with agents in San Antonio to discuss peace. Angered by the Comanches' bringing only one white captive to return to the Texans, the Texans attempted to detain the delegation. A bloody fight erupted, and forty-two perished in the carnage.[11] The Comanches, however, soon avenged the Council House Fight. In one instance that struck terror throughout the country in August, Comanches implemented a daring invasion deep into Texas territory, raiding Gonzales, Victoria, and Linnville on Matagorda Bay.[12] Calls for volunteers to defeat the Indians immediately went forth. More bloodshed and more troops on the border became the real legacy of Lamar's Indian policy instead of a secure frontier.

Sam Houston returned to politics as a congressman representing Nacogdoches during Lamar's presidency and quickly clashed with the president. Not surprisingly, he remained nonplused with the new president's performance and decried the rising taxes, increased corruption, and worsened condition of the country. In 1840 Houston lamented

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[10] John Hoyt Williams, Sam Houston: A Biography of the Father of Texas (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 192.

[11] Herbert Pickens Gambrell, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, Troubadour and Crusader (Dallas: Southwest Press, 1934), 243; Rupert N. Richardson, et al., Texas: The Lone Star State. Sixth Edition. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1993), 134.

[12] J. H. Kerr to John Moore, August 9, 1840, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, III, 428-429.

to Robert Irion, his former secretary of state, that not since the revolution began had he entertained such gloomy hopes for his country.[13]

By 1840 the Texans had largely expelled the Cherokees from the nation. In early 1836 Houston had concluded a treaty with the Cherokees, guaranteeing the Cherokee claim to lands in Texas in exchange for peace while the Texians fought Santa Anna.[14] The agreements Houston had secured with the Cherokees fizzled in Congress as the increasingly aggressive attitude toward the Indians developed. Despite this, Congress took up consideration of the Cherokee Land Bill, which attempted to divide the Cherokee lands. Fierce debate exploded over the issue, absorbing most of the attention of the Texas Congress. One congressman recorded that "The Cherokee Bill has excited so much feeling and interest, that like Aarons [sic] serpent it has swallowed up all the rest."[15] Congressman Sam Houston strongly supported the bill in an attempt to force the government to acknowledge that Texas had conquered Cherokee lands instead of simply removing them from the republic's territory. He exclaimed that the measure remained a pledge as solemn as a nation's faith could make it, and as binding as any national

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[13] Sam Houston to Robert Irion, January 29, 1840, Madge Thornall Roberts, ed, The Personal Correspondence of Sam Houston, 2 vols. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1996). I, 6.

[14] Treaty Between Texas and the Cherokee Indians, Winfrey and Day, eds., Texas Indian Papers, 14-17.

[15] David S. Kaufman to Robert A. Irion, December 11, 1840. Irion Family Papers.

obligation.[16] The measure passed, but the Fifth Congress repealed the measure in the next session.

The administration fared a bit better in other areas of concern. Knowing a nation's greatness does not just depend on battlefield successes, Lamar advocated a number of reforms. The Homestead Law, a novel act rooted in the Mexican legal tradition for the defense of debtors, protected homes and an individual's tools of trade from seizure for debt. Lamar signed legislation that abolished dueling. The practice, long since vanished from the realm of legality in the United States, still thrived in Texas and had at one point resulted in two officers fighting over command of the army. One newspaper declared that the ban on dueling should constitute a source of pride for Texas, urging that the practice be frowned upon by the virtuous portion of the community.[17] Nevertheless, the bitter divisions between the vice president and Houston led Burnet to challenge Houston to a duel, even after the enactment of the ban.[18] The duel, fortunately, never took place.

Lamar also supported other legal reforms. In 1839, Texas abolished branding as a punishment for manslaughter and extended the death penalty to include horse theft.[19]

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[16] Sam Houston to House of Representatives, December 4, 1840, Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, 8 vols. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1940), II, 357.

[17] Telegraph and Texas Register, January 5, 1839.

[18] Austin City Gazette, June 23, 1841.

[19] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 166.

Many Texans strongly supported reform to the criminal system. One editor stated in 1840, "The terrible and disgraceful punishments of hanging, branding or whipping have been prescribed for almost every crime, and with as little regard to humanity, as if our laws were intended for dogs instead of men."[20]

To improve the transportation system in Texas, Congress granted corporate charters to three small railroad companies: the Houston and Brazos Railroad, the Harrisburg Railroad and Trading Company, and the Brazos and Galveston Railroad Company.[21] As Texas had limited resources, Lamar encouraged private enterprise to build the infrastructure the country needed. Suggestions also existed for establishing a rail line from Texas to California. In addition, several road construction companies received corporate charters. A lack of available capital and poor international credit, however, hampered the widespread development of railroads, turnpikes, and canals during the career of the Texas Republic.

For some time, many in Texas, including Lamar, had considered moving the capital from Houston. In May 1838, Colonel Edward Burleson and Jesse Billingsley wrote to the government on behalf of the residents of Bastrop, hoping to lure the seat of government to their community.[22] Instead, in late 1839, the government moved the

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[20] Telegraph and Texas Register, December 9, 1840.

[21] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 369, 488.

[22] Edward Burleson and Jesse Billingsley to Texas government, May 3, 1838, [no editor listed], Writings of Edward Burleson, 1831-1851 (Arlington, TX: University of Texas at Arlington, n. d.), 36-37.

nation's capital to the tiny settlement of Waterloo some thirty miles up the Colorado River from Bastrop.[23] Rechristening the town Austin, the population of the new capital swelled to 850 when just a few months earlier scarcely eight citizens of the city[24] had resided there. Texas also adopted a new flag, replacing the gold-star-on-blue-background design that had flown over the republic for nearly three years. In January 1839, Congress adopted the familiar red-white-and-blue Lone Star ensign that has remained in use ever since.

The establishment of a system of financing public education would become Lamar's enduring legacy. In his 1839 annual address he held that Congress remained no less bound to attend to the dissemination of knowledge than to attend to the physical defense of the country.[25] Texans had lamented the lack of an education system for years and saw the establishment of a school system as a means of attracting families and building a respectable, educated population to guide the future of the country. In January 1839 Congress passed a law requiring that each county of the republic shall have three leagues of land surveyed and set apart for the purpose of establishing a primary school or academy in that county.[26] The same act also provided fifty leagues, or approximately 221,400 acres, of vacant land for the establishment of a national university. Decades

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[23] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 161.

[24] Telegraph and Texas Register, January 1, 1840.

[25] Ibid., 179

[26] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 134.

later, this would come to fruition as the University of Texas. President Lamar also approved corporate charters to three private institutions: DeKalb College, Galveston University, and Trinity College during his administration.

Lamar also advocated policies encouraging immigration and protection of land titles. In 1840 the Fourth Congress passed a draconian measure to combat the manufacture and sale of counterfeit land certificates, proscribing that anyone convicted of such an act would receive thirty-nine lashes on the bare back and three to twelve months in prison.[27]

Despite the enactment of strict laws punishing fraudulent land sales, Lamar and Congress could not agree on a policy of how to locate fraudulent patents. Lamar wished to remain certain that any action that the government took would not jeopardize the claims of legitimate landholders. In January 1840, Lamar vetoed a bill to prevent land patent fraud because a particular section required all titles to include the names of the original land claimants, which he felt unconstitutional.[28]

In 1841, Lamar signed a new land law that attempted to encourage immigration by giving 640 acres to families who had arrived in Texas between the beginning of 1840 to the beginning of 1842 on the condition that they reside on the land for three years and cultivate at least ten acres of land.[29] Single white males over the age of seventeen would

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[27] Ibid., II, 337.

[28] Lamar to Congress, January 27, 1840, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, II. 316.

[29] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 554-557.

receive grants of 320 acres on the same conditions. Under this law, settlers would only pay for surveying, the land title, and various fees. This law would prove inadequate to attract sufficient numbers of settlers for the needs of the nation, despite its generosity. Congress would later repeal the residency and cultivation requirements.

Many in Texas had noticed that while the population grew steadily, the rate had not been as rapid as they had hoped. This frustrated many citizens who now saw the republic as a land of opportunity.[30] Texas seemed to attract a disproportionate number of professionals—doctors, lawyers, and office-seekers—intent on striking a quick and easy fortune in a new country instead of adding to the strength of the frontier. Texas, however, had already become inundated with such individuals. Appeals went out calling on these men to take up farming, invoking the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman republic. One writer lamented that among the thousands of immigrants arriving in Texas, a large portion of young lawyers, physicians, and clerks existed among them, with few opportunities to ply their trades. He wrote, "What is to the farmer a paradise, is to them a desert."[31]

France attempted to launch a colonization effort in Texas.[32] The plan, enthusiastically backed by General James Hamilton, the Texas Minister in Paris, called

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[30] The (Houston) Morning Star, September 10, 1839; James Armstrong to Lamar, June 12, 1841, Papers of Lamar, III, 537.

[31] Telegraph and Texas Register, December 25, 1839.

[32] James Hamilton to David Burnet, April 14, 1841, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, III, 508-509.

for Texas to reserve approximately five million acres for the colonization by some eight thousand Frenchmen, primarily veterans and their families. The Texas Congress took up consideration of the colonization proposal, primarily known as the Franco-Texienne Bill in mid-1841. Many remained doubtful of the bill's merits, despite the vocal support it received from Vice President Burnet and many others. President Lamar came to oppose the measure, although he never gave a major address on the issue. He soon persuaded his allies in the Senate to defeat the bill.[33]

With unwavering confidence and intrepid plans, President Lamar planned a bold course for Texas; but it proved quite expensive. Hobbled with debt from the revolution and the Houston administration, Texas soon acquired the additional burden of new programs that overwhelmed the republic's finances. Lamar remained cognizant of the nation's monetary difficulties and called for new economy measures.[34] Lamar stated that Congress should consider no saving too small to merit attention; furthermore, if Congress could find it practicable to lessen the national expenses without materially affecting the efficiency of the government, it would become the duty of officials to do so.[35] The government continued to seek a loan to help finance its operations and instituted new taxes. Congress reorganized the direct tax, exempting up to four horses or mules owned

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[33] Gambrell, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, 261; Thomas Lloyd Miller, The Public Lands of Texas, 1519-1970 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 38-39.

[34] Lamar to Congress, November 1, 1840, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, III, 468.

[35] Ibid.

per citizen to relieve the burden on farmers and mandated county taxes would not exceed one-quarter of the taxes levied at the national level.[36] As a result of fiscal pressures, the Lamar administration ground to a halt by the winter of 1840. Congressman David S. Kaufman wrote to Robert Irion on December 11 that although Congress already had reached the middle of the session, not a single bill of importance had passed both houses of Congress.[37]

A rising opinion in Texas contended that the difficult financial problems of the nation could be ameliorated through a more centralized financial system. A great deal of opposition to banks, however, had built up in the United States after the Panic of 1837, with many seeing banks as aristocratic and rife with fraud and corruption. These attitudes spilled over into Texas from America, especially as more Americans flocked to the republic and to the protection of homes from debtors that Texas law offered. President Lamar strongly advocated a National Bank of Texas in an 1838 address as promising harmony and benefits to all Texians.[38] Congress briefly considered a proposal forwarded by Branch T. Archer to establish a national bank late in the Lamar administration. The national bank drew wide public condemnation as extravagant and impractical. One Austin-area resident concurred, doubting that any benefit could arise from such an institution. One opponent asserted that no nation had ever benefitted from

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[36] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 576-578.

[37] Kaufman to Irion, December 11, 1840. Irion Family Papers.

[38] Lamar to Congress, December 21, 1838, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, II, 362.

the establishment of a bank in its rapid march to wealth, dignity of character, and glory.[39] The national bank never received legislative approval.

The economic situation of Texas steadily worsened during the Lamar administration. Despite Lamar's bold efforts to expand the glory of the nation, the deteriorating economic conditions increasingly frustrated Texans.[40] With the value of paper money in decline, many citizens saw their financial prospects growing bleak. Confidence in the nation began to sag despite pronouncements of many officials to the contrary.

As government funds dwindled, claims against the government mounted. Contractors and suppliers sometimes waited years to receive payments for their services. One such case involves a bill of more than $3,600 for weapons delivered by arms merchant Charles Hayes. He wrote to his business partner in 1840 explaining that while he had delivered the guns the military had asked for he had received no payment. Hayes explained that the navy secretary lacked funds to pay suppliers, but would remit the proper amount when the money became available.[41] Three years later, Hayes still had not received his money and learned to his shock that the second Houston administration

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[39] Austin City Gazette, July 15, 1840.

[40] The (Houston) Morning Star, May 15, 1839.

[41] Charles Hayes to John Ehlers, May 16, 1840, Albert Sidney Johnston Collection, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington.

refused to have any claims audited that originated under Lamar.[42]

As Lamar's influence withered, his old rival Sam Houston took no pity on him. In a letter to Anna Raguet, the general icily wrote of the chief executive, "He is not to be pitied, but must be despised. He walks about the congress; and is more unnoticed than Esau. . . . No one loves him, and if any respect him, I do not know who they are."[43] Lamar's troubles increased as the value of paper money collapsed. George Bernard Erath, a surveyor and later a lawmaker, noted that soldiers and surveyors often would wait two years to receive their pay. In the meantime, the value of the currency would dwindle so rapidly that it would only have half of the strength it had previously.[44] Inflation would compound the situation when soldiers finally received their pay, flooding the country with paper money. Erath stated that the currency depreciated in 1838 to two for one, to three for one in 1839, and to eight for one in 1841.[45] With little more to offer the international commercial community than vast amounts of land that possessed an unknown wealth, the lack of a developed economy could not support Texas money. The situation only worsened when the government chose to print more paper money to cover its internal debts, driving the value of the national currency down further. Inflation set in as a result, steadily taking its toll on Texas residents.

