THE TEXAS REVOLUTION AS AN INTERNAL CONSPIRACY

THESIS

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PREFACE

In the past many causes for the Texas Revolution of 1835-1836 have been suggested. Various politicians, such as John Quincy Adams, and such abolitionists as Benjamin Lundy and William Ellery Channing have charged that the struggle for independence represented a deliberate conspiracy on the part of vested economic groups in the United States--a plot on the part of southern slaveholders and northern land speculators to take over Texas in order to extend the slaveholding territory of the United States. Those who opposed President Andrew Jackson maintained that the Texas revolt was planned by Jackson in co-operation with Sam Houston for the purpose of obtaining Texas for the United States in order to bring into the Union a covey of slave states that would fortify and perpetuate slavery. The detailed studies of Eugene C. Barker, George L. Rives, William C. Binkley, and other historians have disproved these theories. No documentary evidence exists to show that the settlement of Texas or the Texas Revolution constituted any kind of conspiracy on the part of the United States, neither the government nor its inhabitants.

The idea of the Texas Revolution as an internal conspiracy cannot be eliminated. This thesis describes the role of a small minority of the wealthier settlers in Texas in

precipitating the Texas Revolution for their own economic reasons. This group, made up of many of the leading figures in Texas, were, for the most part, well-to-do farmers, merchants, and professional men. Most of them were slaveholders, and their prosperity depended upon the continued existence of this institution. In their minds, the entire economic growth and development of Texas rested upon slavery. When the Mexican government began to threaten the economic future of Texas by the passage of prohibitatory laws on slavery and commerce, many of the leaders in Texas began to think of freeing Texas from Mexican control. The threat to their own economic position and prosperity gave birth to the idea of Texas independence.

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THE TEXAS REVOLUTION AS A CONSPIRACY

Conspiracy of Southern Slaveholders and Northern Land Speculators

The Texas Revolution often has been described as a Southern plot to extend the slave territory and of land speculators for personal gain. This charge was made seriously for the first time in the mid-1830's, when the movement for the annexation of Texas to the United States got under way. Such men as Benjamin Lundy, William Ellery Channing, and John Quincy Adams claimed the Texas Revolution was promoted by slaveholders and land speculators, and they began a counter-movement to block the annexation of Texas to the United States. In this they obtained partial success, as they succeeded in delaying annexation for a decade.[1]

The idea of a slaveholders' conspiracy originated with Benjamin Lundy in 1832 when he devised a scheme for planting free colonies in Texas. Lundy, believing slavery to be at variance with Christian principles and the Declaration of

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[1]Chauncey S. Boucher, "In Re That Aggressive Slavocracy," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIII(June, 1921), 20, 13; William C. Binkley, The Texas Revolution (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1952), p. 2; Eugene C. Barker, "Public Opinion in Texas Preceeding the Revolution," Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1911, I (Washington, D.C., 1913), pp. 217-228.

Independence, began to look toward Texas in the late 1820's as a convenient spot for the location of a Negro colony. He also projected a free-labor agricultural station in Texas for cotton, sugar, and rice, which would prove that slavery was not necessary for the raising of these crops in semitropical climates. Traveling to Texas in 1832, he devoted that winter and spring to anti-slavery work and the promotion of his Negro colony. Falling in with a notorious Colonel Almonte, Lundy returned home convinced that Texas was a den of thieves. Almonte was a close friend and associate of Santa Anna and he appears to have filled Lundy with the Mexican views of Texas. Lundy believed the Texas leaders were plotting civil disturbances in order to further plans to perpetuate slavery and that land speculators in Texas were using the generosity of the Mexican government for personal profit. In 1836 Lundy abandonned his colonization project and directed all his efforts towards exposing the slaveholders' plot to separate Texas from Mexico and annex it to the United States. He soon became the principal advocate of the conspiracy interpretation of the Texas Revolution. Lundy wrote articles for abolitionist newspapers and published two pamphlets, The Origin and True Cause of the Texas Insurrection and The War in Texas. He looked upon the war as an "invasion of brigands from the United States" who had the "avowed purpose of adding five or six more slaveholding states to this Union." Lundy went on to state that "the immediate cause and the leading object of

this contest in Texas originated in a settled design among the slaveholders of this country (with land speculators and slavetraders) to wrest the large and valuable territory of Texas from the Mexican Republic in order to re-establish the system of slavery, to open a vast and profitable slave market there in, and ultimately, to annex it to the United States." Lundy's assertation that slavery did not exist in Texas at that time was entirely untrue. Lundy declared that some Texas settlers told him the purpose behind the desire for separate statehood from Coahuila was to enable Texans to make their own slavery statutes. Lundy fully believed that Austin and the other Texas leaders were motivated by the desire to perpetuate and extend slavery and obtain personal power, and that they were supported in the United States by the slaveholding interests in the South and the speculators in Texas lands.[2]

Lundy convinced the abolitionists, and his pamphlet The War in Texas served as the main source of material for the anti-slavery opposition to the annexation of Texas as well as the prime source for abolitionist historians throughout the century. Just how far Lundy's writings influenced the public opinion of the day is unmeasurable. His views did affect

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[2]Benjamin Lundy, The War in Texas (Philadelphia, 1837), pp. 3, 12, 16-20, 33, 64; Merton L. Dillon, "Benjamin Lundy in Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXIII (July, 1959), 46-60; George L. Rives, The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848, 2 vols. (New York, 1913), I, 384, 240, 241; Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of the North Mexican States and Texas, Part II--1801-1889, Vol. XVII of The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, 39 vols. (San Francisco, 1889), 159, fn. 18.

the proceedings of Congress through the course pursued by John Quincy Adams, who accepted Lundy's conclusions in his campaign in the House of Representatives against the annexation of Texas. Adams charged that the annexation of Texas might even result in the breakup of the Union. Remembering that these views were largely those of Almonte and that through Adams they were foisted upon historians for a century or longer, we find here another instance of the distortion of history.[3]

Another advocate of this conspiracy theory was William Ellery Channing, a noted Massachusetts cleric. Writing to Henry Clay in 1837 on the question of the annexation of Texas, Channing denounced the Texas Revolution as criminal. He charged that the Texas revolt had been caused by land speculation and the desire to prevent the abolition of slavery. Channing felt that annexation would be madness and would result in perpetual war with Mexico. Attacking the grounds upon which the Texans justified their struggle for independence, he wrote that some of them "are so glaringly deficient in truth and reason, that it is hard to avoid suspicion of every defence set up for their revolt." Slavery and fraud lay at the very foundation of the Texas Revolution and Channing could not see how any could sympathize with the Texas cause.

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[3]Dillon, "Benjamin Lundy in Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXIII, 61-62; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 384-385; Nathaniel W. Stephenson, "Texas and the Mexican War," The Frontier in Politics, Vol. XII of The Chronicle of America Series, edited by Allen Johnson, 50 vols. (New Haven, 1921), pp. 104-105

He described the Texas Revolution as notorious, with land speculators, slaveholders, and selfish adventurers being foremost in proclaiming and engaging in the crusade for "Texan liberties." Channing's strongest argument against annexing Texas was that the act would extend and perpetuate slavery, which in turn would quicken the domestic slave-trade and give new impulse to the foreign. A more serious objection was that the annexation of Texas would increase the number of slave states, thus giving them more political power. Adding a postscript to his letter to Clay following the recognition of the independence of Texas by the United States, Channing declared this move as hasty and a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. Channing concluded by stating his opinion of Texas as a sovereign nation.

> We have recognized Texas as a nation, having all the attributes of sovereignty, and competent to the discharge of all the obligations of an independent state. And what is Texas? A collection of a few settlements, which would vanish at once, were a Mexican army of any force to enter the country.[4]

The theory of the Texas Revolution as a conspiracy of the slavocracy in the United States has been investigated thoroughly by Eugene C. Barker. Instead of a conspiracy, Barker contends that the movement of slaveholders to Texas was the result of normal migration patterns. Propinquity and

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[4]William E. Channing, A Letter to the Honorable Henry Clay on the Annexation of Texas to the United States (Glasgow, 1837), pp. 3-18, 25-26, 34-37, 49; Justin H. Smith, The Annexation of Texas (New York, 1919), pp. 14-15, 18-19.

similarity of climate caused Texas to be settled mainly from the southern region of the United States, and this made the introduction of slavery practically inevitable. Little evidence exists to prove that the settlement of Texas came about even in a small part due to the planned political ambitions of the South. Only after Texas became independent did Southern leaders become aggressive in wanting to obtain Texas for the enhancement of their political strength in the United States. Barker further maintains that slavery played little or no part in precipitating the Texas Revolution. He points out that slavery, though it contributed to the background of mental unease and misunderstanding and was a source of chronic irritation, was not an immediately inflammatory complication in 1835. Barker attributes the outbreak of the revolution to the fundamental differences between two racially and politically different groups. Always in the background was the fatal fact that the Mexicans distrusted and feared the American settlers in Texas while the Texans distrusted and half-despised the Mexicans. Mutual annoyances were magnified and disturbed by the atmosphere of suspicion and misunderstanding. Basically, the Texas Revolution was the product of the racial and political inheritances of the two peoples. Even if there had not been a single slave in the United States, the independence of Texas and its subsequent incorporation into the Union would in all probability have come about as the result of the natural course of the

westward movement, but with one possible difference: the annexation of Texas might have come ten years earlier than it did.[5]

In dispelling the slavocracy conspiracy theory Barker, William C. Binkley, and other historians of this school of thought have failed to take into consideration the idea of an internal conspiracy. They successfully have proved that there was no conspiracy within the United States, but they have presented no evidence to prove that there was no organized movement among the Texas slaveholders themselves to bring about the independence of Texas.

Andrew Jackson and the Texas Revolution

The theory that the Texas Revolution was a deliberate conspiracy on the part of Andrew Jackson, then President of the United States, arose from three different ideas--(1) his attempts to purchase Texas; (2) his close connection with Sam Houston; and (3) his neutrality policy.

Overtures had been made to the Mexican government as early as 1825 for the purchase of Texas. Not until the appearance of Anthony Butler in the summer of 1829, however, does Jackson's

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[5]Eugene C. Barker, Mexico and Texas, 1821-1835 (Dallas, 1928), pp. 62-86; Eugene C. Barker, "The Influence of Slavery in the Colonization of Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (July, 1924), 32-33; Barker, "Public Opinion in Texas," Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1911, p. 219; Binkley, Texas Revolution, pp. 128-129; Lynn I. Perrigo, Texas and Our Spanish Southwest (Dallas, 1960), p. 129; Smith, Annexation of Texas, pp. 29-30; Boucher, "In Re That Aggressive Slavocracy," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIII, 21-22.

interests in acquiring Texas seemed to have been aroused. Butler talked freely to both Jackson and his Secretary of State, Martin Van Buren, concerning the geography and productions of Texas and arguments that might be used in urging Mexico to sell Texas to the United States. The result of Butler's talks came in the form of instructions to Joel Poinsett, the United States Minister to Mexico, to renew overtures to Mexico concerning Texas and the boundary. As nothing came of this, Butler was sent to Mexico City in 1830-1831 to take over the negotiations.[6]

Secretary of State Edward Livingston, in a letter to Butler in February, 1832, spoke of discontent among the Texas settlers which bordered on insurrection. He instructed Butler that should any charge be made that the United States government had formented or connived at these discontents, he was to deny them. One year later Livingston again wrote Butler instructing him to bring his negotiations concerning the purchase of Texas to a speedy conclusion. At about this same time Butler told the Mexican government that Jackson was willing to pay five million dollars for Texas, but Mexico

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[6]Eugene C. Barker, "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution," American Historical Review, XII (July, 1907), 788-789; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 235-237.

[7]Livingston to Butler, February, 1832, House Executive Documents, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, v. XII, No. 351 (Washington, D.C., 1836), p. 83.

rejected the offer as a national insult. In early 1836 Jackson ceased efforts to purchase Texas, partly due to a conviction that any attempt to buy Texas at that time was hopeless because of public opinion in Mexico and partially because of events in Texas. The negotiations had been conducted in such a manner as to cast discredit on Jackson's administration, both at home and abroad, and resulted in increasing materially Mexican distrust of the intentions of the United States government. This distrust and suspicion on the part of Mexico was reflected not only in its relations with the United States, but also magnified the disfavorable image of the Texas colonists.[8]

Jackson has been accused of conspiring with Sam Houston in a plot to take over Texas and secure the territory for the United States. The base of this charge lay with the close relationship of Jackson and Houston. During the period after 1829, Houston never lost contact with Jackson and it may have been more than coincidence that he appeared in Texas in 1832. A great deal of Jackson's information concerning Texas and its affairs came from Houston. On February 13, 1833, Houston

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[8]Barker, "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution," American Historical Review, XII, 791-793; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 241, 261; Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 88.

[9]Barker, "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution," American Historical Review, XII, 788-809; Henry Bruce, Life of General Houston, 1793-1863 (New York, 1891), pp. 77-83.

wrote from Natchitoches, Louisiana, that Texas was ripe for appropriation by the United States. He further stated that Texas, determined to form a state government separate from Coahuila, would likely withdraw from the Mexican confederacy altogether unless conditions were not improved.[10]

The other authority for the conspiracy charge against Jackson stems from a story told by a Dr. Robert Mayo of an expedition to be headed by Houston for the purpose of seizing Texas from Mexico. According to Mayo's story he became acquainted with Houston in 1830 and Houston told him of the proposed expedition, offering Mayo a surgeon's appointment in his army. Mayo later obtained the entire plan from a man named Hunter, a recruiting agent assigned to the Washington area. Hunter stated that several thousand men already had been enlisted in Houston's army and that they intended to establish an independent Texas and resist any attempt of the United States to assume control. Mayo, feeling it to be his patriotic duty, informed President Jackson of the plot by letter in November, 1830. The President took no action and late in 1836 returned

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[10]Houston to Jackson, February 13, 1833, in William Carey Crane, Life and Select Literary Remains of Sam Houston of Texas (Philadelphia, 1885), pp. 46-47; Barker, "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution," American Historical Review, XII, 793-794; William C. Binkley, The Expansionist Movement in Texas (Berkeley, California, 1925), pp. 14-15; The Writings of Sam Houston, edited by Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker, 8 vols. (Austin, 1938-1943), I, 79-81; Perrigo, Texas and Our Spanish Southwest, p. 126.

his letter, thus convincing Mayo that Jackson believed his story, but had taken no steps to prevent it.[11]

No evidence exists to support this charge that Jackson connived at any such project, and his attitude in this affair was straightforward and above reproach. It appears that Jackson had heard rumors of such a plan more than a year before Mayo wrote him. It is certain that he wrote Houston, the Governor of the Arkansas Territory, and the Territorial Secretary, expressing his emphatic opposition to any such enterprise and showing the clearest intention of preventing it should such an enterprise develop. He further instructed Governor Pope of Arkansas to block any such movement that might be made from that territory. In this Jackson's conduct appears irreproachable. No sign of an expedition of the type reported by Mayo could be discovered on the frontier. Houston was not even secretly active in instigating a revolution in Texas in 1830. He did not return to Texas until after the revolution had commenced in 1835, and when he did return he came alone.[12]

The third accusation against Jackson charged that he overlooked violations of United States neutrality and allowed a military occupation of Mexican territory to prevent the defeat of the Texans.[13] Mexico, without much supporting evidence,

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[11]Barker, "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution," American Historical Review, XII, 798-799.

[12]Ibid., 802-803; Smith, Annexation of Texas, pp. 25-27.

[13]Barker, "Influence of Slavery," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 2.

clung tenaciously to the view that the revolution in Texas was encouraged by the United States government. The American government looked upon a Texas revolt as distinctly contrary to its wishes and inconsistent with its aims. As for evidence to support this charge that the American authorities fomented the conflict in Texas none can be offered, save the fact that citizens of the United States were not prevented from aiding the colonists. Men, money, and supplies actively crossed the border into Texas. The Texans expected help from the United States, and they received it. Before the end of February, 1836, hundreds of men from the southern states had drifted in to Texas. For months supplies, arms, and money had been openly sent from New Orleans. The Mexican Foreign Minister wrote in November, 1835, that men were being enlisted openly in New Orleans and left there under arms to make war against Mexico and "by their mere presence to render more difficult the peaceable solution of a purely domestic question."[14] This fact brought repeated protests from the Mexican Chargé d'Affaires in Washington that the United States government was not enforcing neutrality.[15]

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[14]Mexican Foreign Minister Monasterio to Secretary of State Forsyth, November 1, 1835, House Executive Documents, 24th Congress, 1st Session, v. VI, No. 256 (Washington, D.C., 1836), p. 8.

[15]House Executive Documents, 25th Congress, 2nd Session, v. XII, No. 351 (Washington, D.C., 1838), pp. 716, 720; House Executive Documents, 24th Congress, 1st Session, VI, No. 256, pp. 29-30; Senate Documents, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, vol. I, No. 1 (Washington, D.C., 1836-1837), pp. 40, 65, 87.

Though no strenuous efforts were made to enforce the neutrality law of April 20, 1818, it was because the executive had not been given adequate power to prevent filibustering expeditions. As early as November 4, 1835, before any complaints had been received from Mexico, Secretary of State John Forsyth had sent a warning circular to the United States district attorneys in Louisiana, Alabama, New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Maryland directing them to prosecute all violations of the neutrality laws.[16] However, these orders proved fruitless, partly because no evidence could be obtained that a tangible breach of law had occurred, partly because those charged with the enforcement of the laws were far from zealous and were in sympathy with the Texan cause, and partly because those in charge of such operations shrewdly cloaked their activities in legality.[17]

Jackson was by no means impartial. Personally he sympathized with the Texans, but he also had a high sense of the obligation of the United States to maintain an attitude of neutrality. He had also received abundant indications that public opinion could not be expected to support a policy

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[16] House Executive Documents, 24th Congress, 1st Session, VI, No. 256, p. 36; House Executive Documents, 25th Congress, 2nd Session, v. III, No. 74 (Washington, D.C., 1838), pp. 3-4, 23; Senate Documents, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, I, No. 1, p. 42.

