

Duel of Eagles

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DUEL OF EAGLES

CONFLICTS IN THE SOUTHWEST 1820 - 1848

A Unit of Study for Grades 8-12



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INTRODUCTION

APPROACH AND RATIONALE

The National Center for History in the Schools has developed the following collection of lessons for teaching with primary sources. Our units are the fruit of a collaboration between history professors and experienced teachers of United States History. They represent specific “dramatic episodes” in history from which you and your students can pause to delve into the deeper meanings of these selected landmark events and explore their wider context in the great historical narrative. By studying a crucial turning-point in history the student becomes aware that choices had to be made by real human beings, that those decisions were the result of specific factors, and that they set in motion a series of historical consequences. We have selected dramatic episodes that bring alive that decision-making process. We hope that through this approach, your students will realize that history is an ongoing, open-ended process, and that the decisions they make today create the conditions of tomorrow’s history.

Our teaching units are based on primary sources, taken from government documents, artifacts, magazines, newspapers, films, and literature from the period under study. What we hope you achieve using primary source documents in these lessons is to have your students connect more intimately with the past. In this way we hope to recreate for your students a sense of “being there,” a sense of seeing history through the eyes of the very people who were making decisions. This will help your students develop historical empathy, to realize that history is not an impersonal process divorced from real people like themselves. At the same time, by analyzing primary sources, students will actually practice the historian’s craft, discovering for themselves how to analyze evidence, establish a valid interpretation and construct a coherent narrative in which all the relevant factors play a part.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Within this unit, you will find: 1) Unit Objectives, 2) Correlation to the National History Standards, 3) Teacher Background Materials, 4) Lesson Plans, and 5) Student Resources. This unit, as we have said above, focuses on certain key moments in time and should be used as a supplement to your customary course materials. Although these lessons are recommended for grades 8-12, they can be adapted for other grade levels.

Introduction

The teacher background section should provide you with a good overview of the entire unit and with the historical information and context necessary to link the specific “dramatic moment” to the larger historical narrative. You may consult it for your own use, and you may choose to share it with students if they are of a sufficient grade level to understand the materials.

The lesson plans include a variety of ideas and approaches for the teacher which can be elaborated upon or cut as you see the need. These lesson plans contain student resources which accompany each lesson. The resources consist of primary source of the lessons offered on any given topic, or you can select and adapt the ones that best support your particular course needs. We have not attempted to be comprehensive or prescriptive in our offerings, but rather to give you an array of enticing possibilities for in-depth study, at varying grade levels. We hope that you will find the lesson plans exciting and stimulating for your classes. We also hope that your students will never again see history as a boring sweep of inevitable facts and meaningless dates but rather as an endless treasure of real life stories, and an exercise in analysis and reconstruction.

TEACHER BACKGROUND MATERIALS

I. UNIT OVERVIEW

The history of the American Southwest is usually relegated to brief references to the Lone Star Republic, the Mexican-American War, and Manifest Destiny. Students often fail to see the “big picture” and usually have little knowledge of the issues that led to the declaration of Texas independence. Most students view the independence of Texas as a blur in their study of the Mexican-American War.

Students will be able to explore in depth the issues that were at the heart of conflicts in the American Southwest. Through the use of primary and selected secondary sources students will discover different perspectives on these issues. In addition they will compare competing historical narratives and contrast conflicting appraisals of the period by different historians.

Contemporary voices for and against U.S. foreign policy help to draw attention to public reaction to the decision to go to war with Mexico in 1846. Students are asked to grapple with issues that go beyond the scope of typical text accounts of the history of the American Southwest in the first half of the nineteenth century.

II. UNIT CONTEXT

The lessons in this unit of study deal with the period from the opening of Spanish Texas to Anglo-American colonization in the early nineteenth century through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The lessons place this half-century of conflict between Mexico and the United States in clearer focus by exploring causes and consequences of key events from various perspectives. The unit supplements the study of Manifest Destiny and provides teachers with the opportunity of an in-depth study of the Texas War for Independence, the removal of the Cherokee from Texas, and an examination of the causes of the Mexican-American War of 1846. Lessons in the unit examine attitudes towards U.S. expansion and different perspectives on the causes which led to the Texas Independence movement and the Mexican-American War. The unit provides a variety of views on the often neglected history of the American Southwest. The lessons are most effective if placed within the context of a study of Manifest Destiny.

III. CORRELATION TO THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR UNITED STATES HISTORY

Duel of Eagles: Conflicts in the Southwest, 1820–1848 provides teaching materials that address **Standard 1C** of **Era 4**, Expansion and Reform, in the *National Standards for United States History, basic Edition* (Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools, 1996.) Lessons focus on an understanding of the ideology of Manifest Destiny, the causes of the Texas War for Independence and the Mexican-American War, the sequence of events leading to the outbreak of hostilities, the provisions and consequences of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and different perspectives on the war. In addition the unit offers the opportunity to elaborate on **Standard 1B** by exploring the impact of the removal of the Cherokee from Texas in conjunction with an examination of United States Indian policy in the Jacksonian era.

Lessons within this unit likewise address the Historical Thinking Standards by providing primary source materials which challenge students to analyze cause-and-effect relationships, to examine historical change and continuity, to marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances, to evaluate the implementation of decisions, to compare competing historical narratives, and to consider multiple perspectives. Students are also expected to draw evidence from historical maps and use data presented in a time line.

IV. UNIT OBJECTIVES

1. Interpret documents in their historical context.
2. Analyze the motives and interests expressed in primary and secondary sources, distinguishing between historical facts and interpretations.
3. Explain historical continuity and change with respect to conflicts in the American Southwest in the first half of the nineteenth century.
4. Examine multiple perspectives by interpreting documents and explaining how different motives, beliefs, interests, and perspectives influence interpretations of the past.
5. Compare and contrast competing historical narratives and demonstrate how an emphasis on different perspectives contributes to different interpretations.

