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CONFEDERACY, REPUBLIC (AGAIN), OR BOTH? THE PRINT MEDIA AND THE MOMENT OF DECISION IN HARRIS, HARRISON, DALLAS, AND BEXAR COUNTIES, 1860-1861

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CONFEDERACY, REPUBLIC (AGAIN), OR BOTH? THE PRINT MEDIA AND THE MOMENT OF DECISION IN HARRIS, HARRISON, DALLAS AND BEXAR COUNTIES, 1860-1861

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
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Abstract:

Barely a week after the presidential election of 1860, the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* expressed its support for the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas. Indeed, Texas seceded on February 1, 1861, but the Texas Secession Convention did not vote to join the other seceded states in forming the Confederacy for another month. This study examines the moment of decision regarding secession in the Texas counties of Harris, Harrison, Dallas, and Bexar. The debates going on in Texas from the November 1860 presidential election to the state's decision to join the Confederacy on March 5, 1861 did involve slavery, but also revealed an "independent streak" rooted in the Texas Revolution and memories of the Republic of Texas. Looking at the development and makeup of the independent streak on the county level shows that there were different strains of it across Texas and reveals the importance of local context in thinking about the broader secession crisis. This independent streak shaped how the state's political leadership class coped with the 1860 presidential election, the debate over secession, and their ultimate decision to join the Confederacy.

Introduction

Less than one week after the presidential election of 1860, the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* expressed its support for the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas in light of Abraham Lincoln's electoral victory. The paper noted that Texas was more than capable of holding its own, but that secession from the Union in and of itself was the primary objective.[1] The secession convention that convened January 28, 1861 voted in favor of secession from the Union and submitted the related ordinance to a popular vote scheduled for February 23rd, which resulted in a state majority of 46,153 in favor to 14,747[2] against taking Texas out of the Union. Ultimately, however, the "independent streak" expressed by the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* and voters went nowhere: the convention that voted for secession also voted to join with the other seceded states on March 5th. Instead of striking out on their own, Texas political leaders chose to send delegates to the convention that was meeting in Montgomery to draft a provisional Confederate Constitution and establish a new government.[3]

This study examines the moment of decision regarding secession in Harris County, of which Houston was the seat; Harrison County, with Marshall as its seat; Dallas County, with its county seat of Dallas; and Bexar County, with its county seat at San Antonio. For the purposes of the study, the moment of decision is the period running from the weeks before the presidential election of 1860 to March 5th, 1861. During this period, people in all four counties (and in Texas at large) discussed and debated the prospects of a Republican victory in the presidential election,

[1] "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860. The *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* was also known as the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* and was edited by F. H. Cushing and based out of Houston, Texas during the war.
[2] Walter L. Buenger, *Secession and the Union In Texas*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984): 174.
[3] Clayton E. Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy: An Experiment in Nation Building* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002): 57-64, 73-75.

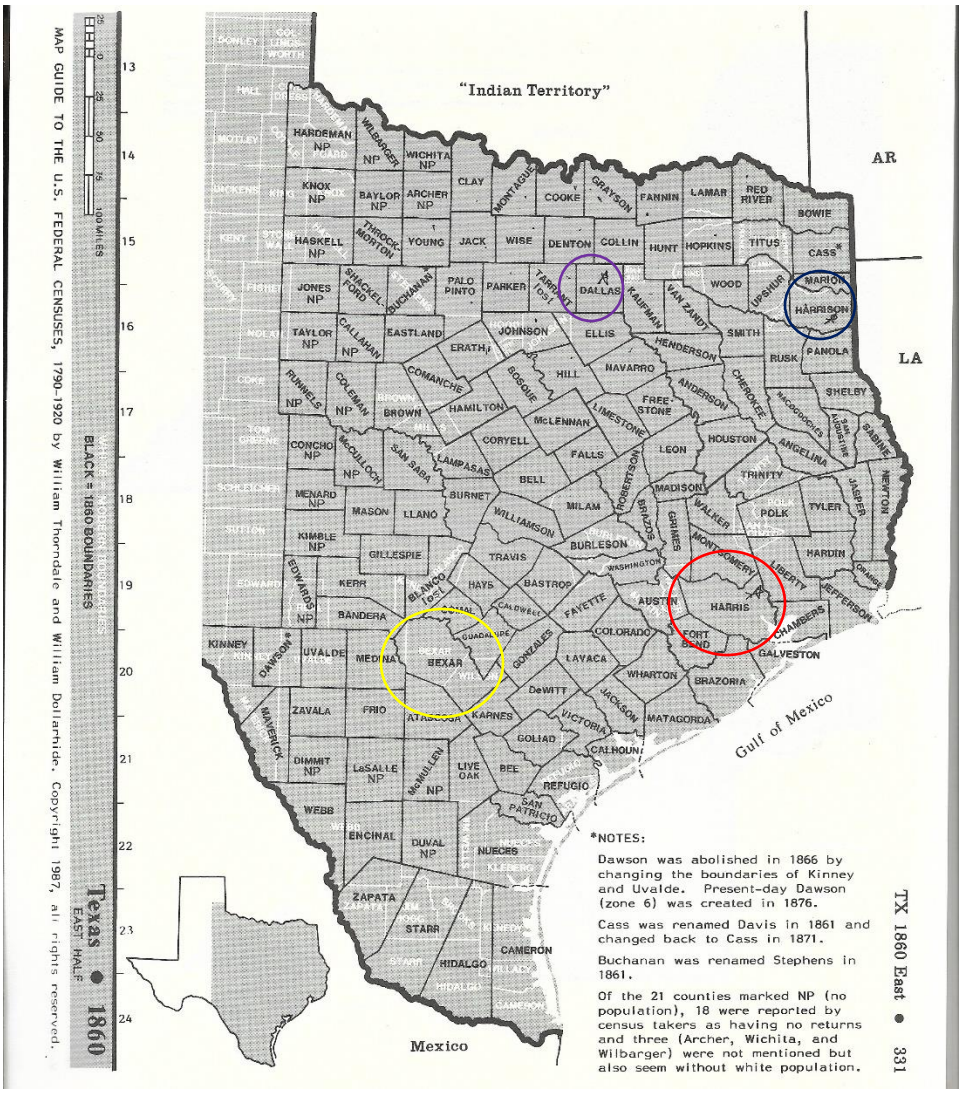
and once said victory had occurred, what to do next—stay, secede and go it alone, or secede and join the other states that were seceding or considering secession.[4] An "independent streak" rooted in the Texas Revolution and the memory of the Republic of Texas, mixed with demographic and historical origins, was a critical part of why Harris, Harrison, Dallas, and Bexar Counties behaved the way they did in the weeks leading up to secession.

The term "independent streak" comes from *Texas in the Confederacy: An Experiment in Nation Building* by Clayton Jewett. There, he defines it as being rooted in Texas's relatively recent past as an independent nation and a combination of a proslavery, states' rights, and the related argument that the state had not given up its sovereignty when it was annexed by the United States in 1845—it had merely delegated some of it to the federal government out of fear that other countries' diplomatic involvement would threaten slavery. This manifested before the Civil War as a focus on what situation—staying in the Union, seceding and returning to the Republic of Texas, or seceding and joining the Confederacy—would best enable Texas to protect its interests after the 1860 presidential election. During the war, it manifested as repeated challenges to the Confederate government in Richmond. The focus on Texas's interests left room for both extreme secessionists and the varieties of Texas Unionism.[5]

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[4] *Handbook of Texas Online*, Margaret Swett Henson, "Harris County," accessed April 1, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Randolph B. Campbell, "Harrison County," accessed April 15, 2019. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch08; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Lisa C. Maxwell, "Dallas County," accessed February 13, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcd02; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; Clayton E. Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy: An Experiment in Nation-Building*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002): 73-75; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860.

[5] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 1-8, 11-27, 70-73; Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, vii-viii, 168-170, 198-207, 253-281.



In this 1860 census map of eastern Texas, Harris County, Harrison County, Dallas County, and Bexar County are circled in red, blue, purple, and yellow, respectively. Map courtesy of *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1920* by William Thorndale and William Dollarhide.

Historiography

In order to consider how Texas's earlier history influenced Harris, Harrison, Dallas, and Bexar Counties during the moment of decision, it is necessary to consider the scholarship on both Texas in the Civil War and secession. In the course of this consideration, I am working with

the idea that Texas possessed an independent streak rooted at least partly in the state's history. However, I will be looking at how this independent streak and Texas's secession logic developed on a local level, allowing for a more nuanced view of both concepts. In addition, due to the noticeable presence of Unionist sentiments in two counties, I will also be drawing on Texas Unionism historiography. In terms of the broader secession historiography, I will be taking scattered references to state-specific circumstances further, arguing that the "logic" behind secession was far from universal, as proved by Texas generally and the counties of Harris, Bexar, Harrison, and Dallas specifically.[6]

In *Kirby Smith's Confederacy: The Trans-Mississippi South, 1863-1865* (1972), Robert L. Kerby covers the Trans-Mississippi Department from the fall of Vicksburg to the end of the Civil War.[7] With Texas, Kerby emphasizes the state's inclination to act independently of the Confederate government in Richmond, starting with the cotton trade with Mexico in late 1861 and regulatory failures by both Texas's government and Richmond due to protests. Then, in 1863, military officials used a Confederate impressment policy to seize planters' cotton outright, which resulted in immediate electoral backlash.[8] Twelve years later, Walter Buenger turned his attention toward another side of Civil War era Texas politics. In *Secession and The Union In*

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[6] Jewett, *Texas in The Confederacy*, 1-8, 11-13, 39-50, 237-242; Buenger, *Secession and The Union In Texas*, 22-33, 42-43, 53-58, 62-79; Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism*, 1-5, 7-13, 42-59, 82-92, 219-240; McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 1-25, 29-35, 53-63, 358-361; Davis, "Striking a Revolution's First Blow," in *Inside the Confederate Nation*, eds. Gordon and Inscoe, 31-39. See also: Robert L. Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy: The Trans-Mississippi South, 1863-1865*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972): vii-viii, 1-50, 377-434; Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992): xi-xiv, 3-30; Clayton E. Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy: An Experiment in Nation-Building*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002): 1-8, 237-242; Charles D. Grear, ed., *The Fate of Texas: The Civil War and the Lone Star State*, (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008): xv-xxi; Kenneth W. Howell, *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009): vii-xi.

[7] Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, vii-viii, 168-170, 198-207, 253-281.

[8] Jewett, *Texas in The Confederacy*, 1-8, 24-61, 173-205; Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, vii-viii, 168-170, 198-207, 253-281. Note: Richmond, Virginia was the capital of the Confederacy from the end of May 1861 to very early April 1865. It was preceded by Montgomery, Alabama for a few months, and succeeded by Danville, Virginia (for about a week). The electoral backlash took the form of the election of several states' rights legislators and a governor.

Texas (1984), Buenger traces the history and development of Texas Unionism from its beginnings after annexation, through periodic coalescence into organized political opposition, and through its fade into the background after Texas joined the Confederacy. Buenger argued that Texas Unionism was rooted in old political ideologies and ways of life brought to Texas by immigrants and spread into a variety of strains which were ultimately defeated by Texas's growing ties to the lower South.[9]

In 1991, Alvin M. Josephy Jr. looked at Civil War Era Texas and its politics in a much broader context. In *The Civil War in the American West*, Josephy Jr. follows the Civil War in the American West from the Texas secession movement to the surrender of the last Confederate forces in June 1865. Criticizing the previous historiography for its treatment of the Civil War in the West, Josephy Jr. argues that the West as a whole was actually very important to the conflict—its demographic makeup encouraged North-South tension, and important battles and discussions were taking place there.[10] In 1997, Dale Baum returned to the question of Texas Unionism. In *The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era*, Baum focuses on the presence (or lack thereof), makeup, and origins of Unionist sentiment in Texas during the Civil War Era. Like Buenger, Baum focuses on those Texans who were in the minority when it came to secession and the Civil War. However, he takes his study

[9] Buenger, *Secession and The Union In Texas*, 5-10, 22-33, 42-45, 53-58, 62-79, 165-182. Buenger situates the center of Texas Unionism in what he refers to as "Upper South Texas," an area home to a significant population of immigrants from the Upper South. When these residents had arrived, they brought their way of life with them—which depended much less on slavery and cotton and more on corn, wheat, and free labor—and maintained it due to physical location and lack of transportation.

