

How Tennessee Invented Texas  
By Sam Barnes  
As told by Will Roberts

Restless discontent, endurance beyond contemporary experience, and a sense of destiny – these characteristics were vital for survival on the frontier in the first five decades after the American Revolution. And men like Andrew Jackson, Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, James Polk, and other heroes of Texas and Tennessee possessed these attributes aplenty. Many men, women, and children armed with little more than grit and determination left the mountains and hollows of Tennessee and traveled west to the vast frontier of Texas. There, they joined settlers and adventurers from other parts of the country to make a new home. Settlement of Texas began soon after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and border disputes with the Spanish were common. The early settlers believed the boundary to be at the Rio Grande River, but the Spanish government held that the Sabine River, further north, was the divide.

In 1821, Mexico gained its independence from Spain, and by 1831, Moses Austin had led three hundred families to settle in the 200,000 acres of Texas, made possible by an agreement with the Mexican government. His son, Stephen continued this colonization, and soon the entire settler population was 20,000. Santa Anna became president of the independent country of Mexico. Austin went down to San Antonio to congratulate the new president and to confirm the agreements of settlement. When he arrived, Austin was thrown into prison and stayed there until 1835. The border disputes between Mexico and the newly arrived Texans blossomed into full conflict by 1836.

So where does Tennessee figure into all of this? During the time of Texas settlement and conflict, Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States. There is no question that this rugged frontiersman encouraged the migration of settlers to Texas. In 1832, five years after Sam Houston served as governor of Tennessee, President Jackson sent him to Texas to negotiate Indian treaties. While he was there, Santa Anna led his punitive armies north to battle. Defense of the Mission Alamo in March of 1836 was planned as a delaying action for Santa Anna's army. Fifteen percent of the defenders killed in this battle, including Davy Crockett, were born in Tennessee – the largest percentage from any state. A month later, Sam Houston led 800 men in the battle of San Jacinto. They defeated 1600 Mexican troops and captured Santa Anna, resulting in Texas independence.

Sam Houston was elected president of the Republic of Texas and served until 1845, when Texas was annexed to the United States under the presidency of James Polk of Tennessee. This action precipitated a three year war with Mexico and culminated in the United States' annexation of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California – just one year before the 1849 gold strikes in California.

So how did Tennessee invent Texas? Settlement began during the presidency of Andrew Jackson. Sam Houston and Davy Crockett led many Tennesseans in battle there, and numerous native Tennesseans died for Texas independence. Sam Houston served as

president of the Republic of Texas and later as its governor. Texas was admitted to the Union in 1845 when James Polk was president. So who can doubt that Tennessee invented Texas? I rest my case..... as told by Will Roberts.

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