V. LESSON PLANS

1. Texas from Colonization to Revolution
2. The Republic of Texas and the Cherokee
3. The Mexican-American War
4. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

VI. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON DUEL OF EAGLES

At the beginning of the nineteenth century armed Anglo-Americans began to migrate illegally into the Spanish province of Texas. Because they came in small numbers, these “filibusters,” as they were called, posed little threat to Mexico. Indeed, the Spanish government saw advantages in the American settlement of Texas. In 1813 the Spanish cortes (parliament) instituted a policy of formally encouraging immigration to Texas. Moses Austin was among the *empresarios* (contractors) who played a critical role in encouraging American settlement of Texas. Only a few settlements had been established before Mexico claimed its independence from Spain in 1821. Independence had little bearing on the influx of Americans into the region, as Mexico continued similar policies. Mexico had hoped to solidify its claim to the region and provide a buffer against Indian raids.

He had negotiated an agreement with the Spanish government on the eve of Mexican independence; after independence his son, Stephen Austin, was awarded a similar grant to settle families in the region. The agreement required immigrants to become Mexican citizens and accept Catholicism in return for a land grant and deferment of taxes for a period of time. By 1828 Austin had encouraged 1,200 families to move to Texas. Although the Mexican policy drew a large number of Americans into the region, it failed in achieving its goal of securing the region under Mexican political authority. Instead, the region’s new inhabitants became discontented with Mexican rule.

Texas was a part of the Mexican state of Coahuila, and its capital, Saltillo, was some distance from settlements in east Texas. Most of the immigrants continued to speak English, remained Protestant despite their outward acceptance of Catholicism, and were outspoken in demanding rights to which they had been accustomed in the United States. They showed little respect for Mexican law or judicial practices and became a thorn in the side of the Mexican government. In time a number of Mexi-

Teacher Background

can residents of Texas joined them in protesting the authority of Saltillo. Adding to settler dissatisfaction, the Mexican legislature consisted of only one Texas representative and ten from Coahuila. Settlers began to clamor for the separation of Texas from the state of Coahuila.

In 1826, Haden Edwards, an empresario from Mississippi, contracted with the Mexican government to bring some 800 families into east Texas as part of the government's colonization policy. He immediately created difficulties by squabbling with existing settlers over land rights. In an effort to secure governmental authority, Edwards formed an alliance with Cherokee Indians who had recently moved across the border into Texas. Edwards proceeded to establish an independent government which he called the Republic of Fredonia. Indians, including Cherokees who had initially supported Edwards, joined with local residents and forced him to abandon his scheme in 1827. Edwards escaped before a Texas militia from the Austin colony and a company of Mexican troops arrived to put down the rebellion. Although differing factions joined to oppose the Fredonia Republic they were as contentious as ever over the political status of Texas.

Adding to the controversy in Texas, the President of Mexico emancipated all slaves in the republic on Independence Day, 1829. Steven Austin's friends in government immediately attempted to exempt Texas from the presidential proclamation. In 1830 the government put an end to further immigration into Texas and outlawed the importation of slaves.

Texans clashed with Mexican authorities in a number of spasmodic conflicts between 1830 and 1832. Texans organized a convention to draw up grievances in 1832 and demanded a change in government policy. The Mexican government in an attempt at conciliation relaxed some of its control by exempted Texans from some tariff regulations, eased the prohibition on immigration, and permitted limited use of English. Mexico, however, refused to grant Texans' wishes to separate from Coahuila.

In 1835, President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna convinced the Mexican congress to abrogate the Constitution of 1824 making him virtual dictator. Austin, who had been imprisoned during Santa Anna's take-over, returned to Texas claiming that war was the only recourse left to Texans. When Texas declared its independence in 1836, the population was approximately 35,000, a sevenfold increase since the province had been opened to foreign settlers. The overwhelming majority of the immigrants were from the slaveholding states of the southeastern United States.

Although Texans called upon the United States for assistance, the Jackson administration took a neutral position. During the course of the war, the Mexican government criticized the United States for supporting the rebellion and charged that the administration turned a “blind eye” to the recruitment of men throughout the South to join the Texans. The Mexican ambassador to the United States, Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza, objected to General Edmund Gaines leading a U.S. force across the Sabine River into Texas for the declared purpose of protecting the Louisiana frontier from Indian attacks. Gorostiza charged that deserters from General Gaines’s militia joined the Texan at the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836 and fought against Santa Anna’s forces still wearing their U.S. uniforms. Mexican authorities further charged that after the battle these very soldiers deserted again, this time rejoining the U.S. army and that General Gaines, fully aware of what had occurred, did not initiate court martial proceedings. The U.S. State Department denied the charges.

General Sam Houston’s victory at the battle of San Jacinto assured the independence of Texas. Santa Anna, captured after the battle, signed a treaty recognizing the Texas Republic and ordered the Mexican army to leave the area. Santa Anna, however, was deposed as president and the Mexican government repudiated the treaty. Mexico, still technically at war with Texas, began negotiations with Cherokee Indians, trying to secure their support against the Texans. Houston, an avowed friend of the Cherokee, became first president of the Republic of Texas. During the war for independence Houston had negotiated a treaty with Chief Bowles (Duwali) of the Cherokee and their Indian allies. After winning independence, the Texas Senate, however, refused to ratify the treaty, which alienated the Cherokee. Rumors of Indian support for Mexico prompted Mirabeau Lamar, the second president of the republic, to make war on the Cherokee and drive them from Texas.

No sooner than Texas proclaimed independence, the Lone Star Republic applied for admission as a state in the Union. Public sentiment in the United States was divided over the question of annexation.