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[42]Hayes to Ehlers, June 1, 1843, Albert Sidney Johnston Collection.

[43] Houston to Anna Raguet, ca. 1841, Irion Family Papers.

[44] Erath, "Memoirs, II," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 26 (1923): 273.

[45] Ibid.

The Austin City Gazette skewered the spending policies of the Lamar administration. The paper noted the explosion in spending and indebtedness, which had vastly surpassed the Houston administration despite Lamar's statements supporting austerity in government spending. In Houston's two years as president, his administration spent just over $960,000.[46] In thirteen months, Lamar spent nearly $2 million. The paper concluded that any unprejudiced person needed not to wonder at the rapid depreciation of Texas promissory notes because, despite his promises to economize, the president had created a floating debt of nearly twice the amount of the whole of the Treasury's issues during the entire administration of his predecessor.[47]

Military expenditures had risen dramatically. Salaries for Texas soldiers totaled over $221,600 in 1839 alone, with their expenses estimated at twice that amount.[48] Some citizens felt the stronger military posture of Texas constituted a waste of resources, especially given the situation of the country. Despite the increase in defense spending, Texas reeled under Indian raids, far worse than under the Houston administration. Houston angrily wrote that Texas had no defenses and the means had been so squandered that Texas had become destitute of means.[49]

The Lamar administration, backed by Congress, continued the prodigious

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[46] Austin City Gazette, March 11, 1840.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Telegraph and Texas Register, December 23, 1840.

[49] Houston to Irion, January 27, 1841, Irion Family Papers.

spending policy. One resident blasted the government spending levels as the Fifth Congress convened in late 1840, stating, "Congress has been in session hardly three weeks and already has expended or appropriated $100,000.00. This is retrenchment with a vengeance—the largest share of this sum was appropriated for the running of the boundary line."[50] The failure of this direction prompted Anson Jones to declare the administration had nearly ruined the country, and within one year the work would be complete.[51] Instead of the nation rising in strength as Lamar had promised, the nation grew poorer. By February 1841 the national debt of the Texas Republic had reached $7.6 million.[52]

Lamar fiercely defended his administration. He felt the administration's expenditures remained necessary to build a strong defense for Texas and an image of power and respectability abroad. In a speech in Houston in May 1840, he admitted that government spending had increased sharply but within the previous year and a half the government had done much to render Texas secure at home and respectable abroad, with settlements spread further across Texas and means of defense greatly perfected.[53] In addresses to citizens across Texas, Lamar admitted no errors and maintained the justice

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[50] Telegraph and Texas Register, December 3, 1840.

[51] Anson Jones Journal, June 7, 1841, Anson Jones, ed., Memoranda and Official Correspondence Relating to the Republic of Texas, Its History and Annexation (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1859), 38.

[52] Telegraph and Texas Register, October 6, 1841.

[53] Lamar, May 28, 1840, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, III, 395.

of each of his actions.

On the diplomatic front, Texas continued to court British recognition for greater trade opportunities, increased respect in the diplomatic community, and improved leverage in dealings with Mexico. Lamar spoke highly of the prospects between Texas and England.[54] British diplomats began to see opportunities for their interests in the Texan desperation. In 1840, Texas cotton exports had amounted to approximately 20,000 bales, twice that of the previous year.[55] This commodity could help supply the burgeoning British textile industry. The Texas cotton market presented a tantalizing alternative to that produced in the American South and represented a vast savings for British industrialists. One British diplomat, Francis Sheridan, in noting the anxiety of Texians for recognition by Great Britain, stated that England almost could make her own terms upon every question, even the slave question.[56] He also conveyed his belief that if Britain recognized Texas, the encouraged migration to the republic could also dilute the strength of slavery interests in the Lone Star Republic over time. The peculiar institution had grown rapidly in Texas, reaching 12,570 slaves in the country by 1840, more than doubling in four years.[57]

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[54] Lamar to Congress, November 12, 1839, ibid., III, 163.

[55] Francis Sheridan to Joseph Garraway, July 12, 1840, E. D. Adams, ed., "British Correspondence Concerning Texas, 1837-1846," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 15 (1912): 219.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Randolph B. Campbell, An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in

France, in addition to Britain, saw hopes of commercial success in Texas. Understanding the possibility that Texas could prove an invaluable ally in any dispute with Mexico, France in 1839 extended diplomatic recognition to Texas and prepared to loan the nation $7 million in 1841. This loan possibility, however, disintegrated after an indignant Texas innkeeper insulted a French diplomat who refused to pay his bill.[58]

In his annual presidential address of 1840, Lamar praised the rising reputation of Texas on the international scene. The president proudly reported that relations with the United States remained quite amicable and the nations of Belgium and Holland lay ready to open a trade relationship with Texas.[59]

Under the Lamar administration, the Lone Star Republic not only set its sights on domestic improvements, but expansion of its borders. Lamar, not content with the Rio Grande as the extent of Texas dominions, looked upon the distant blue waters of the Pacific Ocean as the rightful Texas frontier.[60] Many Texans had enthusiastically shared this vision for quite some time. In May 1837 the Telegraph and Texas Register mused, "Texas, from her position, and from the restless nature of her inhabitants, is not destined to be shut up between the Sabine and the Rio Bravo."[61] The editorial continued in more

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Texas, 1821-1865 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 55

[58] J. S. Mayfield to Lamar, May 25, 1841, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, III, 530.

[59] Lamar to Congress, November 1, 1840, ibid., III, 464-465.

[60] Lamar to Congress, November 10, 1838, ibid., II, 320.

[61] Telegraph and Texas Register, May 30, 1837.

ambitious terms for the future of the Texas Republic with a proclamation that Texans appeared to be the destined rulers of Mexico.

Lamar spoke of peace with Mexico but constantly declared that Texas would one day expand to the Pacific Ocean.[62] The president subtly supported the Federalists against the Centralists in Mexico, sometimes allowing Federalist agents to recruit money, volunteers, and materiel in Texas. The Federalist-held Yucatan Republic contracted with the Lamar administration to use Texas ships to defend their coast against the onslaught of the Centralists.[63]

Lamar stated in November 1839 that he earnestly desired to conclude the nation's differences with Mexico—even if it meant another war.[64] He had sent diplomat Bernard E. Bee to Mexico to attempt to initiate peace talks. Nothing positive emerged from Bee's efforts but other attempts would follow in successive years.

Texas, growing in population and confidence in the early Lamar administration, saw foreign invasion as less and less of a threat. Mexico, for the moment, seemed perfectly tame as it had mounted no military operations against Texas for a number of years. The reasoning of the day dictated that as the Texians had defeated the Mexicans once before with far fewer men to draw on, any future offensive would certainly meet

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[62] Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, II, 320, III, 161.

[63] Jim Dan Hill covers the role of the Texas ships in The Texas Navy (New York: A. S. Barnes and Co., 1962).

[64] Lamar to Congress, November 12, 1839, Papers of Lamar, III, 161.

with disaster for Mexico once again. The situation had not improved much for Mexico since San Jacinto as it wrestled with a chaotic domestic situation.

Foreign observers noted that Mexico probably had more reason to fear Texas than Texas had from Mexico.[65] Texas politicians had repeatedly stated this conclusion. With Mexico in turmoil, a rising Texas could well take advantage of the situation. Many Texans planned to do so. A British writer noted in 1841 that invasion had lost its terrors and Texans remained conscious of their strength, knowing that the enemy had greater danger from them than Texas from the enemy.[66] Despite Mexico's weakness, few of the more belligerent groups in Texas seemed to consider that Mexico still had the capability of mounting an effective defense that would thwart the expansionist dreams of many Texans.

The administration saw opportunities for the nation as it witnessed the upheaval in Mexico. The tide of fortune appeared to turn in favor of the Federalists as the Lamar presidency began. Texans cheered on the Federalist successes.[67] Texas initially declared its neutrality, at least on an official basis, in the seemingly endless conflict in Mexico as the war again approached the Rio Grande.

The Federalists also captured the city of Monterrey that year with the help of

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[65]William Kennedy, Texas: The Rise, Progress, and Prospects of the Republic of Texas, 2 vols. (London: R. Hastings, 1841), II, 324.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Telegraph and Texas Register, April 24, 1839.

some Texas volunteers. Interestingly, an estimated seventy-four Texans served in the Federalist army.[68] Successes had mounted to such an extent that a convention of several northern Mexican states met in Laredo and established the Republic of the Rio Grande on January 18, 1840.[69]

Lamar quietly organized volunteers and approached two prominent Texans, Colonel William S. Fisher, a former secretary of war, and Colonel Juan Seguin, the senator from Bexar and eventual mayor of San Antonio, to lead the Texas volunteers. A respectable number of Texans, perhaps two hundred, eager for battling Mexico volunteered for the fight.

The nebulous Republic of the Rio Grande quickly faltered. In April 1840, Centralists captured and executed a key official of the Republic of the Rio Grande. Antonio Canales, commander-in-chief of the northern Mexican confederacy, eventually offered to surrender to General Mariano Arista, who not only accepted the surrender but quickly appointed Canales, now a Centralist, Collector of Internal Revenue for Nuevo Leon.[70] The Texas volunteers soon learned that the Centralists and Federalists had mutually conspired to ambush them and quickly returned home.

In 1841 the embattled Federalist state of Yucatan, in southern Mexico, declared

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[68]Henderson Yoakum, History of Texas, 2 vols., (Austin: The Steck Co., reprint 1935), II, 289.

[69] Milton Lindheim, The Republic of the Rio Grande: Texans in Mexico, 1839-40 (Waco, TX: W. M. Morrison, 1964), 5.

[70] Ibid., 10.

its independence and quickly sought assistance in its continuing struggle against centralism. Yucatan's envoys found an enthusiastic reception in Texas as Lamar opened the ports and commerce of Texas to its sister republic on the terms of a most favored nation and also pledged the Texas navy to assist the Yucatan Republic.[71] In exchange, Yucatan would pay the Texas naval expenses in the endeavor. Lamar hoped this arrangement would encourage the Federalists throughout Mexico. He confessed his earnest desire to establish relations of amity and friendship with the states of Yucatan, Tobasco, and such others as may throw off the yoke of central despotism in Mexico.[72]

The saber rattling of Lamar and other Texas nationalists did not go unnoticed in the Centralist camps. A rising state of alarm gripped Mexico as the Republic of Texas loudly proclaimed its intentions to seize Upper and Lower California, New Mexico, and other portions of northen Mexico. Texas openly aided the Federalists in the endless civil war and had repeatedly sent its small navy to blockade ports and harass Mexican shipping. An increasing number of Mexicans felt it necessary to strike at the Lone Star Republic before the country followed through on these threats. Mexico, on her part, earnestly prepared for an invasion of Texas.[73] Military plans against Texas advanced quickly after October 1841 as the government in Mexico City again fell, and Santa Anna

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[71] Lamar to Governor of Yucatan, July 20, 1841, George P. Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), II, 793.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Yoakum, History of Texas, II, 318.

again installed himself as the head of state.

The Republic of Texas had long set its sights on the valuable trade passing through Santa Fe. This commerce included merchants traveling along the Rio Grande as well as the trade route that had existed for some time between Santa Fe and Missouri. As Lamar had called for in his 1839 address,[74] an expedition to Santa Fe slowly took shape. The president had great hopes for the expedition, despite arguments over its cost and lack of official congressional approval for funding. Undeterred by the lack of congressional enthusiasm, Lamar nevertheless ordered the Texas treasury to finance the venture.[75]

The Texan-Santa Fe Expedition would become the crowning disaster of Lamar's administration. The distant city lay within the Texas claims to the interior of the Rio Grande but the new republic had not managed to exert either control or influence over the residents. President Lamar deemed it high time that Texas asserted its claim and began to plan an expedition of soldiers and merchants to establish the nation's dominion and trade.

Texas felt perfectly justified in the venture, since it considered Santa Fe a part of the Republic of Texas.[76] The nation would simply take possession of its rightful property. Americans had traded in the area unmolested for years and Texans expected no

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[74] Lamar to Congress, November 12, 1839, Gulick, ed., Papers of Lamar, III, 182.

[75] John G. Chalmers to James B. Shaw, March 24, 1841, Seymour V. Connor, ed., Texas Treasury Papers (Austin: Texas State Library, 1955), II, 613-614.

[76] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, I, 132.

difficulty.

The expedition remained public knowledge for weeks prior to its departure as the Texas press openly debated it and Lamar openly beseeched New Mexico to join Texas in freedom. In an open letter to the denizens of Santa Fe, Lamar begged them to embrace Texas as he extolled the republic's virtues of freedom and dreams of expansiveness from the Sabine River to the Pacific Ocean:

> Our purpose is simply to place before you the rights which we claim, and to admonish you of the change in your condition which the force of circumstances will inevitably place bring about at no distant period, either with or without your consent. . . . Will you shelder [sic] yourselves under the broad banner of the Single Star, which sheds luster whereever [sic] it floats, and lights the brave to victory and glory; or will you prefer still to cling to the unsightly Cactus which gives you no sustenance but thorns you as you embrace it.[77]

Not all Texans remained confident of the wisdom of the excursion, although for different reasons. On May 26, 1841, one newspaper communicated its concerns that the size of the party could prove too large to sustain in the difficult environment between Austin and Santa Fe. The paper learned that the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition would consist of about 300 men and feared the company would suffer much inconvenience in procuring the necessary supplies of provisions and water.[78] Some observers remained highly critical of the excruciatingly high cost of the voyage when faced with soaring debts and a sour economy.

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[77] Lamar to Citizens of Santa Fe, June 5, 1841, Gulick, ed., Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, III, 489-491.

[78] Telegraph and Texas Register, May 26, 1841.

