



The Annexation of Texas

In the 1820s, Mexico gained independence from Spain and took control of the Texas territory. Mexican officials realized they needed more Anglo settlers to come to Texas. What might life have been like then? Imagine that in 1845, 11-year-old James Young's family had been living in Mexican-controlled Texas for many years. Read James' journal entry about the day Texas became a part of the United States of America.



Dec. 29, 1845

Today, Pa says that the United States officially annexed (took control of) Texas, and we are now part of the United States. Texas President Anson Jones lowered the Texas flag this morning and the U.S. flag was raised high. Pa says it is what is best for us all, but I know everything has changed since he came to Texas with his parents in 1828.

Before that time, there were very few Anglos (white people who are not Hispanic) in Texas. Most people here were American Indians, like the Apache and Comanche. Pa's family lived in Virginia and wanted to own land. That would not be very easy to do in the United States. So, Pa's family came to Texas and settled on free land the Mexican government had promised them. In return, my grandfather promised to raise crops and animals on the fertile land. He also pledged, or promised, to pay taxes to the Mexican government and practice the Catholic religion. He made an oath to be loyal to the Mexican Republic. Like all the other settlers to Texas, Pa and his family promised to learn to speak Spanish and follow the Mexican laws.

By 1830, there were many Anglo families living in Texas. Soon the people weren't getting along with the Mexican government. Most of the people never learned to speak Spanish and didn't want to change religions just to please the Mexicans.

The Mexicans passed new laws that made life even harder for settlers. Pa had just married Mama in 1833 when the settlers asked Mexico to let Texas have its own government. The settlers were not happy with Mexico's rules. Pa said when I was just a baby, fighting broke out between the powerful Mexican government and the Texas people. I have heard the stories of the battles in Gonzales and Goliad many times.

Of course, many know the story of the Texans who fought bravely against General Santa Anna at the Alamo. I always enjoy hearing Mama tell me about how she and Pa had to run away from the cruel general when they thought his men were coming to burn down our farm. I was too young to remember it all, but it sure sounds dangerous. I'll bet Pa was very brave. I know the Texans were shouting, "Remember the Alamo!" when General Sam Houston led an attack against the Mexicans at San Jacinto in April 1836.

Pa said many people probably cheered when the Texas flag was lowered and the U.S. flag was raised. Texas needs the money and the protection the United States can give. I know Texas might not be able to stand strong on its own right now. Like many other people though, I feel sad that the Republic of Texas is no longer. I just hope the Mexicans can accept that the United States is calling Texas its own.

Less than six months after Texas became a state, Congress declared war on Mexico.

Connections

Did Davy Crockett really go down fighting?

Davy Crockett was born in Tennessee. He could survive in any wilderness, and some people say he could kill a bear with no help from anyone. Stories about Crockett's adventures made him an American hero. But just how true are the stories about his death at the Alamo?

In 1834, Crockett was angry when he lost an election to the U.S. House of Representatives. He left Tennessee and headed for Texas. He fought in the battle at the Alamo. General Santa Anna's forces killed Crockett and all the other soldiers at the Alamo. But not everyone agrees about how and when Crockett was killed.

There are several primary sources that claim to know how Davy Crockett died. But, they tell different stories. Some say he died during the battle, and he was found near the bodies of Mexican soldiers he took down with him. Other sources say he was with a group of seven (sometimes six) men who surrendered. The men were executed and Crockett died along with them. Historians don't agree on what story is true.

Primary sources are important to learn about history, but not all sources are reliable. There are some things we can't know with certainty.



Georgia Lesson

The Alamo

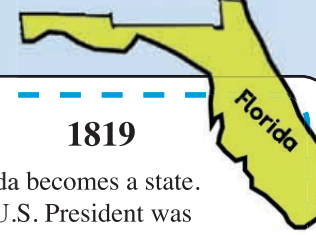
You may have heard someone say, "Remember the Alamo!" The Alamo was the site of an important battle. The battle was near what is now San Antonio, Texas. It was a turning point in the Texas Revolution.

The Alamo was built in the 1700s. The Alamo had a different name then. It was called Mission San Antonio de Valero. It was a mission, a place where missionaries live. Catholic missionaries tried to convert American Indians to Catholicism. Over its history, the Alamo also served military purposes. Near the San Antonio River, it was used as a fortress.