Many abolitionists, fearing that territorial expansion would lead to the expansion of slavery, opposed annexation. Others viewed expansion as the spread of a virtuous and free society that could extend its positive attributes among the other “less advanced” peoples of the continent.

In the 1840s the notion of “manifest destiny” proved a strong impetus for the annexation of Texas. The status of Texas soon became a fiery issue. During the U.S. presidential election of 1844, the Democratic candidate, James K. Polk, pledged to admit Texas into the union. Shortly after his

Teacher Background

election and before inauguration, President John Tyler abandoned his efforts to have Texas admitted by a treaty which required a two-thirds vote of the Senate. Instead, he proposed admission by a joint resolution of Congress requiring only a simple majority. The resolution passed and Texas was admitted to the Union. Mexico, which had threatened a war if Texas was annexed, broke off diplomatic relations with the United States. As political factions in Mexico vied for power, none were willing to risk offending public opinion by even a hint of negotiations with the United States. Polk, seeking to settle disputes over Texas and purchase Mexican territory from Texas to the Pacific, sent John Slidell to Mexico to negotiate a treaty. Mexico's refusal to accept Slidell prompted Polk to prepare a call for a declaration of war. While Polk was writing his war message, news reached Washington that General Taylor's forces, which had moved into disputed territory between the Neuces and Rio Grande, had been attacked by a Mexican force. Supporting Texas's contention that its southern boundary was the Rio Grande, the U.S. argued it had been invaded by the enemy. Mexico, on the other hand, held that Neuces River was the Texas boundary and that it was simply defending its territory. On May 11, 1846 Congress declared war over strong Whig opposition.

U.S. forces under Zachary Taylor invaded northern Mexico and took Monterrey, Stephen Watts Kearny swept across New Mexico to California, and Winfield Scott landed an army at Vera Cruz and marched overland to Mexico City. At the conclusion of the war, Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceding virtually one-half of its territory to the United States.

The four lessons in this unit explore issues involved in the conflicts in the Southwest from differing points of view. Lesson One concerns immigration and settlement of the Mexican frontier by American settlers and the War for Texas Independence. Lesson Two deals with the expulsion of the Cherokee from Texas after independence. Lesson Three explores the causes of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 from different perspectives. Students should be reminded that these opinions represent only a fraction of the wide variety of stances taken on the war. The concluding lesson in the unit examines several articles of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

VII. USING PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS

Before beginning the unit you may wish to duplicate copies of the Document Analysis Worksheet (**Student Handout 1**) as a means of assisting students in working with the numerous documents which are included in the four lessons in this unit. Encourage students to examine the documents for bias and question the material to determine the

author's frame of reference. Caution students not to accept without question evidence presented in documents and to always examine documents in the context of the time in which they were written. Students should make a habit of testing the data presented in primary source materials with evidence gleaned from their study of history.



Battle of Buena Vista
Library of Congress



The Battle of Cerro Gordo
Lithograph, New York, 1847
Library of Congress

DRAMATIC MOMENT



Daniel Cloud, a young lawyer from Kentucky, accompanied Davey Crockett to Texas in January 1836. Cloud wrote the following letter home while on his sojourn to Texas:



Mexico's Secretary of War, José María Tornel y Mendivil, described the character and desires of the United States as he saw them in 1836.

The tide of emigration will be onward and irresistible and he whose life is spared fifty years will see apostles of liberty and republicanism, the sons of our blessed country descending the western declivities of the Rocky Mountains, bearing in one hand the olive branch of peace and the implements of husbandry—in the other, the weapons of defense and security to shed on that benighted region the light of Christianity and the blessings of civilization and free government, than the mighty waves of the monarch of oceans which wash the East Indies, the hoary empire of China and the islands of Polynesia on the east, shall waft all their stores of plenty into the republican ports of our mammoth confederacy of the west.

The Cloud Family Newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 16, cited in Jeff Long, *Duel of Eagles: The Mexican and U.S. Fight for the Alamo* (New York: William Morrow, 1990), pp. 128–29.

. . . To wish, to wait, and to act describe the distinctive character of the government and the people of the United States. No nation in the civilized world can equal them in their boundless ambition. The object of their heart's desire having been determined, they lie in wait for the propitious moment, assuming a disinterested and indifferent attitude in the meanwhile which is foreign to their true feelings, until circumstances favor their designs, when they ruthlessly trample everything in the way of their desire. This is a historical truth as clear as the light of day. . .

The Mexican Side of the Texas Revolution [1836] By the Chief Mexican Participants: General Antonio López de Santa Anna, D. Ramon Martínez Caro, General Vicente Filisola, General José Urrea, and General José María Tornel, Translated by Carlos E., Castañeda (Dallas: P. L. Turner Company, 1956), p. 294.

LESSON I

TEXAS FROM COLONIZATION TO REVOLUTION

A. LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Interpret documents in their historical context.
2. Examine the motives for and consequences of the opening of Mexico's northern frontier to American colonization.
3. Compare and contrast competing historical narratives and demonstrate how an emphasis on different perspectives contributes to different interpretations.
4. Assess the reasons for Texas War for Independence.
5. Examine the role of the United States in the Texas independence movement.

B. LESSON ACTIVITIES

1. Review the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819. Use information from the lesson background to provide students with an overview and to place the readings in historical context. Emphasize the disagreements between the United States and Mexico over the boundary of Texas.
2. Using a topographical map of Mexico and southwestern region of the United States, have students examine the geographic barriers to Spanish and Mexican colonization of Texas. Discuss the motives for colonizing the northern frontier of Mexico in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Locate areas occupied by the Apache and the Comanche. What were the barriers to settling the region? What difficulties would settlers expect to endure in establishing settlements on Mexico's northern frontier.
3. Have students read "Permission for Moses Austin to Settle Colonists in Texas" (**Document 1**). Ask students to list the conditions which Spain required of colonists and discuss ways in which the Spanish government might insure that settlers adhered to these conditions.
4. Assign **Documents 2** and **3** which deal with Mexican immigration policy. What were the chief concerns of Mexican authorities regarding the open immigration policy? What was the basis for Mier y

Terán's distrust of Texans? What were the underlying factors contributing to the problems over Texas? How should the Mexican government have responded to the situation in Texas?