[17] Barker, "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution," American Historical Review, XII, 804; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 369.

of intervention on the part of the government. The Philo-Texan spirit appears to have been more predominant in the South and West; while there was an active minority of abolitionists, small to be sure, who looked upon the struggle of the Texas colonists with suspicion and dislike. The majority of the people of the United States, before the middle of the year 1835, knew little and cared nothing about Texas. Following the events of the autumn of 1835 the subject became one of great and general interest. Although sympathy existed for the Texas colonists among many citizens of the United States, the climate of opinion did not favor going to war with Mexico in order to free Texas. Though Jackson refrained from issuing an official neutrality proclamation, no evidence has been discovered which implicates him in intrigue. A British agent in Texas, who investigated the Mexican accusation, reported that no aid had come from the United States government and all the assistance given to the Texans was by individuals. At a time when Texan affairs looked very dark Stephen F. Austin wrote from New York to Jackson, the Vice-President, and other officials, begging the administration to openly intervene on behalf of Texas. Jackson filed the letter with his private papers, and commented:

> The writer does not reflect that we have a treaty with Mexico, and our national faith is pledged to support it. The Texians [sic] before they took the step to declare themselves independent, which has aroused and united all Mexico against them ought to have pondered well--it was a rash and

premature act, our neutrality must be faithfully maintained.[18]

This clearly expresses the official attitude that Jackson took toward the struggle of the Texas colonists for independence.

The movement of United States military forces into Texas presents a more complicated situation than alleged neutrality violations by private citizens. In January, 1836, General Edmund P. Gaines was ordered to the southwestern frontier to enforce neutrality and keep the Indians quiet. For some time he encamped on the east bank of the Sabine River, but in the latter part of April Gaines moved across the Sabine. He received orders in May, 1836, to use his own discretion about crossing the boundary, but under no circumstances to proceed further than Nacogdoches. On June 28, 1836, Gaines, obstensibily to keep the Indians quiet, occupied Nacogdoches and held it for several months. The Mexican minister immediately protested that the United States had no right to enter disputed territory and that Gaines had obtained his information about the Indians from the Texans. It was well known that a first cousin of the general, James T. Gaines, was a delegate to the Convention of 1836 and had been instrumental in drafting the Texas Declaration of Independence. The

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[18]Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 371-372, 382-383; Henry Stuart Foote, Texas and the Texans, 2 vols. (Austin, 1935), II, 136; Perrigo, Texas and Our Spanish Southwest, pp. 130-131.

charge made by the Mexican minister was not entirely true, as evidence has been found to show that the Indians of the region were being instigated to invade Texas.[19]

The accusation of a conspiracy which involved Jackson first came to the surface during the debate over the recognition of Texas independence. In a speech of May 25, 1836, and in subsequent pronouncements, both private and public, John Quincy Adams denounced the Texas Revolution as a criminal act instigated by slaveholders and land speculators. Adams further declared that the Texas Declaration of Independence was a dishonest document and that the whole affair resulted from a long-concealed plot of Jackson and the slaveholders, aided by Van Buren and Northerners with Southern sentiments, for the double purpose of expanding the territory of the United States and "riveting forever the domination of the slave power upon the Union."[20] Thus was started the anti-Texas crusade, of which John Quincy Adams became the leader. In a long letter to William Ellery Channing, written in November, 1837, Adams wrote concerning Texas:

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[19]House Executive Documents, 25th Congress, 2nd Session, XII, No. 351, pp. 765, 774; House Executive Documents, 24th Congress, 1st Session, VI, No. 256, pp. 32-33, 35; House Executive Documents, 25th Congress, 2nd Session, v. VII, No. 190 (Washington, D.C., 1838), p. 75; Senate Documents, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, I, No. 1, p. 100; Barker, "President Jackson and the Texas Revolution," American Historical Review, XII, 806-807.

[20]Samuel Flagg Bemis, John Quincy Adams and the Union (New York, 1956), pp. 356-357.

> There is no valid and permanent objection to the acquisition of Texas, but the indelible stain of slavery. Abolish that, and the geographical accession to the sectional power and influence of the South would be counter-balanced by her purification from the plague of slavery. She would sympathise with the South by geographical neighborhood, and with the North by her political principles, and the untainted spirit of Freedom.

In this letter Adams made one of the most surprising statements of his lifetime when he maintained that if the North did not resist the annexation of Texas on the grounds of slavery the American people would be doomed to bear the burden of Texas with her "inextinguishable taint of slavery." Not only would they have to bear the burden of Texas, but that of Cuba, also, whose annexation would follow.[21] Seven years later, on June 10, 1844, Adams was to make a similar statement in his Diary.

> The annexation of Texas to this Union is the first step to the conquest of all Mexico, of all the West India islands, of a maritime, colonizing, slave-tainted monarchy, and of extinguished freedom.[22]

Adams carried his anti-Texas crusade to the House of Representatives. For three weeks, from June 16 to July 9, 1838, he addressed the House daily, during which time he gave his famous anti-Texas speech. Adams viewed the Texas question as a sordid plot to expand the slave territory of the United States so as to give the South greater power in the Senate. This speech was not so much a filibuster against annexation as

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[21] Ibid., p. 360.

[22] The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845, edited by Allan Nevins (New York, 1929), pp. 570-571.

a long indictment of slavery.[23] Not until 1841 did the Texas question again become prominent. Adams once more took the lead in the crusade against the annexation of Texas. On May 25, 1842, in a speech in the Committee of the Whole of the House of Representatives, Adams once again denounced Jackson's administration as conspiring to reestablish slavery where it had been abolished and of scheming to force the United States into a struggle on the side of slavery against a freedom-loving Mexico. Adams also claimed that Jackson had been so "sharpset for Texas, that, . . .he set his double engine to work, negotiating to buy Texas with one hand, and instigating the people of that province to revolt against Mexico with the other." Adams went on to charge that Sam Houston had been sent to Texas for the purpose of creating a revolution there and that General Gaines had been sent to the border for the purpose of involving the United States in the struggle between Texas and Mexico. Adams' accusations, often exaggerated and anti-slavery in nature, were used by the opposing faction in Congress as arguments against annexing Texas and they were successful in that they delayed this move until 1845.[24]

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[23]Bemis, Adams and the Union, pp. 369-370; The pertinent volume of the Congressional Globe, volume VI, makes only the most meager mention of Adams' speech. Later Adams himself put together fragments of the speech and had them printed into a pamphlet which was published in 1838.

[24]House Executive Documents, 27th Congress, 2nd Session, v. VII, No. 103 (Washington, D.C., 1843), pp. 1-20; Nevins, editor, Adams' Diary, p. 548; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 388; Elton Raymond Shaw, The Conquest of the Southwest (Berwyn, Illinois, 1924), p. 97; Smith, Annexation of Texas, p. 131.

No evidence has appeared to support any of the charges against Jackson. He displayed throughout his administration a desire to maintain unsullied the honor and dignity of the United States in regard to the Texas question. He did not connive with Houston to take over Texas and he did what the law permitted to enforce neutrality. Without a doubt Jackson desired to acquire Texas, but a wide gulf exists between wishing to purchase something and conspiring to steal it. He thought the characteristics of the American settlers made the permanence of Mexican rule in Texas highly improbable. For this reason he believed that Mexico should sell Texas, but he considered the revolution ill-advised and unfavorable to his plans at that time.

The Texas Revolution as an Internal Conspiracy

The Texas Revolution was not a spontaneous outburst of patriotic indignation against the oppression of the Mexican government. Few colonists were satisfied with all the features of Mexican rule, but not many were ready to resort to armed rebellion. It was the radical agitation of a few leaders against the economic and political policies of the Mexican authorities that forced the war. The Revolution came suddenly and was soon over--less than seven months in duration. For the most part the majority were dazed by its sudden development, and before many could recover it was over. Most of the

rank and file had not been affected by the alleged abuses of the Mexican authorities and after the hostilities broke out manifested a surprising degree of indifference toward the war. Texans did form a majority of the force that captured San Antonio in December, 1835, but with the termination of that campaign they did not re-enlist either as regulars or auxiliaries and did not again take the field in any appreciable numbers until shortly before the Battle of San Jacinto.[25]

A very small group of citizens began and carried out the movement that culminated in Texas independence. Until 1834 the radical element, the Independence or War Party, was in the minority and had little influence on Texas affairs. The great bulk of the people still looked to the conservative leadership of Stephen F. Austin. From the time the economic prosperity and future of the Texans first was threatened, however, radical feelings began to increase. Those who had vested economic interests brought about the declaration of independence. It was not by coincidence that the War Party was made up of many of the leading slaveholders and planters. Most of them were native Southerners who had emigrated to Texas with their slaves. With the threats to slavery and the business community, all that could be forseen under continued

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[25]Francis W. Johnson, A History of Texas and Texans, 5 vols., edited and brought up to date by Eugene C. Barker (New York, 1914), I, 324-325; Barker, "Public Opinion in Texas," Annual Report of American Historical Association, 1911, pp. 227-228.

Mexican control was economic ruin. Texas depended on its slaves for its development and future prosperity. According to their economic thinking, to abolish the institution would revert the land to a wilderness. While all slaveholders, large and small, would feel the effects of emancipation, the larger planters and the merchants were in a position to exercise political influence. Faced with the choice of economic ruin or resistance to Mexican authority, they chose to resist. At first they attempted to evade the laws against slavery, immigration, and commerce; then the Texans demanded separate statehood with the right of self-government; finally, the movement became a struggle for complete independence.

CHAPTER II

POPULATION MOVEMENT IN TEXAS PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE

Distribution and Population of Anglo-American Texas

In attempting to determine certain aspects about the population of Texas accurate statistics for the years 1821 to 1836 are not available.[1] In the period from 1821 to 1836 the population of Texas was scattered from San Antonio to the Sabine River and the Gulf Coast--an area of about 50,000 square miles. The majority of the population was located east of the Guadalupe River and south of the royal highway running from San Antonio to Nacogdoches.[2] Two principal areas of Anglo-American settlement existed around Nacogdoches in East Texas and along the Brazos and Colorado Rivers. The Anglo-American settlements were separated from the Mexican population by an unoccupied area twenty-five to seventy-five miles in width.[3]

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[1]Samuel Harman Lowrie, Culture Conflict in Texas, 1821-1835 (New York, 1932), pp. 30-31.

[2]Juan N. Almonte, "Statistical Report on Texas, 1835," translated by C.E. Castaneda, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (January, 1925), 184; Carlos E. Castaneda, Transition Period: The Fight for Freedom, 1810-1836, Vol. VI of Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936, 7 vols. (Austin, 1950), p. 218; Binkley, Texas Revolution, pp. 14-15.

[3]Binkley, Texas Revolution, pp. 14-15.

The growth of population in Texas resulted from the opening of settlement to colonists from the United States. The population of Texas before the period of American settlement is estimated at about 4,000, mostly Mexicans living in the San Antonio region. In the ten years following the first American settlement the population increased about 500 per cent.[4] Austin's colonies account for the greatest concentration and increases in population. Within three years after the settlement of the original 300 families in 1821 the colony had grown to a population of 1,800 people including 443 slaves.[5] By 1828 Austin's flourishing colony contained 2,021.[6] The total population of Texas in that year was estimated at about 10,000, excluding the various Indians scattered throughout the province. By this time the Americans comprised over sixty per cent of the population and represented the growing element in the population, while the Mexicans were stationary.[7] By 1831 the population of Austin's colony had increased to 5,665, while the total population was estimated at 20,000, with the

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[4] Ferrigo, Texas and Our Spanish Southwest, p. 108.

[5] Eugene C. Barker, The Life of Stephen F. Austin (Austin, 1949), p. 88; Barker, "Influence of Slavery," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 32; Lowry, Culture Conflict, p. 37.

[6] Census of Austin's Colony, March 31, 1828, Nacogdoches Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas; Eugene C. Barker, editor, Readings in Texas History (Dallas, 1929), p. 117; Life of Austin, pp. 149-150.

[7] Rives, The United States and Mexico, I, 153.

Americans comprising about seventy-five per cent.[8] In 1834-1835 Juan Almonte, after an inspection tour of Texas for the Mexican government, estimated the population at 21,000. About 4,000 Mexicans resided principally in the Department of Bexar, and 17,000 Americans, including 2,000 Negro slaves, were located in the Department of the Brazos and Nacogdoches. The ratio of whites to slaves had fallen to between nine and ten to one.[9]

To the American mind of the 1820's Texas was the very seat of fortune. Many potent magnets drew settlers to Texas--the abundant land that could be had for almost nothing; the great prairies and forests; the romantic and mysterious atmosphere of this borderland of the strange Spanish world; and the lure of the unknown with its unlimited opportunities. During the high days of the 1820's a great host of Americans poured into Texas.[10] Many of the settlers emigrated from along the area adjacent to the Mississippi River. They were much the same type of people who had first settler in western Tennessee, Arkansas, or Mississippi. There were also a considerable number of colonists from Germany and Ireland,

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[8]"Census of Austin's Colony, June 30, 1831," Nacogdoches Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas; Barker, "Notes on Colonization," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVII, 116; Barker, Life of Austin, pp. 49-50; S.A. McMillan, The Book of Fort Bend County Texas (Rosenburg, Texas, 1926), p. 19.

[9]Almonte, "Report," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 186, 198, 206, 216 and Ernest Wallace and David M. Vigness, editors, Documents of Texas History (Lubbock, Texas, 1960), pp. 87-89; Lowrie, Culture Conflict, pp. 31, 37.

[10]Stephenson, "Texas and the Mexican War," The Frontier in Politics, pp. 10-11.

as well as a few Englishmen, during this period.[11] A large proportion of the first 300 families were from Missouri, largely due to the fact that this was the region in which the Austins had resided. The later records of Austin's colony statistics show that the balance of the settlers came from the trans-Appalachian states, especially from the states of Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky.

Manuel Mier y Teran, in a letter written to President Guadalupe Victoria in June, 1830, stated that two classes of settlers existed in Texas--first, fugitives from the United States who bore the unmistakable earmarks of thieves and criminals and resided for the most part between Nacogdoches and the Sabine River. The second class was made up of what Teran called poor laborers who could not afford the purchase price of land in the United States, but who wanted to become landholders and so emigrated to Texas. Teran said that this class of settler comprised most of Austin's colony and that most of them owned at least one or two slaves.[12] Teran's opinion concerning the many fugitives and criminals among the early colonists has been proved erroneous as Austin refused entrance to known criminals. Colonists had to furnish testimonies

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[11] D.W.C. Baker, A Texas Scrap-Book (Austin, 1935), p. 585; Rives, The United States and Mexico, I, 143, 182.

[12] Manuel Mier y Teran to President Guadalupe Victoria, Nacogdoches, June 30, 1828, Documents of Texas History, pp. 65-66; Ailene Howren, "Causes and Origin of the Decree of April 6, 1830," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVI (April, 1914), 395-398; Stephenson, "Texas and the Mexican War," The Frontier in Politics, pp. 24-25.

of good character and industrious and moral habits in order to remain in Austin's colonies. Several undesirable colonists were banished and threatened with corporal punishment if they returned. Naturally some criminals found their way to Texas, but for the most part the colonists were industrious and respectable people.[13] The general character of the settlers differed little from the early population of any of the states of the Mississippi valley. These early colonists were agrarians of a type perfectly familiar to the frontier communities of the western states of the American union.[14]

By 1835 more than seventy-five per cent of the white population of Texas were Anglo-Americans, and of these about three-fourths had been born in the slave states of the United States. Table I gives samples of the population at various dates showing the place of birth. Included in this table are the settlers in Austin's colonies who emigrated between the years 1825 and 1831, the fifty-nine signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836, and veterans of the Texas Revolution. The last group includes those who came from the United States only to fight for Texas independence as well as actual settlers who were in the army.

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[13]Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 68, 112; Barker, Life of Austin, p. 87; Sallie Glassock, Dreams of an Empire (San Antonio, 1951), pp. 10-11.

[14]Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 182; Barker, Readings in Texas History, p. 127.

TABLE I

COMPOSITION OF SAMPLES OF TEXAS POPULATION OF VARIOUS DATES*

Place of Birth	Austin's Colonists 1825-1831	Signers of Declaration of Independence	Revolutionary Veterans
South and Missouri	81%	79%	74%
Free Central States	3	0	5
Middle Atlantic States	6	9	8
New England States	2	0	5
Foreign Countries	7	12	9

*Source: Lowrie, Culture Conflict, pp. 35-36.

At the time the revolution started in late 1835 Bancroft estimated the population at 50,000.[15] In his report to the United States Senate in 1836 Henry M. Morfit stated that the population of Texas approximated 58,500. This total contained about 30,000 Americans, 3,500 native Mexicans, 5,000 Negroes and 14,000 to 20,000 Indians. Morfit placed the ratio of whites to slaves at seven to one.[16] However, from 1836 on Texas experienced a continuous and rapid growth.

[15]Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 191-192.

[16]Henry M. Morfit to J. Forsyth, August 27, 1836, Senate Documents, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. I, No. 20 (Washington, D.C., 1836-1837), pp. 13-14. Henderson K. Yoakum, History of Texas from Its First Settlement in 1685 to Its Annexation to the United States in 1846, 2 vols. (Austin, 1935), II, 197.

The population of Texas, chiefly small farmers, was widely scattered over the region between the Sabine and Nueces Rivers within 150 miles of the Gulf of Mexico. The major areas of settlement were along the Brazos and Colorado Rivers and in the Nacogdoches area of East Texas. The rest of the territory included in Texas virtually was unhabited except by tribes of nomadic Indians.[17] In November, 1835, the General Council of the Provisional Government estimated that the domains of Texas extended over some 250,000 square miles, but only about 10,000,000 acres or 15,625 square miles were listed as appropriated.[18] Texas in 1835 and 1836 was typical of the frontier regions of the trans-Mississippi valley. Few roads and steamboats and no railroads existed in the Texas of this period. The towns along the Gulf coast were just beginning to develpp into trade centers, with Brazoria, on the banks of the Brazos River, one of the busiest ports west of New Orleans. Significantly, as will be discussed later, some of Texas' wealthiest families lived in this area.[19]

Place of Slavery in the Economy of Texas

During the period of American settlement the place of slavery in the economy of Texas became increasingly important. The agricultural resources of Texas constituted a potent force

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[17]Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 464-465.