Worse still, opponents charged that Lamar had used the nearly $90,000 of government funds to finance the venture without the explicit consent of Congress, a violation of the Constitution. The (Houston) Morning Star declared that Texas should not send such an expedition as Congress had made no appropriation for the support of a soldier in the field.[79] Few critics, however, voiced concerns on the willingness of the people of Santa Fe to join Texas.

Other Texans extolled the merits of the expedition, confident it would prove a momentous event for Texas. One newspaper emphasized that the expedition would afford an excellent opportunity for young men to see the country and make a small venture on their own account.[80] Despite these criticisms, Lamar and other expedition supporters remained undaunted.

The expedition departed with much fanfare for Santa Fe in late June under the command of Colonel William G. Cooke. Attracted by the promise of adventure, the participants left Brushy Creek near present-day Round Rock to journey through territories completely alien to them, replete with parched prairies and hostile Indians. As the now-exhausted Texans approached Santa Fe in September, one month later than expected, they surrendered to the forces of New Mexico Governor Manuel Armijo who had convinced the people of Santa Fe that the Texans had come to burn, slay and

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[79] The (Houston) Morning Star, June 24, 1841.

[80] Austin City Gazette, February 17, 1841.

destroy.[81] The governor then sent them to Mexico City as prisoners, ordering the deaths of all those who resisted or fell along the way.[82] News of the expedition's tragedy did not reach Texas for several months, but President Lamar faced the political fallout much sooner.

In Texas, meanwhile, the Lamar administration had all but disintegrated. Texans now looked to the next administration as the 1841 election approached. The third presidential election in the republic's history pitted two former Texas presidents against one another: David G. Burnet and Sam Houston.

The 1841 election remained a typically caustic campaign. The candidates often ignored the more pressing issues amidst the fury of personal attacks. Burnet supporters launched vicious assaults on Houston's character in which they constantly cited Houston's notorious alcoholism. One newspaper blasted:

> The people are examining more closely into the character of the candidates; and already a large proportion of the moral and virtuous are beginning to regard Houston pretty much in the same view that we once regarded an old soldier, that we once found lying drunk in a ditch.[83]

In endorsing Houston, the Austin City Gazette emphasized the marked decline in the finances and credit of the nation during Lamar's term. The paper noted that Texas by

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[81] George Wilkins Kendall, Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition (Chicago: Lakeside Press, , 1929), 364.

[82] Ibid., 486; For a more complete account of the expedition, see H. Bailey Carroll, The Texan Santa Fe Trail (Canyon, TX: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1951).

[83] Telegraph and Texas Register, July 14, 1841.

the end of 1838 had been comparatively free from debt, had good credit abroad, had a national currency redeemable almost at par, and had a tax policy that fell lightly on all classes of the community. Two years into the Lamar administration, the country groaned over a national debt of $7 million.[84]

Four men contended for the vice presidency in 1841: Edward Burleson, Memucan Hunt, William Menefee, and Anson Jones. Although the candidates for the major offices had all distinguished themselves in Texas politics, several others had come to Texas drawn only by the prospect of winning office or a patronage appointment. One writer remarked that probably no country had a greater infestation of office seekers than Texas, and they had proven but insatiable leeches to the body politic.[85]

Jones and Burleson both received a great deal of support. The Austin City Gazette lauded Jones as a gentleman in every way qualified to fill the office.[86] Edward Burleson, a staunchly independent candidate, drew wide admiration from all corners of the nation. One publication that had already endorsed Jones praised Burleson's unadorned good sound sense and noted that the people of his district having appreciated it had once elected him senator.[87] This represented unusually high praise in the deeply partisan press of the Texas Republic. Anson Jones dropped out, however, and the race

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[84] Austin City Gazette, February 3, 1841.

[85] Telegraph and Texas Register, August 11, 1841.

[86] Austin City Gazette, May 26, 1841.

[87] Ibid., June 2, 1841.

for vice president fell between Hunt and Burleson.

Burleson maintained a strict independence, not wishing his name identified with either faction as many of his supporters remained committed to either Houston or Burnet.[88] Hunt, in contrast, received bruising criticism. Hunt's opponents blasted his record, including his management of the Navy Department and his term as a diplomat in the United States negotiating the boundary. One Texan wrote, "It would seem, that in a life of some thirty-eight years, this one act in relation to the boundary, is all he can point to with peculiar satisfaction, and I think I have shown no merit attaches to that."[89]

The huge expenditures of the Lamar administration seemed to bring Texas little more than increased debt. A continuation of these fiscal policies and continuing agitation against Mexico, many citizens felt, could only result in disaster.[90] One man explained his reasons for voting against Burnet, though acknowledging Houston's faults, stating that he feared Burnet would plunge the country into active warfare against Mexico.[91] Former Secretary of State Irion wrote to Houston, expressing his deep dissatisfaction with the state of the nation. He declared that Texas decidedly existed in a

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[88] Telegraph and Texas Register, July 21, 1841.

[89] Austin City Gazette, July 28, 1841.

[90] Anson Jones, June 7, 1841, Memoranda and Official Correspondence Relating to the Republic of Texas, 38; and Irion to Houston, September 7, 1841, Irion Family Papers.

[91] Austin City Gazette, August 11, 1841.

state of anarchy.[92] Irion went so far as to suggest imposing martial law. One Texan, despondent over the poor condition of the nation, asserted that Texas had entered such a state of collapse that nothing in the shape of legislation could save the country from a general governmental as well as individual bankruptcy.[93]

As the campaign and attacks continued, one newspaper writer conducted a survey that found Burnet leading by over 2,600 votes.[94] Houston forces remained confident. Houston pledged a sound fiscal policy and intoned the themes of building Texas as a simple yeoman republic. He wrote to supporters that "Our national character may suffer, but we will maintain our independence in two things: the first is, peace; and the second, our farms! Our motto ought to be, `fewer officers, and more corn-fields.'"[95]

Houston won easily in September, as did Burleson. Houston garnered 6,985 votes to Burnet's 2,422, while in the vice presidential contest, Burleson won with 4,875 votes to 3,820 ballots cast for Hunt.[96] Houston would inherit a Texas frustrated by its lack of progress. In his first administration, Houston had managed to hold the more extremist elements in check, but as Texans learned of the fate of the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition

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[92] Irion to Houston, September 7, 1841, Irion Family Papers.

[93] Adolphus Sterne, September 6, 1841, Archie P. McDonald, ed., Hurrah for Texas! (Waco, TX: Texian Press, 1964), 57.

[94] Telegraph and Texas Register, August 4, 1841.

[95] Austin City Gazette, August 25, 1841.

[96] Stanley Siegel, A Political History of the Texas Republic (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1956), 182.

and Mexico prepared again to invade the Lone Star Republic, the hero of San Jacinto would not remain able to control the passions of his countrymen as easily. The failed efforts of Texas to expand left the national coffers considerably poorer, but the nation still thirsted for revenge against its enemies.

The Lamar administration could not bring to fruition its dreams of a greater Texas Republic. His fierce Indian policy resulted in furious skirmishes on the frontier. Although Lamar had stressed his desire for peace with Mexico on numerous occasions, his actions served only to agitate that country. Further, his public yearnings for peace between the two countries contradicted Lamar's burning desire to add California to the possessions of Texas. In effect, the dreams of peace had been sacrificed on the altar of ambition.

Lamar had enacted a considerable number of reforms, established a school system, and encouraged internal improvements. Yet these acts could not make up for the miserable failures of the economy and the inability to keep the peace. His attempts at controlling spending not only failed completely but became widely ridiculed. The great disasters far overshadowed Lamar's few minor victories. After the election of 1841, Lamar waited quietly for his term to end, but circumstances would deny him even that consolation.

The Sixth Congress assembled shortly after the 1841 election, and Lamar would not leave office for a few weeks more. Almost immediately, Lamar's opponents in the new Congress launched a bitter attack on the outgoing president over the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition. Opponents considered the expedition a gross and unconstitutional

extravagance, and several congressmen briefly considered impeaching Lamar.[97]

On December 6, 1841, the Select Committee on the Santa Fe Expedition issued its scathing report and charged that President Lamar "has acted without the authority of law or the sanction of reason; the reasons assigned by the President are strange, unnatural, and unsatisfactory."[98] The committee had found that Lamar had appropriated government money for the expedition without the explicit sanction of law, a violation of the Constitution,[99] yet declined to impeach him, feeling it would serve no purpose since Houston would take office shortly. When his term expired on December 20, Lamar left Houston to deal with the repercussions of the expedition.

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[97] Austin City Gazette, December 15, 1841.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Article I, Section 25, Constitution of the Republic of Texas (Washington, TX: Gales and Seaton, 1836), 11.

CHAPTER 4

DISASTER AND REDEMPTION

Texas faced its greatest peril since the battle of San Jacinto as Sam Houston assumed the presidency for a second term. Houston acknowledged the depth of the crisis as he took the presidential oath for the second time on December 20, 1841. The nation had sunk deeper into debt and faced Indian raids all along the frontier. These problems left the nation anxious, and the new president shared those concerns.

Houston's inaugural speech lacked the flowery eloquence and confidence of his address six years earlier. He touched on three major issues in his speech: peace with Mexico, revising the tariff, and a more austere and manageable fiscal policy. Of the United States, he only mentioned the importance of negotiating a trade treaty. The president also spoke of the need for a just policy toward the Indians and blasted the rising partisanship of Congress. Houston did not remain particularly optimistic in regard to Mexico. He noted that Texas-Mexico relations stood in the same state as in 1836. The president reassured his countrymen, however, as he proclaimed that Mexico could not invade Texas with any hope of success.[1]

As the second Houston presidency began, the fate of the Texan-Santa Fe

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[1] Sam Houston to Congress, December 20, 1841, in Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, 8 vols. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1939), II, 400-401.

Expedition remained unknown in Texas. Congress had almost impeached President Mirabeau B. Lamar over the affair, and Houston avoided any mention of the Santa Fe trek in his addresses. Wild rumors of what became of the expedition swirled, most contradicting one another. Some claimed that the expedition met with the highest success and enjoyed brisk and profitable business.[2] Others reported hearing that Indians had ambushed the travelers before ever reaching Santa Fe.[3] Yet no word came from either the expedition or officials in New Mexico. The strange, unnerving silence only fed the rumors further.

By January 1842, nearly six months after the group had left Austin, new reports from the American Consul at Santa Fe confirmed that Mexican officials had captured the caravan.[4] The loss to the republic consisted of far more than tax dollars, goods, or even soldiers. The disaster struck deeply at the confidence in the integrity of their nation and the already faltering sense of invincibility, and Texans had taken it personally. The nation became immediately enraged and swore to avenge the deed.[5] Several foreign powers, including the United States and Great Britain, offered to help expedite the release of the Santa Fe prisoners.[6] As a result, most of the survivors had returned by the

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[2] Austin City Gazette, October 13, 1841.

[3] Ibid., December 1, 1841.

[4] Ibid., January 5, 1842.

[5] Telegraph and Texas Register, February 2, 1842.

[6] Houston to Congress, February 1, 1842, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 463-465.

summer of 1842. Intervening events, however, worsened the situation between Mexico and Texas.

In response to the horrors suffered by the men of the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition, Congress angrily passed an act extending the borders of Texas to include all of Upper and Lower California, New Mexico, Chihuahua, as well as portions of Sonora, Durango, Tamaulipas, and Coahuila—fully two-thirds of Mexico with a land mass that would almost rival the United States.[7] Houston condemned the measure as embarrassingly impractical. No nation would possibly recognize it and would cast serious doubts on the sensibilities of the Texas government. In his veto message of February 1, 1842, Houston scolded Congress, "It seems to me that until Texas has it in her power to exercise jurisdiction, it can be of no possible advantage to her, that she should assert any claim which would subject her to derision."[8]

Houston, fully aware of the weakness of his country, managed to keep the more radical elements of Texas from charging into a disastrous war with Mexico. He had stated in his inaugural address that he would not agitate Mexico as Lamar had, nor would he waste money on ill-fated peace expeditions to Mexico City.[9] Houston knew the country lacked the resources to mount an offensive, despite the rage felt by the people of the Texas Republic. For the moment, Houston succeeded in curbing the war sentiment,

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[7] Ibid., II, 463.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Houston to Congress, December 20, 1841, ibid., II, 401.

forcing Texas to accept the failure and wait for further developments.[10]

Amidst this atmosphere, an enraged Santa Anna finally carried out his old threats and launched a raid into Texas. On the anniversary of the fall of the Alamo on March 6, 1842, forces led by General Rafael Vasquez sacked San Antonio. Quickly mobilized, the Texans marched toward Bexar and forced Vasquez to leave the city in haste. On March 10 President Houston issued a general call to arms in which he asked his countrymen to prepare for a defensive war.[11] In late March, Houston ordered General Alexander Somervell to pursue the invaders as far as but not beyond the Rio Grande, as the president believed Texas could not muster the forces to invade Mexico successfully.[12] The president also ordered the navy to blockade the eastern coast of Mexico.[13]

The situation in Texas threatened to become uncontrollable. Houston had to order the military not to impress supplies from private citizens that the armed forces felt the military needed to defend the country.[14] Discipline in the frustrated military became increasingly difficult to maintain. In April Vice President Edward Burleson saw that Houston's orders not to cross the Rio Grande had a disastrous effect on the morale of the

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[10] William Campbell Binkley, The Expansionist Movement in Texas, 1836-1850 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925), 93.

[11] Houston to People of Texas, March 10, 1842, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II, 490.