5. Assign *Andrew Jackson and the Proposed Acquisition of Texas* (**Document 4**). What steps did Colonel Butler propose? Why did Jackson refrain from following Butler's recommendation? You may wish to extend this reading by having students research efforts of the United States to acquire Texas before the 1830s.
6. Have students read and discuss *The Declaration of Causes for Taking Up Arms* (**Document 5**) and, working within groups, review the U.S. Declaration of Independence and compare it to the ideas expressed in the Texas declaration. Explain the similarities and differences in the two documents.
7. Read *Appeal from the Alamo* (**Document 6**) and through a class discussion, analyze Travis's appeal to patriotic fervor. Employ a short lecture or have students report on text readings to place the battle of the Alamo into the scope of the Texas struggle for independence. You may wish to use a short video clip from John Wayne's *The Alamo* (MGM, 1960) and have students assess how the Hollywood version conforms with the historical account of the Texas War for Independence.
8. Select two students to read *The Battle of San Jacinto* (**Document 7**) and *Mexico's Perspective on the Battle of San Jacinto* (**Document 8**). Summarize these readings for the class. As an alternative you may wish to conduct a "read-around" as a means of exploring the data presented in these two readings.
9. Have students read and discuss *Mexico's Perspective on Issues* (**Document 9**). Construct a chart illustrating the differences in U.S. and Mexican perspectives.
10. Conclude the lesson with a general class discussion on the question of annexation. Should the United States have annexed Texas in 1836? What factors prevented the United States from admitting Texas into the union? Would annexation have provoked a war with Mexico in 1836? What regions of the United States would have been most favorable to annexation? What regions would oppose admission of Texas? What policy should the Jackson administration have taken toward annexation? Explain.

**SPAIN GRANTS PERMISSION FOR MOSES AUSTIN
TO SETTLE COLONISTS IN TEXAS, 1820
Primary Source**

Moses Austin wrote to the Spanish Governor in Monterrey, Mexico on December 26, 1820 requesting permission to settle emigrants from Louisiana in Texas. In his letter he promised that all colonists would be Roman Catholic and that as soon as they were settled they would “bind themselves by oath to take up their arms in defense of the Spanish government either against the Indians, filibusters, or any other enemy that may plan hostilities. . . .” In less than a month, a surprisingly short time, the Governor approved Austin’s proposal and specified conditions for the settlement in a letter to the Commander-General of Texas.

Monterrey

January 17, 1821

It will be very expedient to grant the permission asked for by Moses Austin for the removal and settlement in the Province of Texas of the three hundred families who declare that they are desirous of so doing as soon as possible under the conditions fixed in the petition which he presented to the governor of the province for this purpose. . . . It would be well also if, in addition to the first and most important conditions of being Catholics or agreeing to become so before they enter Spanish territory and that of proving their character and good conduct as is offered in the said petition, they would take the required oath to be



Stephen F. Austin,
(Son of Moses Austin)

Daughters of the Republic of Texas Museum

obedient to the government in all things, to take up arms in its defense against all classes of enemies whatsoever, to be faithful to the king, and to defend the political constitution of the Spanish monarchy. Very flattering hopes may then be entertained that the province will receive a noticeable development in the branches of agriculture, industry, and the arts through the new inventions they shall be-
ing with them.

Mattie Austin Hatcher, “The Opening of Texas to Foreign Settlement, 1801–1821,” *University of Texas Bulletin*, No. 2714 (April 8, 1927), pp. 354–55.

**MEXICO'S DISTRUST OF TEXANS: A LETTER FROM GENERAL MANUEL
MIER Y TERÁN, JUNE 30, 1828**
Primary Source

Following Mexico's independence from Spain (1821), Stephen Austin convinced the Mexican government that opening Texas to colonization was the most feasible way of converting the province from a wasteland to an economic asset. The Mexican Congress in 1824 offered free land to immigrants and granted special favors to empresarios who recruited immigrants. Each empresario was awarded thousands of acres of land by the Mexican government. Before long the Mexican government began to wonder if open immigration was a viable policy since it attracted an overwhelming number of emigrants from the United States rather than the multi-national migration Mexico had desired. Alarmed by diplomatic efforts by the United States for the purchase of Texas and the influx of migrants from the U.S., Mexico sent a Mexican official, General Manuel Mier y Terán to investigate. The following is an excerpt from Mier y Terán's letter regarding Texas.

As one covers the distance from Béxar [San Antonio] to this town [Nacogdoches], he will note that Mexican influence is proportionately diminished until on arriving in this place he will see that it is almost nothing and indeed, whence could such influence come? Hardly from superior numbers in populations, since the ratio of Mexicans to foreigners is one to ten. . . . The naturalized North Americans in the town maintain an English school, and send their children north for further education.... It would cause you the same chagrin that it has caused me to see the opinion that is held of our nation by these foreign colonists. . . . Thus, I tell myself that it could not be otherwise than from such a state of affairs would arise an antagonism between the Mexicans and foreigners, which is not the least of the smoldering fires which I have discovered. Therefore, I am warning you to take timely measures. Texas could throw the whole nation into revolution.