[10] Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West*, xi-xiv, 3-38, 45-51, 161-167, 177-187, 220-224, 368-385. Josephy Jr. defines the West in this case as running from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, which included Texas. Texas is the focus of the first and part of the second chapter, but also makes its way into later chapters periodically. In these chapters, he talks about Texas from its role in American westward expansion through the military logistics involved in Texas's secession. The continued periodic references mainly concern Texas as the Confederacy's possible gateway to New Mexico and the problems it presented for both the United States and the Confederacy.

from Sam Houston's election as governor in 1859 to the Reconstruction-era 1869 gubernatorial election. He ultimately argues that Texas Unionism was inconsistent at best and not much of a threat in reality, either before, during, or after the war.[11]

Four years later, Clayton Jewett took the idea of Texas's distinctiveness compared to the Confederacy and applied it to the whole state. In *Texas in the Confederacy: An Experiment in Nation-Building* (2002), Jewett tracks the development and implementation of a separate "Texan" identity on the eve of and through the Civil War. Jewett argues that Texans developed a separate identity rooted partly in the state's own history during the Civil War, which caused increased political conflicts as the Civil War went on and Texas repeatedly asserted itself against Confederate political and military officials.[12] In 2006, James L. Haley took several big steps back in timeframe in *Passionate Nation: The Epic History of Texas*. In it, Haley traces the history of Texas from the arrival of the Spanish to the present day. Part Three of the book traces that history from the beginning of the Republic of Texas through Reconstruction. In telling what he refers to as the whole of Texas history, Haley argues that Texas history is vast and diverse, and that it needs to be told altogether in order to show that.[13]

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[11] Dale Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism: Politics in the Lone Star State During the Civil War Era*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1998): 1-5, 7-13, 37-59, 73-92, 117-132, 172-185, 219-240. When Baum discusses the elections, he also explores how the Unionists fared and why they fared how they did. For the secession referendum, he argues they turned out in low numbers because they knew they had no chance of winning. In the wartime elections their presence proved that wartime Texas politics was far from united. In the 1869 election, he argues that, while a Unionist won the gubernatorial election, Republicans and their Unionist predecessors were ultimately unable to become a viable electoral presence.

[12] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 1-8, 11-13, 39-50, 74-75, 79-82, 107-117, 134-140, 143-149, 168-180, 201-205, 209-211, 230-242. Jewett's tracing of this independent streak starts with how Texans talked about secession—where this separate identity started to develop—and follows it through wartime collisions with the Confederate government and into Reconstruction.

[13] James L. Haley, *Passionate Nation: The Epic History of Texas*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006): ix-xviii, 197-336, 555-560. The chapters within Part Three cover the following: Governor Houston's failure to keep Texas in the Union and his deposition after Texas seceded, the backlash against Unionists in Texas, the Civil War itself, and Reconstruction.

In 2009, Kenneth W. Howell and several others took a different kind of broad view in the edited collection *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*. Questions about the need for another such book aside, Howell argues that Texas's role in the Civil War is in need of a general revisiting.[14] Particularly pertinent chapters include Archie P. McDonald's "The Civil War and the Lone Star State: A Brief Overview," and James M. Smallwood's "The Impending Crisis: A Texas Perspective on the Causes of the Civil War," which argues that slavery and threats to the institution, above all else, were what drove Texans toward secession in 1861.[15] Andrew Torget's *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850* (2015) examines the transformation of Texas in the half-century before the Civil War, from the arrival of slaveholders looking for land to plant cotton to Texas's annexation by the United States. Torget argues that these developments could be attributed to cotton, slavery, and empire. In his epilogue, he argues that the Republic of Texas was a testing ground for the Confederacy. Both founded for the same purpose, the Republic of Texas lasted twice as long, but showed the limits of a nation founded on slavery.[16]

Where these authors deal more directly with motivations for and processes of secession, they either treat them as a universally applicable set or note differences between Texas and the other seceded states. In *Texas In the Confederacy*, Clayton Jewett acknowledges differences in

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[14] Howell, ed., *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009): iv-v, vii-xi. The chapters cover a wide variety of subjects relating to Texas and the Civil War, including Texas's perspective on the causes of the war to Texas Unionism, conflicts with Native Americans, wartime governors, and wartime dissent.

[15] Archie P. McDonald, "The Civil War and the Lone Star State: A Brief Overview," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009): 21-29; James M. Smallwood, "The Impending Crisis: A Texas Perspective on the Causes of the Civil War," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009): 32-48;

[16] Andrew J. Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 1-15, 19-24, 49-53, 57-61, 92-100, 134-141, 174-176, 179-183, 215-222, 249-266. In terms of how the developments led to Texas becoming part of the U.S., The Anglo-Americans Mexico invited in to stabilize Texas, brought an expanding cotton market and slavery with them. The struggles that erupted over slavery eventually led to Texas's independence.

how Texas handled secession as compared to other states.[17] James M. Smallwood, on the other hand, in "The Impending Crisis: A Texas Perspective on the Causes of the Civil War," argues that secession and secessionists in Texas were no different than elsewhere in the South.[18] The broader secession historiography has covered both bases. In the century after the Civil War, it shifted from viewing secession as the radical conspiracy of a few key figures to viewing it as a popular movement for which all were at fault. However, historians were producing more state-specific histories and beginning to dismiss both arguments in favor of a more nuanced view with room for state-specific considerations. More recently, however, historiographical conversations about secession have turned toward broader scale considerations, tending to disregard potential differences and assign the same causes/motivations to all.[19]

In *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (2001), Charles Dew used the speeches and letters of the commissioners to trace the causes of secession and the Civil War. Claiming that the secession commissioners' words revealed more than other historians had discussed, he argued that by reading their words, it was possible to understand slavery's importance to secession and the Civil War. In his examination of specific states, however, any acknowledgement of differences between the states was limited to the commissioners' experiences on the ground. For Dew, there was very little difference between

[17] Jewett, *Texas In The Confederacy*, 1-8, 11-13, 237-242.
[18] James M. Smallwood, "The Impending Crisis: A Texas Perspective on the Causes of the Civil War," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009): 32-48.
[19] William J. Donnelly, "Conspiracy or Popular Movement: The Historiography of Southern Support for Secession," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 42, no. 1 (1965): 70-75, 81-84; Charles B. Dew, *Apostles Of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001): 4-17; William C. Davis, "Striking a Revolution's First Blow," in *Inside The Confederate Nation: Essays In Honor Of Emory M. Thomas*, eds. Lesley J. Gordon and John C. Inscoe (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005): 31-40; Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005): 1-25, 100-102; Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010): 1-21, 29-35.

states' motivations for and approaches to secession.[20] In a 2005 edited collection honoring historian Emory Thomas, William C. Davis examines the lead-up to the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, the first shot of the Civil War. He addresses both the motivations and preparation for the war on both sides, arguing that the spark came at a moment in time when both sides were ideologically and technologically ready for war. While making this argument, Davis briefly analyzes the Southern states' motivations for secession, explaining that there were multiple, non-state specific reasons for secession. The logic behind secession could vary, Davis concluded, but not necessarily based on state-specific factors.[21]

Anne Sarah Rubin, meanwhile, focuses on the rise and fall of the Confederate nation. In *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861-1868,* Rubin explores the components of Confederate national identity, how they rapidly became the Confederate nation, and how the "shattered" remains of that nation were incorporated into white Southerners' postwar identity. She argues that the Confederate nation far outlasted the state, enabling southerners to incorporate its "shards" into their post-war identity. Regarding secession, Rubin talks about a universal approach, with no state-specific approaches.[22] In *Confederate Reckoning: Power And Politics In The Civil War South* (2010), Stephanie McCurry explains how the architects of the Confederacy defined the nation's people and purpose She argues that the Confederate Republic was a victim of those excluded from its founders' vision of what it should be—a white man's republic founded on slavery. McCurry does refer to degrees of pro/anti-secession sentiments within the South, but mentions no real state-specific differences.[23]

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[20] Dew, *Apostles of Disunion*, 3, 9-21, 74-81. The secession commissioners were men from five Lower South states sent to other slave states to try to convince them to secede. The states he examines directly include South Carolina, Alabama, and Virginia. He also refers to Texas and Georgia.
[21] Davis, "Striking a Revolution's First Blow," in *Inside the Confederate Nation*, eds. Gordon and Inscoe, 31-39.
[22] Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 1-25, 100-102, 240-248.
[23] McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 1-25, 29-35, 53-63, 358-361. In considering Texas, she attributes Texas's differences to a unionist governor and the public vote to ratify secession.

The Four Counties

Initially named Harrisburg County, Harris County was established in 1836 by the Republic of Texas's First Congress. The name was later changed to Harris County in 1839, and the boundaries it had at the beginning of the Civil War had been established the previous year. The city of Houston had been established in the same year as the county, and it became the county seat the next year; it also served as the temporary capital of the Republic of Texas until 1839. By the time of the Civil War, the county had a population of a little over 9,000, and its seat had a population of around 4,800[24]. Many of its early settlers were from other parts of the South, and they brought their slaves with them. By the time of the Civil War, Harris County had a slave population of between 1,000 and 3,000. There were also a number of French and German immigrants in the county, most of whom had arrived during the 1840s, settled north and west of Houston and were focused primarily on dairy production. The county was near, but not quite on, the Gulf Coast, and it was more inclined to cattle and horse raising than crops like cotton. And, on Election Day in 1860, the majority of the voting population—much to the delight of the strongly Democratic *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*—voted for proslavery, states' rights Democrat John C. Breckinridge.[25]

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[24] *Handbook of Texas Online*, Margaret Swett Henson, "Harris County," accessed April 1, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch07; "Texas Almanac: City Population History From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/topics/ctypophistweb2010.pdf; "Texas Almanac: Population History of Counties From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf; *Handbook of Texas Online*, David G. McComb, "Houston, TX," accessed April 15, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdh03.

[25] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 43-48; "Democracy Triumphant!" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 8, 1860; Note: Breckinridge was one of two Democratic candidates for president in 1860, and one of 4 presidential candidates total. The others were Stephen Douglas (Democrat), Abraham Lincoln (Republican), and John Bell (Constitutional Union).

Like Harris County, Bexar County was established shortly after Texas's independence in 1836. However, the area's local history dated to the early eighteenth century with the founding of San Antonio de Béxar—which became the capital of Spanish Texas in 1773. San Antonio had become the farthest west point of settlement when the first Anglo-American colonists arrived in 1821, though the county's small population remained mostly Tejano through the Texas Revolution, when the town became the county seat in 1837. By the eve of the Civil War, the county had a population of 14, 454, with San Antonio at a population of 8, 253. This population was composed of individuals of Mexican descent, Anglo-Americans who had arrived during the 1820s and 1830s, and later immigrants from the Lower South and Germany. Slaves only made up roughly ten percent of the county's population—at 1,395—and the county's large German population made for a noticeable antislavery sentiment. Slavery, then, played a relatively small role in Bexar County's economy compared to other counties, with ranching and basic agriculture—including corn, oats, and beans—the core staples. The county was relatively split on both the 1860 presidential election and secession. This produced a great deal of political back-and-forth between two of the county's papers, the Democratic-leaning *Daily Ledger and Texan* and the Unionist *Alamo Express*.[26]

Harrison County, Texas, meanwhile, was established in 1839 and organized in 1842, and the boundaries it had on the eve of the Civil War were established in 1846. The town of Marshall

[26] *Handbook of Texas Online,* Margaret Swett Henson, "Harris County," accessed April 1, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Laurie E. Jasinski, "San Antonio, TX," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hds02; "Texas Almanac: City Population History From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/topics/ctypophistweb2010.pdf; "Texas Almanac: Population History of Counties From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf ; "Untitled," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, September 4, 1860. Note: The *Daily Ledger and Texan* was based in San Antonio, Bexar County and edited by A. E. MacLeod during the war. The *Alamo Express* was also based in San Antonio, Bexar County and edited by James P. Newcomb.

was founded in 1841 and named the county seat the following year. Its population reached around 4,000 on the eve of the war. Among the richest counties in Texas in 1860, Harrison County had a population of 15,001, a number that included 8,784 slaves that accounted for 59% of the population overall. This was a county dominated by slaveholders, as most of its population originally hailed from other parts of the slaveholding South. Considered part of East Texas, Harrison County, like Harris County, did see some cattle and horse production, but on the whole it was much more heavily inclined toward the production of corn and cotton. While possessing a larger population and a different economic base, Harrison County leaned the same way politically as Harris County: The *Texas Republican*, a strongly Democratic paper, praised the county's roughly 300-vote majority in favor of Breckinridge as a "Glorious Victory!!!"[27]

Unlike Harris, Bexar, and Harrison counties, Dallas County was established by the State Legislature in 1846, roughly a year after annexation. The town of Dallas had been established roughly four years prior, and had served as the temporary county seat, with the distinction becoming permanent in 1850. By 1860, it boasted a population of 8,665, of which 1,074 were slaves, giving the county one of the state's smaller slave populations. The town of Dallas, meanwhile, had a fairly diverse, if small, population by 1860, with French, Belgian, Swiss, German, and free African-American residents living with and alongside white Texan. In terms of crops, cotton was fairly minor compared to corn and wheat—which put the county on a slightly different economic path than either Harris or Harrison Counties. And yet, despite its smaller

[27] *Handbook of Texas Online*, Randolph B. Campbell, "Harrison County," accessed April 15, 2019. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch08; "Texas Almanac: City Population History From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/topics/ctypophistweb2010.pdf; "Texas Almanac: Population History of Counties From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 43-48; "Glorious Victory!!! Texas the Banner State of the Union. From Thirty to Forth Thousand Majority For Breckinridge and Lane." *Texas Republican*, November 10, 1860. The *Texas Republican* was based out of Marshall, Texas, and edited by R.W. Loughery during the war.

population and more varied agricultural system, Dallas County also leaned in a similar—if less intense—direction to both Harris and Harrison Counties; their response to Lincoln's electoral victory in 1860 was to call it "The evil days, so dreaded by our forefathers and the early defenders of the Constitution…the day of visitation and of wrath"![28]

Taken together, the selection of Harris, Harrison, Dallas, and Bexar Counties is intended to ensure diversity on several fronts. The counties themselves are located in the south, east, north, and west of the state, respectively, providing a measure of geographic diversity.[29] In addition, the counties are relatively diverse in terms of founding dates: three were formally established during the Republic of Texas era, while the fourth, Dallas County, was established after annexation. In addition, Bexar County, one of the three established during the Republic, had organizational roots in Mexican Texas.[30] Between them, the counties are also politically diverse in two main respects, which are visible in their active newspapers. The counties include the full spread of Democratic opinion on the eve of the Civil War. And when it came to the issue of secession, two of the counties (Dallas and Bexar) had noticeable Unionist sentiments, Bexar County especially.[31] Between them, the counties also represent approximately 7.85% of the

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[28] *Handbook of Texas Online*, Lisa C. Maxwell, "Dallas County," accessed February 13, 2020. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcd02; "Texas Almanac: City Population History From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/topics/ctypophistweb2010.pdf; "Texas Almanac: Population History of Counties From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf; *Handbook of Texas Online,* Jackie McElhaney and Michael V. Hazel, "Dallas, TX", accessed February 13, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdd01; "The Election of Lincoln," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860. The *Dallas Herald* was based in Dallas, Texas, founded in 1849, and run by editors C. R. Pryor and J. W. Swindells during the war.