[18]Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 191-192.

[19]Chester Newell, History of the Revolution in Texas (Austin, 1935), p. 141.

in appealing to potential emigrants. The suitability of the soil and climate for the production of cotton and therefore for slave labor stimulated the movement from the southern slaveholding states.[20] Austin observed in 1821 that the appeal of Texas settlement would be entirely agricultural.[21] Slavery was most profitable in the low lands along the coast and the rivers where the settlers engaged in the production of cotton.[22] The oldest American towns in Texas were located on the Brazos River and the largest and wealthiest planters lived along its banks.[23] The slave population of Texas was located almost exclusively in the areas of Anglo-American settlement, and they were fairly evenly distributed among the American colonists. Most slaveholders owned from two or three to perhaps fifteen or twenty slaves. Non-slaveholders were an almost infinitesimal minority, while a somewhat larger percentage owned large numbers and had come to Texas with the intention of opening plantations.[24]

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[20]Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1893 (Washington, D.C., 1894), p. 213; Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 24.

[21]Austin to J. Hawkins, July 20, 1821, in The Austin Papers, I, edited by Eugene C. Barker, Annual Report of the American Historical Association, 1919, II (Washington, D.C., 1922), Part 1, 402-404.

[22]Lowrie, Culture Conflict, pp. 21, 26.

[23]Newell, History of the Revolution in Texas, p. 133.

[24]Permit to settle in the colony from Austin to J. Bell, October 6, 1821, Austin Papers, I, 415-416; Williams to Austin, January 29, 1825, Williams Papers, MSS., Rosenburg Library, Galveston, Texas; Lester G. Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII (September and December, 1898), 662-663.

In 1825 sixty-nine families owned the estimated slave population of 443. The largest slaveholder was Jared E. Groce, who worked ninety slaves on his Brazos River plantation. Of the other sixty-eight families, ten owned more than eleven and fifty-eight owned from one to eight slaves.[25] The eleven largest slaveholding families owned a total of 271 slaves. These eleven families were Jared E. Groce (90), Henry and Micajah Munson (34), John McNeel (25), John W. Hall (20), David and John Randon (20), Jesse Thompson(15), Elizabeth McNutt (15), James A.E. Phelps (15), Alexander Calvit (13), John Williams (12), and Michael Brenaugh (12).[26] The estimated general population of all Texas was between 7,000 and 7,500, which was about evenly divided between the Americans and the Mexicans.[27] Following 1825 the proportion of slaves to whites, including the Mexican population, greatly decreased. In 1834 the slave population in Texas was estimated at 2,000, about ten percent of the total population of about 20,000.

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[25]Land Titles, General Land Office of Texas, Austin, Texas, Vol. 54, pp. 8-17, MS.; Register of Land Titles, General Land Office of Texas, Austin, Translation, I, 264-265; Barker, "Influence of Slavery," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 32; E.L. Blair, Early History of Grimes County (Austin, 1930), pp. 76-90.

[26]Eugene C. Barker, "Notes on the Colonization of Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVII (October, 1923), 118; Austin Papers, I, 1025-1026, 1060; Lester G. Bugbee, "The Old Three Hundred," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, I (October, 1897), 108-117; Walter Prescott Webb, editor, The Handbook of Texas, 2 vols. (Austin, 1952), I, 274, 756, II, 124, 126, 371-372, 439, 774, 913.

[27]Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 153.

The ratio of whites to slaves had fallen to between nine and ten to one. They were fairly evenly divided between Austin's colonies and the settlements of East Texas.[28] Very few Negroes were found in the area from Goliad to San Antonio.[29] As the population of Texas increased the number of slaves brought into the area decreased from year to year. At the time of the struggle with Mexico broke out there were between 2,000 and 3,000 slaves in Texas.[30]

Stephen F. Austin, though personally opposed to the institution of slavery, recognized its necessity in the economic development of Texas. He thought Negro labor absolutely essential to agriculture due to the semi-tropical climate and the fact that the best lands were located in the malarial river bottoms. In addition, it was argued that slaves were necessary as single laborers could make but little impression on the vast wilderness of Texas. Also, free labor was not available, even had the colonists possessed the money to pay for it, because every man possessed more land of

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[28]Barker, "Influence of Slavery," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 32; Almonte, "Report," Documents of Texas History, pp. 87-89; Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 662-664.

[29]Files Number 328 and 335, Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas; Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 664.

[30]Lowrie, Culture Conflict, pp. 51-52.

his own than he could cultivate.[31] Many claimed that the large scale production of cotton demanded the use of slaves, as well as for the clearing of the land and the opening up of great plantations.[32] The fact that a large majority of those immigrating to Texas came from the slaveholding states of the southern United States also contributed to the development of Texas into a slave territory.[33]

As the Austin colony progressed and the production of cotton increased the settlers began to conclude that their prosperity and progress depended on the retention of slavery.[34] Austin made every effort to have slavery at least temporarily legalized by the Mexican government as long as the existence of the colony was problematical. Austin, regardless of his personal views on slavery, exerted every effort to safeguard it. He understood the minds of his colonists and their attitude toward the necessity of slavery as an economic and social institution.[35] Even some leading Mexicans recognized the importance of slavery to the economy of Texas.

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[31]Eugene C. Barker, "African Slave Trade in Texas," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, VI (October, 1902), 105; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 138-139; Barker, Mexico and Texas, p. 72.

[32]Ohland Morton, Teran and Texas (Austin, 1948), p. 62.

[33]Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 410, 392; Smith, Annexation of Texas, p. 9.

[34]Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 125.

[35]Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 664-665; Barker, Life of Austin, p. 230; Barker, Readings in Texas History, pp. 156-157.

In October, 1829, Ramon Musquiz, the Political Chief of the Department of Bexar, wrote to the Governor of Coahuila y Texas that Negro slavery was indispensable to farming in the area.[36] In his report of 1835 Almonte pointed out that in 1834 about 5,000 bales of cotton worth from ten to ten and one-half cents per pound in New Orleans were exported from Texas.[37] Since it was natural that the production of cotton constituted the main industry in Texas, Negro slavery became an essential part of the economy. The peonage type of labor system, then prevalent in Mexico, was not available in Texas. Consequently, since large estates could not be developed without assistance and free labor was nonexistent, the country could be improved but very tardily without slaves. Even General Teran, who disapproved of the institution, realized its importance to Texas when he stated that "land without means of cultivation, in this case Negroes, was useless."[38]

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[36]Ramon Musquiz to Governor Viesca, October 25, 1829, General Land Office of Texas, Vol. 57, p. 103ff, MS.; Political Chief's Blotter, Bexar Archives, MSS. (University of Texas, Austin, 1935-1936); Translation of copy, Padilla to Austin, November 26, 1829, Austin Papers, MS.; The Texas Gazette, January 23, 1830.

[37]Almonte, "Report," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 201, 204, 212, 213. Translator says that the figure for cotton exportation was greatly exaggerated. Abigail Curlee, "The History of a Texas Slave Plantation, 1831-1863," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVI (October, 1922), 86.

[38]Morton, Teran and Texas, pp. 118-119.

Slavery as a Factor in American Emigration to Texas

Many causes have been advanced for American emigration to Texas. Some theorize that the settlement of Texas by people from the United States and in particular from the South, was a natural development in the westward movement.[39] According to the advocates of the expansionist spirit it was the "Manifest Destiny" or fate of the American people to expand westward. Texas' nearness to the southwestern boundary of the United States made inevitable the application of "Manifest Destiny" to that region. Many expansionists felt that Texas, by right of the Louisiana Purchase, belonged to the United States. Thomas Hart Benton argued that Texas had been part of the Louisiana Purchase and that President John Quincy Adams had despoiled the American people of over 200,000 square miles of the finest territory on the continent.[40]

The more immediate causes of emigration to Texas can be traced to the economic situation prevailing in the United States in 1821.[41] The great majority of the earlier colonists

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[39]Boucher, "In Re That Aggressive Slavocracy," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIII, 21.

[40]Article by Thomas Hart Benton written for the St. Louis Beacon, 1829, Congressional Globe, May, 1844, 28th Congress, 1st Session, Vol. XIII, Appendix 474-486; Barker, Mexico and Texas, p. 45.

[41]Barker, "Notes on Colonization," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVII, 108-109; Barker, Life of Austin, pp. 89-94; Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 38.

were from economically unsuccessful, disappointed, or unfortunate elements in the United States.[42] They came to Texas because good land could be obtained for a small cost and the agricultural potentialities of the region afforded them the opportunity of bettering their condition.[43] The two events in the economic situation in the United States which stimulated emigration to Texas were the economic collapse of 1819 and the passage of the Land Act of 1820 which set a minimum price of $1.25 per acre for land and abolished the credit system.[44]

Mexico allowed American colonization of Texas for a number of reasons. Under Spanish rule Texas had been sparcely settled. In order to maintain control over the area the Mexican government realized that it must effectively populate the region. Since native Mexicans were reluctant to colonize Texas the government relaxed its strict policy regarding immigration and colonization and began allowing emigrants from the United States to settle in Texas. The Mexican government saw in the colonization of Texas a means of increasing the national wealth of the Mexican Republic, as well as a way of protecting the northern frontier.[45]

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[42]Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 47.

[43]Newell, History of the Revolution in Texas, p. 14; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 194.

[44]Perrigo, Texas and Our Spanish Southwest, p. 107.

[45]Newell, History of the Revolution in Texas, pp. 14-15.

The history of slavery in Texas began in 1821 with the grant to Austin for the settling of 300 families in Texas. Under the terms of Austin's contract a settler was to receive an additional fifty acres of land for each slave that he possessed. Later this amount was increased to eighty acres for each slave.[46] There may have been a few Negroes already in Texas in the San Antonio region, but these were few in number and limited to personal servants in well-to-do Mexican families. In Mexico conditions were unfavorable for the growth of the institution, and slaves were almost unknown outside of Vera Cruz and the hot lands of the Gulf coastal region. The census of Spanish Texas of December 31, 1792, listed a total population of 3,005, of which thirty-four were Negroes and 415 mulattoes, but they were not classified as slaves.[47] The coming of the American emigrants and the development of the rich bottom lands by slave labor caused the question of slavery to soon force the government of the Mexican Republic to determine its policy in regards to slavery and the colonization of Texas.

Slavery became inseparable from a national policy of colonization for Texas, and Congress found it difficult to

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[46] Austin to Antonio Martinez, August 18 and October 12, 1821, Austin Papers, I, 407, 418; Martinez' reply, August 19, 1821, Dudley G. Wooten, editor, A Comprehensive History of Texas, 1685 to 1897, 2 vols. (Dallas, 1898), I, 472; Barker, Life of Austin, p. 35; Glassock, Dreams of an Empire, pp. 110-111.

[47] Census of Texas, December 31, 1792, Archives, Number 345, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas.

make a decision concerning the institution. In the first colonization law passed in August, 1822, Article XXX stated that settlers could bring their slaves but prohibited the slave trade. The children of slaves born after 1822 were to be freed at the age of fourteen.[48] Austin was present in Mexico City during the debates over passage of the law, and mainly through his efforts the law, when finally passed, contained a favorable slavery provision. After the enactment of the law he continued his efforts to secure more favorable terms concerning slaves by attempting to modify the law and make children of slaves free at the age of twenty-one rather than at fourteen.[49] The first colony of 300 families settled under this law, and the ratio of slave to white was large. Only an estimate of the number of slaves brought in by the "Old Three Hundred" is available. Somewhere between 350 and 400 slaves were brought in by Austin's first colonists, a ratio of about one slave for every three whites.[50]

The "Texas fever" spread rapidly through the slave states of the United States, but along with news of the attractions of Texas, unfavorable reports as to the hostility of the

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[48] H.P.N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas, 10 vols. (Austin, 1898), I, 30.

[49] Austin to Edward Lovelace, November 22, 1822, and Jose Felix Trespalacios, January 8, 1823, Austin Papers, I, 554, 567.

[50] Bugbee, "The Old Three Hundred," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, I, 108-117; Documents of Texas History, pp. 51-58; Webb, The Handbook of Texas, Vols. I and II.

Mexican government towards slavery had become current in the United States. The uncertain future of slavery checked to some extent the flow of immigration to Texas. Austin received letter after letter seeking assurances on this subject. James A. E. Phelps, who had visited Texas for the purpose of obtaining land, wrote on his return to Mississippi:

> The emigrating, or Texas fever prevails to an extent that your wishes would no more than anticipate. . . .Nothing appears at present to prevent a portion of our wealthy planters from emigrating immediately to the province of Texas but the uncertainty now prevailing with regard to the subject of slavery. There has been a parragraph [sic] that has gone the round of the nuse [sic] paper publication in the Middle States, perporting to be an extract from a Mexican paper, which precludes the introduction of negro property into the Mexican Republic, without exception; subjecting the persons so offending to the severest penalties, and also an immediate emancipation of those slaves now belonging to the citizens of the province of Texas, and fredom [sic] to the slave that touches the soil of Mexico.
>
> If this be a fact it will check the tide of emigrating spirits at once, and indeed it has had its influence already. . . .[51]

Another writing from Franklin County, Alabama, stated that the well-to-do planters would not remove to Texas unless they could be assured that their slaves would be secured to them under the laws governing the province.[52] Austin wrote that not only the doubt concerning the status of slavery

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[51]James A. E. Phelps to Austin, Pinckneyville, Mississippi, January 16, 1825, Austin Papers, I, 1020-1021; Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 396; Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 48; Barker, Life of Austin, pp. 127, 145.

[52]Douglas to Austin, February 15, 1825, Austin Papers, I, 1046-1049.

retarded settlement but also the concern over the religious qualification.

> . . .Many Catholics would come from Louisiana if they could bring their slaves here, but, as the greater part of their capital consists in slaves, they cannot emigrate unless they can take the slaves with them. . . .[53]

Despite the uncertainty about slavery, American settlement continued to grow.

For the slaveholders in Texas Mexican hostility towards slavery endangered their property and their future prosperity. The colonists began to evade the provisions against slavery by making contracts with slaves to convert them into peons.[54] This system made no mention of the obnoxious word "slave", and did not outrage the Mexican theory of the equality of men. In April, 1828, the ayuntamiento of San Felipe de Austin requested that the Mexican government recognize the validity of labor contracts between master and servant made before entering Texas.[55] Because of the scarcity of laborers in Texas the next month the authorities enacted such a measure.[56]

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[53]Austin to Erasmo Sequin, January 1, 1824, Austin Papers, I, 718-719.

[54]Shaw, Conquest of the Southwest, pp. 62-63.

[55]"Minutes of the Ayuntamiento of San Felipe de Austin, 1828-1832, I--Minutes of April 5, 1828," edited by Eugene C. Barker, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXI (July, 1917 to April, 1918), 311.

[56]Decree Number 56, Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 213; Barker, Mexico and Texas, p. 75; Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 409.

Theoretically both master and slave went before a notary and declared the slave's value at a certain sum. The slave then contracted to work for the master at certain wages until he had repaid the owner the amount of his value. Wages were so low that a slave never received enough to gain his freedom.[57] This method was reasonably effective as a subterfuge and emigrants continued to bring in their slaves, but there were many who did not consider the bond-servant method as entirely satisfactory. Among these was Stephen F. Austin. He wrote to a cousin in Philadelphia concerning this method of bringing slaves into Texas:

> This provision [the contract law] will be highly useful to the country without the least danger of doing any harm for no one will be willing to risk a large capital in negroes under contracts with them, for they are free on their arrival here, and can only be held to labor by contracts, as servants are all over this nation, and in other free countries.[58]

For a time this method of introducing slaves into Texas seemed to work, but as the region continued to develop into an area of thriving farms the question of slavery became a problem of increasing irritation. The later settlers brought with them the American ideas of government, as well as radical views on slavery and property rights. It was

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[57]Barker, Mexico and Texas, p. 75; Copy of a labor contract prepared by Austin, May, 1828, Austin Papers, MS.

[58]Austin to Thomas I. Leaming, June 14, 1830, Austin Papers, MS. Similar letters were written to a number of other people, including Richard Ellis, S. Rhodes Fisher, and Mary Austin Holley.

inevitable that misunderstanding and trouble should develop between the Texas colonists and the Mexican authorities.[59]

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[59]Binkley, Expansionist Movement, p. 11.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEXICAN SLAVERY LAW

Mexican Attitude Toward Slavery

The slavery question became a constant source of anxiety on the part of the colonists and of irritation on the part of the Mexican government. Mexican sentiment basically opposed slavery. Mexican statesmen had learned their political philosophy from the orators of the French Revolution, and the language of their emotions was epitomized in the words "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." The word "Liberty" was linked with God to form a national motto--"God and Liberty."[1] That it was without significance in their relations with the Indian peons they did not see or wish to see. By its proper name and in the abstract they detested slavery. Some of the leading statesmen in Mexico desired the exclusion of slavery from its unsettled lands, and they acquired a precedent for the prohibition of slavery from the Spanish Colonization Law of 1821 which contained a rigid article against the importation of slaves.

