

Episode 19 (Chapter 1 – Audiobook 3) 1830-1861

Hello and welcome to another episode of the Hidden History of Texas. To date, together we have traveled back in time to the 1500s and taken a look at some of the people and events that occurred. Now we're up to about 1830 and the Anglos have moved into Texas and tension is beginning to run high. In this episode I want to take a look at Texas in the years 1830 through 1833 and talk about some of the issues that arose.

By 1830 eastern Texas had approximately 20,000 settlers and 1,000 slaves and greatly outnumbered the 5,000 Mexicans who lived in the area. It's important to remember that the majority of the early settlers in Texas came from the South and as a result they brought with them their belief system. These beliefs and yes prejudices would come to play a role in spurring the upcoming revolution.

The settlers showed little interest in Catholicism and other aspects of Mexican culture. The expansion was a quest for a better chance and more living room and in many ways the Americans kept their culture. Economic opportunities were what settlers were after, not cultural preferences.

This is most clearly seen after Mexico abolished slavery and by 1829 the colonies teetered at the brink of revolt. In response, President Anastasio Bustamante implemented the Laws of April 6, 1830. The law provided the same type of

stimulus to the Texas Revolution that the Stamp Act was to the American Revolution. It was initiated by Lucas Alamán y Escalada, the Mexican minister of foreign relations, its primary goal was (wait for it) to stop the flood of immigration from the United States to Texas. Before I go much further into some of the other aspects of the law, one giant issue that must be addressed is the one of slavery. Remember, the majority of the new Texas immigrants came from the southern United States and slavery was very much a part of their accepted culture.

There were a few slaves in Texas while it was a Spanish province, and slavery did not really become an institution of significance in the region until the arrival of Anglo-American settlers. The original empresario commission given Moses Austin by Spanish authorities in 1821 did not mention slaves, but when Stephen F. Austin was recognized as heir to his father's contract later that year, it was agreed that settlers could receive eighty acres of land for each enslaved person they brought to the colony.

The motivation for bringing slaves to Texas was primarily economic – using their labor to grow cotton, which was by 1820 the most valuable commodity in the Atlantic world. To Anglo-American slave owners slavery was a practical necessity in Texas – the only way to grow cotton profitably on its vast areas of fertile land.

Stephen F. Austin made this clear in 1824: “The principal product that will elevate us from poverty is cotton,” he wrote, “and we cannot do this without the help of slaves.”

Most of the early slaveholders owned only a few slaves. However, there were a few who brought enough to build plantations immediately. For example, Jared Groce arrived from Alabama in 1822 with ninety slaves and set up a cotton plantation on the Brazos River. The very first 1825 census in Austin's colony showed there were 443 slaves in a total population of 1,800. As Austin's colonists began to establish slavery on the lower Brazos and Colorado rivers, the independence of Mexico cast doubt on the future of slavery in Texas. The leaders of the Mexican nation were mostly opposed to slavery. This was due in part to revolutionary idealism and also for the more pragmatic reason that slavery was not essential to their economy. The Federal Constitution of 1824 did not mention slavery, but the 1827 Constitution of the State of Coahuila and Texas prohibited the further introduction of slaves and declared all children born thereafter to slaves already in the state to be free at birth.

Needless to say this made the Anglo-American settlers very alarmed, but within a year the State Congress of Coahuila and Texas, and some of its Tejano leaders were swayed by the pleas of Austin's colonists about the need for labor. They

passed a law that used the familiar practice of indentured servitude to permit the bringing in and owning slaves under a different name. Before being brought to Texas, enslaved persons signed contracts with their masters by which they technically became free but, in return for their "freedom," agreed that they and their children would, in effect, be indentured to the master for life.

In 1829, President Vicente Guerrero issued a decree abolishing slavery in all of Mexico, but within months he exempted Texas from that order. In short, from 1821 to 1836, the national government in Mexico City and the state government of Coahuila and Texas often threatened to restrict or destroy slavery, but always allowed settlers in Texas a loophole or an exemption. Although the various Mexican governments did not adopt any consistent or effective policy to prevent slavery in Texas, their threats worried slaveholders. Many think that the possibility of Mexico outlawing slavery possibly held back the immigration of planters from the Old South. By the time of the Texas Revolution in 1836 Texas had approximately 5,000 enslaved persons in a total population estimated at 38,470. While the slavery aspects of the law did have an effect on immigration it also cancelled out contracts that had been awarded to various empresarios but that had not been moved toward fulfillment.

When the Mexican government also began to enforcement of other provisions of the law concerning establishment of customhouses to oversee immigration.

These provisions and that one in particular resulted in what is known as the Anahuac Disturbances of 1832 and indirectly in the battle of Velasco, the Convention of 1832 and 1833, and the accumulation of grievances that helped lead to the revolution.

I think I want to stop at this point in Texas time. In the next episode or chapter, I will discuss in detail the Anahuac Disturbance, the battle of Velasco and the conventions of 1832 and 1833. So until then, if you want more information of the Hidden History of Texas, visit the Texas State Historical Association. You can also download both of my audiobooks on the Hidden History of Texas pretty much wherever you download or listen to audiobooks. Links to all the stores are on my website <https://arctx.org>. Don't forget to follow me on Twitter twitter.com/arctxs and on facebook facebook.com/arctxs – so until next time, please tell your friends about the program, I'd appreciate it.

See y'all later, peace