

SECTION 2 Independence for Texas

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

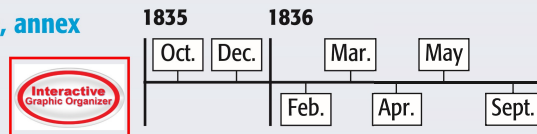
Texans won their independence from Mexico and asked to be admitted to the United States.

Key Terms

Tejano, empresario, decree, annex

Reading Strategy

Sequencing Information As you read Section 2, re-create the diagram below and, in the boxes, list key events that occurred in Texas.



Read to Learn

- why problems arose between the Mexican government and the American settlers in Texas.
- how Texas achieved independence and later became a state.

Section Theme

Geography and History Mexico's offers of huge tracts of fertile land brought American settlers to Texas.

Preview of Events

◆ 1820

1821

Moses Austin receives land grant in Texas

◆ 1830

1833

Santa Anna becomes president of Mexico

◆ 1840

September 1836

Sam Houston is elected president of Texas

March 1836

The Alamo falls to Mexican troops



Davy Crockett

AN American Story

Davy Crockett was a backwoodsman from Tennessee. His skill as a hunter and storyteller helped get him elected to three terms in Congress. But when he started his first political campaign, Crockett was doubtful about his chances of winning. "The thought of having to make a speech made my knees feel mighty weak and set my heart to fluttering." Fortunately for Crockett, the other candidates spoke all day and tired out the audience. "When they were all done," Crockett boasted, "I got up and told some laughable story, and quit. . . I went home, and didn't go back again till after the election was over." In the end, Crockett won the election by a wide margin.

A Clash of Cultures

Davy Crockett of Tennessee won notice for his frontier skills, his sense of humor, and the shrewd common sense he often displayed in politics. When he lost his seat in Congress in 1835, he did not return to Tennessee. Instead he went southwest to Texas.

Crockett thought he could make a new start there. He also wanted to help the Texans win their independence from Mexico. Little did he know his deeds in Texas would bring him greater fame than his adventures on the frontier or his years in Congress.

Conflict over Texas began in 1803, when the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France. Americans claimed that the land in present-day Texas was part of the purchase. Spain protested. In 1819, in the **Adams-Onís Treaty**, the United States agreed to drop any further claim to the region.

Land Grants

At the time, few people lived in Texas. Most residents—about 3,000—were **Tejanos** (teh•HAH•nohs), or Mexicans who claimed Texas as their home. Native Americans, including Comanches, Apaches, and Kiowas, also lived in the area.

Because the Spanish wanted to promote the growth of Texas, they offered vast tracts of land to people who agreed to bring families to settle

on the land. The people who obtained these grants from the government and recruited the settlers were called **empresarios**.

Moses Austin, a businessman who had developed a mining operation in Missouri, applied for and received the first land grant in 1821. Before he could establish his colony, however, Moses contracted pneumonia and died. After Mexico declared independence from Spain, Austin's son, **Stephen F. Austin**, asked the Mexican government to confirm his father's land grant. Once he received confirmation, he began to organize the colony.

Stephen F. Austin recruited 300 American families to settle the fertile land along the Brazos River and the Colorado River of Texas. The first settlers came to be called the **Old Three Hundred**. Many received 960 acres, with additional acres for each child. Others received larger ranches. Austin's success made him a leader among the American settlers in Texas.

From 1823 to 1825, Mexico passed three colonization laws. All these laws offered new settlers large tracts of land at extremely low prices and

People In History

Stephen F. Austin 1793–1836



Stephen F. Austin earned the name “Father of Texas” because of his leadership in populating the Mexican territory of Texas. After attending college he worked as a businessperson. Austin organized the first land grant colony in Texas in 1821. Austin offered large tracts of land to settlers, and his colony grew quickly.

Austin often played the role of spokesperson with the Mexican government, sometimes on behalf of colonists who were not part of his settlement. He served as their advocate, even when he disagreed with their opinions. For example, he negotiated for permission to continue slavery in the province of Texas after it was banned by Mexican law. He also served

nearly a year in prison for promoting independence for the Texans.

After Texas won its war for independence, Austin ran for the office of president. He was defeated but was appointed secretary of state. He died just a few months later. The state of Texas honored Stephen F. Austin by naming its capital city—Austin—after its founding father.

What If...

The Defenders Had Not Stayed at the Alamo?

William Travis and almost 200 other defenders were determined to hold the Alamo. Travis wrote several messages to the people of Texas and the United States asking them for assistance. Travis's appeal was unsuccessful. Texas military forces were not yet well organized and were badly scattered. Travis's letter of February 24, 1836, is one of the finest statements of courage in American history.