Negro slavery existed in Mexico until the year 1829, but it was not prevalent for a more profitable labor system had

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[1] Barker, Life of Austin, p. 230; Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 126.

been developed. The peonage labor system prevalent in Mexico was far less expensive than slavery, but embraced nearly all the attributes of slavery. The position of the Mexican peon was one of perpetual servitude and subjection to a taskmaster. On entering the service of his master the peon bound himself to that master by a written contract. A debit and credit account was kept by the employer and rarely did it show a balance in the peon's favor. He could be legally punished for offenses, and if he deserted his master's service he would be returned and punished. Never out of debt, the peon was ever a bondman, with but little more liberty than a slave. As the average cost of a peon was about $50 a year and required no outlay of capital, the landed proprietors reaped all the advantages of absolute slavery without its expense. The abolition of slavery in 1829 and the various other laws concerning the institution in no way affected the interests of the landed proprietors of Mexico.[2]

Mexican Laws Concerning Slavery

In connection with Texas the question of slavery first arose after the awarding of Austin's colonization grant in 1822. No mention of slavery had been made in either the petition or the grant of Moses Austin in 1821. At that time slavery was legal in Spanish domains, but slaves formed no

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[2]Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 90-93; Smith, Annexation of Texas, p. 9.

considerable element in the population of Spanish-Mexico. After the Mexican Revolution questions concerning slavery arose and the passage of the federal colonization law in 1822-1823 was delayed because of the problem. In the summer of 1822 three colonization bills were introduced in the Mexican Congress. The first remained silent on slavery except that slaves could not be held in any cities that might be founded in Texas. The second bill provided for immediate emancipation of all slaves. The third stated that slaves introduced by colonists would remain so for life, but children of slaves were to be freed at the age of fourteen.[3] In the final colonization law of August, 1822, the slave trade was prohibited, but settlers were allowed to bring in their slaves when they emigrated to Texas. Children born of slaves were to be freed at fourteen. The law further guaranteed liberty, security in the possession of property, including slaves, and other civil rights to all foreigners who professed the Roman Catholic religion.[4] Considerable opposition existed in the Mexican Congress to allowing new settlers to bring in slaves. In letters to various men in the colony Austin wrote of the difficulty he had in obtaining a slavery provision:

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[3]Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 392-393; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 138-139.

[4]Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 30; Castaneda, Transition Period, VI, 193.

> . . .Never would an article have been passed by the congress permitting slavery in the empire for a moment in any form whatever. After the dissolution of congress I talked to each individual member of the Junta of the necessity that existed in Texas, Santander, and all the other unpopulated provinces, for the new colonists to bring their slaves; and in this way I procured the article.[5]

The final slavery article differed from what Austin wanted, and he made every effort to have it changed so as to be more favorable for his colonists. On this subject he wrote:

> As the law now is, all slaves are to be free in ten years, but I am trying to have it amended so as to make them slaves for life and their children free at twenty-one years--but do not think I shall succeed in this point, and that the law will pass as it now is, that is, that the slaves introduced by the settlers shall be free after ten years. . . .[6]

Beginning in 1824 the government enacted a series of national and provincial laws which step by step placed limitations on slavery. On July 13, 1824, Guadalupe Victoria, President of the Republic of Mexico, issued a decree abolishing all traffic in slaves, both domestic and foreign. Slaves brought into Mexico in this manner were free when they touched Mexican soil. This decree was directed essentially against the slave trade from Cuba. It contained no prohibition of the removal of slaves to Mexico by their owners, either citizens or emigrants, for purposes other than trade. Heavy penalties were fixed for violation of the decree. Ships, both domestic

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[5]Austin to Edward Lovelace, November 22, 1822, Austin Papers, I, 554.

[6]Austin to Josiah H. Bell, November 22, 1822, ibid.

and foreign, in which slaves were transported to or introduced into Mexican territory were to be confiscated with the remainder of their cargos. The owner, purchaser, captain, master, and pilot of the vessel were to be imprisoned for one year.[7]

Juan Antonio Padilla, Secretary of State for Coahuila and Texas, advised Austin that the federal act of July 13, 1824, could be reasonably interpreted only as prohibiting the slave trade and that he believed that the colonists could bring in slaves for their own use. Padilla went on to quote the maxim that "what is not prohibited is to be understood as permitted."[8] The Constitution of 1824 and the national colonization law of August 18, 1824, made no mention of slavery. By the law of August 18 admission of foreigners for purposes of colonization could not be denied until the year 1840, but most of the details were left to local authorities.[9] Mexico's public land policy was the reverse of that of the United States. Administration of public lands and the regulation of settlement were left to the individual states of the Mexican

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[7]Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 397-398, 399fn; Barker, "Influence of Slavery," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 8; Newell, History of the Revolution in Texas, p. 8.

[8]Barker, Life of Austin, pp. 232-233.

[9]Decree Number 72, National Colonization Law, August 18, 1824, Documents of Texas History, p. 48; Barker, Readings in Texas History, pp. 73-74.

Republic. The national colonization law merely sat down some general principles designed to serve as a basis for state regulation.[10]

The controversy over slavery delayed passage of a state law. Many members of the state legislature of Coahuila y Texas were hostile towards slavery, and only one, Baron de Bastrop, the representative from Texas, urged that slavery be permitted. Many American settlers became alarmed and made preparations to return to the United States. Many slave-owners felt that they would be ruined if slavery were prohibited. Rather than lose their property they began to think seriously of returning to the United States with their slaves.[11] The citizens of San Antonio, instead of being hostile to the interests of the colony, went almost as far as the American settlers in asking that the government grant toleration of slavery. They realized that the development and prosperity of Texas depended on the retention of slavery.[12] On March 24, 1825, the legislature enacted a colonization law which amounted to at least a temporary declaration of toleration, not only of slavery, but of further introduction of slaves by immigrating settlers. The law stated that settlers would be

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[10]Castaneda, Transition Period, VI, 197.

[11]Jesse Thompson to John Spoul, August 11, 1826, Austin Papers, I, 1405-1406.

[12]Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 403; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 146.

subject to the established laws and those passed in the future on the subject of slavery. No slaves as such were to be brought into the country, but immigrants could bring their servants.[13] The passage of this law only temporarily relieved the settlers.

During the summer of 1825 a memorial urging the continuance of slave importation until 1840 was prepared by Austin and presented to the state government. It further prohibited the slave trade, except for individual transactions. All introduction of slaves would be prohibited after 1840. The grandchildren of slaves thus introduced were to be freed, males at twenty-five and females at fifteen. The government paid no attention to the memorial, but it does illustrate that the colonists were willing to effect some type of compromise with the Mexican authorities.[14] At this early date evidence indicates that many citizens agreed with Austin. It was quite possible for the Texas planter to believe that the further introduction of slaves should be guarded or forbidden, provided his own property remained undisturbed. It would seem that they resigned themselves to the prospect of emancipation after a few years. They did feel that their

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[13]Coahuila-Texas State Colonization Law, March 24, 1825, Documents of Texas History, pp. 48-50; Barker, Readings in Texas History, pp. 75-78.

[14]Memorial concerning slavery, August 18, 1825, and Austin to Governor Rafael Gonzales, August 20, 1825, Austin Papers, I, 1170, 1180.

prosperity and progress were involved in the retention of slavery for a time, the longer the better, but they were able to see the advantages of accomodation with Mexican officials in order to protect their valuable land holdings. The planters who entered Texas after 1830 brought with them more radical views on the subject.[15]

The next legislation directly applicable to the Texas colonists was the slavery provision of the Coahuila y Texas State Constitution of March 11, 1827. Article XIII recognized the existing slavery, but children born to slaves after the promulgation of the constitution were to be freed. The colonists were allowed to bring in slaves for six months after the publication of the constitution or until the end of 1827. The slavery provision further stated that the mode of indemnifying the owners of slaves at the time of the publication of the constitution would be regulated by law.[16] A number of state statutes established the machinery for the implementation of the slavery article. A law passed in September, 1827, required that all municipalities take a census of slaves in Texas, and that slave births and deaths

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[15]Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 666; Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 125.

[16]Constitution of State of Coahuila y Texas, March 11, 1827, Documents of Texas History, p. 61; quoted by Austin in a memorial to the legislature, August 11, 1827, Austin Papers, I, 1407; George P. Garrison, Texas-A Contest in Civilizations (Boston, 1903), p. 101; Barker, Mexico and Texas, pp. 73-74.

be recorded by the local ayuntamientos. The ayuntamientos were further instructed to report to the government every three months, and when a master died without direct heirs all of his slaves were to be liberated and if there were heirs, ten per cent would be emancipated. The September, 1827, law went on to state that the penalties of the Law of July 13, 1824, concerning the slave trade, expressly applied to those who introduced slaves contrary to the Constitution.[17] A decree of November 24, 1827, amended the law to state that when a master died in any unnatural way no emancipation was to take place. It also allowed the transfer of slaves if the old master were indemnified.[18]

As long as their own immediate interests were not attacked the colonists remained aloof and indifferent to Mexican legislation, but this direct blow threatened their prosperity. The Americans argued that the colonization of Texas would be retarded for many years without slave labor. To evade the restriction on further importation of slaves the settlers began introducing them into Texas under the appellation of indentured servants.[19] The San Felipe ayuntamiento petitioned the state government for recognition of these peonage or

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[17]Decree Number 18, Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 188.

[18]Decree Number 35, Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 202; Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 90.

[19]Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 90-93; Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 131.

indenture contracts, and in May, 1828, the state legislature recognized the validity of such contracts.[20] General Teran, in Texas on an inspection tour at the time, wrote his superiors concerning this situation:

> . . . .The prime aim of the colony now is to get permission to bring in slaves. They say that they cannot prosper or develop much of their land, for there are dense forests which can be cleared only by negro labor. They are asking permission of the State to bring in negroes and make the following proposal: When a slave has repaid by work the cost of keeping him, he will be free. His descendents will be free. The request for slaves is disguised by a request that the Government guarantee the contracts which the colonists make in North America with salaried workers--that is, that they enforce what has been stimulated there, for a precedent obliges them to take this sort of precaution; they acquired free servants in Louisiana for the current prices in that country, and when they brought them here they asserted that their work was of greater value, and dissolved the contracts. . . .[21]

Nevertheless, this method of introducing slaves failed to solve the problem, and after 1828 a decreasing number of slaves were brought into Texas.

In 1829 the government began efforts to discourage American immigration to Texas. Leading Mexican officials had become convinced of the dangers of allowing large-scale emigration from the United States. Since a great many of the colonists were slaveowners from the southern part of the United States, the exclusion of slavery from Texas would check

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[20]Decree Number 56, Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 213; Barker, Mexico and Texas, pp. 74-75.

[21]Morton, Teran and Texas, p. 62.

immigration and build up an institutional barrier against the South. Colonel Jose M. Tornel advocated this policy in the Mexican congress, and in the fall of 1829 he induced President Vincente Guerrero to issue a decree freeing all the slaves in the Republic of Mexico.[22] The emancipation decree of September 15, 1829, was the first measure of the Mexican government to arouse general opposition among the Americans. Since there were few slaves in Mexico other than the peons the measure specifically affected Texas.[23]

The decree reached San Antonio on October 16, but Ramon Musquiz, Political Chief of Bexar, withheld it from publication in Texas until petitions could be prepared for change or exception for Texas. Any effort to enforce the decree might have led to serious disturbances.[24] Musquiz urged the Governor of Coahuila y Texas to withhold the application of the emancipation decree to Texas. He argued that cotton could not be grown without the help of Negroes; that slaves had been brought to Texas for agricultural purposes only; and to free them would destroy a portion of the public wealth and retard the development of Texas. In addition, Musquiz

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[22]Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 57-59; Garrison, Texas, p. 103; Morton, Teran and Texas, pp. 95-96; Barker, Mexico and Texas, pp. 54-55.

[23]Shaw, Conquest of the Southwest, p. 61.

[24]Ramon Musquiz to Colonel Antonio Elousa, November 24, 1829, General Land Office of Texas, Vol. 54, p. 115, MS., Austin, Texas; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 185.

mentioned the possibility that the colonists might resist any attempt to enforce the decree. Lastly, Musquiz stated that indemnification would be very heavy and would remain unpaid for many years due to the exhausted condition of the government's treasury.[25] Governor Viesca in turn petitioned President Guerrero to exempt Texas from the emancipation decree. He also mentioned the possibility of resistence on the part of the colonists.[26]

Stephen F. Austin, to whom the colonists turned for direction, seemed determined to resist if the decree were not withdrawn. In reply to a frenzied appeal from a prominent Nacogdoches citizen he wrote that the people of Texas should maintain to the Mexican government that their slaves were guaranteed them under the federal constitution of 1824.

> Our course is a very plain one--calm, deliberate, dispassionate, inflexible firmness; and not windy and ridiculous blowing and wild threats. . . . The constitution must be both our shield, and our arms; under it and with it, we must constitutionally defend ourselves and our property. . . .[27]

The arguments and petitions of the various officials resulted on December 2, 1829, in a decree which denied the benefits of

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[25]Ramon Musquiz to Governor Viesca, October 25, 1829, General Land Office of Texas, Vol. 57, p. 103ff, MS.; Translation, Padilla to Austin, November 26, 1829, Austin Papers, MS.; The Texas Gazette, January 23, 1830.

[26]Governor Viesca to President Guerrero, November 14, 1829, translation published in the Texas Gazette, January 30, 1829.

[27]Austin to John Durst, November 17, 1829, Austin Papers, MS.; Barker, Mexico and Texas, pp. 79-80.

general emancipation to slaves in Texas.[28] Thus, the crisis passed, but left in its wake many scars. The colonists thought the decree a direct violation of their constitutional rights of property and the Mexican government could not forget the threatening tone of the colonial remonstrances. After word had been received of Texas' exception Austin wrote General Teran that he could see nothing in Guerrero's original decree but the overthrow and destruction of all the efforts of more than seven years to redeem Texas from the wilderness, the ruin of many individuals, and the loss of faith in the government, and the surrender of the section to the Indians.[29]

In the spring of the next year, 1830, the relations between the colonists and the Mexican government reached the turning point. The legislation passed by the Congress marked the culmination of Mexico's conviction that unrestricted emigration from the United States was a dangerous error. The man who inspired the Congress to make the fatal mistake of passing such an oppressive law was the minister of relations, Lucus Alaman. In a report to Congress in February, 1830, Alaman remarked at length upon the recalcitrant spirit of the Texas colonists, especially in their evasion of the laws

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[28]Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 655; Barker, "Influence of Slavery," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 23.

[29]Austin to General Teran, December 29, 1829, Austin Papers, MS.

concerning slavery.[30] The legislature responded to Alaman's views and passed a law on April 6, 1830, which prohibited the future settlement of Americans from the United States in Texas. The colonization contracts of all empresarios, except Austin, De Witt, and De Leon, were canceled. Only those giving definite indications of settling in the three exempted colonies were issued passports to enter Texas. The act recognized existing slavery in Texas but prohibited further introduction of slaves. The law, extremely obnoxious to the Texas colonists, was received with out-spoken dissatisfaction. In truth though it did not greatly affect actual conditions, for ever since 1828 slaves had been brought in under the guise of contract or indenture servants, a practice in which the Texas colonists persisted under the new federal law.[31]

From this time forward more oppressive measures taken by both the federal and state governments indicated Mexican determination to eliminate slavery within her boundaries "in truth as well as in name."[32] The problem of slavery continued to plague Austin and his colonists. In the summer of 1831 he wrote his cousin, Mary Austin Holley, on the subject:

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[30]Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 113; Barker, Mexico and Texas, pp. 80-81.

[31]Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 114; Barker, "Influence of Slavery," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 25; Barker, Life of Austin, pp. 269-271.

[32]Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 131.

> Negroes can be brought here under indentures, as servants, but not as slaves. This question of slavery is a difficult one to get on with. It will ultimately be admitted, or the free negroes will be formed by law into a separate and distinct class--the laboring class. . . .Either this or slavery in full must take place.[33]

In April, 1832, the Coahuila y Texas legislature passed a new colonization law which repealed the earlier act of 1825. The new legislation subjected all immigrants to the existing and future laws on slavery and limited the indenture or bond-servant contracts to ten years.[34] The enforcement of this law would have sounded the death knell of slavery. No further legislative action concerning slavery was taken by the state or federal governments until the Revolution. A new emancipation decree issued in 1836 expressly exempted Texas slaveholders from any future indemnification for the loss of their property, but Texas by this time had declared independence.[35]

The legal status of slavery changed during the 1820's from the status of an accepted institution to that of an objectionable practice. Through gradual steps and restrictions the door for evasion had been narrowed to a mere loophole. The question of slavery had been one of constant irritation throughout the period of Anglo-American colonization. The Americans maintained

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[33]Austin to Mary Austin Holley, July 19, 1831, Austin Papers, MS.

[34]Decree Number 190, Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 299-303.

[35]Bugbee, "Slavery in Early Texas," Political Science Quarterly, XIII, 661, 658.

that slave labor was necessary for the rapid development of the area. After 1830 the fear of economic ruin and loss of property prompted many of the wealthier citizens to think of resistance--first as separation into a state of the Mexican Republic and finally as an independent and sovereign nation. When the question of slavery is joined with other economic grievances of the colonists the underlying cause of much of the later action of the struggle for independence can be explained. Slavery played an important role in the settlement and future prosperity of Texas and contributed greatly to the movement which culminated in Texas independence.

CHAPTER IV

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WAR PARTY

Origins

In 1831 William H. Wharton came to Texas and began to organize the War Party, as the insurgent group was called. The War Party advocated more self-assertion and less conciliation on the part of Texas in dealing with Mexico. At first they constituted a minority, but as time passed they grew in strength.[1] The early activities of the radical element consisted of acts of defiance in connection with the collection of customs duties by the Mexican authorities.

As early as December, 1831, a large number of settlers met at Brazoria to consider the proper form of protest to be sent to the collector at Anahuac. One of the first outward signs of active resistance came in May, 1832. Federal soldiers attempted to collect tariff duties and stopped the work of the state land surveyors. John Bradburn, the collector at Anahuac, arrested J. Francisco Madero, special land commissioner, and his surveyor for violating the Law of April 6, 1830. One thing led to another. Bradburn almost incited mob action when he annulled the recently instituted Ayuntamiento of Liberty.

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[1]Louis W. Kemp, The Signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence (Houston, 1944) p. xix; Shaw, Conquest of the Southwest, p. 75.

He was accused of using slave labor to erect military buildings without compensating the owners, of encouraging the slaves to rebel, and of giving protection to two runaway slaves from Louisiana and refusing to return them to their owner. Shortly after this Bradburn arrested several prominent colonists on the grounds that they were obstructing his rule and held them for military trial without formal charges. Among those arrested were William B. Travis and Patrick C. Jack. Jack had organized a local militia company and Bradburn fearing that it might be sued against him had had Jack arrested on some flimsy pretext. Travis had attempted to recover the two runaway slaves for their master.[2] In all Bradburn arrested seventeen Texans and the feeling against him grew more intense.[3] This action signaled a revolt. The residents of Brazoria called a meeting to decide a course of action. William H. Wharton was present and complained at the lack of support within the colony for those who wanted to oppose Bradburn with military force. He railed at the "Toryish" spirit at San Felipe and asserted that he and those like him met as much opposition from Texans as from Mexicans.[4] The citizens of Brazoria were also

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[2]James Lindsay to R. M. Williamson, May 18, 1832, in The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, edited by Charles Adams Gulick and Katherine Elliott, 6 vols. (Austin, 1920-1927), I, 90.

