

Episode 20 (Chapter 2 – Audiobook 3) 1830-1861

Hello and welcome to another episode of the Hidden History of Texas. In this chapter, I was to talk more about the Law of 1830 and the role it played in the Anahuac (ann-new-whack) Disturbances of 1832 and the Battle of Velasco. The law was based on the fourteen recommendations in the Mier y Teran Report encouraging the colonization of Texas by Mexicans and Europeans, promoting military occupation, and stimulating coastal trade. José Manuel Rafael Simeón de Mier y Terán, Mexican general, was born in Mexico City on February 18, 1789. He visited Texas twice: first, as leader of a boundary-commission expedition to Nacogdoches in 1827–29; and second, as commandant general of the Eastern Interior Provinces in 1831.

In 1827 President Guadalupe Victoria named him to lead a scientific and boundary expedition into Texas to observe the natural resources and the Indians, to discover the number and attitudes of the Americans living there, and to determine the United States-Mexico boundary between the Sabine and the Red rivers. The Comisión de Límites (Boundary Commission), traveled throughout Texas from 1827 until 1829 at which time, they returned to Mexico and reported to the President. So far so good.

However, in his report on the commission, Mier y Terán recommended that strong measures be taken to stop the United States from acquiring Texas. He suggested additional garrisons surrounding the settlements, closer trade ties with Mexico, and the encouragement of more Mexican and European settlers. By European settlers, he was suggesting Spanish citizens and not English or French. His suggestions were incorporated into the Law of April 6, 1830, which also called for the prohibition of slavery (which as I mentioned in the previous chapter, didn't happen) and closed the borders of Texas to Americans.

The law also authorized a loan to cover the cost of transporting colonists to Texas, opened the coastal trade to foreigners for four years, and provided for a federal commissioner of colonization to make sure empresario contracts agreed with the colonization law. It prohibited the transport of slaves into Mexico. President Anastasio Bustamante implemented it on April 6, 1830. Many historians believe the law provided the same type of stimulus to the Texas Revolution that the Stamp Act gave to the American Revolution

The Mexican government began enforcement of other provisions of the law, especially concerning the establishment of customhouses to oversee immigration. Once they took those actions, immigration and current settlements were

affected, the resulting tensions boiled over into what is known as the Anahuac (ann-new-whack) Disturbances of 1832.

Anahuac is located in Southeastern Texas and is close to Louisiana, so it is a natural spot for early Anglo settlement to have taken place. The name Anahuac itself is a Mexican term that comes from Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. The first people to live in this area were the Atakapan people as well as the Caddo. By the 1800s the area became known as "Perry's Point", after Colonel Harry Perry, who had erected a military post here in 1816. So Americans had been living there for close to 15 years and they were not going to appreciate anyone telling them they had to leave or to change how they lived.

Due to the implementation of the Law of 1830 on October 26, 1830, Col. Juan Davis Bradburn and approximately forty officers and men landed at the bluff, Perry's Point, overlooking the mouth of the Trinity. Their orders were to establish a garrison and a town. The garrison was originally chosen as a protected, strategic point from which to prevent smuggling on the Trinity and San Jacinto rivers. As a result, it also aided the collector of customs. George Fisher arrived in November 1831, with the job of collecting national tariffs and preventing smuggling. Because the law of 1830 was designed to encourage Mexican and European settlement of

Texas and to restrict Anglo-American settlement; Bradburn was also charged with preventing the entrance of immigrants from the United States.

Bradburn's troubles actually began well before the arrival of Fisher, and the first of it came in January 1831, when José Francisco Madero, the state-appointed land commissioner, arrived to issue titles to those residents of the lower Trinity; these were people who had settled the area prior to 1828. Now even though both the state and national governments had previously approved granting titles, Bradburn believed that the Law of April 6, 1830, effectively annulled the earlier grants.

The matter was complicated by politics because Bradburn represented the Centralist administration, which believed in a strong central government and weak states, and Madero stood for the opposition, the states'-rights-minded Federalists of northern Mexico. Bradburn arrested Madero, but he was soon released by the state authorities, who appealed to Bradburn's superiors, and the land commissioner quickly issued more than fifty titles to local residents before he returned to his home near the Rio Grande.

Madero also organized an ayuntamiento (uh-yuhn-tuh-mee-en-tow) at the Atascosito Crossing of the Trinity and named it Villa de la Santísima Trinidad de la Libertad, which the Anglos promptly shortened to Liberty. Although this was an

act within his powers, it irritated Bradburn and the Centralists, who saw it as a challenge to the national government's control of the area.