[12] Houston to Alexander Somervell, March 18, 1842, ibid., II, 509-510; Proclamation of Houston, March 26, 1842, ibid., II, 537.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Houston to Army and Citizens of Texas, ibid., II, 496-497.

military. Fearing a mass desertion, Burleson assumed command of the army over the president's hand-picked commander, General Somervell.[15] Burleson did not apologize for usurping Somervell's command, as the vice president declared that he loved his country more than he feared his president's wrath.[16] In response President Houston, though irritated, only ordered Burleson to suppress any further insubordinate activity.[17] Discipline problems continued to permeate the Texas military during 1842. Houston reprimanded General James Davis in July for disobeying orders in allowing his men to march away armed.[18] The president acted slowly, leading many, not unexpectedly, to complain loudly about his lack of aggressive action.[19]

In June the president convened Congress in Houston for a special session to address the situation as he feared a lack of safety for the government in Austin. President Houston now had a country furious at the latest round of depredations by Mexico but had few means with which to retaliate. Congress passed a bill giving the president unlimited powers to raise an army and sell land for its financing for an offensive war against Mexico by allowing the president to draft Texans into the militia and sell ten million

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[15] Edward Burleson. April 6, 1842, no editor listed, Writings of Edward Burleson, 1831-1851 (Arlington, TX: University of Texas at Arlington, n. d.), 124-125.

[16] Ibid., 126.

[17] Houston to Burleson, April 11, 1842, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 24.

[18] Houston to James Davis, July 10, 1842, ibid., III, 99.

[19] Telegraph and Texas Register, June 8, 1842.

acres to finance the effort.[20]. Houston did not want an punitive war against Mexico. He estimated that such an undertaking would require a force of at least 5,000 men over one year at a cost of $2 million,[21] more than the resources of the country could withstand. Houston decried the bill's impracticalities and expressed his fears that the incredible powers to draft men and sell public lands would establish a precedent for a dictator in times of crisis. The president promptly vetoed the act.[22] Houston confessed to Colonel Joseph L. Bennett that his plans of retaliation consisted of small punitive raids across the Rio Grande by some 1,300 troops.[23] This plan, however, never materialized.

Many citizens feared that the Mexicans would push the Texans as far as the Brazos River. Houston now argued that, in the face of continuing pressure from Mexico, insufficient forces existed in Austin to protect the archives of the government as well as other government property. Houston argued that the loss of the archives would constitute an irreparable loss to the country.[24] Summarily, the president ordered the archives moved further from the frontier. Officials frequently had moved the archives, which consisted of a sparse amount of official papers, to avoid them falling into the hands of Santa Anna during the Texas Revolution. Although Houston often had expressed grave

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[20] Houston to Congress, July 22, 1842, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 117-118.

[21] Ibid., III, 116.

[22] Houston to Congress, July 22, 1842, ibid., III, 123.

[23] Houston to Joseph L. Bennett, July 26, 1842, ibid., III, 128-131.

[24] Houston to Congress, February 5, 1842, ibid., II, 482.

reservations over the exposed the site of the capital, his critics charged he used the invasion as an excuse to relocate the seat of government.[25] The residents of Austin rose up to prevent the move, feeling that Houston had abandoned the capital. The controversy over the archives raged for months as Austinites stood ready to defend the archives by force of arms. In his state of the nation message in November 1842, Houston reiterated the necessity and propriety of the removal.[26] After several more weeks of confrontation, the attempt to move the archives ended. A brief, bloodless battle on December 30 forced government agents sent to retrieve the documents to flee.

In late summer 1842, Mexico launched a second raid into Texas.[27] The Mexican forces struck at Texas in three columns, marching toward Bexar, Goliad, and Victoria. Texas troops managed to deflect the Mexicans before reaching Victoria and Goliad but could not reach Bexar County in time. On September 11 General Adrian Woll captured San Antonio.[28] Realizing he could not hold the city, the general nevertheless proceeded to declare Mexican law in full effect and named an alcalde for the city. As Texian reinforcements approached to liberate the captured city, Woll mounted a weak defense in the face of Texan volunteers from Gonzales commanded by Colonel Matthew Caldwell.

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[25] Houston to W. D. Wallach, May 31, 1841, ibid., II, 368; Houston to Congress, December 1, 1842, ibid., III, 212.

[26] Ibid., III, 212-213.

[27] For a complete account and analysis of the Mexican raids of 1842, see Joseph Milton Nance, Attack and Counterattack: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964).

[28] Telegraph and Texas Register, September 21, 1842.

The general overwhelmed a second force approaching from LaGrange, commanded by Captain Nicholas Dawson, at Salado Creek. In what became known as the Dawson Massacre, Woll's forces slaughtered forty-one of their Texian captives.

Learning that still more reinforcements approached, Woll abandoned the area with the same haste of Vasquez earlier in the year, taking with him several residents of San Antonio, ten survivors of the Dawson massacre, and a local judge.[29] Despite the threats by General Woll to renew the war in all its fury, Mexico never launched another raid into Texas, although fear of invasion still gripped the Texas Republic.

Houston had ordered a force led by General Alexander Somervell to chase the Mexican invaders out of the country and not to engage in any punitive measures across the border.[30] Somervell proceeded to the Rio Grande. Satisfied that the armies of Santa Anna remained content to stay across the river, the general prepared to return. A small group of three hundred men, furious at the decision not to pursue the Mexicans further, rebelled and mounted their own raid into Mexico.[31] Electing as their commander Colonel William S. Fisher, a veteran of Texan engagements south of the Rio Grande, the Texans descended on the small settlement of Mier.

The Texan volunteers raided Mier early on Christmas Day, 1842. They inflicted

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[29] E. W. Winkler, "The Bexar and Dawson Prisoners," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association 13 (1910): 296.

[30] Houston to Somervell, October 3, 1842, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 170.

[31] Thomas J. Green, Journal of the Texian Expedition Against Mier (Austin: The Steck Co., reprint 1935), 66.

numerous casualties on the Mexican defenders, but soldiers of a regular Mexican army unit overwhelmed the overconfident Texans and forced their surrender.[32] Repeating the disaster of the Santa Fe Expedition, the victors led the 256 Texian captives into the Mexican interior. After several weeks of captivity, the prisoners fled their captors in an attempt to return home. Mexican troops soon recaptured 176 survivors and marched them to the Hacienda Salado where the Texans learned that still new terrors awaited them. Santa Anna had ordered every tenth man shot. Each prisoner at Hacienda Salado was forced to draw from a jar filled with 159 white beans and seventeen black beans.[33] The lives of the men who drew white beans would be spared. Black beans meant death. Thomas Jefferson Green described the somber mood of the drawing. "None showed change of countenance; and as the black beans failed to depress, so did the white fail to elate."[34] On March 25, Santa Anna's troops shot the condemned Texans and marched the 159 survivors to Perote Castle in central Mexico.

President Houston condemned the disobedience of both the Texans and the atrocities of the Mexicans and attempted to expedite the release of the Mier prisoners.[35] A number of the prisoners, including Green, managed to escape and work their way back

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[32] Ibid., 106-107.

[33] Sam W. Haynes, Soldiers of Misfortune: The Somervell and Mier Expeditions (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 124.

[34] Green, Journal of the Texian Expedition, 170.

[35] Houston to Congress, December 12, 1843, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 462-463.

to the safety of Texas. The British and other foreign nations and dignitaries, including Andrew Jackson, attempted to persuade Santa Anna to release the Mier prisoners.[36] Santa Anna occasionally released one or two of the remaining prisoners at a time, finally releasing them all on Mexican Independence Day, September 16, 1844.

Mexico remained a source of great concern for the Houston administration. In June 1843 Houston relayed his fears to Secretary of State Anson Jones that if Mexico invaded again, he could not restrain the people from retaliating.[37] The people wanted war, regardless of the costs to the country, and Houston considered the possibility if the two nations failed to reach an armistice. The president asserted that he had heretofore sought a pacific policy under the most annoying circumstances and added that, if the war began again, he would use all his energies in sustaining it and ensuring success to Texian arms.[38]

Texas had been humiliated in the eyes of the world, showing that it could not even control the territory it claimed. Houston remained fully conscious of this. The value of Texas money again plummeted as international investors lost faith in Texas. Those in the republic who had once dreamt of empire had awakened to a brutal nightmare. Houston wrote to British diplomat Charles Elliot that the downhearted Texans began to

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[36] Ibid., III, 462; William Preston Stapp, The Prisoners of Perote (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977).166-167, 171.

[37] Houston to Anson Jones, June 10, 1843, George P. Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, 2 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), II, 786.

[38] Ibid.

reconsider the viability of maintaining an independent course.[39] The raids by both Mexico and Texas had accomplished little more than bloodshed and both nations now lay exhausted. The two years of military operations by Texas against Mexico had accomplished little, leaving none of the issues resolved.[40] Texas and Mexico soon opened negotiations for an armistice.

The European powers saw an opportunity to win greater influence with the Texas government and offered to arbitrate an armistice between Texas and Mexico.[41] Santa Anna proposed an armistice in 1843 in which Texas would supposedly maintain its autonomy but would have to acknowledge the sovereignty of Mexico over their country. The chances of Sam Houston or the Texas Congress acknowledging even a hint of Mexican sovereignty over them remained almost non-existent. Even the British, who had helped negotiate the deal, did not feel confident about its acceptance. Charles Elliot remarked to a British official in Mexico that the Texas government would not countenance the measure for a moment.[42]

With a cease-fire in effect, peace talks with Mexico proceeded steadily under the

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[39] Houston to Charles Elliot, January 24, 1843, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 300.

[40] Ralph A. Wooster, "Texas Military Operations Against Mexico, 1842-1843," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 67 (1964): 484.

[41] Ashbel Smith to Anson Jones, October 17, 1842, Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 1026-1028.

[42] Charles Elliot to Percy Doyle, June 21, 1843, E. D. Adams, ed., "British Correspondence Concerning Texas, VII," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 17 (1913): 70.

careful nurturing of Great Britain. The British felt that Santa Anna might well consent to a truce of liberal duration, particularly if he made it clear at the same time that no combination of circumstances would ever induce Mexico to conclude a definitive arrangement with Texas until the Lone Star Republic made satisfactory arrangements for the abolition of slavery.[43] Mexico demanded the protection of England and France to prevent Texas from expanding and to defend Mexico in any war that would result from Texas annexation to the United States. Texas and Mexico signed a preliminary peace agreement on February 18, 1844.[44] Texas's continued pursuit of annexation angered Mexico, however, and it soon declared a renewal of hostilities with Texas.

With a respite from Mexican raids, Houston turned to the Texas domestic situation. In his annual message in December 1842, Houston decried the self-serving acts of lawmakers, which he blamed for the decline of Texas and the collapse of Texas money. Houston noted that no nation had ever existed either without a currency or without the means to conduct the business of government, thus making Texas an anomaly.[45] To correct the faltering currency, Houston felt that the situation demanded little more than prudence and economy. He advocated the exchequer system, banning

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[43] Elliot to Doyle, October 10, 1843, "British Correspondence Concerning Texas, IX," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 17 (1914): 311-312.

[44] Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 789; Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas: From Wilderness to Commonwealth 5 vols., (Fort Worth: Wortham-Molyneaux Co., 1924), IV, 148.

[45] Houston to Congress, December 1, 1842, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 207.

the use of all bank notes and relying strictly on notes issued by the Republic of Texas.[46] The exchequer bills essentially acted as a national currency, valid for tax payments and for congressional appropriations. They proved quite successful in adding stability to Texas money. In addition, the government would only accept gold and silver for payment of import duties. Congress also modified the direct tax, requiring a license for liquor vendors and imposing a 15 percent duty on firearms, books, and stationery, although exempting bibles and school books from import duties.[47]

Houston also sought greater control of crime, authorizing $2,000 for a congressional committee to study sites for a penitentiary.[48] The penitentiary bill had passed Congress before. Little success emerged from either plan as attempts to establish a penitentiary continued for several more years.

Houston argued for peace through commerce with the Indians, confident that if Texas would honestly conduct trade in those goods the Indians needed, peace would come to the frontier. Congress approved $2,000 for use in redeeming Indian captives, essentially buying the release of Texans captured during raids.[49] In January 1843 the Texas Congress established a Bureau of Indian Affairs to maintain peace and friendly

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[46] Ibid., III, 208-209.

[47] H. P. N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, 10 vols. (Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), II, 734-743.

[48] Ibid., II, 695.

[49] Ibid., II, 767-771.

intercourse with the Native American tribes throughout the country.[50] This act also established guidelines regulating trade with the Indians, prohibiting the sale or trade of weapons to tribes without the permission of the president. In addition, individuals could not trade with Native Americans for any horse or mule without the consent of a Texas magistrate. A relative state of peace between the settlers and the Indians slowly returned. In a speech to Congress in December 1843, Houston boasted that his Indian policies, which so many Texans had denounced, had resulted in peace and security for Texans all along the frontier.[51]

Despite the many difficulties faced by Texas, the economic fortunes of the republic slowly brightened. In 1842 the Republic of Texas and the United States concluded a trade treaty. Houston lauded the measure, calling on the Texas Senate to ratify the pact.[52] In his annual address in December 1843 Houston reported that during the peace of the previous year, the Texas economy rebounded greatly. Houston boasted in his annual address that Texas remained at peace with the world, while at home, he said, plenty filled the land.[53] Mexico remained quiet, and Houston reported the willingness of Mexico to proclaim an armistice. Texas, recognized by England, France,

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[50] Ibid., II. 842-845.

[51] Houston to Congress, December 12, 1843, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston. III, 467.

[52] Houston to Senate, December 19, 1842, in E. W. Winkler, ed., Secret Journals of the Senate, Republic of Texas (Austin: Austin Printing Co., 1911), 233.

[53] Houston to Congress, December 12, 1843, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 459.

the Netherlands, Belgium, and the German city-state of Bremen, now hoped to open diplomatic relations with Spain.