[3]Virgil E. Baugh, Rendezvous at the Alamo (New York, 1960), p. 157.

[4]Barker, Life of Austin, p. 389; Forrest E. Ward, "Pre-Revolutionary Activity in Brazoria County," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXIV (October, 1960), 215.

exorted by R. M. Williamson, who issued a written appeal to the citizens of Brazoria calling for volunteers to make a forced march to Anahuac to secure the release of the prisoners.[5] This meeting resulted in ninety men joining John Austin in a march to Anahuac. By the time the force reached Anahuac it had grown to 160 men. In the skirmishing which followed, Bradburn retired to the fort at Anahuac and began strengthening his position. He soon found himself surrounded by a force of enraged colonists. The Texans sent John Austin for two cannon at Brazoria and settled down to besiege Bradburn. While waiting for the cannon the Texans drew up a statement of their case, known as the "Turtle Bayou Resolutions." Feeling the need for justifying their action they declared that they were not rebelling against Mexico, but were co-operating with the liberal revolt against they tyranical and unlawful conduct of President Bustamante. By this act the Texans had made a commitment in the political embroglio in Mexico and had taken sides.[6] In June, 1832, Colonel Piedras was sent from Nacogdoches to pacify things in Anahuac. He was captured by the besieging Texans who presented their case to him. Piedras promised to release the prisoners, which he did in July, and agreed to use his influence

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[5]Appeal to the citizens of Brazoria and Vicinity, June 4, 1832, Gulick (ed.), Lamar Papers, I, 92.

[6]Ibid., I, 142-143; Duncan W. Robinson, Judge Robert McAlpin Williamson, Texas' Three-Legged Willie (Austin, 1948), pp. 73-74.

to have Bradburn removed. Bradburn was induced to ask to be relieved. Fearing violence at the hands of the Texans he soon made his way to Louisiana.[7]

As previously mentioned, John Austin had been sent to Brazoria to bring two cannons to Anahuac. Land transportation being difficult, the men decided to carry the cannon to Anahuac by way of water. Twenty citizens met at Brazoria to organize a military force, and over one hundred Texans, including William H. Wharton, signed an oath to resist the Mexican authorities by force. John Austin was chosen military commander and proposed an assault on the fort at Velasco, at the mouth of the Brazos River. On June 22 John Austin and 115 men left Brazoria for Velasco. Another forty men were sent downstream on the schooner Brazoria. Colonel Domingo Ugartechea, commander of the fort at Velasco, attempted to stop the Texans, who then attacked the fort. The attack began sometime after nightfall on June 25, and eleven hours later Ugartechea surrendered. The Mexican garrison was paroled and allowed to return to Mexico. Following this battle not a soldier was left east of the San Antonio River, and the colonists were

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[7]Edna Rowe, "The Disturbances at Anahuac in 1832," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, IV (April, 1903), 262-299; N.D. Labadie, "Narrative of the Fight at Anahuac, or the Opening Campaign of the Texas Revolution," Texas Alamanac, 1859 (Galveston, 1859), pp. 30-36; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, pp. 24-29; William B. Scates, "Account of the Anahuac Affair of 1832," Texas Alamanac for 1873 (Galveston, 1874), p. 30.

left to enjoy peace until the more important movements of 1835.[8]

In the latter part of 1832 and in 1833 the radical or insurgent element concentrated their attention on the two conventions held by the Anglo-American settlers. The first convention was held at San Felipe on October 1, 1832. Fifty-six delegates representing every section of Anglo-American settlement assembled to declare their allegiance to the Mexican Confederation, ask for the repeal of the Law of April 6, 1830, and to petition for a modification of the tariff laws so as to allow duty free importation of certain necessities. The chief object of the convention was to ally the suspicions of various Mexican leaders as to the intentions of the Anglo-Americans in Texas. Stephen F. Austin was elected president of the convention over William H. Wharton, a significant move in that Austin was generally recognized as the leader of the more conservative element and his election as president of the convention signified that the majority of the meeting did not advocate separation from Mexico. As the War Party failed to dominate the convention an expressed denial of a desire for independence was adopted

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[8] Foote, Texas and the Texans, II, 22-23; Gulick (ed.), Lamar Papers, I, 132-136; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, pp. 30-34; Otha Anne Hanscom, Parade of the Pioneers (Dallas, 1935), pp. 67-68; Ward, "Pre-Revolutionary Activity in Brazoria County," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXIV, 217-218.

along with a petition asking for separate statehood from Coahuila. The sentiment in favor of separation from Coahuila had been growing for some time in Texas.[9]

This first convention of Texas resulted in a great deal of criticism from the Mexican authorities. The Mexican authorities declared the 1832 convention to be illegal and its proceedings of a revolutionary character. The Mexican government went on to deny the Texas petition for separate statehood. The Texan leaders then decided to call another convention to meet in April, 1833.[10] The purpose of the Texans in petitioning for separate statehood was misunderstood by many leading Mexicans. All the Texas colonists were asking was that the present state of Coahuila y Texas be divided into two separate states with separate state governments. Their relationship with the Mexican federation was to be the same as that of the state of Coahuila y Texas. But many Mexican officials came to regard the activities of the Texas colonists as being directed toward complete separation from Mexico and annexation to the United States or a federation of the Southern states.[11] So it was that among a maze of misunderstanding of their purposes and intentions the second convention assembled at San Felipe on April 1, 1833.

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[9]Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas from Wilderness to Commonwealth, 5 vols. (Fort Worth, 1924), II, 47-57; Peter Molyneaux, The Romantic Story of Texas (Dallas, 1936), pp. 178-183.

[10]Ibid., 58-60; Ibid., pp. 183-186.

[11]Ibid., 69-71.

The first major signs of factional division and party differences made their appearance at the Convention of 1833. The radical element had gained control due to the large number of recent immigrants, and they had little or no use for the policy of cautious and conciliatory action. Some people frowned on all revolutionary activities and wanted to do nothing that would result in conflict with the Mexican authorities. These opposed the holding of a convention at all and took no part in the elections for delegates to the April 1 meeting. Others wanted to follow a course that would obtain as much from the government as possible with the least amount of friction. The principal objectives sought by those of this opinion were the revision of the tariff laws and the repeal of the Law of April 6, 1830. Among those favoring this approach were Stephen F. Austin, David G. Burnet, Wyly Martin, and James B. Miller. Some favored the idea of petitioning for separate statehood, but with assurances of the loyalty of the colonists to the Mexican federation. Finally, several favored the drafting of a state constitution as well as petitioning for statehood. Among these were some who favored independence, and who advocated the drafting of a state constitution in the hope that the Mexican authorities would reject it, thereby promoting the cause of independence. Included in this group were many men who were to become the leaders of the War Party--William H. Wharton, Henry Smith,

Branch T. Archer, Robert M. Williamson, and Frank W. Johnson. Also favoring the drafting of a constitution was Sam Houston, who was to serve as the chairman of the committee which drafted the tentative constitution for the proposed state of Texas.[12]

A significant change in the temper of the delegates was indicated by their choice for the convention presidency. Again, as in the first meeting, the candidates were Stephen F. Austin and William H. Wharton, but this time the convention elected Wharton. The selection of Wharton not only indicated that the majority of the delegates were in favor of a more positive action toward Mexico than the conciliatory policy advocated by Austin and his adherants, but signified the beginning of an active coalition soon to be known as the War Party. The work of the convention of 1833 consisted of the adopting of a tentative constitution for the state of Texas, a memorial which petitioned for statehood, a resolution condemning the African slave trade, and a petition asking for tariff revision and repeal of the Law of April 6, 1830. The delegates then elected Stephen F. Austin to go to Mexico City and present the documents to the Mexican government.[13] Austin had been chosen over the objections of Wharton and it was evident by this time that the colonists were forming into two distinct

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[12]Garrison, Texas, p. 182; Wortham, History of Texas, II, 75-76; Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 219.

[13]Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 219; Molyneaux, Romantic Story of Texas, p. 196.

parties.[14] The radical elements began to merge into the War Party under the leadership of William H. Wharton and Henry Smith, newly appointed Political Chief of the Department of the Brazos. This group included most of those who at one time or another had disagreed with Austin basically on the best way of advancing the interests of Texas. They advocated that the position of Texas be asserted in a more positive way and they did not believe that the differences between Texas and Mexico could be achieved by peaceful settlement. At this point, the War Party was small and had very little influence among the colonists despite the fact that its numbers had been increased by recent immigrations. From this time to the outbreak of the Revolution the Mexican authorities themselves played into its hands, thereby steadily increasing the radical element's numbers and influence.[15]

Leaders of the War Party

The ranks of the War Party contained a number of prominent men, among them many of the leading landowners and slaveholders. Perhaps the one man associated most with the formation and development of the group was William Harris Wharton. Born in Virginia and raised in Nashville, Tennessee, Wharton first came to Texas in 1827. However, he returned to Tennessee and

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[14]Austin to James F. Perry, August 25 and November 6, 1834, Austin Papers, II, 1077-1078, III, 20.

[15]Binkley, Texas Revolution, p. 39; Smith, Annexation of Texas, pp. 11-12; Wortham, History of Texas, II, 179.

in 1831 returned and became a permanent resident. Not only was he a staunch advocate of independence, but he was also one of the leading planters and slaveholders. Wharton married Sarah Ann Groce, daughter of Jared E. Groce, Texas' wealthiest planter and slaveowner. Groce gave the young couple his landholdings in the Brazoria region (amounting to about one-third of his total acreage) and built the plantation "Eagle Island" on five leagues of land located on Oyster Creek for them as a wedding present. From the time he first came to Texas Wharton worked steadily for Texas' ultimate independence from Mexico. He was one of the first to defy Mexican authority in 1832 by participating in the Battle of Velasco, and he served as a delegate to the Conventions of 1832 and 1833. With the outbreak of hostilities Wharton became Judge Advocate-General of the army. In December, 1835, he was sent to the United States as a commissioner to secure loans for the Texan cause, later being appointed as first Minister of the Republic of Texas to the United States. Upon his return to Texas in 1837, he served as Senator from the Brazoria district in the Second and Third Congresses of the Republic. Wharton and his brother engaged in some land speculation and the phrase "the animating pursuits of speculation" was first used in connection with them and their activities. During the period preceeding the Revolution they owned much of the port of Velasco as well as other extensive tracts of land.

Wharton's brilliant career was cut short on March 14, 1839, when he was accidentially killed by the discharge of his pistol while dismounting from his horse.[16]

Next to Wharton the most enthusiastic advocate of Texas independence was William Barrett Travis. Born in the Edgefield District of South Carolina on August 1, 1809, Travis studied law and began practice in Claiborne, Alabama. He came from a moderately wealthy family, his father having amassed a considerable estate in land, stock, and slaves, and had been raised in the tradition of the Old South. Giving up a profitable law practice and the position as a teacher and leaving a wife and two small children behind him, Travis came to Texas in 1831 to become an arch revolutionary. There has been much speculation as to why Travis would leave his home and family to come to Texas. It is probable that he had heard something of the affairs in Texas and certainly he was in sympathy with the Texas colonists, but there is no evidence that this was reason enough for him to suddenly leave a comfortable life. As for the theory that he envisioned

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[16]E.R. Lindley, compiler, Biographical Directory of the Texan Conventions and Congresses (Austin, 1941), p. 189; Blair, Early History of Grimes County, pp. 83, 87, 90; Ward, "Pre-Revolutionary Activities in Brazoria County," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXIV, 221-222; Dictionary of American Biography, edited by Allen Johnson, 20 vols. (New York, 1933), XX, 35; William M. Jones, Texas Testimony Carved in Stone (Houston, 1952), p. 179; Foote, Texas and the Texans, II, 41-48; Z.T. Fulmore, The History and Geography of Texas as Told in County Names (Austin, 1915), pp. 119-121; Elgin Williams, The Animating Pursuits of Speculation (New York, 1949), pp. 62-63.

himself as the military leader of a revolution in Texas, there is nothing in his future activities to indicate that he had anything more than a laudable desire for military advancement. He was perfectly willing to accept both Austin and Houston as commanders in chief. Travis was neither a power-seeker nor a glory-hunter. The driving reason for Travis' coming to Texas can be traced to the failure of his marriage. Soon after his arrival in Texas he became one of the recognized leaders of the insurgent element, being involved first in the Anahuac disturbances in 1832, when he was jailed by Bradburn for trying to get back some runaway slaves, and then as the leader of the Tenorio Affair in 1835. Travis was a close friend and associate of Robert M. Williamson, and he was one of the five War Party leaders to be proscribed by Santa Anna. One of the first to join the Texas army, Travis participated actively in the campaign from Gonzales up to the capture of Bexar. Ordered to take command of the Alamo in January, 1836, there he commanded the Texas forces against an overwhelming Mexican army. His famous letter addressed to "The People of Texas and all Americans in the world" portrays its writer at his best.

> . . .The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken--I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, & our flag still waves proudly from the walls--I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism & & [sic] everything dear to the American Character, to come to our aid, with all despatch--. . .If this call is

> neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible & die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor & that of his country--
>
> Victory or Death.

One of the few survivors of the Alamo was a Negro boy owned by Travis. He along with the wife of Captain Dickinson brought the news of the fate of the Alamo to the men who were meeting to declare Texas independent of Mexico.[17]

Stephen F. Austin's antithesis in political thinking, Henry Smith, came to Texas in 1827 and immediately became active in Texas affairs. Born in Kentucky, Smith had spent a number of years on the Missouri frontier before coming to Texas. After his arrival in Texas he first settled on a farm in the Brazoria area, then taught school for a while, and finally became a land surveyor. One of the first to defy Mexican authority at the Battle of Velasco, June, 1832, Smith soon became known as an earnest advocate of immediate independence. In 1833 the people of the municipality of Brazoria recognizing his ability elected him to the important position of Alcalde. The next year he was appointed Political Chief for the Department of the Brazos, the first American

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[17] Baugh, Rendezvous at the Alamo, pp. 135, 142, 183, 204, 218; Biographical Directory, p. 182; Fulmore, County Names, pp. 140-143; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, pp. 261-262; Ward, "Pre-Revolutionary Activities in Brazoria County," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXIV, 222; Original of the February 24, 1836, Letter in Army Papers, Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas; Amelia Williams, "A Critical Study of the Siege of the Alamo and of the Personnel of Its Defenders," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVII (October, 1933), 80-87.

to be appointed to that office. Shortly after his appointment Smith issued a circular under the title of "Security for Texas" in which he urged the Texans to immediately organize a separate state government, but he failed to arouse any war furor at this time. Preceded by none in his advocacy of independence, Smith was elected Provisional Governor of Texas by the Consultation of 1835. Deposed in 1836 due to serious misunderstanding with the General Council, Smith continued to consider himself governor and acted as such until he formally resigned before the Convention that met to declare Texas independent of Mexico. Defeated for the presidency of the Republic in 1836, he became the first Secretary of the Treasury, filling this office with remarkable ability. Lured to California by the prospects of gold in the late 1840's, Smith died in a mining camp near Los Angeles on March 4, 1851, a far cry from the leading figure he had been in Texas politics.[18]

Francis White Johnson, one of the earliest and most active supporters of the war against Mexico, was born in Loudoun County, Virginia, where he was raised in the traditions of the Old South. Coming to Texas with his personal servants in 1826 from New Orleans, he established himself

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[18]John Henry Brown, Life and Times of Henry Smith (Austin, 1935), pp. 14-15, 17, 18, 112-113, 140, 319; Biographical Directory, p. 173; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, p. 247; Ward, "Pre-Revolutionary Activities in Brazoria County," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXIV, 222; Binkley, Texas Revolution, pp. 84-85.

as a surveyor in the San Felipe area. Johnson received land in Austin's second colony. Alcalde of San Felipe in 1831, Johnson became one of the more active leaders of the War Party. Commander of a company at the Battle of Anahuac in 1832, he helped expell Bradburn from that place. Johnson engaged in a number of land speculations, particularly in the "Monclova Affair" of 1834, when he and a group of other speculators managed to gain possession of about 400 leagues of Texas land. Because of his revolutionary activities he was among the first to be placed on the proscription list by Santa Anna. To avoid arrest Johnson went to East Texas in the summer of 1835. There he attempted to arouse sentiment for the cause of the War Party. Johnson joined the Texas army on the outbreak of hostilities and served until he was defeated by Urrea at San Patricio in February, 1836. After the Revolution Johnson spent most of his time collecting an elaborate history of Texas and in dealing with land matters.[19]

The part played by Samuel May Williams in the events of early Texas lay in the fields of finance and business. Born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1795, he early entered upon a business career. Coming to Texas in 1822 Williams soon

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[19] Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, v-vi; Biographical Directory, p. 144; Barker, Life of Austin, pp. 468, 471, 479; Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas (St. Louis, 1879), pp. 570-571; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, p. 269; Smithwick, Evolution of a State, p. 60; Williams, Animating Pursuits of Speculation, pp. 42-43; Eugene C. Barker, "Land Speculation as a Cause of the Texas Revolution," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, VII (July, 1906), 79-80, 86.

became secretary for Austin's colony and took over the land office at San Felipe. During this period he received certain premium lands in Austin's colony. In 1830 Williams, in partnership with Austin, took over the contracts of several empresarios. He continued his land operations on a large scale and was in Monclova in the spring of 1835 as the elected representative of Texas to the state legislature, where he introduced the law which authorized the sale of 400 leagues of public land. He acquired large landholdings at the time and made arrangements with a group of men for speculative sellings. Early in 1834 Williams entered into business with Thomas F. McKinney and began a business at Brazoria, but soon moved to Quintana. The two men established a line of three vessels which carried merchandise and supplies up the Brazos and brought down produce for shipment from the wharves and warehouses of McKinney and Williams at Velasco. An early advocate of independence and a strong supporter of the revolutionary party, he was one of the first five men proscribed by Santa Anna for opposition to his centralization scheme. During the Revolution the firm of McKinney and Williams extended financial aid to the Texas government and from 1835 to 1839 Williams was in the United States as a commissioner to solicit aid and purchase ships for the Texas navy. Following the Revolution Williams became an incorporator of Galveston and moved his business there. Williams never engaged in planting to any extensive degree and was not among the larger slaveholders.