Another crisis followed the visit of Gen. Manuel de Mier y Terán, the commandant of the eastern interior provinces, in November 1831. He did not want the ayuntamiento (uh·yuhn·tuh·mee·en·tow) at Liberty and ordered it moved to Anahuac (ann-new-whack). Mier y Teran also did not approve of Anglo-American lawyers practicing before the court without being certified by Mexican authorities, he ordered Bradburn to inspect their licenses. The general also ordered an inspection of land titles. But as far as the colonists were concerned, Teran's biggest mistake was ordering George Fisher to begin collecting duties from all ships already in the Brazos River and Galveston Bay.

This impacted the very financial lifeblood of the settlers. The ship captains, who are notoriously stubborn people, complained about retroactive laws. Moreover, since the assistant collector for the Brazos had not yet arrived, all vessels would have to clear their papers at Anahuac. This created a situation that was very inconvenient for Brazos captains. As a result, several left without stopping for clearance at the mouth of the river. Since there were a small number of soldiers garrisoned at that spot, shots were exchanged between the ships and the troops.

Further trouble stemmed from Anglo-American animosity against Bradburn and his troops, some of whom were former convicts. Anglo neighbors attributed petty thievery and an attack against a woman to the presence of prisoners among the military. Bradburn had also incorporated two or three runaway slaves from Louisiana into his garrison.

While Mexico allowed no slavery but had permitted Austin's colonists to bring Blacks in as indentured servants; Bradburn acted correctly when the fugitives applied for asylum. A slave catcher initially failed to recover the Louisiana runaways, and he hired William B. Travis to attempt to recover them. Now Travis and his law partner, Patrick C. Jack, had already antagonized Bradburn by starting a civilian militia, which was contrary to Mexican law. Bradburn briefly had Jack incarcerated for parading this militia around and later Travis decided to trick Bradburn into releasing the runaway slaves. A man, perhaps Travis, wrapped in a concealing cloak, delivered a note purportedly from an acquaintance of the commander warning that a force of Louisianans was on the march to recover the fugitives he was harboring. When he realized that he had been given false information, Bradburn arrested Jack and Travis; but because the jail was not adequately secure he placed them in an empty brick kiln. Now a kiln is a brick oven and in the 1830s they were not something that you'd keep in the house,

they were separate buildings. They were not comfortable and when they heard this, settlers from the Brazos valley organized a rescue force of perhaps 200 men, who reached Turtle Bayou, six miles north of Anahuac, on June 9, 1832. They made their way to Turtle Bayou and managed to capture Bradburn's entire cavalry force of nineteen men.

They held them hostage, with the idea of exchanging them for Travis and Jack and a couple of others Bradburn had arrested. After a day of skirmishing, an exchange was arranged by the rebels, most of whom withdrew to Turtle Bayou, where they released the captured cavalymen.

Bradburn discovered that not all the insurgents had evacuated as they had promised, and he refused to release his prisoners. He also announced that he would open fire on the town. Another skirmish broke out between Bradburn's men and the remaining Anglos, who retreated to Turtle Bayou to await the arrival of artillery. There was a large party bringing the ordnance up from the Brazos settlements and they engaged a number of Mexican troops at what is known as the battle of Velasco.

While that battle was taking place, the parties at Turtle Bayou composed and signed the Turtle Bayou Resolutions, which explained their rebellion against Bradburn as part of the reform movement of Federalist general Antonio López de

Santa Anna, who had recently won a victory over administration forces at Tampico.

The matter was finally ended when Col. José de las Piedras, Bradburn's immediate superior, arrived from Nacogdoches and, thinking he was outnumbered, bowed to the wishes of the insurgents. He removed Bradburn, reinstated the ayuntamiento at Liberty, and turned over the Anglo-American prisoners to this body. The prisoners were soon released, and after Piedras left, Travis, Jack, and the others returned to Anahuac, where they incited the garrison to rebel against its Centralist officers. A Federalist officer, Colonel Subarán, assumed command of the troops and, within a month, boarded the garrison on ships and moved to the Rio Grande. Thus ending the disturbance at Anahuac and the battle of Velasco but helping to lay groundwork for the conventions of 1832 and 1833. I'll discuss those events next time.

So until then, if you want more information on Texas History, visit the Texas State Historical Association. I also have two audiobooks on the Hidden History of Texas one which deals with the 1500s to about 1820, and the other one 1820s to 1830s. You can find the books 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

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See y'all later, peace