

## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

ferocious act, for which Santa Anna is directly responsible, awakened such a storm of indignation throughout Texas—and what was possibly more important, throughout the United States as well—that all questions of right, wrong, or expediency were lost in a wild desire for revenge. All this culminated in a stern determination to expel the bloody Dictator from Texas, free it from Mexican rule and establish it as an independent state.

The justice of the Mexican contention in the subsequent differences with the United States became obscured and was disregarded, seen as it was, through the butchery of the Alamo and the massacre at Goliad. Mexico, in the end, paid a bitter price for the cold-blooded and inhuman ferocity of her ruler.

## CHAPTER VII

SAN JACINTO—THE NEW REPUBLIC  
—STEPHEN F. AUSTIN

## CHAPTER VII

SAN JACINTO—THE NEW REPUBLIC—STEPHEN F.  
AUSTIN

SANTA ANNA was now practically supreme in Texas. He believed the revolt had been crushed hopelessly and that he had definitely established his ascendancy. He thereupon determined to send the most of his troops back to Mexico. It was only upon the urgent representations of his generals that he agreed to delay their departure, in order to march further eastward and absolutely scatter and destroy the last vestige of armed resistance.

Houston lay on the Colorado River with the main Texan army, numbering less than a thousand men. Santa Anna marched upon him with some two thousand regular soldiers. The rest of his army was in garrison at various points, engaged in small expeditions against



## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

and ruthless Mexican invaders. The whole population fled before Houston, therefore, who continually interposed his army between the fugitives and Santa Anna. This exodus was known in local Texas history as "The Runaway Scrape." In spite of every effort Santa Anna could not overtake the retreating Texans and bring them to battle.

Obloquy and contempt were heaped upon Houston for not giving battle. His courage was impugned, his capacity questioned, and everything was done by his enemies to deprive him of the command. To all this he paid no attention. He knew what he was about and resolutely held to his course. When he got ready and he saw a fair opportunity, he would strike. Till then nothing could alter his stubborn determination.

Suddenly Santa Anna quitted the immediate pursuit of Houston, who was then somewhat to the northward of him on the Brazos, and crossing that river with a heavy cavalry detachment turned southward for a dash at Har-

## SAN JACINTO

risburg, where the President and the Cabinet had their temporary headquarters. Houston had been reenforced by a small body of men and two six-pounders called the "Twin Sisters." These had been sent to Texas by the citizens of Cincinnati. The President and his Cabinet escaped from Santa Anna's rapid raid with great difficulty. Waiting till his infantry joined him, the Mexican general despatched one regiment toward Galveston to pursue the flying legislators, and then marched on New Washington.

Houston was now ready to assume the offensive. Several mutinous and recalcitrant companies, which had withdrawn from him during the retreat, perceiving, before it was too late, the wisdom of Houston's course, now rejoined him. His total force was at this time about seven hundred and fifty men. Santa Anna was within the heart of Texas with perhaps fifteen hundred men, far from his base of supplies, and without the possibility of succor or reenforcement, should he need



## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

either. He was utterly unsuspecting that Houston had at last assumed the offensive. He made the not uncommon mistake of the successful commander of despising his enemies. His detachment of a regiment to pursue the President was a fatal blunder.

Houston reached Harrisburg, which Santa Anna had destroyed, on the 18th of April, 1836. Leaving its baggage wagons, the army crossed Buffalo Bayou in a leaky scow and a timber raft. The cavalry horses were forced to swim the river. At dawn on the twentieth, receiving intelligence that the Mexican army was at hand, Houston marched to the junction of Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto River. Santa Anna with twelve hundred men was at New Washington. He immediately marched to attack Houston.

The armies came in contact that same afternoon. There was some skirmishing, but no decisive engagement. The Mexicans went into camp and threw up a flimsy entrenchment. On the morning of the 21st Santa Anna was

## SAN JACINTO

joined by five hundred cavalymen under General Cos. The total force of the Texans was seven hundred and eighty-two. There were only two hundred bayonets in the Texan army. As the Mexicans outnumbered them more than two to one, the Texans expected to be attacked. The day wore away, however, without any movement being made by the Mexicans and Houston decided at last to begin the engagement himself.