The timeline below covers the Texas Revolution. This includes why the Revolution started. Important battles are listed. One of these is the Battle of the Alamo.


1819

Florida becomes a state. The U.S. President was James Monroe. He negotiated with Spain. He wanted to annex Florida. Annexing Florida meant it would become part of the United States. Some wanted him to try to annex Texas, too.



1823

The Imperial Colonization Law of January 1823. This law allowed Americans who moved to Texas to avoid paying some taxes. This encouraged even more Americans to settle in Texas.




June 26, 1832

Battle of Velasco. The Texans and Mexican troops fought a small battle. The Texans won. The Mexican troops left the area.

January 1834

Stephen Austin, an important Texan, wrote a letter supporting the Texans' demands. He was arrested by the Mexican government for 18 months.




December 11, 1835

The Battle of San Antonio. The Texan army defeated General Cos after a long siege. A siege is when one side prevents its enemies from getting food and supplies. General Cos surrendered to the Texans.

1836

General Santa Anna wanted to take control back from the Texans. He planned an attack. In early 1836, Santa Anna led troops to San Antonio. Some guess he had as many as 6,000 Mexican troops. Only about 150 Texans were present to defend the Alamo. Before Santa Anna arrived, they tried to make the Alamo safe from attack. The regular Texas army was led by Colonel William B. Travis. Colonel James Bowie led the militia. Militia were people who weren't soldiers, but willing to fight. One of the most famous Americans at the Alamo was Davy Crockett.


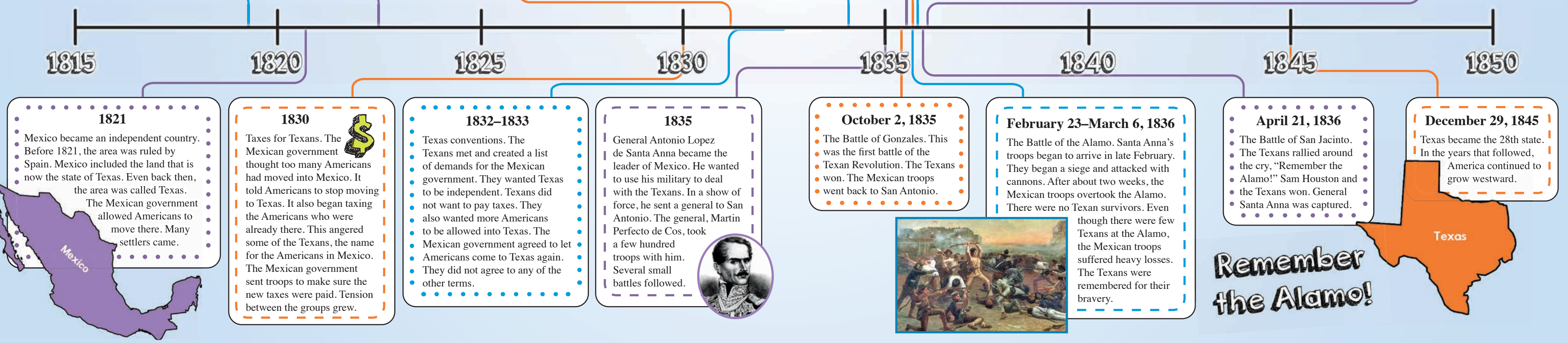


March 17, 1836

The Texan Constitution. The constitution stated that Texas was an independent nation. Sam Houston became the commander of the Texan army.


May 14, 1836

The Treaty of Velasco. General Santa Anna signed the treaty of Velasco to end the Texas Revolution. The treaty said Texas was an independent country. The Mexican government no longer supported General Santa Anna. He was replaced by a new leader. Over the next few years, there was occasional fighting between Mexico and Texas. This eventually led to the Mexican American War.


1821

Mexico became an independent country. Before 1821, the area was ruled by Spain. Mexico included the land that is now the state of Texas. Even back then, the area was called Texas. The Mexican government allowed Americans to move there. Many settlers came.