The majority of the North Americans established here under the Spanish government—and these are few—are of two classes. First, those who are fugitives from our neighbor republic and bear the unmistakable earmarks of thieves and criminals; . . . however, some of these have reformed and settled down to an industrious life in the new country. The other class of early settlers are poor laborers who lack the four or five thousand dollars necessary to buy a sitio [site] of land in the north,

but having the ambition to become landholders—one of the strong virtues of our neighbors—have come to Texas. Of such as this latter class is Austin's colony composed. They are for the most part industrious and honest, and appreciate this country. . . .

. . . The whole population here is a mixture of strange and incoherent parts without parallel in our federation: numerous tribes of Indians, now at peace, but armed and at any moment ready for war . . .; colonists of another people, more progressive and better informed than the Mexican inhabitants; but also more shrewd and unruly; among these foreigners are fugitives from justice, honest laborers, vagabonds and criminals, but honorable and dishonorable alike travel with their political constitution in their pockets, demanding the privileges, authority and officers which such a constitution guarantees. The most of them have slaves, and these slaves are beginning to learn the favorable intent of the Mexican law toward their unfortunate condition and are becoming restless under their yoke, and the masters, in the effort to retain them, are making that yoke even heavier; they extract their teeth, set on the dogs to tear them in pieces, the most lenient being he who but flogs his slaves until they are flayed.

In short, the growing population, its unusual class, the prosperity and safety of the nation, all seem to me to demand the placing at this point of a jefe político [*political leader*] subordinate to the one at Béxar, and also a court of appeals. This done, I do not believe so radical a step as the separation of Texas from Coahuila, now desired by the inhabitants, would be necessary.

Alleine Howren, "Causes and Origin of the Decree of April 6, 1830," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XVI (April, 1913), pp. 395-98.



General Manuel Mier y Terán
University of Texas Special Collections

**ORTIZ REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT OF MEXICO
ON THE COLONIZATION OF TEXAS, 1833**
Primary Source

Tadeo Ortiz de Ayala filed a report appraising the situation in the frontier province of Texas in which he asserts that Texas will declare its independence if certain sets are not taken. The following is an excerpt of the Ortiz report.

February 2, 1833

As a commissioner of the Federal Union and as a Mexican, I believe that I would not be fulfilling my most sacred duty, if I did not take steps in the present difficulties, to give to your Excellency's government . . . a brief report of the deplorable condition in which I found the former Province of Texas. . . .

The class of people who have settled and who will continue to establish themselves in Texas is not unknown to your Excellency. . . . The colonists are natives of the southern states, of low morality and tend to divide the Anglo-Americans confederation; and, although in general industrious many are lazy, but nevertheless brave. At the same time they are corrupt, covetous, and aggressive; they are accustomed to pass life in absolute independence in the privations of the frontier and to enjoy an almost unlimited liberty. . . . Added to this are their unreasonable and insidious political claims, which . . . have directed and are directing the policies of the cabinet in Washington.

. . . It is believed . . . that the President of the United States [*Andrew Jackson*] and his partisans have secret views concerning Texas. . . . With the present Anglo-American minister to our government and with other persons he has an interest in a vast scheme of colonization lately granted to the empresario Austin and his company in defiance of the law of April 6, 1830. These secret views are as alarming as the policies of the government itself, which is interested in the increase of the emigration of criminals from the United States. These criminals have escaped from the courts and from the punishments which are irrevocably imposed there upon violators of the law. They have taken refuge in Texas and have formed a band of vandals who are very hard to control. They have outdone the few honest men. For this reason, Texas is likely to declare itself independent and thus endanger the integrity of the territory of the Republic. Although the United States might, by a Machiavelian policy, refuse to admit them into the Union, it would not fail to

encourage the establishment of an independent state between the two republics.

That the American government has sinister designs of Texas . . . is a truth based upon numerous authentic facts which it would be useless to relate.

I will be concrete and speak in this connection about the pernicious measure initiated a short time ago, which, on being put through by the present executive of the United States has crowded together more than 150,000 Indians who, driven from their ancient and primitive firesides without the slightest reason whatever, are now living and increasing in the most sterile region adjacent to and bordering on the very fertile lands of Mexico. These regions . . . will be occupied by them; and thanks to their abandoned condition . . . the dangers on the frontier will be aggravated to the injury of the rights of Mexico and the integrity of her territory.

. . . I venture to invoke the sacred name of my country, and I entreat Your Excellency to take this humble exposition into consideration and to present it for the deliberation of the next honorable assembly as one of the most urgent and important matters to be decided upon:

To . . . provide for a system for the administration and settlement of the frontier territories . . . seeking after and admitting all families of foreign countries and especially attracting Mexican families with material inducements for the purpose of forming a mixed population capable of neutralizing the preponderance and influence of Anglo-American colonists.

To establish a chain of colonies or military settlements of selected companies of cavalry and infantry of the regular army . . . for the security and defense of the colonists against foreign aggression and the incursions of barbarous tribes.

To . . . formally wage war . . . on the savage hordes that infest the northern frontier and murder its inhabitants

To invite the cooperation in this campaign of the most civilized and warlike tribes of the Cherokees and the Choctaws, enemies of the Comanches. The first named tribes have been from the United States and . . . are living on our frontiers in great numbers. They should be offered a part of the lands occupied by the Comanches . . . so that they may inhabit it as subjects of the Republic

To free the territories in question from all taxes and contributions for ten years, by opening their ports for at least seven years to trade free from all general customs

To tolerate in the new frontier territories religious freedom and the introduction of individuals from all oppressed nations

To annul, without harming the established families, the concessions and prerogatives granted since the year 1827 to the national and foreign empresarios who have not respected the laws and not fulfilled their contract

These suggestions were prompted in me by the purest and most sincere patriotism in behalf of the great interests of my country These, in my judgment, are the only means of salvation