At four o'clock in the afternoon he ordered his small cavalry squadron and his two-gun battery to advance, the infantry following with their guns at a trail. The army band, which consisted of a solitary drum and fife, played a popular air, "Will you come to the bower?" The movement was screened from the enemy by two little islands or clumps of trees between the Texans and the Mexicans. Houston, wearing an old black coat, a black velvet vest, a pair of snuff-colored pantaloons, and dilapidated boots, with his pantaloons tucked into them, and carrying an old sword, led the



## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

advance. Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar was captain of the cavalry. Thomas J. Rusk, Secretary of War, commanded the left; Burleson, the center; and Sherman, the right. As the Texans passed the islands and came in full view of the Mexican lines, Houston galloped up and down the line on a white horse shouting profanely, "G—d d—n you, hold your fire!"

The place where the ensuing battle was fought was enclosed by marshes. There was only one safe way of retreat from it. That was by a road which led across the bayou, called the Vince's Bridge Road. When the army, now on a run, had come within a few hundred feet of the Mexican lines, Deaf Smith, a celebrated scout, dashed up, shouting that he had cut down Vince's Bridge and that there was no retreat. Like Cortez, Houston had burned his boats behind him. It was to be a case of conquer or die. The men did not think of retreating. Shouting "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad! Remember

## SAN JACINTO

La Bahia!" they broke from the timber and rushed upon the Mexican camp.

The surprise was complete. It had never occurred to the Mexicans that the Texans would have the temerity to attack so overwhelming a force. When the Americans burst upon them, Santa Anna was asleep, the cavalry were watering their horses, the cooks were preparing the evening meal, and the soldiers had laid aside their arms and were playing games. The Mexicans ran to their arms, but were driven from their breastworks by a well-aimed volley at close range. They actually had no time to discharge their guns. The "Twin Sisters" did valiant service. In a few minutes the whole Mexican line was in hopeless retreat. Lamar, by a gallant dash with his eighty horses, drove the five hundred cavalymen, struggling with their horses, in great confusion. Some of the Mexican officers bravely strove to rally and form their men, and put up a stout resistance, notably General Castrillon and Colonel Almonte, but in vain.



## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

The battle was over in fifteen minutes. The Mexicans scattered in every direction; some, hotly pursued by the Americans, ran toward the bayou; others fled into the marshes back of their camp, only to be shot as they stood enmired. Colonel Almonte rallied five hundred men under the trees, but they were panic-stricken and he could do nothing with them. They were surrendered in a body. Six hundred and thirty men, including thirty-three officers, were killed on the field. Two hundred and eight, of whom eighteen were officers, were seriously wounded. Seven hundred and thirty were made prisoners. There were a few who escaped and many who were not accounted for who perished in the marshes and rivers. The total Mexican loss was about seventeen hundred. There were eight Texans killed and twenty-three wounded. Santa Anna himself was captured the day after the battle. With him in Houston's possession, the war was over.

The battle of San Jacinto was a small engagement, but one of great importance, for it

## THE NEW REPUBLIC

assured the independence of Texas.<sup>1</sup> Nothing could have exceeded the dash and courage of the Texan force. Houston's maneuvering, his strategy before the battle, his tactics during it, were worthy of the highest praise.

Flushed with its astonishing victory, the army was inclined to exact bloody revenge for the Mexican treatment of Travis and Fannin and their men. It was with difficulty that Houston preserved Santa Anna from the fury of the soldiers, who recalled the massacres and murders of which he had been guilty. Santa Anna was fearful for his life, naturally, and the more willing to recognize the Texan Republic, or to do anything which would ensure his own safety, on that account. Houston carefully guarded the person of the Mexican Dictator, realizing the decisive importance of his capture in determining the future of Texas.