1830

Taxes for Texans. The Mexican government thought too many Americans had moved into Mexico. It told Americans to stop moving to Texas. It also began taxing the Americans who were already there. This angered some of the Texans, the name for the Americans in Mexico. The Mexican government sent troops to make sure the new taxes were paid. Tension between the groups grew.




1832-1833

Texas conventions. The Texans met and created a list of demands for the Mexican government. They wanted Texas to be independent. Texans did not want to pay taxes. They also wanted more Americans to be allowed into Texas. The Mexican government agreed to let Americans come to Texas again. They did not agree to any of the other terms.

1835

General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna became the leader of Mexico. He wanted to use his military to deal with the Texans. In a show of force, he sent a general to San Antonio. The general, Martin Perfecto de Cos, took a few hundred troops with him. Several small battles followed.




October 2, 1835

The Battle of Gonzales. This was the first battle of the Texan Revolution. The Texans won. The Mexican troops went back to San Antonio.

February 23-March 6, 1836

The Battle of the Alamo. Santa Anna's troops began to arrive in late February. They began a siege and attacked with cannons. After about two weeks, the Mexican troops overtook the Alamo. There were no Texan survivors. Even though there were few Texans at the Alamo, the Mexican troops suffered heavy losses. The Texans were remembered for their bravery.



April 21, 1836

The Battle of San Jacinto. The Texans rallied around the cry, "Remember the Alamo!" Sam Houston and the Texans won. General Santa Anna was captured.

December 29, 1845

Texas became the 28th state. In the years that followed, America continued to grow westward.



Remember the Alamo!

Massacre in Goliad

During the battle at the Alamo, Texas leaders worked to recruit, or get, more volunteers who could fight against the powerful Mexicans. In Goliad, Colonel James W. Fannin led between 400 and 500 young men who enrolled from about 10 different states to help Texas. The men worked hard to prepare their fort for the Mexican army. They knew the battle would be soon. The Texans readied their rifles, muskets and cannons.

But these men were in a difficult situation even before they learned that Mexican General Jose de Urrea was headed right towards them. Just like the volunteers in the Alamo, Colonel Fannin's men had very little fresh water or supplies. A number of them were already wounded. They were also not very safe at the fort.

When General Urrea and his 450 soldiers arrived in Goliad, the battle started. Fannin tried to lead his men to safety. But the Mexicans overtook them and Fannin was forced to surrender. In a meeting with General Urrea, Fannin agreed he and his men would give up their weapons and become prisoners of war.

Unfortunately, General Santa Anna had other plans. His order was to execute all the Texans who had surrendered. Following these orders, Mexican soldiers marched the Texas soldiers into a field and shot 342 of them. The Mexicans spared 20 men who were doctors, nurses, interpreters or mechanics, and 28 men escaped by running into the nearby wilderness.

Word of the horrible massacre at Goliad reached Texans quickly. More than ever, Texans were determined to rid themselves of Santa Anna and the Mexican rulers. Now the Texans cried, "Remember Goliad!" along with "Remember the Alamo!"



History

Treaties of Velasco

On April 21, 1836, General Sam Houston and his volunteer Texas army defeated Mexico at San Jacinto. General Santa Anna had no choice but to make a deal with Houston to give Texas its freedom from Mexico. Houston and Santa Anna made a deal soon after the battle but the final agreements were made almost a month later.

On May 14, Santa Anna signed two peace treaties with Texas President David G. Burnet. These written agreements were known as the Treaties of Velasco. In the first treaty, Santa Anna promised to send all of his soldiers back to Mexico. He agreed that Mexico would never again fight against Texas, and he promised to return property that had been taken from the Texans. President Burnet agreed in return that Texas would send Santa Anna back to Mexico and would not attack Mexican troops as they returned home.

This wasn't the only agreement reached in Velasco, however. The Texans also made a secret agreement with Santa Anna. In this second treaty, Santa Anna promised he would do everything in his power to help Texas gain independence from Mexico without any further difficulties. They also agreed that the southern border of Texas would be the Rio Grande River.

Even though both sides agreed and signed the treaties, not everyone was happy. Many men believed Santa Anna should be punished for what had happened at the Alamo and Goliad. When the Mexican troops began their march home, Texas soldiers wouldn't let Santa Anna go free. Mexican officials said the treaties weren't legal because Santa Anna was a prisoner when he signed the agreements. The treaties never worked because both sides violated the agreements. It would still be years before Mexico formally recognized Texas' independence.