“Tadeo Ortiz de Ayala and the Colonization of Texas, 1822-1833,” edited by Edith Louise Kelly and Mattie Austin Hatcher, *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4 (April, 1929), pp. 311, 319-23



Colorado and Red River Land Company Map of Texas
Showing Empresario Grants and Adjoining States, ca. 1832
Texas State Library and Archives Commission

ANDREW JACKSON AND THE PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF TEXAS
Primary Source

President John Quincy Adams appointed Joel Poinsett as ambassador to Mexico and instructed him to negotiate a treaty with Mexico recognizing the Rio Grande as the US-Mexican boundary. Failing to win Mexico's acceptance, Poinsett negotiated a treaty recognizing the Sabine River as the boundary. Jackson was irritated believing that the Louisiana boundary extended to the Rio Grande and that the Adams administration was turning Texas over to Mexico. Since the Senate had not ratified the treaty, when Jackson became president he sought to reopen negotiations for the Rio Grande frontier and to arrange for the purchase of Texas and the acquisition of a western boundary at the 37th parallel to the Pacific Ocean. Jackson sent Colonel Anthony Butler to negotiate with Mexico. The following is an excerpt from a letter to Jackson in which Butler recommended that Texas be taken from Mexico by force.

Mexico City, October 2, 1833

My dear Sir,

A few days ago I wrote you on the subject of T. [*Texas*], and advised an immediate occupancy of the disputed Territory

There are at present in Mexico two gentlemen from T. bearers of a petition to the supreme government for permission to assume an independent state government and be separated from Coahuila [*Stephen Austin's mission to Mexico*]. It will be denied them, in which event say the agents, "we will immediately declare ourselves independent", and I know positively that one of the gentlemen, has already written to his constituents informing them of the probability of their petition being rejected, and advising that the minds of the people be prepared to hold a convention immediately on his return, and declare independence. I do not like to commit names to paper lest my letter should be intercepted, but the same individual has spoken with me freely on the subject, and I have listened to all he wished to say, without committing myself to any thing. He declares that he is decidedly for attaching that country to the U.S. and that nothing short of the desert will do as the boundary. That the application for a state government [separate from Coahuila] is all humbug. . . . [N]o one thinks of remaining connected with Mexico longer than the arrival of a convenient period for separation

Pray write me soon and fully, not only officially through the Department of State but privately and freely under your own hand. Let me know all you wish and all you intend, and rely on my efforts and cooperation with you to death. I will negotiate or fight just as you think best. I am frank and speak to you in all confidence of an old and tried friend when I say that my preference is for the latter. We have abundant cause for quarrel and it would cost less by one half, aye two thirds to take, than to purchase the territory. . . . Think well on this, and I know your decision will be right. Santa Anna is a vile hypocrite, and most unprincipled man. You can have no hold on his moral principles because he is without any. Count therefore on nothing but what we may be prepared to enforce.

Always and faithfully your friend and most obedient servant.

Anthony Butler

John Spencer Bassett (ed.), *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, Vol. V, 1833-1838* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1931), pp. 214-16.



Major General Andrew Jackson, President of the United States
Painted by Thomas Sully; engraved by James B. Longacre
Library of Congress, 1820

**THE DECLARATION OF CAUSES FOR TAKING UP ARMS,
NOVEMBER 3, 1835
Primary Source**

Texans had met in convention on several occasions calling for changes in the administration of the government of Coahuila-Texas. Although some Texans were calling for independence, the majority sought to achieve their demands without resorting to revolution and issued a "Declaration of Causes" for defending themselves against the forces of Santa Anna. The assembly hoped to attract support from liberals in Mexico who opposed Santa Anna's dictatorship.

Whereas, General Antonio López de Santa Anna, and other military chieftains, have, by force of arms, overthrown the federal institutions of Mexico, and dissolved the social compact which existed between Texas and the other members of the Mexican confederacy; now the good people of Texas, availing themselves of their natural rights, solemnly declare,

That they have taken up arms in defense of their rights and liberties, which were threatened by the encroachments of military despots, and in defense of the republican principles of the federal constitution of Mexico, of eighteen and twenty-four.

That Texas is no longer morally or civilly bound by the compact of union; yet, stimulated by the generosity and sympathy common to a free people, they offer their support and assistance to such of the members of the Mexican confederacy as will take up arms against military despotism.

That they do not acknowledge that the present authorities of the nominal Mexican republic have the right to govern within the limits of Texas.

That they will not cease to carry on war against the said authorities whilst their troops are within the limits of Texas.

That they hold it to be their right during the disorganization of the federal system, and the reign of despotism, to withdraw from the union, to establish an independent government, or to adopt such measures as they may deem best calculated to protect their rights and liberties, but that they will continue faithful to the Mexican government so long as that nation is governed by the constitution. . . .

That she will reward, by donations in lands, all who volunteer their services in her present struggle, and receive them as citizens.

These declarations we solemnly avow to the world, and call God to witness their truth and sincerity, and invoke defeat and disgrace upon our heads, should we prove guilty of duplicity.

Eugene C. Barker, "The Texan Declaration of Causes for Taking Up Arms Against Mexico," *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, XV (January, 1912), pp. 182-83, cited in *America's Frontier Story: A Documentary History of Westward Expansion* edited by Martin Ridge and Ray Allen Billington (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), pp. 429-30.

Antonio López de Santa Anna
Paul L'Ouvrier, New York Historical Society



Santa Anna
Engraving, ca. 1845
The University of Texas at Arlington
Library Special Collections

APPEAL FROM THE ALAMO Primary Source

In 1835 Colonel William B. Travis and a group of Texan volunteers seized the Alamo, an old Spanish mission which had been occupied by Mexican troops at the time of the revolt. Between February 23 and March 6, 1836 Mexican forces laid siege to the Alamo. Santa Anna had ordered no quarter for prisoners and 187 defenders perished; only one combatant survived by persuaded his captors that he had been forced to fight. A few women, children, and a black slave were also spared. "Remember the Alamo" became a rallying cry for Texans. A few days before the fall of the Alamo, Travis sent the following appeal for help.