[29] See 1860 census map on page 23.

[30] *Handbook of Texas Online,* Margaret Swett Henson, "Harris County," accessed April 1, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Lisa C. Maxwell, "Dallas County," accessed February 13, 2020. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcd02; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Randolph B. Campbell, "Harrison County," accessed April 15, 2019. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch08.

[31] "Union Mass Meeting In Dallas," *Dallas Herald*, January 2, 1861; "Public Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 28, 1860; Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas*, 62-66; "To-Morrow," *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860; "The Programme," *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860; "National Union Ticket," *Alamo Express*, September 17,

state's total population, between 6.78% and 7.89% of the total slave population, and around 1,172* of the state's slaveholders.[32]Altogether, this diversity allows for more to be said about the degrees to which Texas's independent streak was developing on the ground and how Texans as a whole thought and talked about secession.

1860; "Nominees of the National Democracy," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860; "Voice of Bexar," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860; "Public Meeting," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860; David Dary, *Red Blood & Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998): 68. For more regarding newspapers and political opinion in the mid-19th century United States more broadly, including the debate over its extent, see: Joel H. Silbey's *The American Political Nation, 1838-1893*, Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin's *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics In The Nineteenth Century*, and Mark E. Neely Jr.'s *The Bounaries of American Political Culture in the Civil War Era*. For a more Western view, see chapter three, "Politics", of David Dary's *Red Blood & Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West*.

[32] *Handbook of Texas Online,* Margaret Swett Henson, "Harris County," accessed April 1, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Lisa C. Maxwell, "Dallas County," accessed February 13, 2020. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcd02; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Randolph B. Campbell, "Harrison County," accessed April 15, 2019. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch08; "Texas Almanac: City Population History From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/topics/ctypophistweb2010.pdf; "Texas Almanac: Population History of Counties From 1850-2000," accessed April 1, 2019, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf. Percentages/numbers calculated by author—number of slaveholders excludes Harris County, for which figures were unavailable.

Chapter 1: The Moment of Decision

Political Background

Before there could be any praise or criticism of the presidential candidates, they had to be nominated by their respective parties. The Democratic Party held its nominating convention in Charleston, South Carolina, bringing together a volatile mix of pro-Douglas popular sovereignty Democrats and pro-Breckinridge states' rights Democrats. The situation exploded when the two sides collided over the platform and fifty delegates bolted the convention after Douglas's supporters got their way. After the remaining delegates failed (repeatedly) to nominate anyone, the delegates decided to try again in Baltimore in six weeks and adjourned. Six weeks later, the same delegates bolted again—followed by most of the Upper South's delegates and a few proslavery northern delegates—and nominated John Breckinridge on a states' rights platform in their own breakaway convention. The remaining delegates nominated Stephen Douglas, complaining all the while that the breakaway convention would cost them the election. Meanwhile, the Republican nominating convention in Chicago started with a potential struggle between supporters of William Seward and Abraham Lincoln, but Lincoln was nominated and the platform was agreed upon without much contention. To add to the mess of three candidates from the two major parties, a third party—the Constitutional Unionists—attempted to take advantage of the situation and nominated John Bell on a deliberately non-contentious platform.[33]

One of the failed nominees for the Constitutional Union party was Sam Houston, the governor of Texas. The year before, in 1859, Texans had elected him as governor in a 36,527 to 27,691 vote. Houston's election came at a time when Texas as a whole had otherwise been

[33] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry Of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988): 213-233.

following the line of the proslavery Southern Democrats and represented a brief point in time when pro-Union Texas voters coalesced into serious political opposition and elected a Unionist to the governorship. Even during both of his terms as the president of the Republic of Texas, Houston had been committed to the United States, helping engineer the annexation of Texas, and this did not change while he was governor. However, Houston's election in 1859 would mean that Texas would enter the period between the 1860 presidential election and its secession as the only state with a governor opposed to secession.[34]

The presidential election of 1860 was particularly important in the four counties—and Texas, the South, and the Union as a whole. The parties had held their county conventions, selected their delegates for other conventions and electors for the presidential election, and chosen nominees for earlier state and local elections; the results were running in the papers by August 1860. Political business in Texas had so far looked like it did elsewhere in the mid-nineteenth century South, while attention was very quickly turning to the presidential contest in November. Sections of the papers listing the party candidates for president and vice president and the party platform, as well as presidential electors, ran for weeks prior to the election, and electors, as was their habit, were travelling the state in support of Breckinridge's candidacy. Papers also discussed the relative strength of each candidate, praising their preferred candidate and denouncing the others. [35]

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[34] Baum, *The Shattering of Texas Unionism*, 7-41; Buenger, *Secession and The Union In Texas*, 1-10; McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 51-56.

[35] "Election Returns," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, August 28, 1860; "For President…" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, August 28, 1860; Silbey, *The American Political Nation*, 46-71; " "Just Previous to the Election."," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, August 28, 1860; "Untitled," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, September 1, 1860; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 43-48; "Let Us Reason Together," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, September 1, 1860; "For President…" *Texas Republican*, August 11, 1860; "Vote of Harrison County," *Texas Republican*, August 18, 1860; "Presidential Prospects," *Texas Republican*, October 27, 1860; "Mr. Douglas As A Black Republican," *Texas Republican*, October 13, 1860; "The Election," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "Opposition Electoral Tickets," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860; "National Union Ticket," *Alamo Express*, September 3, 1860; "Nominees of the National Democracy," *Alamo Express*, September 3, 1860.

The Lead-up To the Election

The *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* contended that there was no need for this electioneering, since their chosen candidate, Breckinridge, was guaranteed to win the state. The *Texas Republican*, though similarly confident, took time and space to thoroughly denounce the other Democratic candidate for president, Douglas. The *Dallas Herald*, meanwhile, heaped insults on all of the candidates who were not Breckinridge, be they Douglas, Bell, or any number of attempts at a fusion ticket. Bexar County, however had multiple strains of political preference, with the more Democratic-leaning *Daily Ledger and Texan* promoting Breckinridge and his Southern rights platform, while the *Alamo Express* explicitly declared itself to be for both the Constitutional Union ticket and the "regular" Democratic ticket—i.e., both Bell *and* Douglas—though they claimed that the presence of two Democratic candidates meant that "—clearly…the presidential contest is between Bell and Lincoln".[36]

In short, the activity and interest around the presidential election was typical of the period.[37] What was said about what might happen if Abraham Lincoln were to win, however, was not. Though supremely confident that Breckinridge would win Texas, the focus of the

[36]; "To The Polls!" *Texas Republican*, November 3, 1860; "Constitutional Democratic Platform," *Texas Republican*, October 13, 1860; ; "Presidential Prospects," *Texas Republican*, October 27, 1860; Untitled, *Texas Republican*, October 6, 1860; "Mr. Douglas As A Black Republican," *Texas Republican*, October 13, 1860; "The Election," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "Opposition Electoral Tickets," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860; "Douglas Is To Support The Black Republican Administration," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Dead," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Mr. Bell And His Record," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Facts To Be Remembered!" *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Official Returns," *Dallas Herald*, November 7, 1860; "Presidential Election," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, September 6, 1860; "The Stone Which the Builders Rejected Is Become The Head of the Corner," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, September 12, 1860; "National Union Ticket," *Alamo Express*, September 3, 1860; "Nominees of the National Democracy," *Alamo Express*, September 3, 1860; "Prospects of Presidential Candidates," *Alamo Express*, September 3, 1860.

[37] For more information regarding politics and political participation in the mid-19th century United States more broadly, including the debate over its extent, see: Joel H. Silbey's *The American Political Nation, 1838-1893*, Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin's *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics In The Nineteenth Century*, and Mark E. Neely Jr.'s *The Bounaries of American Political Culture in the Civil War Era*.

Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph was on the possibility of a Lincoln victory. In one series, the paper ran a number of responses received after it asked prominent men what they thought Texas should do in the event a Republican won the election—A. M. Lewis advised that "Texas withdraw from the Union in such an emergency…" without stopping to wait for anyone else. Another response also offered secession as an option, but as a last resort. Yet another individual, former Republic of Texas Interim President and Harris County resident David G. Burnet, called secession without giving the Republicans (should they win) a chance to do anything "…not only unpatriotic and premature, but positively absurd." Burnet, though, did advocate for a united South to secede should Republicans express open hostility toward the South once in power. The newspaper's own editorial board preferred secession as well, even though they referred to immediate secession as impulsive. In these arguments for immediate secession irrespective of other states' plans, Texas's independent streak was beginning to surface.[38]

On the surface, many of these reactions to the specter of a Republican Administration looked similar to those associated with other proslavery views across the slaveholding South. But if we look closer, we can find hints of Texas's history and experiences in both the problem of and solution to Lincoln's election. A. M. Lewis, for instance, wrote in late October 1860 that state leaders should consider immediate secession without waiting for other states to make a move, and wanted to "continue the star with five points against the united anathemas of the world" as an independent republic (again). Guy M. Bryan believed Republican antislavery policies to be tyrannical and argued that Texas's past as an independent republic both entitled it to and meant that it should secede should Lincoln be elected. Others encouraged their fellow

[38] "The Election," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?- Response of Ex-President David G. Burnet," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 1, 1860.

Texans to "resume, with proper dignity…our original position as a Sovereign Republic" as quickly as possible, referring to the speed with which Texans responded to Mexican incursions on their rights in the 1830s. Even those who wanted to wait and see what Lincoln would do once in office framed their recommendations in Texan terms. Should the worst come to fruition and Texas end up seceding, an unidentified author wrote, Texas should "abandon confederacies forever" and return to its former status as an independent Republic. Secession without consideration of other states was very much the response of choice.[39]

Though extremely confident in Breckinridge and closely focused on what would/should happen in Texas if Lincoln were to win the presidential election, the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* did find space and time to address the other candidates, namely Steven Douglas. In the same article in which they explained what they saw as a lack of need to push Breckinridge's candidacy, the paper also denounced advocates of a "fusion" ticket—which would have established an anti-Lincoln ticket—as a hopeless cause. They claimed that a fusion ticket headed by Douglas (or Bell, for that matter) had no hope of winning "Oregon, California, New York, and the entire South." In addressing the fusionists' idea that Texas should vote for whichever candidate had the best chance of winning overall, the paper's editors revealed that they were not the only ones who denounced Douglas: they claimed "Gen. Houston once pronounced [Douglas] a traitor, and said he ought to be hung." They also denounced Bell for having nothing in common with Texas politics. They were certainly concerned with a possible Lincoln victory, and saw an

[39] "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?- Response of Ex-President David G. Burnet," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 1, 1860; "What Shall Be Done? Response of Hon. Guy M. Bryan," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 1, 1860; "Letter From W.R. Regan. What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 8, 1860; "What Shall the South Do If Lincoln Be Elected?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 8, 1860; "What Shall Be Done? Response of Judge P. W. Gray," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 13, 1860; "What Shall Be Done? Response of Ashbel Smith," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph,* November 24, 1860.

anti-Breckinridge fusion ticket—which could help Lincoln win—as enough of a problem to be worth addressing.[40]

In Harrison County, the *Texas Republican*'s attention was somewhat more focused on the popularity of the Breckinridge/Lane ticket compared to the misfortunes of the Bell and Douglas campaigns. The paper made repeated references to the unpopularity of the latter two candidates, and spent a fair bit of space going after the Northern Democrat Douglas, who one article called "A Black Republican."[41] In light of the problem with the latter two campaigns, the paper believed that Breckinridge was all but guaranteed to win Texas and the country. It did not give much thought to Lincoln's prospects except to say he had no chance in Texas and did not believe it possible for him to win the election overall. Only in the weeks between the election and the paper's receipt of the official results did the paper begin to think seriously about what to do if Lincoln was elected. The editors then—quite predictably—expressed an intense dislike of the idea. Still, much like the editors of the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, those of the *Texas Republican* began to devote a great deal of space to how the individual states alone had the right to decide if they would stay in the Union or secede from it, and that Texas alone had the right to make that call for Texas.[42]

In Dallas County, however, there were a couple of other matters which seemed to take precedence over discussion about what should be done in the event of Lincoln's election as president. At the beginning of October 1860, when the other papers were deep into their

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[40] "The Election," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860.