On May 14th, at Velasco, Santa Anna signed two treaties, a public and a private one, in

<sup>1</sup> "I was thirty years too soon!" exclaimed the ineffable Aaron Burr when he heard the news.



## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

which he agreed to the independence of Texas, and the withdrawal of all the Mexican troops in the territory.

The treaties were ratified by General Filisola, upon whom the command of the Mexican troops devolved after Santa Anna's capture, and Texas was immediately evacuated. The Texans released Santa Anna. So soon as he reached Mexico, he disavowed the treaties, claiming that they were extorted from him under duress. As to that, it is certain that his desire for freedom and his fear for his personal safety, induced him to sign the treaties. Paying no attention to this attitude of the Mexican government, the Texans at once assumed a place among the nations of the world. This place they maintained for ten years.

An election for President was held in September, 1836, and Sam Houston was chosen by an overwhelming majority over his competitors, Austin and Smith. Really, no man had done so much for Texas as Stephen F. Austin, but the glamour of Houston's decisive

## THE NEW REPUBLIC

military success at San Jacinto was sufficient to give him the election by over five thousand votes, Austin and Smith receiving less than one thousand in the aggregate. Houston, wisely desirous of uniting all parties, made Austin Secretary of State, and Smith Secretary of the Treasury.

Not counting Smith, who had been President of the Constitutional Convention, and Burnet, who had been President pro tem. until the regular election could be held, Houston was the first President of the Texan Republic. An article in the Constitution of Texas precluding a President from succeeding himself, except after an interval of a presidential term, subsequently caused the election of Lamar, who had distinguished himself while in command of the cavalry at San Jacinto, as the second President. At the expiration of Lamar's term, Houston was reelected as the third President. Thereafter Anson Jones was elected as the fourth and last President.

The scope of this monograph does not allow



## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

me to dwell further upon the internal history of Texas. Suffice it to say, in the words of her most recent historian: "Texas can scarcely be said to have had an enviable experience in its essay at independent self-government. During the ten years through which the effort lasted, the young republic, with small available resources and smaller credit, lived a hand-to-mouth existence and was constantly threatened with bankruptcy."<sup>1</sup>

The United States officially recognized the republic on the 1st of March, 1837. France followed in 1839, Holland and Belgium in 1840 and England in 1843. Mexico never fairly recognized the independence of Texas. She kicked spasmodically against the pricks of independence, in fact. Desultory military operations were indulged in on both sides. The advantage from one point of view was on the side of the Mexicans, who captured several Texan expeditions, one against Mexico proper, another against Santa Fé. Mexico also

<sup>1</sup> American Commonwealths—Texas. George P. Garrison.

## STEPHEN F. AUSTIN

seized San Antonio and Goliad on one occasion, although both places were promptly evacuated on the approach of a Texan force. From another point of view, the honors were with the Texans, for the Mexicans gained no permanent advantage in their designs to subdue the revolting territory. So far as Mexico was concerned, Texas was a fact accomplished, although Mexico steadfastly refused to admit it. Mexico could neither subdue Texas, nor would she acknowledge her independence—an impossible position, and one which was bound to make trouble.

Before continuing to record the general course of events, at this point it seems fitting to devote some space to Stephen F. Austin. His character and the services he rendered his country have been indicated during the course of this history. Dating from his Mexican confinement, his health had been very indifferent. On this account at first he refused to accept the office of Secretary of State, but was finally prevailed upon to do so by the urgency



## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

of his friends. His weakened condition proved unequal to the strain of his duties and on the 27th of December, 1836, in the forty-fourth year of his age, he died of pneumonia. He literally gave his life for his country. Well did the government in announcing his death, style him, "The Father of Texas."

Most of the civic rewards at the disposal of a republic, I observe, go to the successful soldier rather than to the civilian, however eminent the civilian may be, and the name which is most popularly associated with Texan history is that of Sam Houston; but it is no disparagement to that doughty old fighter to place beside it, and it may be above it, the name of Stephen Fuller Austin; a pure and unselfish patriot, a devoted and disinterested public servant, a prudent and far-seeing statesman, a cultivated, high-minded gentleman, and a kindly and generous philanthropist. The integrity of his character, no less than the honesty of his motives, and the quality of his services, will forever appeal to the Texan youth.