He did, however, own at least two personal servants. Founder and president of the Commercial and Agricultural Bank at Galveston, the first incorporated bank in Texas, he retained this position until his death in 1858. Williams was one of the largest speculators in Texas lands during the pre-revolutionary period, being joined by a number of his fellow members of the War Party. These activities caused many colonists to suspect the motives of the War Party in arousing the people to resist Mexican authority and declare Texas independent.[20]

Robert McAlpin Williamson, "Three-Legged Willie," came to Texas from his native state of Georgia in 1826. Settling in San Felipe he practiced law and edited several newspapers, the first being the Texas Gazette. Williamson took an active part in all the occurrences leading up to the Texas Revolution and became one of the most ardent advocates of resistance to Santa Anna's usurpation of power. He is credited as much as any other one man with precipitating and sustaining the revolution. As a result there was a price on his head and he was an object of particular vengeance and hatred on the part of the Mexicans. A close friend of William B. Travis and a remote cousin of Sam Houston, Williamson was the Texas Revolution's

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[20] Biographical Directory, pp. 191-192; Ruth G. Nichols, "Samuel May Williams," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LVI (October, 1952), 189-208; Arthur C. Burnett, Yankees in the Republic of Texas (Houston, 1952), pp. 60-61; Smithwick, Evolution of a State, pp. 59-60; Austin Papers, I, 881, II, 357, III, 15-16; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, p. 279; Worth S. Ray, Austin Colony Pioneers (Austin, 1949), pp. 248-249; Hanscom, Parade of Pioneers, p. 69; Williams, Animating Pursuits of Speculation, pp. 48-51.

chief orator and propagandist. Williamson came from a wealthy family and by his marriage to a daughter of one of Austin's original colonists he became a substantial planter and slave-owner in Texas. Williamson later filled many public positions and was a member of the Supreme Court of the Republic. Williamson's voice was initial in readying his fellow War Party members for the roles they were to play in bringing about the independence of Texas. Retiring to his farm near Independence in 1848, he lived there until his death on December 22, 1859.[21]

Branch Tanner Archer early became prominent in the movements preliminary to the Revolution of 1836. Born in Virginia and a physician by profession, Archer came to Texas in 1831 and settled in Brazoria where he received title to a town lot. Shortly after his arrival in Texas the citizens of Brazoria appointed him a commissioner to negotiate with Bradburn at Anahuac for modification of the orders issued by by the Mexican military commanders. In a speech made at this time he declared himself to be in favor of immediate resistance to the Mexican government. In 1833 Archer represented Brazoria in the Convention held at San Felipe and announced

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[21] Robinson, Judge R.M. Williamson, pp. 4, 8, 104, 168, 178, 218; Biographical Directory, pp. 192-193; Smithwick, Evolution of a State, pp. 62-63; Fulmore, County Names, p. 122; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, p. 274; Ray, Austin Colony Pioneers, pp. 250-251; Jones, Texas Testimony Carved in Stone, p. 5; Applications for Land, Austin's Colonies, A, 45-46, Spanish Archives, MSS. in General Land Office of Texas, Austin.

his support of immediate separation from Mexico. A delegate to the Consultation of 1835, Archer was chosen president of that body, a major achievement for the War Party. In December, 1835, he was appointed along with William H. Wharton and Stephen F. Austin to visit the United States and enlist financial aid for the Texan cause. Archer was noted for his rare ability as a popular agitator and was well suited to play a leading role in the revolutionary activities that led to the declaring of Texas' independence.[22]

Another early advocate of Texas independence and leader of the War Party was Moseley Baker, who claimed to have made the first speech urging complete separation from Mexico. Born in Norfolk, Virginia, Baker early moved to Montgomery, Alabama, where he studied law and edited a newspaper, the Montgomery Advertiser. He came to Texas in 1832, settling first at Liberty but later moving to San Felipe where he resumed his law practice and engaged in land speculations. Baker took part in the activities at Anahuac and was one of those proscribed by the Mexican government. In August, 1835, he and Frank W. Johnson were sent to East Texas to arouse sentiment for the cause of the War Party. On the outbreak of hostilities he joined the army and served throughout the

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[22] Biographical Directory, p. 44; Johnson, Texas and Texans, II, 814; Foote, Texas and the Texans, II, 11-12; Fulmore, County Names, p. 103; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, pp. 265-266; Webb, Handbook of Texas, I, 63.

Revolution. Baker represented Austin County in the First and Third Congresses of the Republic. He died in Houston in September, 1848.[23]

Among the other prominent members of the War Party were three relatives of William H. Wharton--his younger brother, John A. Wharton; his father-in-law, Jared E. Groce; and his cousin by marriage, Edwin Waller. John Austin Wharton was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1809. There he received the best available education and became a lawyer at the age of twenty-one. In 1830 he went to New Orleans where he practiced law for three years. Then he joined his brother in Texas in 1833 and soon began to take an active part in the affairs of Texas and the activities of the War Party. As a delegate to the Consultation in 1835 John A. Wharton introduced the resolution which authorized the calling of the Convention of 1836 for the purpose of declaring the independence of Texas. On December 8, 1835, Houston appointed Wharton "Texas Agent" and sent him to New Orleans to buy supplies for the Texas army. During the Revolution he served as Adjutant General on Houston's staff. Following the Revolution he resumed the practice of law in Brazoria and later in Houston, then served in the First Congress of the Republic. He received land in

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[23] Biographical Directory, pp. 48-49; Thrall, Pictorial History of Texas, p. 498; Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 225,227; Jones, Texas Testimony Carved in Stone, p. 182; George L. Crocket, Two Centuries in East Texas (Dallas, 1932), pp. 167, 169.

Brazoria County for his services during the Revolution and engaged in cotton production. John A. Wharton died in December, 1838, one year before his more famous brother.[24]

The plantation home of Jared Ellison Groce often served as the meeting place for members of the War Party. Groce, father-in-law of William H. Wharton and cousin by marriage of Edwin Waller, was the wealthiest man in Texas as well as a substantial land holder and the largest slaveowner. Born in Halifax, Virginia, Groce came to Texas in 1821 from Alabama, bringing with him over 100 slaves. Locating in the part of Austin's colony lying east of the Brazos River, he received title to ten sitios of land, over 40,000 acres, from the Mexican government. Austin had given Groce these large tracts of land because he possessed slaves and capital. Groce soon became the most substantial planter in Texas, by virtue of being the first to plant cotton on a large scale and building the first cotton gin. As early as June, 1824, he petitioned the Mexican government requesting that no new legislation passed affect his slaves or, if this could not be granted, that he be allowed to take his slaves back to the United States. As a delegate to the Convention of 1832 Groce voted against

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[24] Biographical Directory, pp. 188-189; Samuel H. Dixon and Louis W. Kemp, The Heroes of San Jacinto (Houston, 1932), pp. 40-42; Williams-Barker, WSH, I, 295-296; Fulmore, County Names, pp. 119-121; Brown, Life of H. Smith, pp. 82-83; William W. Groce, "John A. Wharton," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XIX (January, 1916), 272-278; Comptroller's Military Service Records, MSS. in Texas State Library, Austin.

separate statehood for Texas, feeling such a move was premature at the time. Later through the influence of Wharton and as a result of the actions of the Mexican government regarding slavery and trade he became an advocate of independence for Texas. Groce built, with slave labor, and owned at least three extensive plantations in Texas--"Bernardo" on the Brazos, "Groce's Retreat" in Grimes County, and "Eagle Island" in Brazoria County which he gave to his daughter and her husband William H. Wharton. It was Groce who suggested that Sam Houston would be a valuable addition to the radical element and that the War Party should invite him to come to Texas. Although he did not participate in the military events of the Revolution, he did furnish provisions for Houston's army and gave financial and material aid to the infant Republic. Groce did not live very long after the Republic was established. He died in November, 1836, one month after Houston became the first President of the Republic of Texas.[25]

Edwin Waller was one of the more avid advocates of Texas independence and was one of the first to defy outright Mexican

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[25]Rose Groce Berleth, "Jared E. Groce," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XX (April, 1917), 358-368; Biographical Directory, p. 93; Blair, Early History of Grimes County, pp. 74-90; Thrall, Pictorial History of Texas, pp. 547-548; Ray, Austin Colony Pioneers, p. 110; Register of Land Titles, General Land Office of Texas, Austin, Translation, I, 264-265; Documents of Texas History, I, 51-58; Jose Maria Sanchez, "A Trip to Texas in 1828," translated by C.E. Castaneda, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIX (April, 1926), 273-274; Barker, Readings in Texas History, p. 144; Barker, "Influence of Slavery," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII, 9; Williams-Barker, WSH, I, 411; Marquis James, The Raven: A Biography of Sam Houston (Indianapolis, 1929), p. 239.

authority. Born in Spottsylvania County, Virginia, he came to Texas from Missouri in 1831. Settling in the Brazoria region he received title to one league of land in July, 1831, and established a cotton plantation on Oyster Creek. He also owned a small vessel, the Sabine, which he used to transport cotton and various other products to New Orleans and other markets. Waller began to take an active part in the activities of the War Party as early as 1832 when he joined Lieutenant Henry D. Brown's company and participated in the Battle of Velasco. Waller was responsible for the purchase of two cannons which were smuggled into Texas aboard his vessel. These cannons were later used during the Revolution aboard an armed vessel.. Alcalde of Brazoria in 1833 and a delegate to the Consultation in 1835, he served on the General Council until his election as a delegate to the Convention of 1836. Waller was one of the few early leaders of the War Party to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence. Following the Convention he joined the "Runaway Scrape" and was seen at Beaumont by Colonel William Gray on the day of the Battle of San Jacinto removing his and William G. Hill's Negroes from Texas. Following the Revolution he returned to his plantation on Oyster Creek, where he engaged in cotton planting. In 1837 the plantation consisted of over 1,000 acres planted in cotton and corn and worked by seventeen prime field hands. Judge Waller remained active in the political affairs of Texas until the Civil War. He was appointed Postmaster General in 1839

and was a commissioner for the laying out of the state capital at Austin. He died in Austin on January 3, 1881, one of the last survivors of the original War Party.[26]

These men, who came to be designated as the leaders of the War Party, were later joined by many other distinguished Texans such as Sam Houston, Andrew Briscoe, and James C. Collinsworth. With the exception of Samuel M. Williams they were all native Southerners. They came from the well-to-do class and were all landowners and slaveholders. Without exception they all advocated complete independence from Mexico, and they were all to play important roles in bringing this about.

Means Used to Encourage the Revolutionary Movement

The arrest of Stephen F. Austin in January, 1834, marked the beginning of a gradual collapse of the faith of the Texas colonists in the Mexican government and by the time he was

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[26]Kemp, Signers, pp. 356-361; Samuel H. Dixon, Men Who Made Texas Free (Houston, 1924), pp. 337-342; Biographical Directory, pp. 185-186; Fulmore, County Names, pp. 118-119; Thrall, Pictorial History of Texas, p. 629; Spanish Archives, VIII, 453; Headright Certificate 63, File 962, Milam 1st Class, MSS. in General Land Office of Texas; Hanscom, Parade of Pioneers, p. 69; William F. Gray, From Virginia to Texas, 1835, Diary of Colonel William F. Gray, edited by A.C. Gray (Houston, 1909), pp. 167-170, 227-228; Secret Journals of the Senate, Republic of Texas, 1836-1845, edited by Ernest W. Winkler (Austin, 1911), pp. 59, 146-147; R. E. Pearson, editor, "Reminiscences of Judge Edwin Waller," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, IV (July, 1900), 33-51; Jones, Texas Testimony Carved in Stone, pp. 132, 185.

released Texas was on the brink of revolution, and the stage was set for independence.[27] The train of events which led to the Texas Revolution began in May, 1834, while Austin was still in prison in Mexico City. At that time the leading Centralists in Mexico met and called upon Santa Anna to assume the powers of a dictator. Within a week Santa Anna violated his oath of office and became the leader of the Centralist' revolution. By this act he repudiated the liberal program of 1832. The national Congress was dissolved, as well as state legislatures and local ayuntamientos which did not adhere to the new policy. By a series of unconstitutional acts the predicate for the absolute abrogation of the Constitution of 1824 was laid and a centralized government replaced the federal system set up by the Constitution of 1824.[28]

The sending of troops to Texas to prevent any move the colonists might make in opposition to the new program had been the plan of Santa Anna all along. The supposed reason for this action was to protect the colonists from Indian attacks and to help re-establish the collection of custom duties in Texas. This, however, was just an excuse. Santa Anna, like many other Mexicans, suspected that the Texas

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[27]Eugene C. Barker, "Stephen F. Austin and the Independence of Texas," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, XIII (April, 1910), 264; Stephenson, "Texas and the Mexican War," The Frontier in Politics, pp. 51-53.

[28]Molyneaux, Romantic Story of Texas, pp. 214-217; Wortham, History of Texas, II, 153-158.

colonists were planning independence and he was determined to block this. In January, 1835, Captain Antonio Tenorio and a small force arrived at Anahuac to reopen the fort there. From the beginning conditions were bad and much discontent and friction existed over the collection of the duties. On the night of June 12 an incident occurred which was to have far-reaching effects. The occasion was an attempt made by an Anahuac merchant, Andrew Briscoe, to send an empty box out from the port. Briscoe and DeWitt C. Harris were arrested by Tenorio and as they were being conducted to jail one of the Mexican soldiers shot an innocent by-stander. The incident of the empty box was not the only grievance Tenorio had against Briscoe. Briscoe had been the ringleader in arranging a meeting that had been held at Harrisburg on June 4, at which an agreement was reached to meet again on the 6th and march against Anahuac. The agreement listed the grievances against the Mexican government concerning the administration of the customs laws and was signed by Briscoe, Harris, and fifty-four others. The entire incident caused great excitement throughout Austin's colony.[29]

On June 21 there occurred another incident which greatly added to the general excitement in Texas. On that date a

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[29]Baugh, Rendezvous at the Alamo, pp. 173-175; Stephenson; "Texas and the Mexican War," The Frontier in Politics, pp. 57-59; Eugene C. Barker, "Difficulties of a Mexican Revenue Officer in Texas," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, IV (July, 1900--April, 1901), 194, 197.

government courier from General Cos was searched by members of the War Party and definite indications of the plans of the central government were discovered. Also, dispatches from Cos to Tenorio were found which said that troops were being sent to Texas. These discoveries bore out everything that was being said by the War Party and they made the most of them. The most immediate result of the disclosures was a proclamation issued by James B. Miller, the Political Chief of the Department of the Brazos, which urged the people to organize and called them to arms for a march on the Mexican authorities at San Antonio. This encountered strong opposition, but while the excitement was still high the War Party held a meeting at San Felipe on June 22. Robert M. Williamson addressed the people, calling upon them to rally to the support of "liberty, the Constitution, and federation." Also Santa Anna's violations of the Constitution of 1824 were denounced and the determination to maintain it was affirmed.[30] The majority of the colonists, however, were not yet ready to take such a stand. The next day a similar meeting was called at Columbia, but the conservatives blocked the attempt of the War Party to pass resolutions supporting the San Felipe meeting. Resolutions were adopted protesting war-like acts calculated to involve Texas in open conflict with the national government, but before action could be taken on these resolutions, the War

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[30]Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 206-208; Binkley, Texas Revolution, p. 47.

Party took a step of utmost gravity.[31] The more radical elements had held a secret meeting following the San Felipe meeting of June 22 and adopted resolutions authorizing volunteers to expel Tenorio's garrison from Anahuac. On the night of June 29 twenty-five men under the leadership of William B. Travis captured the fort and forced Tenorio to surrender. When word of this action became known there was a storm of condemnation throughout Texas. A wave of peace sentiment was sweeping over Texas and public opinion had changed. Travis became the target for a great deal of personal criticism and his actions were regarded as ill-advised and rash. In early September, 1835, he wrote an explanation and justification of his act and sent it to Henry Smith with the intention that it be published in the Texas Republican. It was never published, but the original copy was preserved and in it Travis made this statement concerning his actions.

> . . .Being highly excited by the circumstances then stated, I volunteered in that expedition, with no other motives than patriotism and a wish to aid my suffering countrymen in the embarrassing strait to which they were likely to be reduced by military tyranny. I was casually elected the commander of the expedition, without soliciting the appointment. I discharged what I conceived to be my duty to my country to the best of my ability. . . .[32]

The counter move started at Columbia in late June had the effect of driving the War Party to cover, and sentiment for

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[31]Binkley, Texas Revolution, p. 50.

[32]Binkley, ibid., pp. 49-50; Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 210-211.

the conservative course spread throughout Texas during the next month. The more radical leaders in the War Party closely watched events in Mexico, and they were convinced that when a majority of the colonists realized the full intentions of the reactionaries in control of the government they would resist. The leaders of the War Party were fully convinced that the only way of saving Texas from despotism was to keep all Mexican forces out of Texas. They began spreading reports of the progress of centralism in Mexico and of the determination of the Mexican government to overwhelm Texas by military occupation. On July 4th Robert M. Williamson published an address to the people of Texas, explaining the motives of the June 22 meeting at San Felipe and warning them of the dangers that threatened Texas. He further stated that the Mexican army was coming to Texas to compel the citizens to obedience and liberate the slaves. In this speech Williamson assumed only one line of reasoning which may be termed defensive. He realized that many of the colonists were under the impression that the chief source of opposition to Santa Anna stemmed from the invalidation of the state laws which had permitted large-scale land speculations. Williamson endeavored to show in his speech that speculation was a false issue dragged in to obscure the real concerns. He several times mentioned his disdain of the speculators and made his own position on speculation quite clear:

> I have been your fellow citizen for years, and you cannot believe that I am influenced by speculation. On the honor of a man I assure you that I have all to lose and nothing to gain by the disturbances of

> our country; and I am in no way connected either with the speculation or the speculators! . . .

