**Texas Annexation: United We Stand?**

**by Vale Fitzpatrick**

Contrary to what most people today believe, the annexation of Texas to the United States was not a foregone conclusion. After the success of the Texas Revolution (1836), the young nation expected to be brought into the Union. Texan voters overwhelmingly supported annexation (3,277-91); indeed, most Texans expected annexation in 1836-37. The administrations of Andrew Jackson and Martin van Buren shocked Texans by rejecting annexation on the grounds that it would mean war with Mexico.[1](http://education.texashistory.unt.edu/lessons/psa/Texas_Annexation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1%22%20%5Co%20%221) The issue periodically arose in Texas and United States politics. It would not be until Sam Houston’s second term as president (1841-1844) that annexation was once again a major issue for both countries. The main point of contention in the United States was that Texas was a slave state. Abolitionists argued that its annexation would expand slavery and increase the power of the slave states in the United States Congress.

During his second administration on 24 January 1843, Republic of Texas President Sam Houston wrote England’s *chargé d’affaires* in Galveston, a friendly letter in which he commented that nine-tenths of Texans who talked with him favored annexation to the United States as a means of gaining peace and security from Mexico. Leaders in Washington, regardless of their sectional loyalties, also favored annexation, he told Elliot, and both parties would advocate the policy in oncoming elections. Houston hinted to Britain that to prevent annexation Mexico must recognize the independence of Texas. Houston implied the Republic would be happy to remain independent. In reality there was only lukewarm support for annexation in the United States, and so Houston used British “ambitions” to spur the United States into action. He was careful during this period to never fully commit to annexation, but to wait and see whether the United States would approve annexation, because a failed bid by Texas would cost it British support.[2](http://education.texashistory.unt.edu/lessons/psa/Texas_Annexation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2%22%20%5Co%20%222)

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During the administration of John Tyler, President Houston undertook a serious attempt to craft an annexation agreement. Texas ministers Isaac van Zandt and James Pinckney Henderson secretly worked on crafting the agreement. Houston, who received a copy of the treaty on 28 April 1844, was generally satisfied. However, any chance for the treaty to be accepted was destroyed when it became the central issue in the 1844 United States presidential election. Henry Clay, the Whig candidate, announced he would oppose annexation. On 8 June 1844 the United States Senate killed the treaty by a 35 to 16 margin, with fifteen southern Whigs voting against a treaty they otherwise would have supported. Texans reacted bitterly, while Houston announced that Texas was “free from all involvements and pledges” and would pursue its own national interests. Houston, however, said that in the event of a new offer from the United States that was unequivocal in character, and removed all impediments to annexation, “it might be well for Texans to accept the invitation.”[3](http://education.texashistory.unt.edu/lessons/psa/Texas_Annexation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn3%22%20%5Co%20%223)

Before Houston, left office, James K. Polk, the expansionist Democrat candidate, won the 1844 United States presidential election. President Tyler took Polk’s victory as a mandate and sent a message to congress recommending annexation by joint resolution, which would require only majority approval in both houses.

The United States Congress, encouraged by President Tyler’s message, began to consider proposals for bringing Texas into the Union. The House passed the annexation resolution in late January by a vote of 120 to 98. With minor amendments, the Senate concurred on the night of February 27 by a vote of 27 to 25. The joint resolution called for Texas to enter the Union as a state, that would retain its public lands (something unique among all other states) and its public debt. The United States would settle all boundary disputes, and Texas would have the option of dividing into four separate states. President Tyler sent the resolution to Texas on March 3, 1845, urging acceptance by the January 1, 1846, deadline set by the United States Congress. Houston had limited enthusiasm for an offer from Washington which he felt dictated terms that he thought was unfair to Texas. Republic of Texas President Anson Jones, however, was now in charge of negotiations.[4](http://education.texashistory.unt.edu/lessons/psa/Texas_Annexation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn4%22%20%5Co%20%224)

News of the Congressional joint resolution spread across the Republic of Texas during the spring, causing a massive outpouring of support for annexation to the United States. Citizens of nearly every county held mass meetings endorsing annexation. President Jones, however, wanted to delay the issue until France and Britain pressured Mexico to guarantee Texas independence. Mexico, on advice of the British, agreed to acknowledge the independence of Texas on the condition that the Republic would not annex herself to any country. Jones wanted to use the guarantee of independence from Mexico coupled with friendly British and French relations, to gain additional concessions from the United States. Texans, however, wanted annexation and they wanted it immediately. President Jones bowed to public pressure and called a special session of the Texas Congress to meet on 16 June 1845 and consider the question of annexation. The delay in endorsing annexation, together with his feud with Houston, politically damaged Jones and ensured he would never again hold political office in Texas.

OAs the convention assembled on 4 July, Jones placed before them and the Texas Congress the choice between annexation to the United States or independence recognized by Mexico. The Senate unanimously rejected guaranteed independence from Mexico, and then both chambers accepted the annexation treaty. The convention accepted the resolution by a vote of fifty-five to one. Richard Bache of Galveston was the lone dissenter. According to legend, he had come to Texas after divorcing his wife in the United States and voted against annexation because he never again wanted to live in the same country with his ex-wife.[5](http://education.texashistory.unt.edu/lessons/psa/Texas_Annexation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn5%22%20%5Co%20%225)

A state constitution was drawn up by the convention and quickly ratified by popular vote in October 1845. It was accepted by the United States Congress on 29 December 1845, when President James K. Polk signed the Texas Admission Act. The formal transfer of power occurred on 19 February 1846. Republic of Texas President Anson Jones turned over the reins of state government toGovernor James Henderson, declaring “the final act in this great drama is now performed; the Republic of Texas is no more.”[6](http://education.texashistory.unt.edu/lessons/psa/Texas_Annexation/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn6%22%20%5Co%20%226)