Fellow Citizens and Compatriots:

I am besieged by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continued bombardment for twenty-four hours and have not lost a man. The enemy have demanded a surrender at discretion; otherwise the garrison is to be put to the sword if the place is taken. I have answered the summons with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls.



Engraving from *Davey Crockett Almanack*, 1835-38
Library of Congress

I shall never surrender or retreat.

Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, and of everything dear to the American character to come to our aid with all dispatch. The enemy are receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. Through this call may be neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and that of his country. Victory or death!

W. Barret Travis
Lieutenant Colonel Commanding

P.S. The Lord is on our side. When the enemy appeared in sight, we had not three bushels of corn. We have since found, in deserted houses, eighty or ninety bushels and got into the walls twenty or thirty head of beeves [beef].

Henderson Yoakum, *History of Texas*, Vol. 2 (New York: Redfield, 1856), pp. 76-77.



Ruins of the Alamo
Jacob Edmund Blake, 1845
National Archives

THE BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO

Primary Source

The Alamo fell on March 6, and later in the month Colonel Fannin, a Georgian commanding a force consisting of volunteers from the United States, surrendered his force near Goliad. Santa Anna, in order to discourage foreign support for the Texans, had ordered that all foreigners would be considered as pirates and killed. Fannin and his force of 342 were executed by a firing squad, even though they had been assured that they would be returned to the U.S. Santa Anna pursued the Texans and, in April, within a month after Fannin's surrender, confronted General Houston at San Jacinto. The following account of the ensuing battle is taken from a dispatch from General Rusk to David Burnet, President of Texas.

*War Department, Headquarters, Army of Texas
San Jacinto River, April 22, 1836*

To His Excellency David G. Burnet, President of Texas.

Sir: I have the honor to communicate to your excellency a brief account of a general engagement with the army of Santa Anna, at this place on the 21st. . . .

Our army, under the command of General Houston, arrived here on the 20th. . . . The enemy...were unconscious of our approach until our standard was planted on the banks of the San Jacinto. Our position was a favorable one for battle. On the noon of the 20th, the appearance of our foe was hailed by our soldiers with enthusiasm. The enemy...took a position in front of our encampment...where they panted their only piece of artillery. ...In a short time, the commenced firing upon us. . . . A charge was made on the left of our camp by their infantry, which was promptly repelled by a few shots from our artillery, which forced them to retire. . . .

The attack ceased; the enemy retired...and remained in that position, occasionally opening their cannon upon us, until just before sunset. . . .

Early next morning, about nine o'clock, the enemy received a reinforcement of five hundred men, under the command of General Martin Perfecto do Cos, which increased their strength to fourteen or fifteen hundred men. It was supposed that an attack upon our encampment

would now be made; and, having a good position, we stationed our artillery, and disposed of the forces, so as to receive the enemy to the best advantage. At three o'clock, however, the foe, instead of showing signs of attack, was evidently engaged in fortifying. We determined, therefore, immediately to assail him; and, in half an hour, we were formed in four divisions. . . . At the command to move forward, all divisions advanced in good order and high spirits. On arriving within reach of the enemy a heavy fire was opened, first with their artillery on our cavalry. A general conflict now ensued. Orders were given to charge. . . . Major-General Houston acted with great gallantry, encouraging his men to the attack, and heroically charged, in front of the infantry, within a few yards of the enemy, receiving at the same time a wound in his leg. The enemy soon took to flight, officers and all, some on foot and some on horseback. In ten minutes after the firing of the first gun, we were charging through the camp, and driving them before us. They fled in confusion and dismay down the river, followed closely by our troops for four miles. Some of them took the prairie, and were pursued by our cavalry; others were shot in attempting to swim the river; and in a short period the sanguinary conflict was terminated by the surrender of nearly all who were not slain in the combat. One half of their army perished; the other half are prisoners, among whom are General Santa Anna himself, Colonel Almonte, and many other prominent officers of their army. The loss of the enemy is computed at over six hundred slain, and above six hundred prisoners. . . . Our loss, in point of numbers, is small, it being seven slain and fifteen wounded.

This glorious achievement is attributed, not to superior force, but to the valor of our soldiers and the sanctity of our cause. . . . There was a general cry which pervaded the ranks—"Remember the Alamo! remember Bahia!" These words electrified all. "Onward!" was the cry. The unerring aim and irresistible energy of the Texan army could not be withstood. It was freemen fighting against the minions of tyranny, and the result proved the inequality of such a contest. . . .

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, yours,

Thomas J. Rusk, Secretary of War

P.S.—Since writing the above, General Cos has been brought in a prisoner by our cavalry.

T.J. Rusk

John H. Jenkins, ed., *The Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836*, Vol. 6 (Austin: Presidial Press, 1973), pp. 10-13.

**GOROSTIZA AND TORNEL Y MENDÍVIL: MEXICAN PERSPECTIVES
ON THE BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO
Primary Source**

Manuel E. de Gorostiza, Mexican Ambassador to the United States, in a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, gave his government's perspective on the importance of the battle of San Jacinto. The following is an excerpt from this letter.