[41] "Mr. Douglas As A Black Republican," *Texas Republican*, October 13, 1860. The term "Black Republican" was a derogatory term frequently used by proslavery Democrats to refer to Republicans—Abraham Lincoln especially—on account of their supposedly abolitionist stance.

[42] "Public Speaking," *Texas Republican*, October 27, 1860; "Presidential *Prospects*," *Texas Republican*, October 27, 1860; Untitled, *Texas Republican*, October 6, 1860; "Mr. Douglas As A Black Republican," *Texas Republican*, October 13, 1860; "The Presidential Context," *Texas Republican*, November 17, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Texas Republican*, November 17, 1860.

discussions of the presidential candidates, the *Dallas Herald* had just resumed printing after its office—along with much of Dallas and Northern Texas—had been destroyed in a series of fires over the summer. In the October 10th issue, their first after the fires, the *Herald*'s editors thanked their friends and patrons profusely for raising funds to help them erect new offices, explained where their new printing press and related materials had come from, and proclaimed that "…we have succeeded in establishing ourselves in a well-stocked office, of entirely new material, with an increased subscription…"[43] Albeit a week later than planned, the *Dallas Herald* was back and more than ready to dig into election politics.[44]

And, much like the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, the *Dallas Herald* saw a need to both address and denounce Douglas's and Bell's candidacies—along with a seeming proliferation of fusion and opposition tickets—more than promote the Breckenridge/Lane ticket. In referring to the "weak and disorganized Opposition party of this State" they listed and denounced no less than five electoral tickets: one with Governor Sam Houston at the top, which fell apart quickly; one including a Pease, Norton, Latimer, and a fourth individual, which also collapsed fairly quickly; a third to which they referred as the "genu-i-n-e Bell Ticket" which was dismissed by the state government in Austin; a fusion ticket that quickly overwhelmed the other four electoral tickets; and a fifth headed by one George W. Smythe. When it came to the Constitutional Union ticket of Bell and Everett, the paper denounced their ideas, but praised them for being "honest to a fault" about their desire to destroy democracy even though Bell had "been on every side of every question, except place-hunting" and shared almost no sentiments with the people of Texas. Meanwhile, the *Dallas Herald* did not seem to consider Douglas much of a Democrat at all, even

[43] "The Herald and Late Improvements," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860.
[44] "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "To Our Patrons," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860; "Our New Dress," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860; "The Herald and Late Improvements," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860.

though he had been nominated by the "regular" Democratic convention. Prior to the election, they made multiple references to a statement by Douglas that, should Lincoln be elected, he would back that administration whole-heartedly—for them, this meant that Douglas and his supporters were basically Republicans in all but name and a Republican victory, even if it was a "Republican" administration, would destroy Texans' way of life.[45]

When it came to what-ifs and questions of secession, the *Dallas Herald* spent very little time and space on the matter until the weeks between the election and their confirmation of the results—not unlike the *Texas Republican*. They did occasionally bring up disunion, but did so more in the context of claiming that a number of candidates—Breckinridge included—earned support from secessionists. Concerns about Lincoln's election and how Texas should respond to it began to creep in as the election grew closer, however. The editors likened the looming possibility of Lincoln's election to a coming apocalypse and claimed that "…some of the [Texas] counties are being placed on a war basis…determined to be prepared, if the worst should come…" They also began to consider secession, particularly as an option if Texas and the other slaveholding states were unable to "secure our rights, in the Union if we can". Once the election took place, these sentiments and concerns intensified, with the paper declaring that, in the face of an antislavery administration in Washington, "the Southern States [Texas included] can dissolve peaceable (we know what we say) their union with the North"—they were fully aware this meant disunion. They even went so far as to refer to the coming days of "dominant Republicanism" as "the *dies irae*—the day of visitation and of wrath"—basically the biblical end of days. These

[45] "Opposition Electoral Tickets," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860; "Douglas Is To Support The Black Republican Administration," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Dead," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Mr. Bell And His Record," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Facts To Be Remembered!" *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "The Fusion Ticket For Texas," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Gone Over To The Black Republicans," *Dallas Herald*, October 24, 1860; "The Election," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860.

views of Lincoln and the Republican Party intensified in the days following Lincoln's election. "The evil days [were declared to be] upon us" wrote the *Herald*'s editor, but "they are the dark hours that usher in the brighter morn…" so long as Texas and the South stood together.[46]

Unlike the other counties, editorial opinion in Bexar County was decidedly split when it came to the presidential candidates. Both Breckinridge and Bell earned supporters. The respective papers—the *Daily Ledger and Texan* and the *Alamo Express*—went in different directions as each promoted one of the two candidates while taking the occasional jab at the other paper. The *Alamo Express* called on "the conservative men of the South to rally to the support of Mr. Bell as the only man who can defeat Lincoln" while the *Daily Ledger and Texan*'s editor promoted Breckinridge for his consistency in political opinion and proclaimed him to be the "only man that can be elected, if the election goes to the House". The *Daily Ledger and Texan* also noted the regular proceedings of the local Breckinridge club and regularly encouraged its readers to join. Meanwhile, the *Alamo Express* remarked that a recent lack of political commentary on the part of papers like the *Daily Ledger and Texan* indicated that "the loud, clear ring of the great Union Bell…falls like a funeral knell on their ears" They proclaimed that Texans "have demanded Union, and they will maintain it, in spite of the Union-Splitters" and that the Bell/Everett ticket was the way to achieve this. The editors of the *Alamo Express* were optimistic about the ticket's chances beyond Texas as well, and heartily promoted the meetings of a local Union club.[47]

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[46] "Mr. Douglas On The Stand," *Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860; "Unititled," *Dallas Herald*, October 31, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, October 31, 1860; "The Right Spirit And The Right Doctrine," *Dallas Herald*, October 31, 1860; "The Terrors of Submission," *Dallas Herald*, November 7, 1860; "The Election Of Lincoln," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860

[47] "Presidential Election," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, September 4, 1860; "National Union Ticket," *Alamo Express*, September 3, 1860; "Prospects of Presidential Candidates," *Alamo Express*, September 3, 1860; "Untitled," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, September 4, 1860; "What Our Daily Papers Say," *Alamo Express*, September 3, 1860; "Platform," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, September 11, 1860; "Election In Texas. What It Proves," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, September 14, 1860; "A Call For A Straight-out Douglas Ticket," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, October 3, 1860;

Regardless of who they were backing, the Bexar County newspapers engaged with the possibility of Lincoln's election as well as how to respond to it. The *Alamo Express* repeatedly proclaimed secession, including secession in the event of Lincoln's election, to be empathetically wrong. Lincoln's election alone, should it happen, was not justification enough to leave the Union. The editors denounced both Republicans and Breckinridge Democrats in similar terms and argued that both Bell and Douglas were better because they did not advocate secession or disunion. They also continually drew connections between Breckinridge Democrats, their supporting papers, and disunion, connections that the *Daily Ledger and Texan* regularly dismissed as either outdated references or outright lies. However, the *Daily Ledger and Texan*'s editors did publish and promote the argument that "if Mr. Lincoln was elected…it would be the duty of the South to secede at once" These sentiments intensified as Election Day arrived and as the results began to come in from across the country. Lincoln's apparent victory led Breckinridge Democrats to intensify their arguments for secession even as the Constitutional Unionists and Douglas supporters persisted in their sentiments, even to the extent that "If a disruption of the government should take place…we wish to be understood as among those who have opposed disunion."[48]

"Breckinridge Club Meeting," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, October 8, 1860; "Untitled," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, October 1, 1860; "The Case Stated," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, September 25, 1860; "The Union Electoral Ticket," *Alamo Express*, September 10, 1860; "Cheering Signs," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860; "Union Meeting," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860.

[48] "Speech of Judge Douglas," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860; "A Roman Catholic View," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860; "Cheering Signs," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860; "Keep It Before The People," *Alamo Express*, September 24, 1860; "Why Was Breckinridge Included? *Alamo Express*, October 15, 1860; "The Speaking In Front Of Menger's Last Night," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, October 4, 1860; "Correction," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, October 4, 1860; "The Election," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 5, 1860; "Election Returns," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 8, 1860; "To-Morrow," *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860; "The Programme," *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860.

The Results and the Committee Meetings

Having declared "the canvass is now closed" the *Alamo Express* ran its last issue on November 5th, promising that the editors would try to bring the paper back as a more regular one as soon as they could.[49] Once the election results were certain, though, the *Daily Ledger and Texan* and many residents of Bexar County turned to the question of what to do now that Lincoln had been elected. The paper advocated calm, level-headed discussion of potential next steps, on the grounds that there was a tiny—though highly unlikely—chance that Lincoln would order the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law and ignore the more radical Republicans. Still, secession loomed large in the pages of the *Daily Ledger and Texan*. In reporting on the mass meeting that took place in Bexar County on November 24th, the editors noted that said meeting had been held "In order that, the sovereign state of Texas, may provide the ways and means of exerting her Sovereignty" in the face of coming Republican rule. They also noted that not everyone at the meeting was for secession, and that there was a diversity of opinion in the series of speeches given at the meeting, with some men calling for prompt secession and others advising that Texans wait until Lincoln was sworn in before deciding on a course of action. The *Daily Register and Texan* did note, though, that the two resolutions produced—one calling for Governor Houston to call a special session of the legislature to approve a State convention, the other to publish the proceedings of the meeting—were unanimously accepted.[50]

[49] "To Our Readers," *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860. Note: they did eventually bring the paper back, but it was destroyed by pro-Confederate groups in May of 1861. See: David Dary, *Red Blood & Black Ink: Journalism in the Old West*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998): 68.

[50] "To Our Readers," *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860; "The Election and Its Results," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 15, 1860; "Secession," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 20, 1860; "Public Meeting," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860; "Voice of Bexar," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860.

The *Texas Republican* and a number of the residents of Harrison County, meanwhile, took the election results and turned immediately to the question of what to do about Lincoln's election. Reporting on a mass meeting in Marshall, the paper explained that those in attendance had called for a mass meeting to take place "on Saturday, the first day of December next" to figure out what the next step should be, and that, should it be necessary, "maintain…her independence out of the Union". Though not explicitly calling for secession, the people of Marshall at least believed it to be a possible way to preserve Texas's independence. They also favored the idea that, whatever ended up being done, it needed to be done prior to Lincoln's inauguration or else "the people, at last weary of the protracted struggle, will sink into submission". Texas thus could not afford to wait to act. Secession, should the people deem it necessary, probably needed to happen quickly.[51]

This fear of submission to "Black Republicanism," as the *Texas Republican* called the looming Republican government, came from a fear that if the South did not act, it would lose its way of life to the Republicans who were intent on destroying slavery. Texans referred to acquiescence to the new administration as submission, which was akin to allowing the violation of Texas's sovereignty. Lincoln's election seemed to foretell the destruction of the southern way of life by a government Texas Senator Louis T. Wigfall, who happened to be from Marshall, claimed would subvert the Constitution, abolish slavery, and install a new economic system of free labor across the United States, regardless of local white populations' wishes. In addition, the editors of the *Dallas Herald* went so far as to list precisely what they believed the effects of submission would be: immediate danger to slavery, "a powerful consolidation of the strength of

[51] "The Election," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "Public Meeting At Marshall," *Texas Republican*, November 24, 1860; "The Feeling in Texas," *Texas Republican*, November 24, 1860; "The Demands of the Crisis," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860.

the Abolition party at the North", federal support of abolitionist and abolitionist-encouraged actions within the South, and the eventual destruction of the South itself. In Bexar County, the *Daily Ledger and Texan* made similar claims. Its editors proclaimed that these "…enemies of the Union…" would "…compromise away constitutional right…[and]…submit to wrong and injustice" and enable the destruction of Texas and the South. In their eyes, submission was worse than disunion. Both Senator Wigfall and the *Dallas Herald*'s editors feared that letting Lincoln and the Republicans be sworn in would lead to the total destruction of Texas and the South. It would also allow for more of the abolitionist-set fires and slave insurrections the *Texas Republican* and *Houston Tri-Weekly Texan* had reported on over the summer and which the *Dallas Herald* had been a victim of.[52]

Allegedly, cities and towns across Texas had been reduced to ashes, and multiple plans for slave insurrections had been uncovered, much to the terror of white residents. In its return to print after the fires, the *Dallas Herald* claimed the fires were the fault of "the evil machinations of desperate lawless men, who corrupted our slaves, destroyed our property, and desired to murder both men and women, old and young". Abolitionists and their allies had gone to Texas explicitly to "tamper with the slaves," added the editors, and encourage them to target white Texans. Meanwhile, the North—at least according to Texans—condemned Texans' responses, be they clamping down on their slaves or hanging those they deemed responsible, which the *Dallas Herald* argued was "…not more so [murderous]…than the insurrection, and burning, under the direction of those associated with Mr. Bewley," a Northern Methodist minister and

[52] "The Demands of the Crisis," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 13-27; James M. Smallwood, "The Impending Crisis: A Texas Perspective on the Causes of the Civil War," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009): 44-46; "Incendiarism and Plots of Negro Insurrection In Texas," *Texas Republican*, August 11, 1860; "The Recent Fires," *Texas Republican*, September 8, 1860; "The Terrors of Submission," *Dallas Herald*, November 7, 1860; "The Election," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 5, 1860;

supposed out-and-out abolitionist allegedly involved with the fires/insurrections.[53] Though the fires were found to have been caused by a combination of dried out wooden buildings and spontaneously combusting phosphorus matches, at the end of the hot summer months, many Texans were unconvinced. They continued to associate fires with abolitionists and claimed that, if Texas did not act promptly—or worse, if Texas submitted to a Republican administration—then Republicans would continue this pattern of destruction. In the words of an article published in the *Texas Republican* on the day of the public vote on secession, the question of secession versus submission boiled down to a single question: "Are you freemen or slaves?" Submission meant slavery, and many Texans would rather leave the Union than submit[54].