Houston confronted the lingering fiscal issues that the nation faced. Houston blasted the continuing epidemic of tax evasion that plagued the government's finances and berated Congress for the lack of action in collecting revenue. The president noted that of $49,000 levied in direct taxes, the government had collected only $13,000—a mere 26 percent.[54] He demanded that Congress enact a more efficient system of collecting revenue. Houston proposed establishing collectoral districts, with government tax collectors responsible for each district.[55] Congress never approved the proposal.

The president also asked for further protection of the frontier. He relayed a report that the officer in charge of the southwestern frontier had received only $500 for its defense in the previous year. Despite this inadequacy, the president remained confident that the relative peace between settlers and Indians would continue, requiring military expenditures of no more than $10,000.[56]

Houston, conscious of the need of farmers for greater means to transport crops to market, called for internal improvements such as roads, bridges, and navigable waterways.[57] The president now believed that the situation of the country had stabilized

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[54] Ibid., III, 472.

[55] Ibid., III., 469-470.

[56] Ibid., III, 467.

[57] Ibid., III, 474.

to such an extent as to allow the public financing of the construction of roads and bridges at a comparatively small cost. Congress responded favorably to Houston's requests. Two months after the address lawmakers renewed their approval of an act to build a road from Washington-on-the-Brazos eastward to the Sabine River. Shortly afterward, Congress approved the establishment of the Central National Road from fifteen miles below the mouth of the Elm Fork of the Trinity River to the Red River.[58] The act also provided that surveyors would receive land as payment for their work on the road. Another act prohibited the obstruction of any navigable river by cutting down trees to block traffic or by the construction of dikes and mill dams without the approval of the government.[59]

Houston continued to encourage greater population growth, which up to this time had not met the needs or expectations of the country. The president approved repealing the requirement of staying three years on land granted to new settlers, allowing greater flexibility of movement and a less overwhelming obligation.[60] With waves of European immigrants entering Texas through the renewed empresario program that had worked so well in the early days of Texas colonization, the electoral strength of the new immigrants not tied to the thinking of the southern United States could vote for abolition or even to enter Texas into the realm of those colonial powers. Congressmen

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[58] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 1013-1016.

[59] Ibid., II, 993.

[60] Ibid., II, 771.

unsuccessfully reintroduced the Franco-Texienne Bill in December 1841. Nevertheless, Houston continued to support colonization efforts.

The disasters of the 1842 Mexican invasions, the 1842 Mier Expedition, and the 1841 Texan-Santa Fe Expedition left Texan military strength and confidence in a shambles. The people had become discouraged and the nation's resources exhausted. The thirst for vengeance against Mexico, no matter how justified, had nearly destroyed the country. As a result of these tribulations, Texas nationalism had largely burned itself out. Few cries rang out for invading Mexico and by late 1843 and early 1844 public opinion swung back in favor of annexing the republic to the United States.[61] The Houston administration could now pursue annexation with open public support. Yet Houston maintained his discretion in the pursuit of admission into the Union. The rapid change of heart by the Texans struck many observers. One editor noted in February 1844 that seldom had anyone witnessed a more complete revolution in public opinion than had taken place within the last three or four months, both in Texas and in the United States, as scarcely a solitary voice had been raised in Texas against annexation.[62] Even the devout champion of Texas independence, Mirabeau B. Lamar, now favored annexation.[63]

As spring bloomed throughout the continent in 1842, despite the frustrations with Mexico, the prospects of Texas annexation also seemed to come back to life. Although

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[61] Telegraph and Texas Register, February 7, 1844.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ashbel Smith, Reminiscences of the Texas Republic (Galveston: Historical Society of Galveston, 1876), 79.

Houston did not mention annexation in any of his state of the nation addresses during his second administration, he firmly retained the desires he evinced during the addresses of his first administration for joining the United States and watched for signs of its progress.[64] The Texas minister to the United States, James Reily, reported to the government that the administration of President John Tyler, in addition to Congress, appeared amicable to the proposition of the republic joining the union.[65]

Texan desires to establish a formal trading relationship through a treaty nevertheless did not progress at all. Houston noted some frustration in this regard during his addresses as the United States hesitated to act on the trade agreements.[66] Reily expressed to Jones his belief that one great reason why the negotiation of a trade treaty met with continual delay simply lay with Tyler administration wishes to make a treaty of annexation.[67] The lack of any progress in Washington deeply frustrated Reily. In March, he wrote Secretary of State Anson Jones, begging to return home, stating that he could do

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[64] Houston to Charles Elliot, January 24, 1843, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 299-302; Houston to Joseph Eve, February 17, 1843, ibid., III, 322.

[65] Llerena Friend, Sam Houston: The Great Designer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1954), 122; Justin H. Smith. The Annexation of Texas (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 107.

[66] Houston to Congress, December 1, 1842, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, III, 210.

[67] James Reily to Anson Jones, April 14, 1842, Texan Diplomatic Correspondence (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), I, 552.

nothing in the way of negotiation for Texas.[68] The Texas government granted Reily his wish and sent Isaac Van Zandt in his stead.

The administration held the trade negotiations as a stepping stone to annexation. Although Houston did not deem the conclusion of the treaty of commerce vitally important, he hoped that a treaty of annexation would emerge from talks with the United States.[69] The Texas chief executive contended that if annexation would not result immediately, the negotiations at least could forge an alliance between the two nations to give Texas protection from Mexico.

In October 1842 the Tyler administration proposed to negotiate an annexation treaty. Houston met Tyler's overtures for negotiating annexation with great skepticism. America had rebuffed Texas once before. President Houston knew of the vast political weaknesses of his American counterpart and doubted that Tyler had the strength to overcome the formidable opponents of annexation. In addition, Britain, France, and Mexico would do all in their power to prevent it. If annexation failed a second time, the Houston administration knew that it would leave Texas feeble at home and friendless abroad.[70]

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[68] Reily to Jones, March 25, 1842, Anson Jones, Memoranda and Official Correspondence Relating to the Republic of Texas, Its History and Annexation, William H. Emory, ed.(Chicago: Rio Grande Press, reprint 1966), 178.

[69] Thomas Maitland Marshall, "Diplomatic Relations of Texas and the United States, 1839-1843" Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association 15, (April 1912), 280.

[70] Clarence R. Wharton, History of Texas (Dallas: Turner Co., 1935), 228; Friend, Sam Houston, 124-125.

Houston and his cabinet and remained aware of the hostile opinion of Texas by the northern states. To achieve annexation, the Houston administration knew it would have to overcome the rising abolitionist sentiment in the northern part of the United States. A new tactic required appealing to something more universal in the American character, such as issues of national security or expansion. Houston again withdrew the Texas petition for annexation. He had for some time praised England, and the Tyler administration began to feel that perhaps the British would gain a foothold in Texas. Americans began to realize what a strong British presence would mean for the economic and defensive security of the United States.[71] With Texas in terrible defensive shape, speculation grew in the United States that Texas might not simply become an ally of Great Britain but a full-fledged member of the British Empire. Texans and Americans knew that the United States had to pursue Texas, not as a matter of convenient expansion but perhaps as a national necessity.[72] Houston would later express such sentiments to former president Jackson.

Texas diplomats slyly did nothing to discourage the fears of the United States over European designs in Texas. J. Pinckney Henderson, working with Van Zandt in the annexation negotiations, became quite familiar with their trepidations as he talked with American politicians. He informed Jones of his discovery while in the United States

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[71] J. Pinckney Henderson to Jones, December 20, 1843, Official Memoranda and Correspondence Relating to the Republic of Texas, 279.

[72] Andrew Jackson to Francis P. Blair, February 8, 1843, John Spencer Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, 6 vols. (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969), VI, 202.

that southern and western politicians had grown considerably alarmed at the report of the apparent prospect of England gaining a foothold in Texas.[73] Henderson knew that no such possibility existed but nevertheless did not deny these reports, as he saw the rumors continued to have a positive effect for Texas.

The Anglo-American rivalry placed Texas in a perfect position to reap the rewards offered by both nations. Houston remained careful to maintain the delicate position of Texas while steadily feeding the concerns of those two powers. The president began to imply that the United States needed the annexation of Texas far more than the Lone Star Republic needed the American Union. In a letter to Andrew Jackson, despite otherwise stating his support of annexation, Houston intoned, "Texas with peace could exist without the U. States; but the U. States cannot, without great hazard to the security of their institutions, exist without Texas."[74]

Great Britain knew that Houston favored annexation but could not gauge the depth of his conviction. In the meantime, Houston promised the unwavering and valuable friendship of Texas to England if the British helped them to reach peace with Mexico. He informed British diplomat Charles Elliot that he desired to see Texas occupy an independent position among the nations of the world.[75] With Sam Houston

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[73] J. Pinckney Henderson to Jones, December 20, 1843, Official Memoranda and Correspondence Relating to the Republic of Texas, 279.

[74] Houston to Jackson, February 16, 1844, Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, VI, 261.

[75] Houston to Elliot, May 13, 1843, E. D. Adams, ed., "British Correspondence Concerning Texas, V," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 16 (1913): 322-324.

acting so amicably toward Britain, that nation's diplomats began to feel that Houston had lost interest in annexation. They informed London that the administration had no undue feelings of partiality toward the United States.[76]

In January 1844, Houston ordered the Texas charge d'affaires to in the United States, Isaac Van Zandt, to resume annexation negotiations with the United States--but only in secret. In a confidential address to the Senate, Houston advocated annexation as the best way to defend Texas from Mexico and asked the senators to support Texan diplomatic efforts in the matter.[77] Annexation seemed to proceed well for Texas. Although the people of Texas again favored annexation, Houston would not cut off all lines of retreat.[78] He wished to maintain the friendly relationships that had developed with England and France, which could vanish as Texas pursued annexation. In addition, approval by the United States Senate remained uncertain.[79] Concerned about maintaining the strictest constitutional ground, Houston preferred the admission of Texas as a territory. He considered the assumption of the Texas debt a minor issue. Although the president largely accepted the terms of the treaty of annexation, he feared that the Texas

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[76] Elliot to Doyle, June 21, 1843, E. D. Adams, ed., "British Correspondence Concerning Texas, VII," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 17 (1913): 72.

[77] Houston to Senate, January 20, 1844, Winkler, ed., Secret Journals of the Senate, 295.

[78] Joseph Schmitz, Texan Statecraft, 1836-1845 (San Antonio: Naylor Co., 1941), 206.

[79] Van Zandt to Jones, January 20, 1844, Winkler, ed., Texas Diplomatic Correspondence, I, 239.

Senate would not find the terms agreeable.

Houston confessed his concerns to his aging friend, Andrew Jackson, in February 1844. Each decision held grave risks for Texas, but he believed that he pursued the only course available for the survival of Texas. He complained that the actions of the United States had discouraged Texan hopes of annexation but, despite the tremendous internal difficulties and external dangers that Texas faced, he remained determined upon the immediate annexation of Texas.[80]

As the annexation treaty dragged through the United States Senate, Texans again felt the same frustration with the pace of the measure they had felt during the first Houston administration.[81] And the same sense of defiance rose over the possibility of rejection. One Texan asserted that if the United States refused to admit Texas, his countrymen would work for the absolute and unqualified independence of Texas and would resist any policy or public measure that would have a tendency to impair or compromise Texas sovereignty.[82]

John C. Calhoun assumed his duties as the American secretary of state on March 30 after the death of Abel P. Upshur and rapidly proceeded to conclude the treaty with Texas. On April 12, 1844, the United States and the Republic of Texas finally signed a

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[80] Houston to Jackson, February 16, 1844, Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, VI, 260.

[81] Telegraph and Texas Register, May 1, 1844.

[82] Ibid., June 26, 1844.

treaty of annexation.[83] The terms called for Texas to cede all public lands to American control and the United States government to assume the debts of Texas. The full terms of the treaty did not completely satisfy the Texas commissioners but the Texians accepted the agreement nonetheless.[84]

The treaty quickly went to the United States Senate for ratification. Tyler assured the Texas government that if the treaty failed in the Senate he would seek to pass a law annexing Texas into the Union. He further pledged to defend Texas from any hostile reprisals by Mexico while Congress considered the proposal.[85] Opponents, such as John Quincy Adams, portrayed it as a dark day. In his diary, the former American president wrote, "This was a memorable day in the annals of the world. The treaty for the annexation of Texas to this Union was this day sent to the Senate, and with it went the freedom of the human race."[86]

Isaac Van Zandt wrote to Jones in May noting that a rising public sentiment in the United States favored annexation.[87] He happily added that the furor seemed to make

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[83] Ibid., May 1, 1844; Van Zandt and Henderson to Jones, April 12, 1844, Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 269-273.

[84] Van Zandt and Henderson to Jones, ibid.

[85] Ibid., II, 271-272; Wortham, History of Texas, IV, 158.

[86] John Quincy Adams, April 23, 1844, Charles Francis Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, 14 vols. (Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries Press, reprint 1969), XII, 9.

[87] Van Zandt to Jones, May 11, 1844, Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 280.

England nervous, which could only benefit Texas. Van Zandt also noted later that month that the peace terms with Mexico had damaged annexation in the Senate, although public sentiment remained high.[88]

To the disappointment of Texas, the treaty failed on June 8 by a vote of sixteen in favor and thirty-five in opposition.[89] Several senators who had publicly supported annexation voted against the treaty. Van Zandt reported that the growing inter-party divisions over annexation ruled the vote.[90] Supporters still tried to keep annexation alive as Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri introduced a bill to admit Texas, but the measure received little support from either the Democrats, the Whigs, or the Republic of Texas.[91] Texas would have to wait until after the American presidential election for annexation. Abolitionists and other opponents rejoiced over the rejection of the treaty. John Quincy Adams recorded the vote as a deliverance of the country from a slavery conspiracy.[92] Frustrated by the vote, Van Zandt resigned and Texas attempted to deal

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[88] Van Zandt to Henderson and Jones, May 25, 1844, ibid., II, 283; Van Zandt to Henderson and Jones, June 13, 1844, ibid., II, 286.