## STEPHEN F. AUSTIN

The following memorabilia collected by Guy M. Bryan in *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, are both pertinent and interesting:

"In Yoakum's account of Austin's funeral, he says, 'the nation has erected no monument to the memory of Austin, but this he did himself while he lived, in laying the foundation to a great State, and building it upon principles of moderation and freedom; Austin lived to see his work completed, his country free, prosperous, and happy.' Austin gave up his life, as he had given his best years, to Texas. Austin paid his own expenses (which were large) while in Mexico in 1833-34-35, and a bill for them was never presented to the government for payment, and remains unpaid. He pledged all his property to raise the first loan for Texas in New Orleans in 1836. . . . He had two faithful servants, an old negro woman named Mary, who attended to his rooms, and a body-servant, a negro named Simon. He was neat in his person and clothing, avoiding everything like pretension, or that would attract attention to his dress.

"In the earlier years of the colony he wore a suit of buckskin, made and presented to him by his friends, Mrs. Calvert and Mrs. Long. It was dyed



## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

dark brown and thoroughly dressed, so that it was as pliant as woolen or cotton cloth. When in the City of Mexico he gave more attention to his personal appearance, for the higher classes of Mexicans were fond of dress and gave great attention to their personal apparel. He was of simple but polished manners, derived from his early education and associations in the best society of Lexington and St. Louis, of which he was a prominent member among the young. He was a graceful dancer, participating in the amusements of the occasion at the parties and balls of the 'old settlers,' making himself agreeable to the young and the old by his genial, unassuming, and pleasing manners. The 'old settlers' delighted to recount to the writer these and other scenes and the part Austin took in them; those were happy days to all of them, and were some compensation to Austin in his anxieties and troubles in founding civilization and an empire in the wilderness. His relatives never heard him utter an oath; in all his private and public papers nowhere has the writer found such, but always elevating thought and language. He had a few good books, some of which he studied for his guidance. The works of Anacharsis, which delineated the laws, governments, and greatest characters of Greece, formed one of them. He gave this book to

## STEPHEN F. AUSTIN

the writer, and told him that it had been of service to him.

"He was a philanthropist, statesman, thoughtful student, and devoted patriot, free from all pretension, thoroughly honest, and truthful in all his ways. He loved Texas better than himself; she was his mistress; he never married.

"Williams, in his 'Life of Harrison,' says of him: 'Austin was a man of the highest character, of judicial moderation and prudence, as well as energy and perseverance. He appreciated the conditions on which a permanent and prosperous colony could be founded, and carried them out with rare tact and sagacity. He encouraged industry, and governed the lawless elements of the population by his weight of character and personal influence. To him more than any other is due the creation of an American State in Texas. He was forced into political prominence by the demands of the times rather than any desire of his own, and was as modest and self-sacrificing as he was sagacious and practical.'

"Baneroff, in his 'History of Texas,' says of him: 'Austin made self-assertion subordinate to the public weal. His sense of equity and his constancy, his perseverance and fortitude, his intelligence, prudence, and sagacity, and, lastly, his en-



### CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHWEST

durance under persecution, benevolent forgiveness of injuries, and far-reaching philanthropy, mark him as no common person, and place him on the pedestal of great men.'

"His influence with the 'old settlers' was great, for they had tried him, and knew he was worthy of their confidence. 'He was mild, modest, simple, disinterested, and, above all, unimpeachably just.' We may say of him what Anacharsis said of 'the greatest of Grecians': 'A faithful portrait of his mind and heart would be the only eulogy worthy of Epaminondas.'"

## PART II THE MEXICAN WAR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

---

### CHAPTER VIII

#### CAUSES OF THE MEXICAN WAR