The tilt toward secession intensified in Dallas County over the couple of weeks after the presidential election as the results became more certain. The *Dallas Herald* had briefly discussed and approved of secession prior to the election, but once Lincoln had been elected, prompt action with the end goal of secession became the order of the day. To the paper—and what they claimed to be the vast majority of Dallas County—there was no point in waiting until Lincoln was inaugurated, since the antislavery aims of the incoming administration were already self-evident. And Dallas County did not wait: a public meeting was called and held November 17th, only a week and a half after the election to discuss Texas's next steps. That meeting produced a series of unanimously adopted resolutions that expressed the ongoing distaste for submission, a desire

[53] "Hanging of Anthony Bewley," *Dallas Herald*, October 31, 1860.
[54] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 13-27; James M. Smallwood, "The Impending Crisis: A Texas Perspective on the Causes of the Civil War," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009): 44-46; Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas*, 55-57; "The Terrors of Submission," *Dallas Herald*, November 7, 1860; "Incendiarism and Plots of Negro Insurrection In Texas," *Texas Republican*, August 11, 1860; "The Condition of the Country-Reflections," *Texas Republican*, August 25, 1860; "Just Previous to the Election," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, August 28, 1860; "Will You Fail to Vote To-Day?" *Texas Republican*, February 23, 1861; "The Herald and Late Improvements," *Dallas Herald*, October 10, 1860; "The Texas Excitement," *Dallas Herald*, October 24, 1860; "Hanging of Anthony Bewley," *Dallas Herald*, October 31, 1860.

for prompt action—especially on the part of Governor Houston to convene the state legislature to discuss the state's next move—and a call for Texas to secede and "take her place among the free and independent Nations of the earth." By the time the public meeting reconvened December 1st, sentiments regarding secession had only intensified. They were on display in a parade of "fifteen young girls…selected as the representatives of the Southern states" that preceded the meeting Those sentiments were also on display in the meeting's resolution, which called on Texas to "arise, declare their independence, and prepare to defend their liberties." Even more so than before the election, white Texans moved toward secession in the wake of Lincoln's victory.[55]

In Harris County, meanwhile, white commitments to disunion deepened once the results of the presidential election were certain. Though its editors expressed nominal respect for those who wanted Texas to wait for the Republicans to act first, the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* believed—in line with what they claimed to be a majority of Texas slaveholders—that "the sooner the house, divided against itself, falls, the better." The editors also claimed that a majority of the merchants believed secession was the only valid option left, and that they preferred the establishment of a "Southern Confederacy" as the best method of protection. At the same time though, they referred to a large majority of individuals generally being in favor of the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas, whether as an end result or as a necessary step on the way to Texas becoming part of a "Southern Confederacy." In calling for a public meeting on the matter, though, the paper encouraged the people to be absolutely certain of what they wanted to do before moving forward. The paper believed secession—involving the re-establishment of

[55] "Untitled," *Dallas Herald,* October 31, 1860; "The Right Spirit and the Right Doctrine," *Dallas Herald,* October 31, 1860; "The Terrors of Submission," *Dallas Herald*, November 7, 1860; "The Election of Lincoln," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "The Meeting Last Saturday," *Dallas Herald*, November 28, 1860; "Public Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 28, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald,* December 5, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, December 5, 1860; "Enthusiastic Meeting At Dallas. Glorious Demonstration!" *Dallas Herald*, December 12, 1860.

Texas's formerly independent status—to be preference of the majority, but wanted that majority to be as careful as possible in taking this step.[56]

Creating a new Republic of Texas was not necessarily the end goal in and of itself. While noting their preference for re-establishing the Republic, the editors of the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* also noted that "Even many who desire to see a Southern Confederacy, look to that as to be obtained only by Texas becoming entirely independent first". One way or another, the point of doing so would be to protect Texas's slaveholding interests. Many actually opposed joining a Confederacy on these same grounds, in fact: the state's interests would only be safe, they asserted, if Texans were in charge of their own public policy. Conversely, similar arguments were used in favor of joining together with other Southern states to enable Texas to better protect itself against an ongoing "Indian problem," as well as help the state succeed in gaining recognition of independence from other governments and in negotiating with the former Federal government. Returning to the Republic of Texas—as many in Harris County hoped would happen—would strengthen Texas's negotiating position. If Texas made clear it could hold its own independently, political leaders could gain more concessions in exchange for joining a potential Southern Confederacy.[57]

The mass meeting in Harris County took place on December 1, 1860 and part of the proceedings appeared in the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*. The meeting's fruits were a set of resolutions proposed to the state at large, including recommendations for a state convention, dates, location, and electoral procedures for delegates who would attend said convention, and a call for the state's legislature to be convened. The meeting pushed for resistance of some sort to

[56] "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; "The Meeting Next Wednesday," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860.
[57] "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 25-27, 68-73.

the pending Republican government, but emphasized that, whatever form that resistance would take, it needed to be made in line with the state at large. Attendees worried in particular about Governor Sam Houston; he was reluctant to convene the legislature over the election results. The meeting's participants therefor emphasized that "Steps ought to be taken to avoid unnecessary delay, and accelerate the movement" regardless of the governor's actions or lack thereof, even if those steps were merely to develop a plan of action. Harrison County's white citizens were not alone in making these plans. In the same issue, the paper noted that it had received word of a plan drafted by several state officials in Austin that very closely resembled the one produced in the Harris County mass meeting.[58]

Harrison County's mass meeting took place a week prior and was filled with speeches claiming that Texas and the South had no other option but to "withdraw from the Union!" in order to protect their rights. The convention attendees "gave no evidence of undue excitement" but were unanimous in their insistence that the time for action had come. The resolutions produced by this meeting called for another meeting of Harrison County's citizens to decide on their next move, and also paralleled the resolutions from Harris County in calling for a state convention. In addition, the meeting proclaimed that "we to-day hoist the Lone Star Flag, as an indication that she will not submit…but will maintain if necessary her independence out of the Union". The second meeting occurred December 1 and nominated four delegates to be sent to a state convention and for the governor to call the legislature into session. Should the legislature be called, the meeting added, "the Hon. G. W. Whitmore [a state legislator] be requested to resign his seat in that body…" on the belief that "…the sentiments promulgated by him are much better adapted to a Northern than a Southern constituency". The convention and the county knew the

[58] "The Harris County Programme," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860.

direction they wished to take and did not want an uncooperative state legislator to get in the way.[59]

The Lone Star Flag, The Texas Revolution, and the Republic of Texas

From Lincoln's election through the mass meetings, one callback to Texas's past as an independent nation is particularly noteworthy: the flying of the "Lone Star Flag". The *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, the *Texas Republican*, the *Dallas Herald*, and the *Daily Ledger and Texan* noted instances of the flag being flown all across Texas, usually accompanied by expressions of "the love which many of our citizens feel for the "Lone Star," and their wish to see it again take its place independently" in some way, shape, or form. Other Texans recalled the fight for Texan independence and proclaimed, "Long may it wave".[60] These sentiments were even expressed in official resolutions from the mass meetings, including one from Harrison County's mass meeting in Marshall in November 24th:

> *Resolved*, That Texas entered the Union as a free and sovereign State, and that we to-day hoist the Lone Star Flag, as an indication that she will not submit to inequality in the Union, but will maintain if necessary her independence out of the Union. Under that Flag she was wrested from the despotism of Mexico and under it she will resist tyranny, come from what-ever source it may, acknowledging the principle that "Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God."[61]

This sentiment had already spread widely enough in Houston that the Lone Star Flag had already been flying from "the highest flag staff in Houston" for more than two weeks. One very specific detail mentioned by the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* ties directly to Texas's independent past.

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[59] "Harrison County Speaks," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; "The Mass Meeting On Saturday," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Mass Meeting—Selection of Delegates To A State Convention," *Texas Republican*, December 8, 1860.
[60] "Harrison County Speaks," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; Untitled, *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; "Brazoria County Meeting," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 24, 1860; "Letters From the People," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 29, 1860; "The Lone Star Flag Afloat In Galveston," *Dallas Herald*, November 14, 1860; "Texas Items," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "The Lone Star Flag," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 23, 1860;
[61] "Harrison County Speaks," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860.

The flag in question was the "old San Jacinto flag"—likely the very same one carried by Texas troops in the Battle of San Jacinto. Fought on April 21, 1836, the concluding engagement of the war, when Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana's troops were defeated in roughly eighteen minutes. This specific flag had been sought out "…On hearing the result of the late Presidential election…" from its current owner (at the time), one Mr. Wm. Gemmel, for the express purpose of putting it on the tallest flag pole in Houston. That this specific flag was the flag of choice shows just how powerfully the state's earlier independence resonated with the electorate.[62]

Like the other papers, the *Dallas Herald* had noted similar sentiments along with many of their accounts of where and how the flag was being flown. In noting that the Lone Star Flag had gone up in Houston, the paper added that it had been accompanied by a "Declaration of Independence". The *Herald* also noted that in several cases—Dallas County included—the hoisting of the Lone Star Flag was accompanied by calls for mass meetings to discuss the response to Lincoln's election. The paper defined the flying of the flag as "indicative of the will and desire of our people to assert their independence" rather than submit to the incoming Republican administration. The editors of the *Dallas Herald* were equally excited when the Lone Star Flag went up over the Dallas Court House, exclaiming that "The banner of the Lone Star of Texas waves in the breeze, this morning, from the Court House in this place!"[63]

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[62] "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Hoisting the Lone Star," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 27, 1860; *Handbook of Texas Online*, L.W. Kemp, "San Jacinto, Battle of", accessed April 16, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qes04. Note: the Houston flag is referred to as both the Lone Star Flag and the San Jacinto Flag, but those are quite possibly two different flags. See "Flags of the Texas Revolution," by Charles A. Spain, Jr. in *Handbook of Texas Online* for more information.

[63] "The Lone Star Flag," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "The Lone Star Flag Afloat In Galveston," *Dallas Herald*, November 14, 1860; "Texas Items," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "The Alarm," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860.

In San Antonio, Bexar County, the *Daily Ledger and Texan* noted on November 20th that they had received word of several instances of the Lone Star Flag's being raised across Texas—no doubt including those mentioned in the papers in Harris, Harrison, and Dallas County. Other examples included two flags that went up in Castroville, one raised by German residents and the other by French. Three days later, the paper informed its readers that the Lone Star Flag "…was thrown to the Breeze at 4 o'clock P.M…." in San Antonio by a group of local citizens—a little less than a day before the mass meeting took place. As previously mentioned, Bexar County was not home to as many secessionists as the other three counties. Even so, when the Lone Star Flag went up in San Antonio, it was within hours of several posters calling for a public meeting, which took place the next day. Moreover, when that meeting convened, many of those present argued that "the union was in effect dissolved" and the only option for Texans was to secede and raise the Lone Star Flag again. The notable presence of unionists did not undermine the desire of many Bexar County citizens to return to the glorious days of independence past.[64]

As for what exactly this flag looked like, the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* published a short history and description of the flag on October 27, 1860. The editors described each of the major flags flown in Texas between the revolution and annexation by the United States. They characterized the first Lone Star Flag this way: a flag "of white, red, and blue, and with a white, five-pointed star, set in a ground of red." Another version of the flag consisted of a white flag with a blue star in the middle, with the words "Liberty or Death" on one side and "Ubi Libertas habitat, ibi nostra patria est" on the other. The flag that became the official flag of the Republic

[64] "Untitled," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 20, 1860; "The Lone Star Flag," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 23, 1860; "Public Meeting," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860; "Voice of Bexar," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860; "The Lone Star Flag," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "The Lone Star Flag Afloat In Galveston," *Dallas Herald*, November 14, 1860; "Hoisting the Lone Star," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 27, 1860

of Texas in December 1836 however, was "an azure ground, with a large golden star central" Later, in 1839, a new national flag was instituted which later became the state flag.[65]

In addition to the descriptions in the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, the *Dallas Herald* ran an article just after Christmas containing a copy of the act of the Texan Congress that established the description and details of the flag. This, the editors did "for the benefit of our friends who wish to have a *real* Lone Star Flag flying":