[89] John Quincy Adams, June 10, 1844, Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, XII, 49.

[90] Van Zandt to Henderson and Jones, June 10, 1844, Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 285.

[91] Ibid.

[92] John Quincy Adams, June 10, 1844, Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, XII, 49.

with the sting of another humiliation.[93] Houston said nothing more on the subject while president.

Despite the failure of the annexation vote in the United States, Houston concluded his second administration in December 1844 by reporting his general satisfaction to Congress with the progress the Republic of Texas had made.[94] He expressed confidence in the marked improvements Texas had made in regard to Indian relations but noted the need for increased funding for the Indian affairs department. Houston began talks with all the major tribes in Texas about a peace settlement but did not conclude these negotiations during his presidency. The president lamented in his 1844 address, however, the lack of any progress on a trade treaty with the United States. He steered clear of the subject of annexation in his farewell address. Houston scolded Congress for not passing the revenue programs he had sought, although he remained pleased that the fiscal condition had improved significantly. Houston reported that the government's budget almost balanced,[95] slowing the republic's slide into deeper debt.

Earlier in 1844, as the annexation debate raged in the American Congress, the Telegraph and Texas Register expressed hopes that the ratification treaty would make the

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[93] Van Zandt to Henderson and Jones, June 13, 1844, Garrison, ed., Texan Diplomatic Correspondence, II, 286.

[94] Houston to Congress, December 4, 1844, Williams and Barker, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, IV, 392.

[95] Ibid., IV, 395.

Republic's presidential election of that autumn unnecessary.[96] After the treaty failed, the election had to proceed as usual. The 1844 election proved a typically caustic campaign, although quite tame compared to the election in the United States.

Vice President Edward Burleson and Secretary of State Anson Jones announced their candidacies for the presidency early in 1844, while Kenneth L. Anderson, former speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, announced for the vice presidency. William H. Jack, former secretary of state under President Burnet and vocal critic of the Houston administration, also ran for vice president but died just before the election.[97]

Burleson, firmly allying himself with his western constituency, had broken with Houston over the attempt to move the capital from Austin. As vice president during the Seventh Congress, Burleson voted against Houston on numerous tie votes that emerged during that tumultuous session. Burleson's opponents attacked his lack of formal education as a preclusion to the presidency. Few Texans had any formal education either, and few schools existed in Texas. Supporters responded to the criticism against Burleson by stating that seminaries and colleges may make scholars and orators but not statesmen.[98]

Much like the 1836 election, annexation had almost become an article of faith for most Texans. Ironically, just a few years earlier, most Texans had opposed annexation.

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[96] Telegraph and Texas Register, April 24, 1844.

[97] The (Clarksville) Northern Standard, September 17, 1844.

[98] Telegraph and Texas Register, July 3, 1844.

Opponents charged that Jones opposed annexation, which he consistently denied. In the closing weeks of the campaign, one such opponent blasted, "The people of Texas must now remember that this is the true position for which Dr. Jones has placed himself. HE HAS ALL ALONG BEEN OPPOSED TO ANNEXATION."[99] The accusation hurt him both personally and politically. In actuality, records indicate nothing other than his consistent efforts in behalf of that measure. These facts apparently mattered little to those who yearned for a Burleson victory.

Burleson's lack of education continued to hinder his campaign. Despite any formal schooling, Burleson had learned to read and write and had become an eloquent speaker. His supporters emphasized his courageous battlefield exploits, comparing him with another famous self-made man, Andrew Jackson.

Houston remained rather quiet during the campaign, much to the consternation of Jones. The president only endorsed the secretary of state in early August, an action that many observers felt secured the election of Jones as Houston remained popular in the more heavily-populated east. While most presidential elections in the history of the Texas Republic resulted in landslide victories, the 1844 election returns remained remarkably close, closer than any other in the history of the republic. Jones won with 7,037 votes compared with the 5,668 votes cast for Burleson. The image of Jones as the tool of England cost him many votes.[100] This picture lasted far beyond the election as

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[99] Ibid., August 21, 1844.

[100] Herbert Gambrell, Anson Jones: The Last President of Texas (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Co., 1948), 351.

opponents mounted blistering attacks on his credibility during his presidency.

Houston had brought Texas from the brink of disaster to a position of relative peace and prosperity. Instead of facing another catastrophic war with Mexico, Texas had agreed to a cease-fire and had begun negotiations for a peace treaty. Great Britain, France, and the United States actively pursued the favor of the Republic of Texas. The nation's economy had escaped the threat of bankruptcy in 1841 and risen to a level of stability and increasing national credit. The hopes of the nation rested with sustained economic growth, new immigrants, and annexation to the United States. Anson Jones now faced this task.

CHAPTER 5

ANSON JONES AND THE TWILIGHT OF THE REPUBLIC

Texas had come close to achieving annexation in 1844, but joining the United States still had not come to fruition. The fourth elected president of the Republic of Texas, Anson Jones, had seen annexation scuttled before, and only its final consummation would satisfy him. Jones did not mention the subject of annexation in his inaugural address in December 1844, but it would dominate his short administration. He would later state his belief that it lay in the best interests of securing annexation to remain quiet on the subject, lest annexation opponents misconstrue any comments or leave France and Great Britain offended. President Jones concentrated on domestic matters in his address, calling for peace with the Indians and Mexico, further efficiency in government spending, and widespread internal improvements.[1]

In addition to stricter fiscal discipline and internal improvements, the new president called for the introduction of a penitentiary and the establishment of a school system for Texas children. In 1842 the Senate had passed a bill establishing a penitentiary, yet it had failed to materialize.[2] Jones also called for the abolition of paper

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[1] Telegraph and Texas Register, December 18, 1844.

[2] Ibid.; H. P. N. Gammel, comp., The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897, 10 vols. (Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), II, 695.

money to curb the inflation which had so often plagued the Texas economy.

On February 3, 1845, the Texas Congress passed a measure stating that all taxes would be payable in gold or silver only.[3] Paper currency, as a result, had effectively become worthless to the government. The Republic of Texas long had difficulty with its finances, falling deeper into the abyss of debt with each passing year. Although the republic had attempted to pay for some projects through land sales, government officials had not had time to capitalize on these sales or develop a sufficient financial system or infrastructure—both necessary to exploit the natural wealth of Texas that they had long known their country possessed. As such, Texas could not pay its soldiers and officials or meet any of its other obligations except through loans from other nations or land grants.

The president met with some success in the construction of internal improvements. Jones approved $7,000 to construct a seventy-five foot high lighthouse on Galveston Island, which a tax of three cents per ton on ships entering the port would help finance.[4] Doctor Jones also approved the establishment of a hospital in Galveston, financed by fees on incoming passenger ships.[5] The Jones administration approved a measure allowing the return of land seized for delinquent taxes in 1843 and 1844 if the owners paid those taxes. Congress accomplished little else on the matter.

Jones firmly defended a policy of peace with the Indians, believing that it

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[3] Ibid., II, 1140.

[4] Ibid., II, 1135.

[5] Ibid., II, 1161-1162.

represented a course not only according to the dictates of humanity but also the principles of acknowledged and sound policy. In addition, such a policy afforded the least expensive protection and the greatest safety to the extended frontier of the nation.[6]

The attempt by Jones to pursue a dual course of international recognition and annexation left the European powers somewhat confused. The international powers largely had to rely on their instincts when the Texas government gave conflicting or confusing signals on its intentions. By 1844 most observers believed that Texas would firmly commit itself to annexation. England and France, seeing the rapid progress toward annexation, attempted a last-ditch effort to prevent annexation. Their protests in Washington had gone ignored, and they now beseeched Mexico to come to a peace settlement with the Republic of Texas, hoping it would defuse the desire for annexation.[7] The British Minister in Texas spearheaded these last efforts. The British permitted this exercise, although they did not instigate or direct it and certainly did not anticipate success.[8] Nevertheless, the British government prepared a declaration that explicitly stated the desires of both the French and English governments to see the continued independence of Texas and guaranteeing to push Mexico to restore peace and for the protection of the Republic of Texas if it foreswore annexation.

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[6] Telegraph and Texas Register, December 18, 1844.

[7] Earl of Aberdeen to Charles Elliot, July 3, 1845, Ephraim D. Adams, ed., "British Correspondence Concerning Texas, XX," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 20 (1916): 189-191.

[8] Ephraim Douglass Adams, British Interests and Activities in Texas, 1838-1846 (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, reprint 1963), 231.

Fortune again smiled on annexation supporters as a result of the American presidential election. James K. Polk of Tennessee had emerged from the political wilderness to capture the presidency of the United States, narrowly defeating the veteran Whig standard-bearer, Henry Clay, in November 1844.[9] Seeing an outspoken supporter of annexation elected, John Tyler decided not to let the last four months of his term go to waste, as several lame-duck presidents had done. In his State of the Union message in December, Tyler declared that his government must obey the will of the people and annex Texas without undue delay. When Congress came back into session that winter, with a public mandate for annexation, it quickly went to work on a joint resolution to bring Texas into the Union.

On January 25, 1845, the House of Representatives approved the resolution for annexing Texas by a vote of 118 to 101.[10] The resolution headed to the Senate, where on February 26 it passed by the narrowest of margins—27 to 25.[11] If one more senator had voted negatively, the resolution would have failed as the United States had no vice president to break a tie vote. The long-harassed Tyler signed the resolution on March 1 and left office on March 4 with a victory for himself and other annexation enthusiasts.

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[9] Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas: From Wilderness to Commonwealth, 5 vols. (Fort Worth: Wortham-Molyneaux Co., 1924), IV, 185.

[10] Congressional Globe, Twenty-eighth Congress, Second Session (Washington: Globe Office), 193.

[11] Congressional Globe, Twenty-eighth Congress, Second Session, 290; John Quincy Adams, February 27, 1845, Charles Francis Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams (Freeport, NY: Books For Libraries Press, 1969), XII, 173.

The terms of annexation had changed a bit from the failed treaty. Most notably, Texas now had the responsibility of retiring its national debt but kept its public lands in order to finance it.[12] Although pleased, President Jones knew that the United States may have approved a joint resolution annexing Texas, but Texas did not belong to the Union just yet. Tyler's quick action in securing the joint resolution left Polk with little more to do on annexation than to supervise the formal admission of Texas. President James K. Polk, in his inaugural address in Washington on March 4, 1845, blasted the cession of Texas in the 1819 Adams-Onis Treaty but hailed the action of Congress that gave the assent of the government to the reunion.[13]

President Jones actively sought peace for his country. In February 1845 the Texas Senate ratified the Treaty of Tehuacana Creek, a treaty of peace, friendship, and commerce with eleven major Indian tribes in Texas that Houston had laid the groundwork for, which for the time ended the interminable string of battles between Native Americans and Texas settlers.[14] Congress also enacted a law prohibiting all non-licensed merchants to trade with the Indians.[15] Texas simultaneously pursued peace with Mexico, feeling that it could only strengthen annexation efforts. Jones hoped to bring Texas into the Union in peace, not with a war nipping at its heels.

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[12] Wortham, A History of Texas, IV, 186-188.

[13] The (Clarksville) Northern Standard, May 20, 1845.

[14] Dorman H. Winfrey and J. R. Patterson, Jr.,eds., Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), 114-119.

[15] Gammel, comp., Laws of Texas, II, 1139.

Jones soon won peace for Texas from its mortal enemy, Mexico. In the midst of the annexation furor, Great Britain and France pushed Mexico to offer a peace settlement with Texas in hopes of dissuading the Texian people from joining the United States. On June 4, 1845, Jones received Mexico's terms for an armistice. The peace proposal stipulated that Mexico would recognize the independence of Texas if the country refused annexation.[16] Texans interpreted it as tantamount to recognition, although they likely would not accept the terms. Despite these serious shortcomings, Anson Jones proudly recorded in his diary that a historic day of peace had arrived for the Texas Republic. "Now, my country, for the first time in ten years, is actually at peace with ALL the world."[17]

Jones announced the terms of the agreement with Mexico to the people of Texas. The people had a clear choice to remain independent or join the United States. In this way, Texas could join the United States without the appearance of being a beaten country trying to seek safety. The pride Jones felt in the peace initiatives with Mexico did not meet with such a reception from his countrymen. Instead, many in Texas roundly condemned the proposed peace as a plot to undermine annexation and ally with

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[16] Ernest Wallace and David M. Vigness, eds. "A Preliminary Treaty With Mexico," Documents of Texas History (Austin: Steck Co., 1963), 147.

[17] Jones, June 4, 1845, Official Memoranda and Correspondence Relating to the Republic of Texas, Its History and Annexation, William H. Emory, ed. (Chicago: Rio Grande Press, reprint 1966), 41.

England.[18]

For many annexation supporters, peace with Mexico and annexation remained completely irreconcilable. Still more believed that Mexico would never honor the treaty under any circumstances. One opponent theorized that the object of the Mexican government simply remained to lie and deceive Texas in order to delay long enough for the opponents of annexation to gain strength and defeat the measure.[19] This writer declared that Mexico would not dupe Texas with such a scheme. The ferocity of the public outcry shocked Jones, who had acted only in good faith.

Jones did not want to trap Texas in any one course of action should either annexation or independence fail.[20] In 1847 Jones wrote that he had intended to pursue annexation and independence at the same time, openly and fairly, hopefully eliciting an intense rivalry and jealousy from the major powers that the action and reaction of these nations upon each other would satisfy either outcome.[21] Jones further maintained that Texas remained satisfied to obtain the offer of independence, annexation, or both together and thus have the privilege of choosing which she would take and which she

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[18] Ashbel Smith, Reminiscences of the Texas Republic (Galveston: Historical Society of Galveston, 1876), 72-73.

