

Section

2

Houston's First Term

Main Ideas

1. As president, Sam Houston created a cabinet to help him resolve issues facing the Republic.
2. Problems with military discipline, debt, and public land faced the first Houston administration.
3. President Houston wanted to protect the rights of American Indians in Texas.

Why It Matters Today

Economic problems were among the many challenges facing the Republic of Texas. Use current events sources to learn about current economic problems in Texas or the United States.

Key Terms and People

- cabinet
- Texas Rangers
- Texas Navy
- expenditures
- revenue
- ratify
- Chief Bowles

The Story Continues

On October 22, 1836, Sam Houston stood before the leading citizens of Texas. His sword from the Battle of San Jacinto hung at his side. The audience grew quiet as he prepared to take the oath of office. Houston spoke briefly of his plans for Texas. Then he paused, removed his sword, and grasped it in both hands. In an emotional voice, he declared that the sword was a symbol of his past position. "I have worn it . . . in defense of my country," he said. Now Houston faced new challenges as president of the Republic.



TEKS: 4A, 4B, 9A, 9C, 17C, 18A, 21A, 21B, 21D, 21E, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the events of Houston's first term in office.



Houston's Administration

Sam Houston became the first popularly elected president of the Republic of Texas on October 22, 1836. Addressing the new Texas Congress, Houston laid out his goals for his term in office. He stressed the need for peace with American Indians and the need to stay alert and guard against an attack by Mexico. He also expressed his hope of seeing Texas annexed to the United States.

To address the challenge he faced, Houston needed the help of trusted advisers. He appointed these advisers to his **cabinet**. Many prominent veterans of the Revolution served in Houston's cabinet. Henry Smith was secretary of the treasury, and Thomas Rusk was secretary of war.

Past to Present

The Size of the Texas Government

The Texas government has grown tremendously since the days of the Republic. Today's government includes some 250 agencies, boards, and commissions. State employees number in the hundreds of thousands. Paying for this enormous government cost more than \$43 billion in 2013. In contrast, the Republic of Texas government needed only about \$130,000 to operate in 1845. This amount would equal about \$2.1 million today. **Why do you think state government costs so much more today?**

Stephen F. Austin was named secretary of state. However, Austin served the Republic for only a few months. As a result of overwork and exposure to cold, he developed pneumonia and died on December 27, 1836. Texans mourned the loss of the leader who had dedicated his life to Texas. President Houston issued a statement expressing the nation's loss. "The father of Texas is no more. The first pioneer of the wilderness has departed." He ordered a 30-day period of mourning to honor Austin.

With a cabinet in place, Houston and his government turned their attention to creating a court system. James Collinworth was appointed chief justice of the Republic's Supreme Court. Below the Supreme Court were four district courts, 23 county courts, and justice courts.

Reading Check Drawing Inferences and Conclusions Why do you think Houston named veterans of the Revolution to his cabinet?

**Defining Texas**

When Houston took office, the Republic of Texas did not have clear boundaries. Although the Congress claimed the Rio Grande as the republic's border with Mexico, the Mexican government did not recognize this claim, and many Texans did not either. Some people south and west of the Nueces River still considered their land part of Mexico.

The republic also had no permanent capital. Velasco had been the capital at the end of the revolution, but the government had moved to Columbia after the war ended. Officials found the town too small, and in 1837, Congress named the tiny town of Houston the new Texas capital. As a result, the town grew rapidly. In January 1837 it had 12 residents and one log cabin, but within four months, some 1,500 people lived there.

As he had promised, Houston attempted to bring Texas into the United States. The U.S. government, however, was not interested in annexing Texas. It was, though, willing to recognize Texas as an independent nation in 1837.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea What town became the capital of Texas during Houston's administration?

**Houston and Army Unrest**

While the Houston administration was dealing with defining Texas, a new challenge arose within the army. Volunteers from the United States had flocked to Texas, eager to take part in the Texas Revolution. Many had arrived too late to take part, but they were still eager for action. Brawls were common among the unruly troops.

Although the war had ended, some Texans in the army harbored strong feelings against Mexico. Among them was army commander Felix Huston, who wanted to invade Mexico. President Houston considered



Texas Rangers

Formed in 1835, the Texas Rangers were dedicated to protecting the people of Texas. The first Rangers rode horses and used new pistols called revolvers. Over time, the Rangers have adapted to new duties and new technologies. Today the Rangers serve as a force of special law officers charged with keeping the peace. They use modern weapons and drive vehicles with high-tech equipment. Women have served as Texas Rangers since 1993. This photograph shows a group of Rangers from around 1900, along with the wife of one Ranger.