> "Sec. 3. *Be it further enacted*, That from and after the passage of this act, the National Flag of Texas shall consist of a blue perpendicular stripe of the width of one-third of the whole length of the flag, with a white star of five points in the centre thereof, and of two horizontal stripes of equal breadth, the upper white the lower red, of the length of two thirds of the whole length of the flag…"[66]

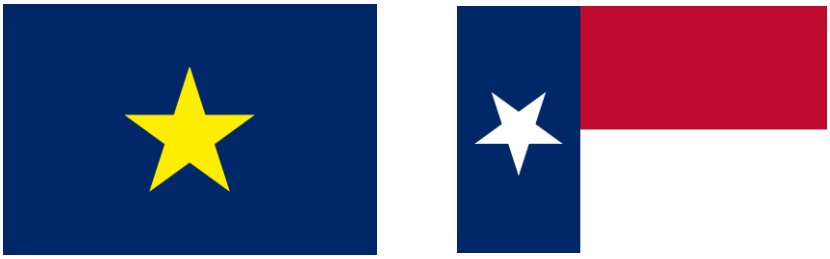
A Dallas resident, General J. J. Good, had brought the copy of the act back from Austin, which the article explained was an amendment to the act previously quoted by the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*. For many Dallas County residents, and certainly for General Good and the editors of the *Dallas Herald*, the sight of the Lone Star Flag flying from buildings across the county was wonderful. Accuracy, though, mattered too. The details of the "Lone Star Flag[s]" being raised across Texas after Lincoln's election were unclear, but the meaning of the flags and reasons for their being raised were not.[67]

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[65] "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; "What Shall Be Done? Response of Ashbel Smith," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 24, 1860; "The Lone Star Flag," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860. Note: according to the article, the Latin translates as "Where Liberty dwells, there is my country"; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Charles A. Spain, Jr., "Flags of Texas," accessed May 8, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/msf01. Note: there were multiple flags referred to as the "Lone Star Flag" across Texas's history. Images of the last one referred to in the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, as well as the second national (turned state) flag are included.

[66] "The Lone Star Flag," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860.

[67] "The Lone Star Flag," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860. Note: according to the article, the Latin translates as "Where Liberty dwells, there is my country"; "The Lone Star Flag," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Charles A. Spain, Jr., "Flags of Texas," accessed May 8, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/msf01. Note: there were multiple flags referred to as the "Lone Star Flag" across Texas's history. Images of the last one referred to in the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, as well as the second national (turned state) flag are included.



(These are the two "Lone Star" flags used by the Republic of Texas as national flags. The one on the left is the one described in the article, and the one on the right is the second national flag that later became the state flag. Both images courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.)

That these sentiments were expressed—and this particular flag raised— is no surprise. Several notable white residents of Harris County had deep roots in the old Republic of Texas. The Republic's interim president and vice-president, David G. Burnet and Lorenzo de Zavala, respectively, had come from Harris County; Burnet, in fact, still lived there. The Battle of San Jacinto had also taken place on ground that would become Harris County eight months later. In fact, the county seat of Houston had been specifically named after Sam Houston, who had commanded the Texas troops at San Jacinto and later served as the Republic of Texas's second (and fourth) president. The county's founders had also convinced the Texas Congress to name Houston the temporary capital of the Republic. That a county with such close ties to both the Texas Revolution and the Republic of Texas was so enthusiastic about secession, and the possibility of re-establishing the Republic of Texas, should come as no surprise. Even before the election, Harris County residents had framed their ideas of what to do if Lincoln was elected in terms of the Texas Revolution and the Republic of Texas.[68]

[68] *Handbook of Texas Online,* Margaret Swett Henson, "Harris County," accessed April 1, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch07; "What Shall Be Done?- Response of Ex-President David G. Burnet," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 1, 1860; *Handbook of Texas Online*, L.W. Kemp, "San Jacinto, Battle of", accessed April 16, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qes04; *Handbook of Texas Online*, David G. McComb, "Houston, TX," accessed April 15, 2019,

Residents of Bexar County had similar ties to the Texas Revolution. There, however, talk of re-establishing the Republic of Texas was practically non-existent before the presidential election and was subdued afterward as well, both in terms of the county's own enthusiasm and the *Daily Ledger and Texan*'s remarks about the rest of Texas. The exceptions to this rule consisted of a poetic song that referenced the Lone Star flag, the Alamo, and the Battle of San Jacinto; a few scattered references to the necessity of taking Texas out of the Union before Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, 1861; and a plea from a Louisiana paper for Texas to secede and join a southern Confederacy rather than secede and simply "inaugurate an independent government of her own". Given that Bexar County and the city of San Antonio played a critical role in the fight for Texas independence in 1835-6—home to both the 1835 Siege of Bexar and the Battle of the Alamo on March 6, 1836—the lack of promotion of the Republic of Texas may not make sense. However, many of San Antonio's and Bexar County's residents fled the area in the aftermath of the Texas Revolution and did not return until after Texas was annexed by the United States. In addition, the city and county suffered two separate Mexican invasions and occupations during the days of the Republic. Given the difficulties the county suffered in that era, the apparent lack of enthusiasm for re-establishing a Republic should come as no surprise.[69]

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https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdh03; Andreas V. Reichstein, *Rise of The Lone Star: The Making of Texas*, trans. Jeanne R. Wilson, (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1989): 159-160; "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Hoisting the Lone Star," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; "What Shall Be Done? Response of Hon. Guy M. Bryan," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 1, 1860; "Letter From W.R. Regan. What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 8, 1860.

[69] *Handbook of Texas Online*, Margaret Swett Henson, "Harris County," accessed April 1, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, L.W. Kemp, "San Jacinto, Battle of", accessed April 16, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qes04; *Handbook of Texas Online*, David G. McComb, "Houston, TX," accessed April 15, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdh03; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Laurie E. Jasinski, "San Antonio, TX," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hds02; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 55-73; "For The Ledger and Texan," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 11, 1861; "The Convention," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 24, 1861; "Louisiana and Texas—Mexico," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 31,

Harrison County, on the other hand, was much less enthusiastic about the possibility of re-establishing the Republic of Texas, even though residents and the staff of the *Texas Republican* were definitely pro-secession by the time the county meetings had been held. Prior to the meetings, the paper had advocated disunion as one of several options, but by the time the local and county meetings occurred, the editors had joined the growing chorus arguing that secession was Texas's only option. Though the county had been named after revolutionary leader Jonas Harrison, whose move from supporting the Mexican government to backing the Texas Revolution was deemed "enormously influential" by historians, Harrison County as a whole was more supportive of secession in general. Even then, Marshall was home to one of Texas's two United States Senators, Louis T. Wigfall, an ardent secessionist who did everything he could to drive the state out of the Union. Harrison County also had a fairly high slave population, which further oriented it toward secession. It was at a mass meeting in Marshall in late November that a resolution proclaimed "That Texas entered the Union as a free and sovereign State…but will maintain if necessary her independence out of the Union", but "out of the Union" did not automatically mean in the Republic of Texas when it came to Harrison County.[70]

Meanwhile, resurrecting the Republic of Texas came up less frequently in Dallas County. One of the resolutions passed at the November 17th mass meeting did proclaim that, rather than submit to a Republican administration, they "…decidedly prefer[red] that Texas should

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1861; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Stephen L. Hardin, "Alamo, Battle of The," accessed March 16, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qea02.

[70] "Public Meeting At Marshall," *Texas Republican*, November 24, 1860; "The Feeling in Texas," *Texas Republican*, November 24, 1860; "The Demands of the Crisis," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; "Harrison County Speaks," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; "The Mass Meeting On Saturday," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Randolph B. Campbell, "Harrison County," accessed April 15, 2019. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch08; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Cecil Harper Jr., "Harrison, Jonas," accessed May 5, 2019; Archie P. McDonald, "The Civil War and the Lone Star State: A Brief Overview," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy: Texas During the Civil War*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009): 21-23. Note: Texas's other Senator at the time was John Hemphill. Both were Democrats; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 65-70.

withdraw…and take her place among the free and independent Nations of the earth" and a speech at the same meeting referred to "…the coming glories of the Lone Star Republic…"[71], but such references were relatively rare. Dallas County itself had been established from pieces of Nacogdoches and Robertson Counties in 1846, about a year after the Republic of Texas had ceased to exist, so it had no history under that government. In addition, the town of Dallas was possibly named after George Mifflin Dallas, the Vice President under James K. Polk, who presided over the annexation of Texas. Dallas County and its residents did not hesitate to draw on the imagery of the Lone Star flag, though—the *Dallas Herald* praised its flying across the county and state. When it went up in Dallas, the editors proclaimed that "The banner of the Lone Star of Texas waves in the breeze this morning, from the top of the Court House in this place!" Though secession in general was the focus, the memory and imagery of the Republic of Texas was by no means absent.[72]

Unlike Harris and Harrison Counties, Dallas County was more split on the subject of secession, at least when it came to the timing. While the Union meeting held in Dallas on December 29th agreed with the public meeting held a month earlier that Lincoln's election warranted concern for Texas's future in the Union, many present asserted that immediate secession was not the answer. Instead, the Union meeting's resolutions called for a list of demands, including the repeal of all northern personal liberty laws, protection of slavery in the territories, and legislation on slavery by slave states alone. If those demands were rejected, then—and only then—would "pride, honor and interest [demand]…to sunder the ties that bind us

[71] "Public Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 28, 1860; "The Meeting Last Saturday," *Dallas Herald*, November 28, 1860.
[72] *Handbook of Texas Online*, Lisa C. Maxwell, "Dallas County," accessed February 13, 2020. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcd02; "The Alarm," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "Untitled," *Dallas Herald*, November 21, 1860; "Public Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 28, 1860; "Enthusiastic Meeting At Dallas. Glorious Demonstration!" *Dallas Herald*, December 12, 1860; Reichstein, *Rise of the Lone Star*, 177-182.

now, and let the irrepressible conflict come". In the minds of this group of Texas conditional unionists, secession was not yet worth the trouble—slavery was not as much of a concern to a county that drew much of its population from the Upper South, where staple crop agriculture was not paramount, and where geography and topography were less friendly to slave-produced crops like cotton.[73]

Bexar County, though, was much more split when it came to secession. The county's residents ultimately voted 827-709 in favor of secession in February 1861, but the Unionist sentiment that contributed to that comparatively small majority was fairly active going back to before the 1860 presidential election. At that point, the county's Unionist paper, the *Alamo Express*, was regularly denouncing secession and those who advocated it. The paper endorsed both the Constitutional Union ticket and "regular Democratic ticket" on the grounds that both disavowed secession. On the eve of the election, the editors proclaimed that "if a disruption of the government should take place…we wish to be understood as among those who have opposed disunion." And if a war should break out as a result, "we shall be proud to be ranked among those who fought against disunion." After the election, the Unionist sentiment persisted in Bexar County so much so that the county's November public meeting witnessed the most serious debate over the question itself. The two resolutions that came out of the meeting agreed that Governor Houston should call a special session of the legislature and that the proceedings of the meeting should be published. In the minds of a not insignificant portion of the population of Bexar County, who for the most part were not involved in slavery or the production of cotton, secession was completely unjustified.[74]

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[73] "Union Mass Meeting In Dallas," *Dallas Herald*, January 2, 1861; "Public Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 28, 1860; Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas*, 62-66.
[74] *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; "Cheering Signs," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860;

This kind of Unionism was the product of a variety of factors and was most prominent in Northern Texas—the home of Dallas County—and Western Texas, which included Bexar County. As previously mentioned, these two areas were part of what Walter Buenger termed "Upper South Texas", an area home to larger numbers of immigrants from the Upper South, as well as stronger Unionist beliefs. However, there was a great deal of diversity in this Unionism, some of which was on display at the Dallas Union meeting in late December 1860. The meeting then backed secession, but only if the incoming Republican administration actually acted concretely on the slavery question. Ultimately, though, fears from the fires over the summer, and a growing skepticism about the federal government's commitment to Texas harmed the Unionists' ability to prevail. And when secession came in February 1861, these Unionists sided with their state over the federal government they believed had failed Texas.[75]

In addition to the fires in the summer of 1860, Dallas County—along with much of Northern Texas—had another ongoing problem that both exacerbated negative perceptions of the Union and distracted from the coming State Convention. Raids from tribes like the Comanche, Kiowa, Lipan-Apache, Kickapoo, and others had been an issue on the frontier throughout the entirety of Texas history, but one particular string of incidents during the moment of decision fed into feelings about the Union. A little over a month after Lincoln's election, a call went out in the *Dallas Herald* from Northern Texas pleading for the rest of Texas to "…SEND US SOME MEN, AND MUNITIONS OF WAR…" to fight back against Indian attacks in the counties of

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"Union Meeting," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860; "Keep It Before The People," *Alamo Express*, September 24, 1860; "To-Morrow," *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860; "The Programme," *Alamo Express*, November 5, 1860; "National Union Ticket," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860; "Nominees of the National Democracy," *Alamo Express*, September 17, 1860; "Voice of Bexar," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860; "Public Meeting," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860.