[19] Telegraph and Texas Register, April 23, 1845.

[20] Herbert Gambrell, Anson Jones: The Last President of Texas (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 359.

[21] Anson Jones to Hamilton Stuart, November 23, 1847. Letters Relating to the History of Annexation (Galveston: Civilian Office, 1848), 28.

would reject.[22]

Annexation appeared imminent. Jones remained careful to keep the process under control, fearing a last-minute derailment. The people of Texas, however, had enough of delays and proceeded under their own initiative. They excitedly embraced the prospect of joining the United States, without any thought to the terms or self-image. County after county formed local conventions to nominate delegates for the state constitutional convention and draw up resolutions in support of annexation. Harrison County residents, for example, resolved that the reannexation of Texas to the United States, upon the basis proposed in the Joint Resolution met their hearty approbation and promised the measure their cordial and unwavering support.[23]

Seeing that events were moving faster than he wished, Jones acted to restore some semblance of legitimacy to the ratification of annexation and the formation of a state government. Through an April proclamation published across the nation for several weeks, the president announced an extra session of Congress to discuss the terms of annexation the United States presented to Texas and called for a general convention for July for the people to meet and discuss the matter.[24]

Jones convened the Ninth Congress in special session at Washington-on-the-Brazos on June 16 to give the government's explicit sanction to the convention. The

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Telegraph and Texas Register, April 30, 1845.

[24] Ibid., April 16, 1845.

annexation process had come too far only for a technicality to undermine it. The president wanted the formality to prevent the appearance of the convention appearing as an extralegal mob. The people of Texas, almost in a frenzy for the completion for annexation, would have proceeded with or without the approval of the government. On June 23, the special session gave its official consent to the annexation of Texas to the United States.[25]

Jones fiercely defended his record on annexation. Although Jones did find increasing pressures to act swiftly in favor of annexation, a goal he had always held, he believed that it constituted the wisest course to maintain a degree of discretion on the matter. He wrote that he believed it was most proper for him not to touch annexation while it was thus before the United States Congress and that if his silence on the subject induced the belief that he opposed the measure, it did no harm to either the cause of annexation or independence or to the interests of the country.[26] Despite the rather defiant tone of his letter, the bitter accusations tortured Jones for the rest of his life. No detailed analysis of the evidence suggests that Jones ever opposed annexation. He had consistently pursued the measure during his tenure as secretary of state and oversaw the final completion of the effort with great poise and sincerity.

Jones had followed Houston's lead on the pursuit of annexation, allowing the other parties to court the Texas Republic, instead of the opposite. Jones, though an able

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[25] Ibid., June 25, 1845.

[26] Jones to Hamilton Stuart, November 23, 1847, Letters Relating to the History of Annexation, 17.

diplomat and legislator, lacked Houston's political finesse and thick skin and could not weather the blistering criticisms of an anxious public as easily. Publicly, Houston had to maintain some ambivalence on the matter. He knew that no matter how strong a case Texas and its supporters made for the union, Congress would not necessarily support the measure. If he actively supported it, he would risk alienating the Europeans, whose support remained indispensable if Texas remained independent. Jones faced the same difficulties. The only reasonable course remained to step aside and allow the jealousies between the European powers and the United States to fester over Texas.[27]

Even as formal annexation lay months away, the United States began moving in troops to defend Texas and prepare the transfer of the military of the Texas Republic to Union authority. Many Texans welcomed the measure. This move, however, made some Texans nervous, fearing the move could provoke an invasion by Mexico.

The general convention convened at Austin on July 4, but Jones did not attend. The delegates elected Thomas J. Rusk president of the convention, immediately adopted the articles of annexation, and rejected the overtures from Mexico.[28] The convention then proceeded to draw up a state constitution. Rusk spoke to the convention, warmly advocating the terms of annexation as alike honorable to the United States and to Texas and would not seek to alter the terms presented to Texas by the government of the United

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[27] Ibid., 28.

[28] Texas Constitutional Convention, Journals of the Convention (Austin: Shoal Creek Publishers, 1974), 30; Wallace and Vigness, eds., Documents of Texas History, 148.

States.[29] The convention approved the state constitution on August 28.

The Austin convention attempted to redress many of the issues that faced the republic. Various land issues, for example, continued to consume the national legislature. The General Land Commissioner, Thomas W. Ward, wrote to Rusk offering several suggestions for surveying and fees for the land office for the state government.[30] The state constitution merely gave the legislature the responsibility for the organization of the office. Anson Jones quietly let the convention perform its duties without interference from the chief executive.

In the summer of 1845, two great friends of annexation died. Vice President Kenneth Anderson, long a supporter of the measure, passed away suddenly on July 3.[31] On June 8, Andrew Jackson died in Tennessee. Sam Houston had traveled to the United States to see his friend, only to arrive thirty minutes after Jackson passed on. The people of Texas mourned Jackson's death as much as citizens of the United States, with the Texas Congress approving resolutions honoring Jackson for his work on behalf of the Lone Star Republic.

The course of the nation now lay with the people rather than President Jones. On October 13, the people of Texas overwhelmingly voted in favor of both annexation to the United States and the new state constitution. Several counties voted unanimously for

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[29] Telegraph and Texas Register, July 8, 1845.

[30] Thomas W. Ward to Thomas J. Rusk, July 21, 1845, Journals of the Convention, 145.

[31] Telegraph and Texas Register, July 28, 1845.

annexation or with only a handful of dissenting votes. Despite the tremendous enthusiasm that existed in the Republic of Texas for annexation, observers noted that the turnout in the referendum election had remained unusually light, with perhaps only half of the electorate voting.[32] Dissent still existed, however. Approximately one-third of the residents of Galveston County voted against the resolution, and the Texas ambassador to England and France, G. W. Terrell, had long opposed it.[33]

Texans nominated J. Pinckney Henderson for the first governor of the new State of Texas. One of the most respected men in the Texas Republic, one newspaper lauded the former secretary of state, declaring that amid all the fierce political strife that agitated the republic, Henderson alone stood unharmed and remained one of the few public men of Texas who had no enemies.[34]

James B. Miller also received a nomination for the governorship, while former congressmen Albert C. Horton and N. H. Darnell contended for the post of lieutenant governor. In December Henderson won overwhelmingly, earning 7,853 votes to 1,673 votes for Miller.[35] Horton defeated Darnell by a margin of only 120 votes.

Annexation marched undeterred to its final consummation. The United States

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[32] Telegraph and Texas Register, October 15, 1845.

[33] G. W. Terrell to Jones, January 21, 1845, Jones, Memoranda and Official Correspondence Concerning the Republic of Texas, Its History, and Annexation (Chicago: Rio Grande Books, 1969), 405.

[34] Telegraph and Texas Register, October 1, 1845.

[35] Wothram, A History of Texas, IV, 207.

Congress approved the proposed state constitution, and on December 29, 1845, President Polk signed the legislation admitting Texas as the twenty-eighth member of the United States of America. The formal transfer did not take place until February 16, 1846, when the First Legislature convened. The state legislature chose Thomas J. Rusk and Sam Houston as the state's two senators, completely bypassing any office for Anson Jones.

In a solemn ceremony on February 19, President Anson Jones formally ceded the authority of Texas to the United States. Jones concluded his presidency with the now-famous words:

> The lone star of Texas, which ten years since arose amid cloud, over fields of carnage, land obscurely shone for a while, has culminated, and, following an inscrutable destiny, has passed on and become fixed forever in that glorious constellation which all freemen and lovers of freedom in the world must reverence and adore—the American Union. Blending its rays with its sister stars, long may it continue to shine, and may a gracious heaven smile upon this consummation of the wishes of the two republics, now joined together in one. "May the union be perpetual, and may it be the means of conferring benefits and blessings upon the people of all the States" is my ardent prayer. The final act in this great drama is now performed. The Republic of Texas is no more.[36]

In a final poetic act as the Texas flag descended the last time, the old flagpole bearing the Lone Star ensign snapped. The state officers took their oaths of office, and the State of Texas began its new duties as a member of the Union. Simultaneously, Texas dealt with its duties as a debtor while slowly initiating internal improvement projects. The Lone Star Republic, after innumerable toils and hardships, had become a shining new member of the bright constellation of the United States.

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[36] Eugene C. Barker, "The Annexation of Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 50 (1946), 74.

As for Jones, his administration had succeeded in many issues during his brief presidency by finalizing peace with the Indians and Mexico, no matter how brief that peace, completing annexation, beginning some improvements projects, and abolishing paper currency as he had originally pledged. The brevity of his term, however, prevented further action and other occasions to address the nation. The larger projects of internal improvements and public institutions would not emerge to any appreciable degree for years, until after the United States had relieved Texas of the financial and military burdens of nationhood.

Anson Jones retired to relative obscurity, still hounded by accusations by political enemies over his conduct. Both the Texas Congress and the new state legislature refused to give him a vote of appreciation for his services to Texas, an honor which others had received. In 1857 Senator Thomas J. Rusk committed suicide and the irate state legislature swore not to send Senator Houston back to Washington, and thus the legislators had two senate seats to fill. Jones had hoped for a seat but his name never came into consideration. For Jones, the legislature had effectively invalidated everything he hoped for.[37] Wrenched in the depression that agonized his later years, Jones killed himself at the old capitol in Houston in 1858.

The threat of war with Mexico stemming from annexation proved valid. Within a few short months of the entry of Texas into the Union, Mexico and the United States declared war on each other. In the aftermath of the Mexican War, Texas entered into a

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[37] Gambrell, Anson Jones, 435.

bitter disagreement over the disposition of the Santa Fe area that Texas continued to claim. Through the 1850 Compromise, the United States government split off Santa Fe into the Territory of New Mexico, redrawing the Texas boundaries to give them their modern shape in exchange for the assumption of the debts of the State of Texas by the federal government.[38] By 1861, Texas had seceded from the Union, driven by the seemingly irreparable breach between the northern and southern states. The governor of Texas, Sam Houston, bitterly resisted the secessionists, only to be stripped of his office.

Texas, born of proud and brave citizens dedicated to building a better life for themselves, endured years of struggle for the realization of the vision the settlers dreamt for their adopted land. They had seen a nation with a destiny of becoming a yeoman republic flowing with milk and honey but could barely escape poverty. Texans fought to build and maintain a nation but steady misfortunes made them understand that their first impulse had been the best course for Texas, leaving the chaos and tyranny of centralist Mexico for the freedom and stability they had always known.

The presidents of the Republic of Texas led the nation through the difficult crises that plagued the country and laid the foundations for its continued freedom and future prosperity. Through their addresses to the nation, they attempted to meet the many crises the nation faced and build a lasting framework for Texas. Some presidents met with success in their endeavors. Continued strife and debt frustrated many bold plans the presidents envisioned for their country, but their determination kept Texas alive and

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[38] Mark J. Stegmaier, Texas, New Mexico, and the Compromise of 1850 (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996), 252-255.

secured its admission into the United States.

CHAPTER 6

THE PRESIDENCIES CONSIDERED

In a study of the speeches presented by the presidents of the Republic of Texas regarding major public issues, one can determine different techniques to problem solving. The four men who served as president of the Republic of Texas each faced fierce challenges while holding separate visions for their beloved country. Despite their common desire for the safety and prosperity of Texas, the Texas presidents had sharp and sometimes violent disagreements on political and personal matters. They all shared similar convictions on several issues but differed on many others, ranging from issues of international relations and defense to annexation and internal improvements.

The ad interim president, David G. Burnet, a deeply religious man, directed the Texas Revolution as if it had become Armageddon. After the slaughter of Texas troops at the Alamo and Goliad, Texas settlers believed that the matter had become a life and death struggle. In a series of letters, Burnet hounded Houston to attack the Mexican armies and beseeched the United States to intervene on behalf of the Texians. Burnet and Texas agents in the United States managed to win over the sympathies of many Americans and secured financial support for the war effort from several others. He failed to convince the United States to intervene officially.

After the revolution, Burnet faced the problems of building a new nation but

lacked the resources of time and money to undertake any solutions. The First Congress only began shortly before the end of his administration. His only speech before that body called for a strong defense, development of the country, and the development of a sound financial system. Before the Texas Congress acted on any of these proposals, Sam Houston assumed the presidency. After Houston's first term ended in 1838, Burnet became vice president of the nation and enjoyed a great deal of popularity in Texas politics through the 1860s.

Sam Houston, by far the most dynamic and effective of all Texas leaders of the era, maintained a headstrong course on what he believed represented the correct direction for the country. Houston had won the adoration of the people of Texas by his stunning victory at San Jacinto. This acclaim, coupled with his policy successes, gave him the political strength to resist the passions of the moment. A man of a flirtatious nature and numerous passions, Houston at times seemed to enjoy not only resisting the popular feelings of the moment but actually irritating others. At Lamar's inauguration in December 1838, the outgoing president could not resist the temptation to upstage his old adversary. Dressed in the antiquated garb popular during the American Revolution, Houston delivered a three-hour farewell address, which reportedly had so upset Lamar that the incoming president had the inaugural speech that the poet had so lovingly crafted delivered by his private secretary.[1]

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[1] Randolph B. Campbell, Sam Houston and the American Southwest (New York: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1993), 85; Marshall de Bruhl, Sword of San Jacinto: A Life of Sam Houston (New York: Random House, 1993), 256.

During both of his administrations, Houston called for annexation to the United States in his formal addresses and correspondence. He struggled with Congress over the development of the General Land Office and, through his government's 1842 adoption of the exchequer system, revived the strength of the economy to slow the nation's slide into debt.