The defenders—mostly volunteers—were free to leave whenever they chose. But they decided to defend the Alamo for a cause in which they believed.

Santa Anna hoped the fall of the Alamo would convince other Texans that it was useless to resist his armies. Instead, the heroism of those in the Alamo inspired other Texans to carry on the struggle. "Remember the Alamo!" became the battle cry of Houston's army.

Travis's Appeal for Aid at the Alamo,
February 24, 1836

To the People of Texas
and All Americans in the World—

Fellow Citizens and Compatriots:

I am besieged by a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual Bombardment & cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise the garrison are to be put to the sword if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat.

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

Victory or Death
William Barret Travis
Lt. Col. Comdt.

reduced or no taxes for several years. In return the colonists agreed to learn Spanish, become Mexican citizens, convert to Catholicism—the religion of Mexico—and obey Mexican law.

Mexican leaders hoped to attract settlers from all over, including other parts of Mexico. Most Texas settlers, however, came from the United States.

Growing Tension

By 1830 Americans in Texas far outnumbered Mexicans. Further, these American colonists had not adopted Mexican ways. In the meantime the United States had twice offered to buy Texas from Mexico.

The Mexican government viewed the growing American influence in Texas with alarm. In 1830 the Mexican government issued a **decree**, or official order, that stopped all immigration

from the United States. At the same time, the decree encouraged the immigration of Mexican and European families with generous land grants. Trade between Texas and the United States was discouraged by placing a tax on goods imported from the United States.

These new policies angered the Texans. The prosperity of many citizens depended on trade with the United States. Many had friends and relatives who wanted to come to Texas. In addition, those colonists who held slaves were uneasy about the Mexican government's plans to end slavery.

Attempt at Reconciliation

Some of the American settlers called for independence. Others hoped to stay within Mexico but on better terms. In 1833 **General Antonio López de Santa Anna** became president of

The Struggle for Independence

During 1835 unrest grew among Texans and occasionally resulted in open conflict. Santa Anna sent an army into Texas to punish the Texans for criticizing him. In October some Mexican troops tried to seize a cannon held by Texans at the town of **Gonzales**. During the battle the Texans decorated the front of the cannon with a white flag that bore the words “Come and Take It.” After a brief struggle, Texans drove back the Mexican troops. Texans consider this to be the first fight of the Texan Revolution.

The Texans called on volunteers to join their fight. They offered free land to anyone who would help. Davy Crockett and many others—including a number of African Americans and Tejanos—answered that call.

In December 1835, the Texans scored an important victory. They liberated **San Antonio** from the control of a larger Mexican force. The Texas army at San Antonio included more than 100 Tejanos. Many of them served in a scouting company commanded by Captain Juan Seguín. Born in San Antonio, Seguín was an outspoken champion of the Texans’ demand for independence.

Despite these victories, the Texans encountered problems. With the Mexican withdrawal, some Texans left San Antonio, thinking the war was won. Various groups argued over who was in charge and what course of action to follow. In early 1836, when Texas should have been making preparations to face Santa Anna, nothing was being done.

The Battle of the Alamo

Santa Anna marched north, furious at the loss of San Antonio. When his army reached San Antonio in late February 1836, it found a small Texan force barricaded inside a nearby mission called the **Alamo**.

Although the Texans had cannons, they lacked gunpowder. Worse, they had only about 180 soldiers to face Santa Anna’s army of several thousand. The Texans did have brave leaders, though, including Davy Crockett, who had arrived with a band of sharpshooters from Tennessee, and a tough Texan named Jim Bowie. The commander, William B. Travis, was only 26

What might have happened?

1. Do you think the stand at the Alamo helped the cause of Texas independence even though it was a defeat for the Texans? Explain.
2. Did history take a different course because of the decision to defend the Alamo? Explain.

Mexico. Stephen F. Austin traveled to Mexico City with the Texans’ demands, which were to remove the ban on American settlers and to make Texas a separate state.

Santa Anna agreed to the first request but refused the second. Austin sent a letter back to Texas, suggesting that plans for independence get underway. The Mexican government intercepted the letter and arrested Austin. While Austin was in jail, Santa Anna named himself dictator and overthrew Mexico’s constitution of 1824. Without a constitution to protect their rights, Texans felt betrayed. Santa Anna reorganized the government, placing greater central control over Texas. This loss of local power dismayed many people.

 **Reading Check** **Explaining** What role did empresarios play in colonization?