[75] Buenger, *Secession and The Union In Texas*, 22-33, 42-43, 53-58, 62-79; "Union Mass Meeting In Dallas," *Dallas Herald*, January 2, 1861; "Public Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 28, 1860; "Speeches On Frontier Matters," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "From The Frontier," *Dallas Herald*, January 2, 1861.

Jack, Parker, and Palo Pinto. Then, a week after the appeal for aid, news came of a massive group of Indians including "the [Shawnee], Caddoes, Kickapoos and other tribes" who were congregating within fifty miles of Denton, Texas. Rumors circulated that these natives were dancing with scalps taken in raids in Jack and Parker Counties, and those rumors quickly reached Dallas. The city and county soon became a funnel for aid and men heading west and news coming back east. Almost as quickly, however, word arrived that this particular alarm had ultimately been false. Nevertheless, this would-be incident and others that had preceded it, led many in Dallas County and elsewhere in Northern Texas to question whether, given that "the end of all governments is to insure the protection of the life and property of their citizens" the U.S. government merited further support.[76]

The Problem of Governor Houston

If there was anything Harris, Harrison, Dallas, and Bexar Counties had in common when it came to secession—aside from the fact that a majority in each place approved of it—it was a concern over Governor Sam Houston's actions in the wake of Lincoln's election. As the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* put it in their coverage of Harris County's December 1st mass meeting, the concern was that Governor Houston would "if he does not actively co-operate," actively oppose what the paper called the "will of the people." Houston's behavior was particularly concerning to secessionists because they believed the state legislature needed to be called, and because the Texas legislature was not in session at the time, the governor had to call a special session, which Houston did not want to do. In fact, Harris County Judge P. W. Gray claimed that "A State

[76] Buenger, *Secession and the Union in Texas*, 73-79, 108-118; "An Appeal To The Citizens of Texas By The People of The Frontier," *Dallas Herald*, December 12, 1860; "Exciting News," *Dallas Herald*, December 19, 1860; "Aid For The Frontier," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "Those 900 Indians," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "Speeches On Frontier Matters," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "From The Frontier," *Dallas Herald*, January 2, 1861.

should only secede by regular action of her functionaries, calling a convention by law." Shortly afterwards, a group of pro-secession politicians sent out a call for the election of delegates from each county to a state secession convention irrespective of the governor's lack of action. The *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* even accused the governor of stalling in order to give the anti-secession "submissionists" time to promote their plans.[77]

At the same time, the *Texas Republican* criticized Houston's announcement that he would call a special session of the legislature if "an exigency arise…in which it is necessary for the State of Texas to act alone, or by a Convention," by asking why it was not yet an emergency. Neighboring states, after all, had already convened secession conventions; a few had already seceded. In noting the consistently pro-secession results of the county conventions, the paper's editors also accused Houston of doing everything in his power to keep secession from happening: he was doing nothing, they wrote, but "express[ing] his own views, but will not permit the people to do so through their organized Government". The *Texas Republican* charted its own course. Its editors called on Harrison County residents not to let the Governor's actions dissuade them. Overall, the county's white residents feared that Governor Houston would succeed in subverting the will of the people, and as the *Texas Republican* put it, "the people…will sink into submission".[78]

[77] "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 1, 1860; "The Legislature and the State Convention," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 21, 1860; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 54-56; "What Shall Be Done? Response of Judge P. W. Gray," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 13, 1860; "To The People of Texas," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 6, 1860.

[78] "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 1, 1860; "The Legislature and the State Convention," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 21, 1860; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 54-56; "What Shall Be Done? Response of Judge P. W. Gray," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 13, 1860; "To The People of Texas," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 6, 1860; "The Demands of the Crisis," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; "Gov. Houston's Address," *Texas Republican*, December 15, 1860; "Texas and Her Governor," *Texas Republican*, December 22, 1860.

Like Harris and Harrison Counties, Dallas County's leading white men had been frustrated with Houston's behavior since the election. Having previously denounced his acceptance of Lincoln's election as "find[ing] response in not more than one-tenth of the people"[79] of Texas, the editors of the *Dallas Herald* backed the call for a state convention regardless of what Governor Houston wanted. To be sure, what they, along with Harris and Harrison Counties, had originally wanted was for Governor Houston to call the state legislature into session as a preliminary move to a state convention. However, with Houston refusing to act, a group of Texans—including several from Dallas County—put out a call for a state convention, arguing that since threats against Texas and the South had reached new heights, and since neighboring states had already left the union, the people of Texas needed to act even if the governor and the legislature would not. The people of Dallas County did not see themselves as being bound to follow the line of Governor Houston: they themselves held the power to act, as they always had.[80]

In Bexar County, concern with Governor Houston's actions (or lack thereof) did not materialize until after the November 24th public meeting. One of the two resolutions there called on the governor to convene a special session of the legislature in advance of a state convention. Even then, many attendees opposed the push for a special session of the legislature at the end of December and a state convention at the beginning of January. Arguing that the governor's delay in calling the legislature into special session would actually help the secession movement, the *Daily Ledger and Texan* claimed that the immediacy of the proposed timeline was bad because it

[79] "Indignation Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 14, 1860.
[80] "A Call For A State Convention," *Dallas Herald*, December 12, 1860; "Indignation Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 14, 1860; "Gov. Houston's Address," *Texas Republican*, December 15, 1860; "Texas and Her Governor," *Texas Republican*, December 22, 1860; "Good News For The People," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860.

would not allow the people to prepare appropriately for as big a move as secession. The editors also supported Governor Houston's right to delay calling the legislature into session until he believed all of Texas agreed. However, the paper did publish a call for a state convention and particulars for the election of delegates to said convention from several dozen Texas citizens. Although they disagreed with the push for a state convention without waiting for the governor to act, the editors conceded that their patience with the governor was running thin, especially since a majority of the people wanted a state convention regardless of Lincoln's behavior once in office. And so, they added, the best way forward was to "forgo our personal views, and to cooperate with the wisdom and patriotism of the state".[81]

In response to both Governor Houston's inaction and the pro-secession politicians' call for a state convention, both Harris and Harrison Counties jumped into action. Harris County's mass meeting had already resolved to call for a state convention, but once county leaders received word of the state politicians' plan, they signaled their support. The plan as reported by the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* was this: a convention was to be held in Austin starting the fourth Monday in January, 1861; each congressional district was to elect twice its number of legislators as delegates; and those delegates were to be elected on January 8th according to normal election procedures. The *Texas Republican* printed the news of this plan a couple of weeks later, noting that it had the approval of leading state officials. In explaining those officials' justification for the plan, the newspaper's editors remarked that other states were already far ahead of Texas in the secession process, so even if Governor Houston did eventually call the legislature into session, the "will of the people" could not wait for a governor who was so

[81] "Public Meeting," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860; "Voice of Bexar," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, November 26, 1860; "Extra Session of the Legislature," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, December 6, 1860; "To Our Fellow-Citizens of the State of Texas," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, December 11, 1860; "State Convention," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, December 12, 1860;

reluctant to act. In the meantime, the *Dallas Herald* printed a "Call For A Convention," which proclaimed that "A Legislature cannot express as a Convention may, the sovereign will of the people of Texas," so even if the governor did not see fit to convene the state legislature, it did not really matter.[82]

Governor Sam Houston gave in eventually. On December 17th, he called a special session of the legislature, to convene a week before the secession convention on January 28th. Upon hearing of this news, there was some confusion in Harrison County, where the paper remarked: "Are we to understand from this that he changed his mind?" In Harris County, the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* remarked that, while the calling of the legislature was now "no longer of absolute necessity" it was still useful, in that it would give sanction to what they called a revolution. The sentiment that the calling of the legislature was useful but not really necessary was echoed in Dallas County, where the *Dallas Herald* proclaimed that "the Executive…will now move in harmony with the great mass of the people!" The *Herald*'s editors added that the state legislature, when it met, would ratify the call for and actions of the convention. At this point, the calling of the legislature by Governor Houston was more of a formality than anything else: the state's leading white men had already made up their minds mostly in favor of secession.[83]

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[82] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 54-56; "The Harris County Programme," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Plan [illegible] For a State Convention," *Texas Republican*, December 15, 1860; "A Call For A State Convention," *Dallas Herald*, December 12, 1860.

[83] "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 1, 1860; "The Legislature and the State Convention," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 21, 1860; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 54-56; "Untitled," *Texas Republican*, December 29, 1860; "Untitled," *Texas Republican*, December 29, 1860; "The Convention," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 27, 1860; "Texas and Her Governor," *Texas Republican*, December 22, 1860; "Indignation Meeting," *Dallas Herald*, November 14, 1860; "A Call For A State Convention," *Dallas Herald*, December 12, 1860; "Good News For The People," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860.

The State Convention

Meanwhile, the elections for delegates to the secession convention were causing a great deal of excitement. In Harris County, secessionists accused unionists of attempting to convince people not to vote in an effort to keep the convention from happening. The *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* explained that the election for delegates was more important than any election ever held in the state before. Every voter should "feel that his country…institutions…liberties… birthright, his family, his children, his future peace, all demand that" he should vote. In Harrison County, prospective convention delegate Colonel W. B. Olichtree encouraged residents not to be complacent; secessionists could still lose. Over-confidence "might be taken hold of by those opposed to State action," he warned. And yet, in spite of such concerns, there was a great deal of confidence in both counties regarding the expected result: victory for the secessionists. With convention plans in motion and Lincoln's March 4, 1861 inauguration looming, the *Texas Republican* wrote that "The ordinance of annexation ha[d] but thirty days to live," and Texas would "assume her place among the nations of the earth, free, independent, [and] self-reliant".[84]

In Dallas County, the meeting to nominate delegates for the State Convention election went off without incident and produced four nominees: J.N. Smith, Pleasant Taylor, J.B. Taylor, and T.P. Nash. When J. N. Smith declined the nomination, a large group of Dallas citizens petitioned another man, E. P. Nicholson, to serve in his place. Nicholson responded that, while he "appreciate[d] fully the responsibilities which will be coupled with a seat in that body," and accepted the nomination, he added that "if Dallas County is in favor of quietly submitting to Black Republican rule…then I trust my election will be defeated, for I cannot reflect such

[84] "The Convention," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 27, 1860; "Untitled," *Texas Republican*, December 22, 1860; "Election," *Texas Republican*, December 29, 1860.

views." Nicholson and the other nominees canvassed the county in the two weeks between the nominations and the election. In Bexar County, nominating procedures produced four nominees in the county itself and another two in a district including parts of Bexar and five other counties. According to the paper, these six candidates were pledged to support immediate secession, while another—Edward P. Alsbury—would support secession if united Southern action could be achieved. In the end, the six immediate secession candidates were the ones elected.[85]

Governor Houston's Problem

Though he certainly had experience dealing with a "free, independent, [and] self-reliant" Texas, Governor Sam Houston remained unenthusiastic about the idea of re-establishing the Republic of Texas—or even secession, for that matter. He had avoided calling the special session of the legislature as long as he could in a bid to dissuade Texans from holding a state secession convention, and only did so after so many white citizens had decided to hold the convention anyway. He had hoped to avoid giving sanction to the secessionists by doing so, but at least as far as Harris County was concerned, the calling of the legislature—though no longer necessary by the time it was done—still gave the convention the sanction of the sitting government. In addition, Houston also tried to subvert the secessionists by calling on December 27th, 1860 for elections to take place February 4th, 1861 to choose delegates for a convention of all the Southern states. Unfortunately for Houston, the same legislature he had called to subvert the secessionists

[85] "Public Meeting In Dallas," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "Correspondence," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "Remember The Election," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "Public Speaking," *Dallas Herald*, December 26, 1860; "Election Notice," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, December 24, 1860; "For Delegates To The State Convention," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 3, 1861; "Candidates to the Convention," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 3, 1861; "Co-operation Ticket," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 3, 1861; *Journal of the Secession Convention of Texas 1861*, Edited from the original in the department of state by Ernest William Winkler, State Librarian. Texas Library and Historical Commission, the State Library. Austin: Austin Print. Co., 1912. Originally published serially in newspapers.

contained many delegates to the secession convention, and they endorsed the convention and repealed Houston's resolution calling for the delegate elections and Southern convention.[86]

Governor Houston's sentiments against secession and re-establishing the Republic of Texas originated from his own experiences governing an independent Texas. After commanding the Texas troops at the Battle of San Jacinto, he allowed himself to be nominated for and then won the presidency of the new Republic of Texas. In serving as the Republic's first president from October 22, 1836 to December 10, 1838, Houston faced several problems that never went away, not even by the time of his second term as president from December 12, 1841 to December 9, 1844. One of the biggest and most immediate issues he confronted was financial: having won their war for independence entirely alone, the Republic was economically exhausted. Houston had faced a significant public debt upon taking office, and by his second term the debt had mushroomed to $7,446,740. Then by the time of Texas's annexation by the United States, it had reached nearly $10,000,000. In addition to these extraordinary financial problems, the Republic of Texas had faced nearly constant difficulties with Native Americans; Houston had tried to make peace with the two tribes chiefly responsible—the Cherokee and the Comanche—but his efforts ultimately failed. Houston and his successors also confronted other difficult questions regarding foreign policy, specifically as concerned Mexico. Mexico never recognized the Republic, and actually invaded Texas and occupied San Antonio twice during Houston's second term as president. The United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands did recognize Texas's independence, though.[87]

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[86] "The Convention," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 27, 1860; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 54-57; "Texas and Her Governor," *Texas Republican*, December 22, 1860; McDonald, "The Civil War and the Lone Star State," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, 23.