He went on to brand Santa Anna as a dictator and advocated the seizure of San Antonio by force. Williamson attempted to explain the true state of affairs and said that Mexican soldiers were being sent to Texas not because of land speculation but to compel the colonists to obedience to the new government, force them to give up their arms, liberate their slaves, and support a dictator. He said in part:

> . . .Let us no longer sleep in our posts, let us resolve to prepare for War; and resolve to defend our country against the danger that threatens it. . . .Already we can almost hear the bugles of our enemies; already have some of them landed on our coast; and you must prepare to fight. Liberty or Death should be our determination and let us one and all unite to protect our country from all invasion, and not lay down our arms so long as a soldier is seen in our limits.

There is no evidence to show that Williamson was in any way connected with the gigantic land speculations of 1834 and 1835, so his speech was not an attempt to exploit the natural fears of the colonists to cover up speculation. However, he did play upon the fears of the people in regard to the emancipation of slaves and the possibility of a slave insurrection. He was trying to convince the settlers of some type of concerted action and in particular the need for another convention.[33] This ringing appeal produced little results.

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[33]R.M. Williamson's address of July 4, 1835, Circular printed by F.C. Gray, Brazoria, in Lamar Papers, I, 206ff; Robinson, Judge R.M. Williamson, pp. 99, 105-112; Broadside in Austin Papers, MSS.; Barker, Life of Austin, p. 475; Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 241-246.

Most expressions of public sentiment during the next few weeks were conservative in character and followed the general lines of the Columbia resolutions. The people believed that the alarming rumors were being spread by land speculators in hopes of profiting from an agitation of the public. Throughout July local meetings continued to express views condemning all violate action and promoting peace, although many expressed themselves in favor of holding a general consultation.[34]

Opinion differs as to the role played by the land speculators in promulgating the Texas Revolution. Barker states that neither the speculators nor the speculations contributed much to the coming of the revolution. On the other hand such writers as Benjamin Lundy and William Channing maintain that the speculators stirred up all the agitation in Texas in order to shield themselves and save their land grants. The truth seems to be that the speculators had a keener sense of the plans of Santa Anna for centralization of the government and a much better understanding of the true situation in Mexico than those who had remained in Texas. Following the adjournment of the state legislature in the spring of 1835, the Monclova speculators returned to Texas and sought to convince the colonists that the dissolution of the state legislature constituted the first step in Santa Anna's plan to make Texas a military colony. The people, in general, thought that the speculators' talk of invasion was merely a smoke screen to

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[34]Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 248-249, 227-228.

protect their interests.[35] The colonists paid little attention to the rumors coming out of Mexico, although some concern existed over the speculators' agitation on the part of some of the wealthier colonists. One planter objected to taking up arms against Mexico for the purpose of protecting a few unprincipled land speculators.[36] Generally the perception of the colonists was dulled by land speculation and concerted action was delayed. The revolution itself was slow in getting under way because many of the colonists hesitated to support what they believed to be a speculator's war.[37] The slaveholders and leaders of the War Party realized that they had to overcome the people's fear of a war on behalf of the speculators before they could gain support for their course of action. Thus Williamson and the other War Party leaders disclaimed any connection with the speculators or the speculations and endeavored to show the people that speculation was a false issue. To help overcome the people's fear of a speculators' war the War Party played on their fears of slave emancipation. Handbills were printed by the War Party giving reports of travelers returning from Mexico that Santa

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[35]Williams, Animating Pursuits of Speculation, pp. 200, 55.

[36]Asa Brigham to John A. Wharton, July 19, 1835, Austin Papers, III, 92.

[37]Barker, "Land Speculation as a Cause of the Texas Revolution," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, X, 94-95.

Anna was leading an army of 5,000 to free the slaves and turn them loose on the whites.[38]

Meanwhile, on July 11, a Central Committee of Vigilance, Correspondence, and Safety was being formed at San Felipe by delegates from Columbia, Mina, and San Felipe. This committee named Don Carlos Barrett and Edward Gritten to visit General Cos and explain the situation in Texas and the position of the colonists.[39] This action did not satisfy the more aggressive leaders. In late July they began a movement for a general convention of all Texas. On July 25 a notice signed by such leaders as William H. Wharton, W.H. Bynum, W.G. Hill, and William T. Austin appeared in the Texas Republican which called for a meeting to be held at Columbia on July 30 for the purpose of expressing the sentiment of the people in regard to having a general convention. This meeting dissolved with no concrete results, as the majority of those present were of the Peace Party, but another meeting was called for August 15. After the adjournment of this meeting the members of the War Party met and decided to work quietly to unite all those throughout Texas who favored their course of action. Frank W. Johnson and Moseley Baker were sent to East Texas to arouse sentiment for the cause of the War Party in that area. So

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[38]Handbill in Austin Papers, MS. Informant was H.A. Allsberry. Barker, Mexico and Texas, pp. 84-85.

[39]Wortham, History of Texas, II, 247, 252.

it was that the War Party secretly began to effect a compact organization.[40]

The Peace Party was still in control down at least to the middle of August. Edward Gritten in a letter to Colonel Domingo de Ugartechea assured him that the people desired peace. William B. Travis, too, admitted the strength of the Party. The unexpected reaction of the public to Travis' actions at Anahuac caused him to consider whether he and the War Party were moving too fast. In a letter to James Bowie, written on July 30, he said:

> The truth is, the people are much divided here. The peace party as they style themselves, I believe are the strongest, and make much the most noise. Unless we could be united, had we not better be quiet and settle down for a while? There is no doubt but that a central government will be established. . . .I do not know the minds of the people upon the subject, but if they had a bold and determined leader, I am inclined to think they would kick against it. . . .God knows what we are to do! I am determined, for one, to go with my countrymen: right or wrong, sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I am with them.[41]

The resolutions passed at a meeting held at San Jacinto on August 8 reflect the clearest statement of the view of the intelligent conservatives. They were prepared by David G. Burnet and stated that the conservatives would accept the change from the Constitution provided the military was kept

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[40]Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 225, 250; Wortham, History of Texas, II, 253-255; Crocket, Two Centuries in East Texas, p. 167.

[41]Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 238-240.

out of Texas and the country was guaranteed from oppression. If the peace mission of Barrett and Gritten had succeeded these resolutions might have been the basis upon which the policy of submission could have been carried into effect.[42] The peace mission failed, however, and the course of events turned in another direction.

On July 25, 1835, a letter written by James H.C. Miller to a friend, John W. Smith, of San Antonio, contained a proposal for putting an end to all the trouble in Texas. Miller proposed that all the leaders of the War Party be arrested immediately. Smith showed the letter to Colonel Ugartechea. An order was promptly issued to the Political Chief of the Department of the Brazos for the arrest of six prominent men--Lorenzo de Zavala and the five ringleaders in the capture of Tenorio, Frank W. Johnson, William B. Travis, R.M. Williamson, Mosely Baker, and S.M. Williams. The order resulted in a rapid change in popular sentiment. The activities of the War Party were revitalized and even the Peace Party was opposed to such actions by the authorities.[43] Austin had been released from prison through the intervention of Santa Anna, who believed that Austin would be instrumental in restoring order in Texas. Austin came home with the hope that the situation might still be saved and war averted, but he found the situation in Texas

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[42]Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 227-228; Binkley, Texas Revolution, pp. 58-59.

[43]Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 240; Binkley, Texas Revolution, p. 57; Stephenson, "Texas and the Mexican War," The Frontier in Politics, pp. 59-60.

critical. The Texas of 1833, faithful to Mexico, had now given way to a rebellious Texas. During Austin's imprisonment strong popular excitement had been kindled in Texas by the radical minority. The country was divided between those who advocated resistance to Santa Anna's policies of centralization and those who still counseled patience and submission. Austin's arrival in Texas at this crucial moment was both timely and fortunate as his attitude toward the movement for a general consultation became of immediate importance. Shortly after his return he addressed a gathering at Brazoria and clearly outlined the situation facing Texas and the course that he felt should be taken. This speech had the effect of uniting all Texas on a common platform. He regarded the preservation of peace as almost almost impossible. He ended his speech with a toast that united Texas:

> The constitutional rights and security and peace of Texas--they ought to be maintained; and, jeopardized as they now are, they demand a general consultation of the people.

On three essential issues Austin declared himself to be in accord with the War Party. He was for a consultation, resistance to the introduction of troops, and maintaining the constitutional rights of the colonists and the security of Texas. The most important feature of his speech, however, was that he set forth a clear-cut legal basis for any course the majority of

the people might decide upon. The esteem in which Austin was held caused his views to be generally adopted.[44]

Immediately following the Brazoria meeting Austin went to San Felipe, where he became a member of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety. In late September Austin issued his most radical utterance to that date in a circular sent out by the San Felipe Committee of Safety. Word had been received of the advance of General Cos toward Bexar. The directive read in part:

> War is our only resouce [sic]--and there is no other remedy but to defend our rights, our country, and ourselves by force of arms. . . .[45]

This prompt decision for war by Austin was inevitable in light of the statement he had made in his Brazoria speech. The War and Peace Parties were drawing closer together by this time. This and the fact that Austin was still the leader of his colony and of Texas was illustrated by a letter written by William B. Travis to Austin on September 22.

> All eyes are turned towards you; and the independent stand you have taken has given the Sovereigns confidence in themselves--Texas can be wielded by you and you alone; and her destiny is now completely in your hands--I have every confidence that you

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[44]Johnson, Texas and Texans, I, 147, 258, 261, 263; Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 162-164; Foote, Texas and the Texans, II, 56-57; Wortham, History of Texas, II, 319.

[45]Foote, Texas and the Texans, II, 67-68; Perrigo, Texas and Our Spanish Southwest, p. 127; Austin to the Columbia Committee, September 17, 1835, Austin Papers, III, 128-129; Austin to W.D.C. Hall, September 19, 1835, Austin Papers, III, 129.

> will guide us safe through all our perils--this is not the base flattery of a servile mind--but is the reasoning of one ardent in his country's cause, and who wishes to unite his feeble efforts with those who have the power and inclination to lead us in safety to the desired end.[46]

The outbreak of hostilities between the Texans and a Mexican force in October, 1835, necessitated a declaration to the world of reasons why Texas had taken up arms. For this purpose a "Consultation of the chosen delegates of all Texas" met at San Felipe on November 3.[47]

The first question before the Consultation was to decide whether to declare the independence of Texas or contend for the restoration of the Constitution of 1824. A large proportion of the delegates believed that independence was inevitable sooner of later, but a majority believed it inexpedient to take such a step at this time. The views of those who opposed independence prevailed and the delegates voted thirty-three to fifteen not to declare independence. On November 7, 1835, a unanimous declaration was adopted stating that the people of Texas had taken up arms in defense of their rights and liberties and in defense of the Constitution of 1824 and that they were "no longer, morally or civilly bound by

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[46]Travis to Austin, September 22, 1835, Austin Papers, III, 133; Ward, "Pre-Revolutionary Activities in Brazoria County," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LXIV, 229.

[47]Eugene C. Barker, "Texan Declaration of Causes for Taking Up Arms Against Mexico," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XV (January, 1912), 182-183; Binkley, Expansionist Movement, p. 16.

the compact of union." They offered to join with those Mexicans who stood by the Constitution of 1824 and whose rights, like those of the Texans, were "threatened by encroachments of military despots." The declaration went on to state that "they do not acknowledge that the present authorities of the nominal Mexican Republic have the right to govern within the limits of Texas." The declaration further contained the statement that Texas had the right to withdraw from the Mexican union and to establish an independent government.[48]

The rest of the work of the Consultation was concerned with establishing a provisional government and organizing an army. The plan for the civil government was chiefly drawn up by Henry Smith. It was significant that Smith, an avowed leader of the War Party, was elected governor of the provisional government over Austin by a vote of thirty-one to twenty-two. A General Council was created, with one representative from each municipality, for the purpose of co-operating with the governor. Before the Consultation adjourned on November 14 a very important resolution was adopted. On the motion of John A Wharton, it was:

> Resolved, That the Governor and Council be empowered to issue writs of election to fill any vacancies that may occur in this body, and for the representation of those jurisdictions

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[48] Barker, "Texan Declaration of Causes," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XV, 173-185; Binkley, Texas Revolution, p. 79, 101-102; Brown, Life of Henry Smith, pp. 78-83; Newell, History of the Revolution in Texas, pp. 62-63.

> not yet represented; or to cause a new election in toto for delegates to the Convention of the first of March next.

It was by this arrangement that the Council called the Convention of 1836 for the purpose of declaring Texas independent of Mexico, thus playing directly into the hands of the War Party.[49]

At the time of the adjournment of the Consultation of 1835 most of the colonists did not favor independence. The great majority of the people were more interested in their cotton crops than in the revolution. Within a few months, however, the majority was forced to made a decision on submission to Santa Anna or independence.[50]

The striking similarities of the American, French, and Bolshevik Revolutions may also be discerned in the Texas Revolution. Each was promulgated and started by a minority. In the case of the Texas Revolution this minority consisted of the leading radical slaveholders who wished to protect their property. They thought that their continued economic prosperity depended upon the retention of the institution of slavery. When their property was threatened by the Mexican authorities this radical minority began to organize a course of resistance.

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[49]Brown, Life of Henry Smith, pp. 82-83; Stephenson, "Texas and the Mexican War," The Frontier in Politics, pp. 64-65.

[50]Stephenson, "Texas and the Mexican War," The Frontier in Politics, pp. 67-68.

Because they were few in number they had little influence at first. However, from 1831 on the War Party, as the minority element in Texas was called, began a movement to force the majority to take a stand. Such events as the attacks on Anahuac in 1832 and 1835, the Battle of Velasco, the various public meetings, and the speeches and writings of the War Party leaders were all designed by the radical minority to force the issue.

Fortunately for the War Party the Mexican authorities reacted in the right way. From the beginning of 1834 on Santa Anna played into their hands by attempting to force his centralization scheme on the Texas colonists. Santa Anna's determination to use military force to eliminate any resistance on the part of the Texans and to bring them into line with the rest of Mexico forced the majority to take sides and accept a revolutionary course of action.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNERS OF THE TEXAS DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Statistical Survey of the Signers

During the winter of 1835-1836 public opinion in Texas began to crystallize toward the belief that the time had arrived for independence from Mexico. Even Stephen F. Austin urged that the independence of Texas should be proclaimed, and other Texas leaders were equally decided on the matter.[1] The convention which assembled on Tuesday, March 1, 1836, at Washington-on-the-Brazos, met under depressing circumstances. Almost every hour brought rumors or bits of news relative to the advance of the Mexican forces. Excitement was at its height when word was received of the siege of the Alamo. The delegates lost little time in discussion and immediately went to work on the business at hand.[2]

Sixty-two delegates had been elected to the convention, but only fifty-nine were present at the proceedings and signed the Declaration of Independence. Three delegates, James Kerr

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[1]James K. Greer, "The Committee on the Texas Declaration of Independence," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXX (April, 1927), 239; Austin to Houston, January 7, 1836, Austin Papers, MS.; Barker, Readings in Texas History, p. 234.

[2]Wortham, History of Texas, III, 217.

of Jackson, John J. Linn and Juan Antonio Padilla of Victoria, arrived too late to take any part in the convention. Linn later stated that the advance of the Mexican army in their region prevented their attendance at the convention.[3] When the convention met on March 1, forty-four delegates were present.[4] Seven others took their seats the next day, March 2. One delegate was seated on March 3 and 4; three on March 6; and one on March 7, 10, and 11.[5] Very few of the delegates had served as delegates to the Consultation of 1835 or the Conventions of 1832 and 1833. One explanation for the fact that very few of the delegates to the Convention of 1836 had served in the previous conventions was that many of those who had been delegates to the other conventions were now serving in the Texas army. Another explanation was that these earlier conventions had been made up of conservatives and with the change in the temper of opinion delegates with

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[3]Kemp, Signers, pp. i, v; Greer, "Committee on the Texas Declaration of Independence," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXX, 240; R. Henderson Shuffler, The Ark of the Covenant of the Texas Declaration of Independence (College Station, Texas, 1961), p. 12; John J. Linn, Reminiscences of Fifty Years in Texas (Austin, 1935), pp. 54,56.

[4]Colonel William F. Gray in his Diary says that only forty-one delegates were present on March 1, but the Journal of the Convention lists forty-four delegates as being present on that date. Gray, Diary, p. 121; Journal of the Convention of 1836 in Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 824-825; "Proceedings of the Convention, March 2, 1836," File Number 492, Archives, Texas State Library, Austin; Kemp, Signers, p. xii.

[5]Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 827-838, 843, 847-848, 881, 882; Kemp, Signers, pp. xii-xiii.

more radical ideas had been chosen. Of the fifty-nine delegates four had been delegates to the Convention of 1832; four to the Convention of 1833; thirteen to the Consultation of 1835; and six had been members of the General Council. The delegates to the Convention of 1832 were William Menefee, Charles Taylor, Thomas J. Gazley, and Claiborne West. Those sent to the Convention of 1833 were Gazley, Jesse Grimes, A.B. Hardin, and Sam Houston. The thirteen delegates sent to the Consultation included five men who had attended the two previous conventions, Menefee, Houston, Grimes, Hardin, and West. The eight other delegates were Lorenzo de Zavala, John W. Moore, James B. Woods, Edwin Waller, John S.D. Byrom, Stephen H. Everitt, Martin Parmer, and Thomas Barnett. The six members of the General Council were Menefee, Grimes, Parmer, Waller, Barnett, and James Power.[6]

Only ten of the delegates had been in Texas prior to January 1, 1830, and fifteen had arrived in 1835. It was from those who arrived after 1830 that the War Party drew most of their strength. Many of those who came to Texas after 1830 came directly from the Southern states of the United States and most of them were slaveowners. They brought with them the more radical ideas on slavery and the course of action that should be followed by Texas. The make-up of the convention constitutes clear evidence of the ascendency of radical

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[6] Biographical Directory, pp. 18-22; Brown, Life of Henry Smith, p. 97.

control. Austin, the leading conservative, was in the United States, while the radicals were represented by such leading members of the War Party as Sam Houston, Andrew Briscoe, James Collinsworth, and Edwin Waller. Thirteen delegates openly were affiliated with the War Party and the rest of the delegates followed their lead. By this time, too, Austin and most of the other leading conservatives had endorced complete independence for Texas and public opinion now supported the move.[7]

The convention was called to order by George C. Childress of Milam. James W. Collinsworth of Brazoria was chosen chairman pro-tem and W.A. Farris, secretary pro-tem. Regular officers were then elected. Richard Ellis of Pecan Point was chosen president of the convention and H.S. Kimble was elected to serve as secretary.[8]

Certain general conclusions emerge from a statistical survey of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Of the fifty-nine signers two were native Texans and life-long residents, Francisco Ruiz and his nephew Jose Antonio Navarro, both of San Antonio. Included also was an Englishman, a Canadian, an Irishman, a Scotsman, and a native of Mexico. Forty-four signers had been born in the southern states of the

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[7] Garrison, Texas, p. 210; Kemp, Signers, p. i.

