

Hello, welcome to another chapter of The Hidden History of Texas,

In this episode, I'm going to explore Spain / Mexico / Texas and the events that took place between the three nations during the years 1815 to 1821. Before I can really discuss 1815 to 1821 and how the turmoil in Mexico was taken advantage of by some of the resident Anglos. I want to go over some events that took place in Texas between 1812 and 1815. There will also be a mention of the War of 1812 because that war, which lasted until 1815 also affected lives in Texas. For your further reading and study, my sources for this information are listed at the end of the transcript file and at the bottom of the post.

Remember that Father Hidalgo issued his famous call for Mexican independence in 1810 and over the next several years violence erupted in New Spain or Mexico. At that time Texas was a part of Mexico and so it was natural that the violence and revolution would spill over into the territory.

The rebellion against Spain showed up in Texas in 1811 in San Antonio with what is called the Casas Revolt. This was one of were many challenges to imperial rule that took place after Father Hidalgo made his demands. Manuel Maria de Salcedo, the Texas governor who was loyal to the Spanish monarchy, discovered that the rebels planned on gaining assistance from the United States through Texas. He decided to use soldiers from the garrison in San Antonio and attack revolutionary

forces on the Rio Grande. Well, that decision didn't go over well with the soldiers or citizens of San Antonio. Not because of any love for the rebels, their fears were that the city would be defenseless against attacks from local tribes. The city was governed by what is known as the *alcalde*, and members of that group named Captain Juan Bautista de las Casas as the commander of the forces in San Antonio. The militia arrested the governor and declared themselves to be on the side of the rebels. Their success was not a lasting one. There were many who were still loyal to Spain and a faction led by Juan Manuel Zambrano gained strength when a rumor arose that the French were going to get involved. This caused more citizens to support Zambrano and they quickly overthrew Casas who was executed in Monclova and whose head was sent back to Texas.

One thing that Casas did achieve in his brief stay in power was to open trade with the United States. This too had unintended consequences, as it led to what is known as the bloodiest battle ever fought on Texas soil. The Battle of Medina.

The Battle of Medina? Most folks who learned Texas history in grade school are familiar with the Alamo, San Jacinto, some with Goliad, but Medina? It is one of the least studied battles, and as I mentioned the bloodiest, and also one of the most important battles in Texas history.

The battle impacted more than just Texas and Mexico. It had an effect on the futures of Spain, Mexico, the United States, England, and France. The world was in chaos at the time and Spain's empire was in jeopardy. Spain's king was Joseph Bonaparte the brother of Napoleon Bonaparte, the current emperor of France, who himself was waging war throughout Europe. The United States and England were also at war (the war of 1812). The world was literally on fire, and then a group led by José Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara and August William Magee entered the fray. They entered Texas on August 7, 1812, under the false statement that they wanted to help make Texas an independent state under the Mexican Republic. They had initial success by quickly capturing Nacogdoches, Trinidad de Salcedo, La Bahía, and finally San Antonio. In April of 1813 they made San Antonio their headquarters and issued a declaration of independence for the State of Texas under the Republic of Mexico. That action did not go over nearly as well as they hoped it would.

“In August of 1813, Spanish General Arredondo led an army of 1,830 men from Laredo to San Antonio to stop the rebellion. The republican army, which included “Anglos, Tejanos, Indians, and former royalists” totaled approximately 1,400 men. Upon hearing of the Spanish approach, the men decided to spare the city of San Antonio from the ravages of battle and meet the royalist army south of the community. During a fierce four-hour battle, the republican army was annihilated.

Of those not killed in battle, most of those trying to flee were captured and executed. Of the original 1,400-man force, less than 100 survived. In contrast, General Arredondo lost only 55 men.” (SanAntonio.gov,2022) Not only were 1,300 men killed, the Hispanic population in Bexar also paid the price. Anyone who sided with the insurgents was punished. Men were killed or forced into exile, women were jailed, some were forced to be servants to the soldiers, and many were stripped of their property.

After the battle there was about a two-year period of semi peace and quiet. In 1815 Henry Perry, who had been involved with the Gutiérrez-Magee expedition, crossed the Sabine River with a small force. They occupied Point Bolivar on the Gulf Coast, as the first step in a plan to conquer Texas. Then in September privateer Louis Michel Aury occupied Galveston on behalf of a group from New Orleans. They declared a makeshift establishment as the port of the Republic of Mexico.

Perry and his forces marched to La Bahia, where they were defeated by the forces of the government. By 1818 all of the invaders and local rebels in Texas had been defeated and Texas was relatively quiet until the summer of 1821. That was when one of the leading royalist commanders, Agustín de Iturbide, reached an agreement with rebel leaders still in the field and declared Mexican independence. Texas, exhausted by its previous participation in the war of independence, by continuous

Indian raids, and by periodic filibustering expeditions, embraced independence cautiously. In the summer of 1821 residents of Béxar, La Bahía, and what was left of Nacogdoches, swore allegiance to the new Mexican nation and prepared to take their destiny into their own hands. These events took place at the same time that yet another effort to develop Texas through immigration was getting off the ground.