[87] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 54-57; McDonald, "The Civil War and the Lone Star State," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, 23; Reichstein, *Rise of the Lone Star*, 151, 156-172, 177-180; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07.

Back during the first elections in the Republic of Texas in 1835, a question had been asked that, for Houston, provided at least part of the solution to the problems the Republic would soon face. Along with choosing representatives, a president, a vice-president, and other elected officials, Texans were asked if they were in favor of or against annexation by the United States, to which the majority responded that they were in favor. However, Houston's own contradictory statements on annexation early in the Republic's existence, combined with international factors—namely ongoing trouble with Mexico and various internal political matters in the United States—meant that serious conversations did not take place until 1845. Houston knew that annexation was probably the only way the Republic of Texas could solve its biggest problems. In the end, Texas officially became a state in the United States on February 19, 1846, and at least several of the various problems Houston had been faced with were solved.[88]

Now, as Governor, Houston was well aware of the difficulties an independent Texas might face yet again. But he also believed that Texas would likely return to its former independent status rather than aligning itself with the other seceded states. This troubled him: he knew where Texans' interests and opinions lay, but he was deeply concerned that a return to independence would mean a return to the troubles of the 1830s and 1840s. Governor Houston, like many other Texas residents—Harris and Harrison Counties included—had lived through at least part of Texas's existence as an independent republic, but Governor Houston seemed to be almost alone in his awareness of the risks of returning to the Republic of Texas. With the exception of former interim President Burnet, those discussing the possibility of re-establishing

[88] Reichstein, *Rise of the Lone Star*, 151-156, 172-180.

the Republic of Texas ignored the historical reality of its lived existence in favor of a more romanticized version of its memory.[89]

Such historical ignorance was most prominent in Harris County, which was also the county where Texas's "independent streak" showed most strongly. The *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* pointed out, in the immediate aftermath of Lincoln's election in November, that the majority of Texans desired to re-establish the Republic of Texas as "…our only hope of safety" from a Republican administration. Although they did express some caution about secession in general, the editors' caution only concerned coordinated action—nothing about the very real dangers of independence. The references in both the *Tri-Weekly Telegraph* and in Harrison County's *Texas Republican* to the hoisting of the Lone Star Flag across the state almost consistently called back to Texas's independence—and in one case in Houston, to the Battle of San Jacinto—without invoking the struggles that the Republic had faced throughout its existence. Even the attitudes expressed in the county mass meeting resolutions ignored the messy history of the Republic: references to Texans' willingness to "maintain if necessary [their] independence out of the Union" ignored the massive costs of that independence.[90]

The only notable exception came from another former president of Texas. David G. Burnet wondered in his letter to the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* whether an independent Texas might once again "stand isolated in all her feebleness?" However, questions like these

[89] Reichstein, *Rise of the Lone Star*, 151-180; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 55-57, 70-71; "What Shall Be Done?- Response of Ex-President David G. Burnet," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 1, 1860; "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Hoisting the Lone Star," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860.

[90] "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Hoisting the Lone Star," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; "Harrison County Speaks," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; Untitled, *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; "Brazoria County Meeting," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 24, 1860; "Letters From the People," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 29, 1860.

were few and far between in a county strongly inclined toward romanticizing the Texan past and invoking a hopeful independent future. Indeed, even those who advocated for the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas as a mere step toward joining a Southern Confederacy did so in the professed expectation that Texas would hold its own among the other nations of the Western Hemisphere. Secessionists in Harris County trafficked in a romanticized version of what had been, in reality, a decade of near disaster.[91]

At what would seem to be the opposite end of the spectrum of perceptions of historical reality stood Bexar County. The county's population and economy had been impacted by both the early wave of what Texans called the Runaway Scrape—when Texans fled the advancing Mexican army in early 1836—and then both Mexican invasions in 1842; the county had suffered enormously during the years of the Texas Revolution and Republic of Texas. Most locals recalled that it did not begin to recover until after annexation. Ambivalence toward re-establishing the Republic of Texas in Bexar County thus makes sense. In fact, the county's earlier ambivalence toward secession itself—and the close vote on the matter—can be explained by this troubled history during the eras of the Revolution and the Republic. Another contributing factor to Bexar County's relatively strong unionist sentiments was the demographic imprint of that troubled past. As a result of repeated Mexican invasions in the 1840s, the county's population had plummeted. When the population began to rise again, it did so on the backs of many Tejano residents, German immigrants, and white and black newcomers from the Old

[91] "What Shall Be Done?- Response of Ex-President David G. Burnet," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 1, 1860; "Mass Meeting of Harris County," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, December 4, 1860; "Hoisting the Lone Star," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 27, 1860; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; "Harrison County Speaks," *Texas Republican*, December 1, 1860; Untitled, *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; "Brazoria County Meeting," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 24, 1860; "Letters From the People," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 29, 1860; Reichstein, *Rise of the Lone Star*, 151, 156-172, 177-180; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 10, 1860; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 25-27, 68-73.

South. This population, whether for good or ill, carried no nostalgic attachments to the Republic of Texas: they had no reason to secede in order to fulfil a prophecy rooted in the local past.[92]

Other States' Problem

There was a flip side to this story, however: the idea of an independent Texas caused serious concern among those who had not lived through the days of the Republic. Precisely because an independent republic did appeal to many Texans, including some of the very politicians convening at the beginning of 1861 to draft articles of secession, and precisely because so many of the Texans voting on those articles on February 23, 1861 were loyal to the Republic's nostalgic past, other Southerners worried about Texas's loyalty to the Confederacy. The prospect of an independent Texas was much more concerning, that is, to politicians in other Southern states. They feared that if Texas followed its own path, which it had done before, and which many claimed it was capable of doing again, those states would lose access to its wealth of resources. Much like many Texans, other Southerners believed Texas was capable of holding its own as an independent Republic (again), and they feared that ability.[93]

This was especially the case for Louisiana officials. Their state had already seceded on January 26, 1861 and had been watching Texas closely. Louisiana's state government sent state

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[92] *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Laurie E. Jasinski, "San Antonio, TX," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hds02; Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 54-57; McDonald, "The Civil War and the Lone Star State," in *The Seventh Star of the Confederacy*, ed. Kenneth W. Howell, 23; Reichstein, *Rise of the Lone Star*, 151, 156-172, 177-180; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Carolyn Callaway Covington, "Runaway Scrape," accessed March 17, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pfr01; ; "For The Ledger and Texan," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 11, 1861; "The Convention," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 24, 1861; "Louisiana and Texas—Mexico," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 31, 1861.

[93] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 55-73; "An Ordinance," *Texas Republican*, February 16, 1861; "From Austin. Ordinance of Secession Passed," *Texas Republican*, February 16, 1861; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Texan*, November 10, 1860.

commissioner George Williamson to speak to Texas's secession convention on February 11th, a little over two weeks before the public secession vote. Williamson, who believed slavery was doomed if Texas did not join the Southern Confederacy upon secession, emphasized the cultural similarities and economic connections between the two states, and claimed that union with the other seceding states was Texas's best chance of protecting its interests. In addition, newspaper articles from Louisiana papers made their way into Texas papers, making the same encouragements as Williamson. For example, an article published in the *Daily Ledger and Texan* a month before the public vote on secession explained that the state of Texas was extremely important to Louisiana for trade purposes. The article continued to explain that if Texas would look at its own capabilities and desire for empire, it would not only declare independence but move to invade a vulnerable northern Mexico—in which case it would abandon its relationship with Louisiana. Just like Williamson's speech, the article cited close ties between Louisiana and Texas as grounds for why Texas should not return to its old independent status.[94]

The End of the Beginning

Fortunately for Williamson and Louisiana, though, Texas did not elect to re-establish its former independent status upon seceding from the United States. On February 23, 1860—after six states had already seceded[95]—Texans went to the polls and voted overwhelmingly in favor of secession. Harris and Harrison Counties were no exception, voting 715-107 and 866-44 in favor,

[94] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 55-73; "An Ordinance," *Texas Republican*, February 16, 1861; "From Austin. Ordinance of Secession Passed," *Texas Republican*, February 16, 1861; "What Shall Be Done?" *Houston Tri-Weekly Texan*, November 10, 1860; "Louisiana and Texas—Mexico," *Daily Ledger and Texan*, January 31, 1861;
[95] McPherson, *Battle Cry Of Freedom*, 234-235. Those states were: South Carolina (December 20, 1860), Mississippi (January 9, 1861), Florida (January 10, 1861), Alabama (January 11, 1861), Georgia (January 19, 1861), and Louisiana (January 26, 1861).

respectively, while Dallas County followed them with a 744-237 margin. Only Bexar County witnessed a close race; there, secessionists won only 54% of the vote. When it came to deciding what to do next, economic concerns, especially regarding trade with the rest of the South, and troubles with Native Americans won out. Though the convention did not turn their attention to whether or not to join the Confederacy until March 5th, the Confederacy itself was more immediately interested. The Confederate Secretary of War, L. P. Walker, heavily implied that he believed Texas would/should join the Confederacy in a letter to the convention president dated February 23, 1861. The convention, on the other hand, was otherwise occupied by matters of delegate credentials and the formal count of the public vote.[96]

When the convention moved to consider joining the Confederacy, an initial failed attempt to table the ordinance was followed by a handful of votes on minor wording. Then, the convention debated and then voted on completely changing a section regarding the authorization of the Texas delegation to the Confederacy to act as the state's official representatives. On March 5, 1861—three days after a headline in the *Texas Republican* proclaimed that "Texas Has Spoken!" and "Submission Silenced!"—the secession convention adopted an ordinance to join with the other seceded states in the newly-established Confederacy in a 109-to-2 vote. The state immediately sent delegates to the convention and provisional Confederate government meeting in Montgomery with directions to "apply for admission of this State into said Confederacy, and

[96] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 55-73; "An Ordinance," *Texas Republican*, February 16, 1861; "From Austin. Ordinance of Secession Passed," *Texas Republican*, February 16, 1861; "Texas Has Spoken! Submission Silenced!" *Texas Republican*, March 2, 1861; "Election Returns," *Texas Republican*, March 9, 1861; "The Election," *Dallas Herald*, February 27, 1861; "To The Hon. O. M. Roberts," *Texas Republican*, March 23, 1861; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; *Journal of the Secession Convention of Texas 1861*, Edited from the original in the department of state by Ernest William Winkler, State Librarian. Texas Library and Historical Commission, the State Library. Austin: Austin Print. Co., 1912. Originally published serially in newspapers.

to that end and for that purpose to give in the adhesion of Texas to the provisional Constitution of said confederate States".[97]

Once Texas joined the Confederacy, its state officials were required to take an oath of allegiance. This ultimately meant that Governor Sam Houston, who refused to take the oath, was forced to resign, much to the delight of Texans who had supported secession. He had posted a proclamation after Texans voted in favor of secession officially recognizing the vote, but after Texas joined the Confederacy, he refused to sacrifice his principles. Joining with the Confederacy did not mean, however, that Texas's "independent streak" would disappear. It became particularly prominent when it came to Confederate interference in the Texas cotton trade, and again when General Edmund Kirby Smith was appointed commander of the Trans-Mississippi District. This "independent streak" also came up at the very end of the Civil War, as the final battle of the Civil War took place in Texas—the Battle of Palmito Ranch on May 12-13, 1865. The decision-making process in late 1860 and early 1861 that enabled Texas to get to this point in the first place was rooted in the memory of the old Republic of Texas and the Texas Revolution, and demographics for Harris, Harrison, Dallas, and Bexar Counties.[98]

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[97] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 55-73; "An Ordinance," *Texas Republican*, February 16, 1861; "From Austin. Ordinance of Secession Passed," *Texas Republican*, February 16, 1861; "Texas Has Spoken! Submission Silenced!" *Texas Republican*, March 2, 1861; "Election Returns," *Texas Republican*, March 9, 1861; "The Election," *Dallas Herald*, February 27, 1861; "To The Hon. O. M. Roberts," *Texas Republican*, March 23, 1861; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; *Journal of the Secession Convention of Texas 1861*, Edited from the original in the department of state by Ernest William Winkler, State Librarian. Texas Library and Historical Commission, the State Library. Austin: Austin Print. Co., 1912. Originally published serially in newspapers.

[98] Jewett, *Texas in the Confederacy*, 64, 73-75; Reichstein, *Rise of the Lone Star*, 114-115; Kerby, *Kirby Smith's Confederacy*, vii-viii, 168-170, 198-207, 253-281; "The Law of Maximum," *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 5, 1863; "Trans Mississippi District," *Texas Republican*, January 22, 1863; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Randolph B. Campbell, "Harrison County," accessed April 15, 2019. https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch08; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Margaret Swett Henson, "Harris County," accessed April 1, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hch07; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Lisa C. Maxwell, "Dallas County," accessed February 13, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcd02; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Christopher Long, "Bexar County," accessed March 15, 2020, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb07; Josephy Jr., *The Civil War In the American West*, 223-224.

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