Name _____

Map Activity

1. Create a timeline that includes the battles of the Texas Revolution. Be sure to use chronological order!
2. Select any two of the battle sites. Use the scale to determine how far apart the sites are. If adults walk at about three miles per hour, how many hours would it take to move between the two sites? How many miles do you think soldiers could travel per day?
3. Why do you think Americans moved to Texas? Looking at the map, determine what resources were available in Texas. If necessary, consult other sources.
4. Select one of the battles on the map. Review this issue of Studies Weekly. Use additional sources if necessary. Alone or with a partner, create a poster that depicts important historical figures, facts, background, and outcomes of this battle.
5. Select one of the battles. Write a letter to a friend from the perspective of a Texan or Mexican soldier. What is the area around you like? Explain why you are fighting. Consider describing your living conditions, the types of food you eat, and what you do to relax.

Mapping and Charting



Compare and Contrast

Activity

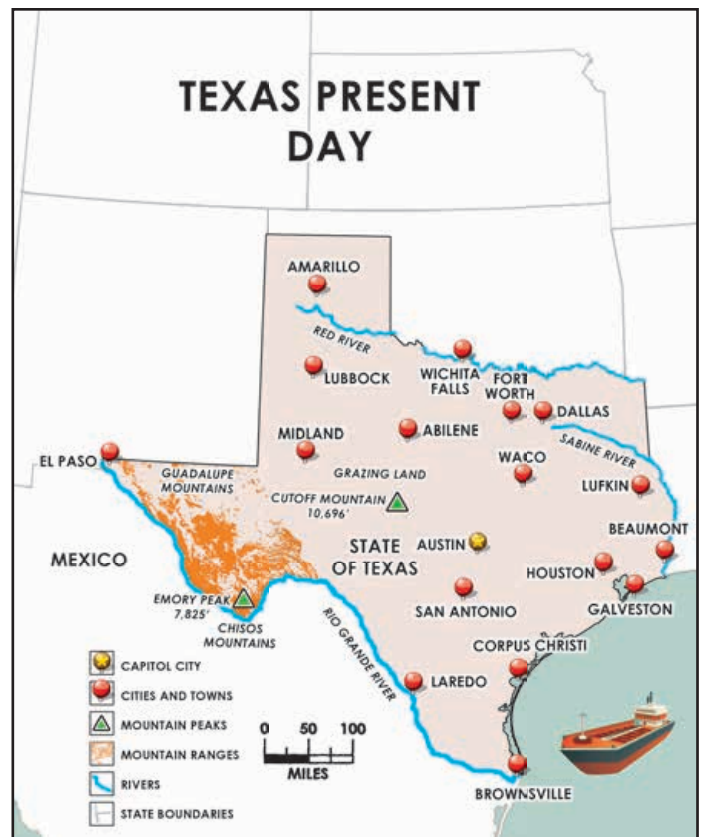
1. Look at the shape of the historic map of Texas and the newer map of Texas. They are slightly different. Use a highlighter to mark the borders on each map. Describe how the borders are different. Why do you think this is?

4. What do the differences on the map tell you about life in Texas in the 1830s?

2. Use your highlighter to mark the important features on both maps. What are these features on the historic map?

5. Look at the cities of Houston, Austin, and San Antonio on the modern map. Approximate the distance from nearby natural features. Now, draw these cities on the historic map. Share your guesses with a partner. Do you agree or disagree?

3. What are the important features on the modern map?



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Think & Review

1. What did lowering the Texas flag and raising the U.S. flag symbolize?
2. Why do people disagree about how Davy Crockett actually died?
3. General Urrea allowed Colonel Fannin and his soldiers to surrender by giving up weapons and becoming prisoners of war. What happened to change that plan?
4. Why were many Texans not pleased that President Burnet agreed to let General Santa Ana return to Mexico?
5. Why do people say, "Remember the Alamo!"?

Let's Write

Do you believe that the Anglo settlers were right to rebel against the Mexican government? Write an argument to support their actions or explain why they were wrong. Provide evidence and explain your reasoning.