

How Tennessee Invented Texas

Characteristics required for a pioneer are: restless discontent; endurance beyond contemporary experience; and a sense of destiny. These traits were not rare in the frontier west of the Appalachian Mountains in the first five decades after the American Revolution. Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, James K. Polk and most of heroes of Texas and Tennessee possessed those attributes in a-plenty.

Settlement of Texas began soon after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Border disputes occurred with Spain. The early settlers thought the boundary to be at the Rio Grande River but the Spanish government of Mexico thought the boundary was settled further north at the Sabine River.

In 1528 the first white man was recorded to have ventured into Texas. By 1730 the Spanish had set 30 expeditions in this area looking for the cities of gold and in 1718 San Antonio was made the administrative center of northern Mexico. The Alamo is in San Antonio. In 1821 Mexico gained its independence. Before 1831, Moses Austin had brought three hindered families to settle in 200,000 acres of Texas by agreement with the Mexican government. His son Steven Austin continued this colonization and by 1832 the entire settler's population was 20,000. Santa Anna became president of the independent country of Mexico in 1830. Austin went down to congratulate him and make sure the agreements of settlement were ok, but he was thrown in prison until 1835. The border disputes and the settlements with newly arrived Texans blossomed into full conflict by 1836.

So where does Tennessee figure into all of this? Well, it is important to realize that during this time of settlement and early Spanish and Mexican conflict, Andrew Jackson had been elected President of the United States. He served from 1829-1837. There is no question that this rugged frontiersman encouraged the migration of settlers to this area. Sam Houston was twenty-six years younger than his mentor Andrew Jackson. In 1832, five years after Sam Houston was Governor of Tennessee, President Jackson set Sam to Texas to negotiate Indian treaties. He tarried. Finally, Santa Anna led his punitive army north.

Defense of the Mission Alamo was planned as a delaying action for Santa Anna's army and occurred March of 1836. At this battle there were 189 defenders killed. Fifteen percent of these defenders noted to have been born in Tennessee – the largest percentage from any state – including, of course, Davy Crockett. Eight Mexican-Texans also died defending the Alamo. A month later in April of 1836 the battle of San Jacinto was fought. Led by Sam Houston, eight hundred attackers defeated one thousand six hundred Mexican troops and Santa Anna was captured. This resulted in Texas independence. Sam Houston was the elected President of the Republic of Texas and he served until 1845. In 1845 Texas was annexed to the United States under the Presidency of James K. Polk of Tennessee. This precipitated a war with Mexico, which lasted three years culminating in the annexation of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California. I think it is interesting to note that these acquisitions were made one year before the 1849 gold strikes of California.

In summary, during the Presidency of Andrew Jackson, Texas settlements began, Tennesseans were led by the examples of Sam Houston and Davy Crockett. Many Tennesseans died in their effort for independence. Sam Houston became the President of the Republic of Texas and later the governor of the State of Texas. Texas was admitted to the union in 1845 when James K. Polk was President. So who can doubt that Tennessee invented Texas? I rest my case.

By Sam T. Barnes for Will Roberts