[8] Greer, "Committee on the Texas Declaration of Independence," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXX, 240-241; Barker, Readings in Texas History, p. 234; Gammel, Laws of Texas, I, 825.

United States, with Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee the leading states. Seven came from the Middle Atlantic and New England states.

Table II gives the birthplaces of the signers. The majority of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence were born in eight southern states.

TABLE II

SIGNERS OF THE TEXAS DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE--BY PLACE OF BIRTH

State	Number	Per cent
South		80
Virginia	11	19
North Carolina	10	17
South Carolina	4	7
Georgia	4	7
Kentucky	6	10
Tennessee	9	15
Mississippi	1	2
Texas	2	3
North		12
Massachusetts	1	
Pennsylvania	3	
New York	2	
New Jersey	1	
Foreign		8
Mexico	1	
British Empire		
England	1	
Scotland	1	
Ireland	1	
Canada	1	
Total	59	100

Source: Kemp, Signers, p. xxii; Lowrie, Culture Conflict, p. 33.

Fifty-seven of the signers moved to Texas. Only one signer, Thomas Barnett of San Felipe, was a member of Austin's original colony and had come to Texas in 1823. One signer came in 1825; one in 1827; two in 1828; and one in 1829. On January 1, 1830, only ten of the fifty-nine signers were living in Texas. In that year ten moved to Texas, and in 1831 six more arrived. Three signers immigrated in 1832, five in 1833, and eight in 1834. Seventeen of the signers came to Texas as late as 1835 and 1836. Those who came at this time "never had the opportunity or misfortune to live under the rule of which they complained in the Declaration of Independence."[10] Fifty signers immigrated to Texas directly from Southern states, with Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, and Kentucky the leading areas. When compared to place of birth, Table III indicates that many of the signers had moved westward previously, and the shift to Texas constituted a second or even a third relocation.

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[10]Kemp, Signers, pp. xvi-s vii, xxi.

TABLE III

SIGNERS OF THE TEXAS DECLARATION

OF INDEPENDENCE--BY PLACE EMIGRATED FROM

State	Number	Per cent
South		85
Virginia	1	2
North Carolina	3	5
Georgia	3	5
Kentucky	5	8
Tennessee	13	22
Florida	1	2
Alabama	8	14
Mississippi	2	3
Louisiana	7	12
Arkansas	3	5
Missouri	4	7
North		9
Pennsylvania	2	
New York	2	
Illinois	1	
Native Texans	2	3
Foreign		3
Mexico	2	
Total	59	100

Source: Kemp, Signers, pp. 1-380; Dixon, Men Who Made Texas Free, pp. 1-370; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, p. 58.

Of the fifty-nine men who participated in the proceedings of the Convention of 1836 forty were under the age of forty. Along side men of training and talent worked those of lesser capacity. They had a wealth and variety of political institutions to draw from because of the large number of states represented.[11] Of the total number only four had had

[11]Barker, Readings in Texas History, pp. 249-250.

extensive political experience. Houston, Samuel P. Carson, and Robert Potter (whose sanity was questionable) had served in the United States Congress and Lorenzo de Zavala in various capacities in the Mexican government.[12] Four, Carson, Richard Ellis, Martin Parmer, and de Zavala, previously had helped write other constitutions. Six signers had served in state legislatures. These included Carson (North Carolina), Benjamin B. Goodrich (Alabama), Jose Antonio Navarro (Coahuila y Texas), Parmer (Missouri), Potter (North Carolina), and de Zavala (Yucatan and Mexico).[13]

A survey of the economic interests of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence results in certain definite conclusions. For the most part the signers were landholders and vitally interested in the economic future of Texas. They represented various economic groups ranging from large-scale planters and small farmers to merchants and professional men. Sixteen signers were lawyers by profession,

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[12]Kemp, Signers, pp. 45-56, 173-188, 258-277, 370-380; Dixon, Men Who Made Texas Free, pp. 77-79, 219-221, 137-145; Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress, 1774-1927, compiled by Ansel Wold (Washington, D.C., 1928), p. 79; Z. T. Fulmore, "Samuel Price Carson," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, VIII (January, 1905), 263-266; Crane, Life and Literary Remains of Houston, pp. 46-47, 49; James, The Raven, pp. 51, 54, 56.

[13]Kemp, Signers, pp. 96-106, 140-144, 235-252; Dixon, Men Who Made Texas Free, pp. 43, 223, 243-247, 147-154; W. S. Cleaves, "Lorenzo de Zavala in Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVI (July, 1932), 29-32; Raymond Estep, "Lorenzo de Zavala and the Texas Revolution," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LVII (January, 1954), 322-335.

six were physicians, one a teacher, and one a Methodist minister. Fifteen were of the planter class, and at least nine owned more than twenty slaves. A number of the planters and professional men engaged in various mercantile and commercial business. Many of the merchants and those engaged in commerce were also substantial landowners and often engaged in planting on the side. Politically and economically these men were very close to the planter class. They were vitally interested in protecting slavery as their continued prosperity depended upon its retention. Their livelihoods were geared to the production of cotton and other agricultural products. So they joined with the planters to protect the basis of their economy--slavery. At one time or another eighteen signers were engaged in some type of business enterprise. Three, Sterling C. Robertson, James Power, and Lorenzo de Zavala, had received empresario contracts from the Mexican government. A number of the others engaged in various land speculations. Table IV gives the professions of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. The first column gives those who were trained for a particular profession or designated that the listed profession was their only means of livelihood. The last column gives those signers who actually practiced their professions at the time of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Because a number of the signers engaged in a number of enterprises these have been indicated by the number in parenthesis.

TABLE IV

SIGNERS OF THE TEXAS DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE--BY PROFESSIONS

Profession	Number Trained For	Number Engaged In
Physicians	6* (1)	4
Lawyers	15* (2)	4
Planters (large-scale)	9* (6)	11
Small Farmers	7	8
Merchants	14	17
Teachers	1	1
Ministers	1	1
Politicians	1	2
Soldiers	2	7
Surveyors	2	2
Printers	1	2

*Number of signers engaged in this profession as well as some other. One physician was also a merchant; two lawyers were also planters; four planters were also merchants and two engaged in politics.

Source: Kemp, Signers, pp. 1-380; Dixon, Men Who Made Texas Free, pp. 1-370; Shuffler, Ark of the Covenant of the Texas Declaration of Independence, p. 15.

As seen from the table the Convention of 1836 was dominated by men of the upper economic class--planters, lawyers, merchants, and physicians. All the signers definitely stood to profit economically from the declaring of Texas independence. The property of all was more secure. An independent Texas which would protect property rights and slavery was of utmost importance to these men.

Table V is a summary or resumé of some of the significant facts concerning the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. Given in this table are the names of the signers, their approximate age at the time independence was declared on March 2, 1836, the year in which they came to Texas and established permanent residence, the place they emigrated from or the state they designated as their former residence, and the municipality they represented in the Convention of 1836. Southerners dominated the convention. A majority of the signers were southern by birth and had come to Texas directly from the southern states of the United States bringing with them southern traditions and ideas. The convention was a fairly young body with forty being the average age. All of the signers with the exception of fourteen had lived under Mexican authority and had experienced the various abuses put forth in the Declaration of Independence. This information was obtained at the time of the convention by Benjamin B. Goodrich, one of the signers. Included at the end of the table are the three elected delegates who were unable to attend the proceedings of the convention.

TABLE V

SIGNERS OF THE TEXAS DECLARATION

OF INDEPENDENCE

Name	Age	Date Came to Texas	Place Emigrated From	Municipality Elected to Represent
Jesse B. Badgett	29	1835	Arkansas	Bexar
George W. Barnett	43	1834	Mississippi	Washington
Thomas Barnett	48	1823	Kentucky	San Felipe
Stephen W. Blount	28	1835	Georgia	San Augustine
John W. Bower	27	1835	Arkansas	San Patricio
Asa Brigham	46	1830	Louisiana	Brazoria
Andrew Briscoe	26	1833	Mississippi	Harrisburg
John W. Bunton	28	1833	Tennessee	Mina
John S.D. Byrom	38	1830	Florida	Brazoria
Mathew Caldwell	38	1831	Missouri	Gonzales
Samuel P. Carson	38	1834	North Carolina	Red River
George C. Childress	32	1835	Tennessee	Milam
William Clark, Jr.	37	1835	Georgia	Sabine
Robert M. Coleman	37	1832	Kentucky	Mina
James Collinsworth	30	1835	Tennessee	Brazoria
Edward Conrad	26	1835	Pennsylvania	Refugio
William C. Crawford	31	1835	Alabama	Shelby
Richard Ellis	54	1834	Alabama	Red River
Stephen H. Everitt	29	1834	New York	Jasper
John Fisher	36	1832	Virginia	Gonzales
S. Rhodes Fisher	41	1830	Pennsylvania	Matagorda
James T. Gaines	60	1812	Louisiana	Sabine
Thomas J. Gazley	35	1829	Louisiana	Mina
Benjamin B. Goodrich	37	1834	Alabama	Washington
Jesse Grimes	48	1827	Alabama	Washington
Robert Hamilton	53	1834	North Carolina	Red River
Bailey Hardeman	41	1835	Tennessee	Matagorda
Augustine B. Hardin	38	1825	Tennessee	Liberty
Samuel Houston	43	1833	Tennessee	Refugio
William D. Lacey	34	1831	Tennessee	Colorado
Albert H. Lattimer	36	1833	Tennessee	Red River
Edwin O. LeGrand	33	1834	Alabama	San Augustine
Collin McKinney	70	1831	Kentucky	Red River
Samuel A. Maverick	33	1835	Alabama	Bexar
Michel B. Menard	31	1832	Illinois	Liberty

TABLE V--Continued

Name	Age	Date Came to Texas	Place Emigrated From	Municipality Elected to Represent
William Menefee	40	1830	Alabama	Colorado
John W. Moore	39	1830	Tennessee	Harrisburg
J. William Motley	24	1835	Kentucky	Goliad
J. Antonio Navarro	41		Native	Bexar
Martin Parmer	58	1825	Missouri	San Augustine
Sydney O. Penington	27	1834	Arkansas	Shelby
Robert Potter	36	1835	North Carolina	Nacogdoches
James Power	48	1838	Mexico	Refugio
John S. Roberts	40	1827	Louisiana	Nacogdoches
Sterling C. Robertson	50	1830	Tennessee	Milam
Francisco Ruiz	54		Native	Bexar
Thomas J. Rusk	32	1835	Georgia	Nacogdoches
William B. Scates	30	1831	Louisiana	Jefferson
George W. Smyth	33	1830	Alabama	Jasper
Elijah Stapp	53	1830	Missouri	Jackson
Charles B. Stewart	30	1830	Louisiana	San Felipe
James G. Swisher	41	1833	Tennessee	Washington
Charles S. Taylor	28	1828	New York	Nacogdoches
David Thomas	35	1835	Tennessee	Refugio
John Turner	34	1834	Tennessee	San Patricio
Edwin Waller	35	1831	Missouri	Brazoria
Claiborne West	36	1831	Louisiana	Jefferson
James B. Woods	34	1830	Kentucky	Liberty
Lorenzo de Zavala	47	1835	Mexico	Harrisburg
James Kerr*	46	1825	Missouri	Jackson
John J. Linn*	34	1830	Ireland	Victoria
J. Antonio Padilla*	58		Native	Victoria

*Elected as delegates to the Convention of 1836, but not present at its proceedings.

Source: Biographical Directory, pp. 21-22; Baker, Texas Scrap-Book, p. 58; Convention Election Returns, MSS. in the Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas; Kemp, Signers, pp. v, xvii, xx, xxii, xxvii; Shuffler, Ark of the Covenant of the Texas Declaration of Independence, p. 15.

The Work of the Convention of 1836

As the men who fomented and led the movement for independence did so primarily for economic reasons, and a major part of their thinking revolved around the institution of slavery, the Constitution of 1836 would certainly reflect their views. The provisions relative to slavery seemed to have caused little or no discussion at the time of their adoption. Section 9 of the General Provisions recognized slavery by providing that all Negroes still in bondage and who had been slaves prior to their owner's removal to Texas, were to remain in that state, "provided, the said slave shall be the bona fide property of the person so holding said slave as aforesaid." Congress was forbidden to pass laws prohibiting immigrants from bringing their slaves into Texas and Congress was forbidden the power of emancipation. Even slaveholders were denied the privilege of freeing their slaves, except with the consent of Congress, unless they were sent beyond the boundaries of the Republic. Free Negroes were not allowed to reside in Texas unless they had the consent of Congress. The last provision of Section 9 stated that the importation or admission of Negroes into Texas, except from the United States, constituted piracy and was forever prohibited.[15]

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[15]Constitution of the Republic of Texas, March 17, 1836, Documents of Texas History, p. 104; Wortham, History of Texas, III, Appendix-VI, 427-428; Rupert N. Richardson, "Framing the Constitution of the Republic of Texas," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXI (January, 1928), 191-219.

In 1836 no antislavery sentiment existed in Texas. If such sentiment had been present, any delegate who sincerely desired independence would have been ill advised to have recommended any restrictive clauses. Even Stephen F. Austin, who had always personally opposed the institution of slavery, had reached the conclusion more than six months before the convention that Texas would be a slave area. He stated this belief in a letter to his cousin, Mary Austin Holley, written in August, 1835, before he returned to Texas from his imprisonment in Mexico.

> . . .It is very evident that Texas should be effectually, and fully, Americanized, . . . Texas must be a slave country. It is no longer of doubt. . . . .[16]

Although the traffic in slaves was denounced in the Constitution of 1836, the economic interests of Texas required that immigrants be allowed to bring their property with them. The formulators of the constitution recognized that the future progress of Texas depended on emigration from the southern slaveholding states, and unless future settlers were allowed to bring their slaves few would come.[17] Texas was controlled by Southerners; the area had a Southern-oriented economy and Southern mores. No change was contemplated or even imagined.

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[16]Rives, United States and Mexico, I, 316-317; Austin to Mary Austin Holley, August 21, 1835, Austin Papers, MS.

[17]Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II, 305, fn. 47.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Texas Revolution was not a spontaneous outburst of patriotic indignation against the tyranny and despotism of the Mexican government. The majority of the population were more interested in their crops than in participating in armed rebellion against Mexico. Even after hostilities commenced the rank and file of the population manifested a surprising degree of indifference toward the war. It was the radical agitation of a small minority against the economic and political policies of the Mexican government that forced the Texas Revolution.

The movement for the independence of Texas from Mexico developed from the threats of the Mexican government to the economic prosperity and future of the propertied class in Texas. With the threats to slavery in various legislative enactments of the Mexican Congress and the legislature of Coahuila y Texas, all that could be foreseen by the leaders of Texas under continued Mexican rule was economic ruin and loss of property. Slavery was the basis of the agricultural economy of the Americans. In their mind, the destruction of the institution would not only wreck agriculture, but all forms of business. Faced with the choice of severe property

loss and economic ruin or resistance to Mexican rule, this group chose to resist.

The radical element, which came to be known as the War Party, appeared in Texas politics in the early 1830's. At first they were few in number and had relatively little influence outside their own economic group, but as tensions mounted between Texas and Mexico, the Radicals exploited the situations and increased their influence far beyond their numbers. The leading members of this group were the leading landowners and slaveholders. For the most part they were native Southerners who had immigrated to Texas for economic reasons. They brought their native traditions and ideas with them, including the institution of slavery, the only type of labor system that they had experienced. Geographical conditions present in Texas also played a part in determining that slavery be an essential part of the economy. The soil, climate, and location of Texas were extensions of the South, and cotton became the mainstay of the economy. In the Southern tradition, Negro slavery was an essential for the production of this crop. By threatening to do away with this institution the Mexican government was severely endangering the future prosperity of not only Texas but of a substantial group of its colonists.

The radical element underlies and colors all of the relations of the colonists with the Mexican government from

1831 until the outbreak of the Revolution. Fear of what might happen to them economically led the radicals to resist and defy the authority of the Mexican government. At first this resistance took the form of evasion of the laws against the importation of slaves, immigration, and commerce. Then it grew into a movement for separate statehood with the right of self-government. As the difficulties between the colonists and the government increased and multiplied the radical sentiment expressed itself in a number of incidents which involved armed resistance and outright defiance of Mexican authority. The purpose of these activities was to force the hand of the Mexican government and push the great mass of Texans to their side. From 1834 on it became a struggle for complete independence on the part of the members of the War Party. The War Party led the movement for a general convention of all Texas for the purpose of determining the action that should be taken. Threatened with military despotism on the part of Santa Anna and his determination to bring the rebellious colonists to complete submission, the radical leaders succeeded in forcing the majority to choose the only course possible for them. By the time the Convention of 1836 met on March 1 there was no longer any doubt as to the outcome. The movement for independence culminated with the severence of all ties with Mexico and the establishment of the sovereign Republic of Texas on March 2.

By this move the economic future of Texas and of the small minority of men who had been instrumental in bringing it about was assured. Slavery, the foundation of the economy and wealth of Texas, was protected, until years later, when another revolution against the United States failed.

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