Before we discuss the early colonists and their relations with Mexico, we must understand that the first group of folks of English origin who came into Texas seem to be probably some of the least colony-minded people to make the move and they often did their best to be invisible to the authorities.

Not all of them were so invisible to the Spanish. John Hamilton visited the mouth of the Trinity River as a horse buyer about 1774 and purchased stolen livestock...something that didn't go over well with the Spanish. Others such as English architect Alfred Giles in 1779, who designed many buildings around Texas and Mexico and John Culbert, a silversmith, were allowed to live in San Antonio primarily because their skills were valuable.

Legal immigration began to expand the population of Texas in the 1820s. In December 1820, Moses Austin, the last of the promoters of foreign settlement in Texas, arrived at Béxar and asked for approval for a colony of 300 families. He

returned home to Missouri where he learned permission had been granted.

Unfortunately, he died a couple of months later and was unable to bring his colony to Texas. That task fell to his son, Stephen F. Austin, his colony would present the final, successful challenge to preserving Texas as an integral part of Mexico.

When Spain and then Mexico accepted foreigners they were to be Catholic, industrious, and willing to become Spanish citizens in return for generous land grants. Spain expected the new settlers to increase economic development and help deter the aggressive and mobile Plains Indians such as the Comanches and Kiowas. Mexico continued the Spanish colonization plan after its independence in 1821 by granting contracts to empresarios who would settle and supervise selected, qualified immigrants.

Austin's advertisements for colonists coincided with Mexican independence and the presumption that a republic would be organized. Stimulated by these events, some families began moving immediately to the Red River near future Texarkana and across the Sabine along the old Spanish road leading to Nacogdoches. There they remained as squatters, some with intentions of joining the Austin colony, but others engaged in trading with the Indians and Mexicans.

Upon returning to Texas in early 1822, Austin discovered he must go to Mexico City to confirm the contract with the national government, even though his first

settlers were on their way with only vague instructions about where to settle. Soon after he reached the capital, a coup established an empire, and the resulting turmoil delayed Austin for a year. In April 1823 he finally received a contract under the Imperial Colonization Law, which had been passed in January. Because the empire collapsed in April and the republic was reestablished, Austin's empresario contract was the only one issued under this law. The reinstated republican Congress immediately approved the imperial contract, and Austin rushed back to Texas to organize his colony.

Anglo-Americans were attracted to Hispanic Texas because of inexpensive land. Undeveloped land in the United States land offices cost \$1.25 an acre for a minimum of 80 acres (\$100) payable in specie at the time of purchase. In Texas each head of a family, male or female, could claim a headright of 4,605 acres (one league-4,428 acres of grazing land and one labor - 177 acres of irrigable farm land) at a cost about four cents an acre (\$184) payable in six years, a sum later reduced by state authorities.

Two other reasons brought Anglo-American settlers to Texas. Through the 1820s, most believed that the United States would buy eastern Texas from Mexico. Many thought that portion of Texas had been part of the Louisiana Purchase and that the United States had "given" it away to Spain in exchange for Florida in the 1819 Adams-Onís Treaty, which established the Sabine River boundary. The

Texas pioneers expected annexation would stimulate immigration and provide buyers for their land. A second attraction was that Mexico, and the United States had no reciprocal agreements enabling creditors to collect debts or to return fugitives. Therefore, Texas was a safe haven for the many Mississippi valley farmers who defaulted on their loans when agricultural prices declined at the end of the War of 1812 and bankers demanded immediate payment. Faced with seizure of their property and even debtors' prison in many states, men loaded their families and belongings into wagons and headed for the Sabine River, where creditors could not follow and there was opportunity to start over.

Beginning in 1824 when the Mexican Republic adopted its constitution, each immigrant took an oath of loyalty to the new nation and professed to be a Christian. Because the Catholic Church was the established religion, the oath implied that all would become Catholic, although the national and state colonization laws were silent on the matter. Religion was not a critical issue, however, because the church waited until 1831 to send a resident priest, Michael Muldoon, into the Anglo-Texan communities. This was inconvenient for those wishing to marry because there was no provision for civil ceremonies, and only priests had authority to perform nuptial rites. Anglo-Texans unwilling or unable to seek a priest in Catholic communities received permission from the authorities to sign a marriage bond, a practice common in the non-Anglican foothills of Virginia



and the Carolinas before 1776, promising to formalize their union when a priest arrived.

That's going to do it for today, so until next time, when we talk about some of the other conditions that Mexico imposed on the new settlers and some of the troubles those conditions caused.

I'm Hank Wilson, this has been another chapter in the Hidden History of Texas; Talk with you soon, God Bless y'all.

#### Reference Sites

Texas State Historical Association - <https://www.tshaonline.org/home/>

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/amerbegin/power/text2/text2read.htm>

[The English Texans – Institute of Texas Cultures](#)

<https://texancultures.utsa.edu/wp->

[content/uploads/2019/08/TxOneAll\\_English\\_Combined2019.pdf](https://texancultures.utsa.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/TxOneAll_English_Combined2019.pdf)