Houston wrestled with Congress on the shape of the land office and vetoed several measures that he stated would lead to fraud. Houston finally settled on a proposal in 1838, although land grant fraud continued to plague the republic. Periodic skirmishes with the Indians continued but Houston managed to secure peace agreements with several tribes. Annexation failed and other nations remained wary about recognizing Texas independence, but in 1837 the United States became the first nation to recognize Texas. Houston pushed for austerity in government spending, but the nation continued to sink deeper into debt. Above all, an analysis of Houston's first term reveals a mixed record.

During Houston's second term he addressed such issues as tariff revision, peace with Mexico, a more just policy toward the Indians, removal of the national archives from Austin, improved foreign relations, the exchequer currency system, modification of the direct tax, the establishment of a penitentiary, tax collectoral districts, internal improvements, increased immigration, and annexation to the United States. He met with success on most issues. Congress approved tariff and tax reform, the exchequer system, and approved a bill to study sites for a penitentiary but failed to approve the proposed tax collection system or to begin construction on the prison. Houston's attempt to encourage

immigration met with moderate success as the nation removed residency requirements on land grants. Several road and canal projects, such as the Central National Road, began but did not reach completion.

Houston failed to remove the archives but did establish friendlier relations with Native Americans. His record with Mexico remains mixed during the second term. He had called for peace but a series of invasions in 1842 brought the nation to the brink of war. Texas forces drove the Mexicans from Texas, but Houston refused to carry out any punitive action. Relations improved between Texas and Mexico as England and France prodded Mexico to establish peace with Texas but concluded no treaty during Houston's presidency. More nations recognized Texian independence and opened trade negotiations with the Lone Star Republic and Texas once again negotiated annexation with the United States. Although annexation proceeded positively, the two nations did not finalize an agreement. His efforts proved far more successful than his first administration.

The second elected president of Texas had a powerful vision for the republic. Often as obstinate as Houston, Mirabeau B. Lamar defiantly maintained that his course for the country remained best. Although both possessed keen political skills, Houston could get away with his contrariness because the results of Houston's actions eventually proved him right, while the results of Lamar's policies proved the ineffectiveness of the latter's direction.

Lamar called for a policy of active warfare against the American Indian tribes in Texas. Although Lamar's Indian policies achieved a momentary respite from the endless

warring between the settlers and the Native Americans, battles with the Indians continued to plague Texas for decades more while frontier defense weighed heavily on the minds of his successors. He had driven the Cherokees from Texas but the dramatic Comanche raids in the aftermath of the Council House Fight with Comanches proved the fragility of the Lamar policy.

Lamar dreamed of building an empire practically overnight. He called for roads and armies to carve out new territories for Texas. His ambitions, however, far outstripped the available resources of the country. Inflation soared and the economy nearly disintegrated.

Although he called for peace with Mexico in his addresses, Lamar continually agitated that country with calls for expanding the Texas frontier further into Mexico and supporting the enemies of the centralists, driving paranoia into the leaders of an already desperate country. His attempt to win over the people of New Mexico through the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition proved a total disaster and led to renewed hostilities with Mexico. Lamar left office as the firestorm surrounding the expedition enveloped him. Nevertheless, Lamar remained active in Texas politics and later enjoyed a career as a diplomat for the United States.

Lamar achieved some successes as road and canal projects began, the community of Austin became the nation's capital, strict measures to combat land fraud became law, and public schools and a university received land grants. Education, however, would take years to develop in Texas and the university would not appear for more than forty years. Despite these few accomplishments, most of Lamar's major initiatives failed.

Anson Jones possessed the skills and education imperative in the realm of diplomacy, as well as the fullest confidence of Sam Houston. In a letter to Jones in November 1841, Houston insisted that the doctor become his secretary of state, noting that Jones had always remained in consideration for the new cabinet.[2] The withdrawal of the annexation petition by Jones in 1838 painted the doctor as an enemy of joining the United States in the eyes of many Texans, although he had never expressed any such sentiment. He had followed Houston's instructions and continued afterward to cultivate amicable relations with the United States.

Jones did not mention annexation in his 1844 inaugural address, hoping not to upset the delicate diplomatic situation that could either reward the efforts of Jones and others with annexation or present another icy rebuff. He moved cautiously, almost to the point of paralysis, as president to ensure that annexation maintained a legitimate course.

As president, he moved carefully to ensure the secure future of Texas—as either a state or an independent nation. Despite his obvious talent and the esteem of prominent Texans, Jones never quite developed the finesse necessary to function effectively in both the gentlemanly realm of diplomacy and the cutthroat world of Texas politics. The blistering criticisms he received eventually wore down the last Texas president and destroyed him.

Anson Jones, like Burnet, had few opportunities to express his goals for the

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[2] Sam Houston to Anson Jones, November 24, 1841, Eugene C. Barker and Amelia W. Williams, eds., Writings of Sam Houston, II (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1939), 390-391.

Republic of Texas. Jones, however, outlined a modest agenda for the nation in his inaugural address which garnered some successes. Jones called for internal improvements, a ban on paper money, and peace with Mexico and the Indians. He proved successful in all of these matters as the Senate ratified a peace treaty with the major tribes of Texas, Mexico offered a peace agreement, and the Congress moved to a strict hard money system and initiated several road and port improvement projects.

The delicate peace Texas had with Mexico since independence and the always tense relationship between the settlers and the Indians dictated the need for continued diligence. In the spring of 1836, the very life of the Texas nation and people depended on defense. Burnet beseeched the men of Texas to fight for their country. After the Texas Revolution, Houston attempted to downsize the army to relieve the nation of its crushing fiscal deficits. This proposal met with howling disapproval from many Texans. Lamar entered office in 1838 and sought to build a strong military, heedless of cost, to defend the frontier from the Native American tribes and to wreak vengeance on Mexico. In every one of his speeches he called for a stronger military and an expanded Texas.

Houston never expressed any such imperialist desires. Houston stated his policy in 1841 as essentially, "fewer officers and more corn fields."[3] Although the nation reeled from two devastating Mexican raids in 1842, Houston refused to mount a major offensive against Mexico. He vetoed a major military appropriations bill and opted for a more defensive posture instead, calling only for troops to push the invaders back across the Rio

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[3] Austin City Gazette, August 25, 1841.

Grande. Occasionally he would call for increased military appropriations, but in his addresses, he typically called for restraint or for cutbacks in defense spending. He briefly considered selling the Texas navy. Congress tended to acquiesce to his desires for limited spending on defense, but Houston made many vocal opponents on the matter.

In his inaugural address, Anson Jones called for a sound and humane policy toward the Indians, promising to maintain the defense of the frontier. Jones's modest proposal for national defense proved adequate as Texas pursued peace with both Mexico and the Native American tribes. As annexation approached, Jones helped facilitate the introduction of American troops into Texas to discourage Mexico from invading.

Each president actively sought the support of the international community for the Texas cause and proudly reported their successes to the nation. The Texas Republic steadily gained the respect and recognition of other nations. Over time, more nations gave their official recognition to the independence of Texas and negotiated trade arrangements with the Lone Star Republic.

The central question of the Texian people remained the choice between joining the American union or preserving independence. At the polls, Texans twice (in 1836 and 1845) demanded that the Republic of Texas join the United States. The delegates assembled in Austin to consider the invitation of union resoundingly rejected an offer by Mexico in 1845 to recognize the independence of Texas in exchange for the promise of the Texas government to reject American annexation.

For a brief period in the late 1830s and early 1840s, in the wake of the stinging rejection by the United States, Texans seemed determined to continue as an independent

nation. The two nations enjoyed positive relations but could never ratify a trade agreement that the two countries had so earnestly pursued. Lamar extolled the virtues of an independent Texas while Houston and Jones still longed for annexation. Burnet had supported annexation from the days of the Texas Revolution.

Texas faced the crushing task of fighting a war and building a nation in an often-violent frontier with no financial system in place. Burnet and special commissioners all attempted to secure funds from supporters in the United States to fund the revolution against Mexico, but Texas still faced massive debts after the battle of San Jacinto. Burnet addressed the need for a better financial system in the Texas Republic but the short length of his presidency prevented him from taking any action.

Houston attempted to redress the problems of Texas money and managed to stabilize the condition of the economy. Burnet mounted a huge debt to keep Texas alive during the revolution and had few means to pay off the debt. Lamar, like Houston, spoke of government efficiency to curtail the nation's slide into debt, but Lamar engaged in numerous costly adventures--from the Indian wars to the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition to massive spending on internal improvements--that served to sap the strength and confidence in Texas currency. As a result of Lamar's economic policies, inflation soared.

Houston returned to the presidency in 1841 and advocated banning bank notes for use as currency in favor of government-issued notes. The exchequer system proved quite successful in combating inflation and reviving the strength of the Texas dollar. Jones later called for an outright ban on paper money. The effect proved minimal, as the Texas

economy continued to grow. Even with banks illegal in Texas under the state constitution of 1845, Texas continued to attract investors and immigrants, while steadily building more infrastructure. The matter of public finances never strayed far from the minds of the Texas presidents. Every major address mentioned the fiscal strength of the Texas Republic and offered various solutions for invigorating the Texas economy.

Burnet expressed hopes of utilizing the natural resources of Texas but never described a detailed plan nor had the occasion to do so during his term as president ad interim. During Houston's first term, the finances of the nation prevented him from proposing any major undertakings. The early efforts of internal improvements remained strictly the province of enterprising Texians. Lamar undertook numerous internal improvements projects, from the beginnings of public schools to canals and roads.

Houston also proposed road and waterway projects during his second administration. As he took the presidential oath of office for a second time in 1841, Houston took control of a nation in chaos. Internal improvements remained far from his priorities as the nation nearly disintegrated from the onslaught of Mexican armies and a collapsing currency. After the crisis of the first year of his second administration passed and the economy improved, Houston felt the government could now afford to invest in infrastructure, particularly to facilitate the shipment of goods to market. Jones also pushed for more internal improvements, calling for hospitals, improved port facilities, and roads to the warm approval of Congress.

David Burnet, distracted by the war with Mexico, had little to do with the Indians, as the Native Americans in East Texas had agreed to remain peaceful during the fighting.

Houston had concluded a peace treaty with the Cherokees in February 1836 which gave the Texians a reprieve from frontier raids during the days of the revolution. After Houston became president, he sought a peaceful relationship based on commerce to stave off violence. He typically spoke of the need to nurture a lasting peace with the Indians as being in the best interests of the nation but cautioned about the need for continued defense. Despite this liberal policy, Houston remained careful to keep up frontier defenses. Anson Jones largely mirrored this policy.

Houston and Jones met with considerable success in dealing with the native tribes. Texas concluded several treaties with the major tribes, and the Senate ratified a peace treaty with eleven major tribes in 1845. Periodic Indian raids, however, frustrated Houston's efforts in his first administration. In addition, Houston's attempt to grant title to certain lands to the Cherokees could not find congressional approval and disappeared after the Cherokees left Texas.

Mirabeau B. Lamar, on the other hand, forever held an intense disdain for American Indians. He called for either expulsion or outright extermination of Indians. After an intensive effort in 1839, Texas troops forced the Cherokees to leave the country. The most intense fighting did subside during the Lamar presidency, but many tribes remained in Texas and presented concerns to numerous future Texas leaders.

Each president expressed his firmest wish for peace with Mexico. Circumstances in Mexico, however, tended to alter those plans a bit. Texas waged a bitter war for its independence under Burnet, but afterward the ad interim president sought a peace treaty with Mexico that guaranteed an end to hostilities and Texas sovereignty. Despite the

armistice signed after San Jacinto, hostile feelings remained. The settlers lived in fear of another attack. Sam Houston recognized the intense feelings but understood the desperate condition of the nation in 1836 prevented any realistic attempt to strike at Mexico. He successfully dissuaded his countrymen from pursuing a belligerent policy, at least temporarily.

Lamar passionately defended the dreams of empire and hoped Texas would absorb Mexican territory all the way to the Pacific Ocean. He also stated his desire for peace with that nation. Despite his tributes to a peaceful coexistence with Mexico, he encouraged volunteers to fight the centralist armies and used the navy to harass centralist ships off Yucatan. ` He called on the citizens of New Mexico to join Texas and sent an expedition to cement the relationship between the two. After the capture of the Texan-Santa Fe Expedition, an enraged Mexico launched raids into Texas.

Houston entered office and faced the brunt of the renewed Mexican ire. Texans repelled the raids, but his calls for patience and promise of only a limited response met with absolute disgust from many. One group of soldiers disobeyed Houston's orders and launched their own failed raid on the Mexican village of Mier. After the raids of 1842, relations improved steadily as England and France encouraged a reconciliation between Mexico and a Texas seeking annexation to the United States.

Mexico made a number of peace overtures which Texas met with skepticism. In February 1845 Jones received a peace treaty that Mexico and Texas agents had agreed to. Jones felt that Texas had finally achieved peace with its enemies but the Texas people did not share the president's enthusiasm. Many decried the treaty as an attempt to

sabotage annexation, and the measure failed. By May 1845, Mexico offered to recognize the Republic of Texas if it did not accept annexation to the United States. By this time, the decision lay in the hands of the state constitutional convention, which resoundingly rejected the offer. Less than a year later, Texans again found themselves at war with Mexico, but this time as a member of the United States.

The presidents laid down the foundations for education, infrastructure, and frontier defense of Texas in their addresses, although each president met with varying successes and often met with many difficulties that threatened to derail the republic. Texas nevertheless persevered through that tumultuous decade and joined the United States. As the Republic of Texas closed and J. Pinckney Henderson became governor of the State of Texas, Texans now had the defensive and economic might of America to nurture the further development of the Lone Star State.

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