Philadelphia
September 12, 1836

To the Honorable J. Forsyth, Secretary of State

. . . The undersigned will . . . remind the Secretary of State . . . that the . . . [Texans] were beaten wherever they appeared. They had, by their own confession only six hundred men under arms, commanded by General Houston. That general succeeded in surprising the vanguard of the Mexican army, and it was then only, when General Santa Anna, who, from accident or excess of zeal, was present, became the prisoner of the Texans, and was forced by them to sign an armistice, which was most improperly, and in a manner most contrary to all probability obeyed by General Filisola, that the Texans obtained the unexpected advantage of the evacuation of the territory. The undersigned conceives that none of these things indicate steadiness or consistency as yet. Had the general-in-chief President Santa Anna not been present at San Jacinto, or had General Filisola not obeyed the orders of the captive, the consequences of that battle would have been politically unimportant, and but very trifling in a military point of view. The situation of the Texans would not have been improved by the victory, as the Mexican force was still six or seven times greater than theirs. Moreover, the seasonal rains and fevers immediately afterwards, rendered the continuation of the war impossible—a circumstance which completely accounts for the subsequent inactivity.

The Mexican congress, however, has deprived the battle of San Jacinto of its political importance, by declaring null and void all acts signed by president Santa Anna during his captivity; and as the sickly season will soon have ended, the day is at hand when the Mexicans will cross the Colorado. The Texans will then have the opportunity of showing whether they possess the requisites for national freedom and independence. We shall then judge by actions, not by accidents, whether their movement assumes the

steady and consistent form which is necessary to render their ultimate success probable. . . .

—*Manuel E. De Gorostiza*

Senate Documents, 24th Congress, 2d Session, December 5, 1836-March 3, 1837, pp. 77-78.

José María Tornel y Mendivil appraised the impact of the loss of Texas on Mexico.

. . . The loss of Texas will inevitably result in the loss of New Mexico and the Californias. Little by little our territory will be absorbed, until only an insignificant part is left to us. . . .

The resources of this country now available are more than sufficient to humble the pride of those who, not knowing how to defend their territory, obtained a victory at San Jacinto by a mere whim of fortune, that fickle goddess that seems to rejoice in disappointing those who place too much confidence in her favors. Five thousand infantry and 500 cavalry would be enough, more than enough, to put an end to the high hopes of the Texans, to drive them to the banks of the Sabine, and to reconquer the favors of destiny . . .

. . . The fear that we find ourselves involved in a war against the United States if we refuse to subscribe to the terms demanded is not without foundation. If their diplomacy has been dictated by a preconceived plan,—and this cannot be doubted by those who have observed the skill with which the cabinet in Washington directs its affairs—it is obvious that their aim has been to acquire possession of the disputed territory [the Nueces to the Rio Grande] by force if necessary. This will involve us in more serious difficulties than even those presented by the Texas question itself. War with the United States, however need not be feared, for our final salvation may depend upon it. . . .

Carlos E. Castañeda, trans., *The Mexican Side of the Texas Revolution [1836] By the Chief Mexican Participants: General Antonio López de Santa Anna, D. Ramon Martinez Caro, General Vicente Filisola, General José Urrea, and General José María Tornel*, (Dallas: P. L. Turner Company, 1956), pp. 370-72.

MEXICO'S PERSPECTIVE ON ISSUES

Primary Source

In 1848 fifteen Mexican authors wrote an account of the Mexican-American War, *Apuntas para la historia de guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos*, which was translated and published in English by Albert Ramsey in 1850. The following excerpt is a Mexican view of the Texas war for independence.

. . . The object which we aim at is to show that the United States intended to obtain . . . [Texas] at any price; and to accomplish it, introduced there her citizens, taking care to increase the population. . . . Their minds were prepared gradually to embrace the first opportunity that might offer to strike the blow. . . .

[Mexico] could not remain indifferent to the cry of a rebellion raised within her borders. In endeavored to have order restored in the department in a state of revolt, trying in the first place the conciliatory method of agreement. It proposed to the colonies new advantages, and franchises; among others, that of being exempt for another period of ten years from paying taxes. When it was seen only that every peaceable proposition was discarded, it was decided to declare war, and subject, by actual force, those who were not willing to hear any other argument than the roar of the cannon. . . .

The Texans, on their side, prepared to make a vigorous resistance. To sustain it they counted on effectual aid from the United States, which gave protection to them,—covert, indeed, but still decided and constant. Supplies for the war, arms, men, and whatever was requisite, left the most populous cities of the Union to assist the cause of the Texans, while it protested that it observes the most strict neutrality. . . .

The United States, always giving out that they had no other object than to defend their threatened frontier, had sent a considerable force, under the orders of General Gaines, to the banks of the Sabine. They authorized him, if necessary, to advance to Nacogdoches, a place situated many leagues on this side of that river, and embraced, without any doubt, within the territory recognized as the Mexican. . . .

. . . The occupation of Nacogdoches by the troops of General Gaines consummated the violence to the Mexican territory. Thus in a time of peace between the two nations; when the North Americans proclaimed neutrality; when Mexico had given no offense; they penetrated into her territory armed, occupied her places, and took against her an imposing

and inimical attitude. To excuse this conduct the United States advanced nothing more substantial than that Mexico could not restrain the Indians on her territory from making hostile incursions against their citizens. This principle conflicted with the rules established for the regulation of international rights. According to these one people cannot take military possession of the territory of another under the plea of defending a frontier.

. . . The question of justice than only remained, and no doubt was entertained that forthwith we ought to declare war against the neighboring Republic. This was not done nevertheless, from the urgent reasons of the incalculable evils which would flow from an open contest with a powerful nation. We were disposed to let the cloud blow over; and even subsequently, when new causes of complaint were frequently received. Among these may be stated as the principal, the unwarrantable affair of the taking of Monterey in California, by Commodore Jones, which was passed over so as not to interrupt the peace subsisting. . . .

Albert C. Ramsey, ed. and trans. *The Other Side: or Notes for the History of the War between Mexico and the United States*, (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), pp. 18-22.



La Llorona [The Weeping Woman]

Woodcut in *The Military Heroes of the War with Mexico*
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