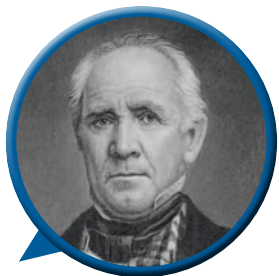
How has the technology used by the Texas Rangers changed since their early days?

such a move risky. He decided to replace Houston with a calmer commander, Albert Sidney Johnston. However, this decision angered Houston, who injured Johnston in a duel. With Johnston unable to take command, unrest in the army grew. One commander urged soldiers to march on the capital. He wanted the army to “chastise the President, kick Congress out of doors, and give laws to Texas.” To regain control, Houston placed all but 600 troops on leave and never recalled them.

For defense and frontier protection, Houston turned to militia companies and the **Texas Rangers**. The Rangers were a defense force that tried to keep the peace along the frontier. Formed on November 24, 1835, the Texas Rangers had to be ready to ride at all times. Although Houston’s actions solved some problems, conflicts with the army continued to trouble the Republic for many years.

The **Texas Navy**, which had gone into action in January 1836, also proved difficult for Houston, whose administration was unable to pay repair expenses. One ship, the *Liberty*, was seized in New Orleans and two others were almost confiscated in New York. After raiding along the Mexican coast, the *Independence* was captured by the Mexican navy on its way back to Texas from New Orleans. Defying Houston’s orders to remain close to home, the *Brutus* and the *Invincible* also raided Mexican towns and took Mexican ships captive in summer 1837. The *Invincible* was forced aground by two Mexican navy ships and destroyed, and the *Brutus* was lost in a storm.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea What action did Houston take to solve growing unrest in the army? What role did the Texas Rangers play?



BIOGRAPHY

Sam Houston (1793–1863) When Sam Houston first rode into Texas in 1832, he was already a well-known hero in the United States. Although he was born in Virginia, his family had moved to Tennessee in 1807. Two years later he left home to live with the Cherokees. In 1813 he joined the U.S. Army, fighting under General Andrew Jackson. His experience with the Cherokees earned him a position as an Indian agent for the U.S. government. With the support of Jackson, Houston entered politics. He represented Tennessee in the U.S. Congress and served as its governor. After again living with the Cherokees, Houston moved to Texas in December 1832. Houston served his fellow Texans—first in the military and then in politics—for some 25 years. **What experiences helped Houston become a leader in Texas?**

★ Economic Policies

In addition to these military issues, the new nation also faced economic problems. The Republic's **expenditures**, or spending, far exceeded its **revenue**, or income. When Sam Houston took office, Texas had a national debt of \$1.25 million. The new government tried to pay off that debt by collecting taxes, including customs duties on imports. The Republic also sold some public lands and tried to get loans in the United States. However, the debt continued to rise as expenses increased.

To make matters worse, the United States experienced a financial crisis in 1837. The Panic of 1837 led to an economic depression. Texas, which traded heavily with the United States, soon felt the effects. Business slowed, and goods became scarce.

The Republic's limited money supply posed another economic problem. Texans manufactured few goods and therefore had to import many items. This meant that money flowed out of the Republic, but little came in. The government printed more paper notes, but it had no gold or silver to back them. People did not trust money that could not be traded for gold and silver, and so the value of the Republic's money dropped.

Reading Check Analyzing Information How did economic problems in the United States affect Texas?

★ Land Policy under Houston

Although the Republic had little money, it was rich in land. More than 200 million acres of public land was available to people who wanted to move onto it. The guidelines for acquiring public land were laid out in the Constitution of 1836. Heads of families living in Texas on March 2, 1836—excluding African Americans and American Indians—were given 4,606 acres at no charge. Single men aged 17 and over received 1,476 acres. Texans who had fought in the Revolution got bonus land as well. People who arrived after 1836 could also receive land, although they did not get as much as earlier settlers did. In all, the Republic distributed nearly 37 million acres of land under this land policy.

Texas officials hoped their generous land policies would help Texas recover from the devastation of the Revolution. Once land was transferred to private hands, it could be taxed to bring in revenue. To further help the economy, the government also hoped to bring more people to Texas. It tried to encourage immigration by establishing a new colonization policy in the early 1840s. Based on the Mexican *empresario* system, this policy gave agents contracts to settle immigrants in Texas. The Republic distributed another 4.5 million acres under this system.

Reading Check Making Generalizations and Predictions How do you think the Republic's land policy affected immigration to Texas?



Interpreting Visuals

Texas Indians. Houston believed that American Indians and Texas settlers could live together in peace. Based on this engraving, how do you think Indians' lives differed from those of settlers in Texas?

★ Houston's American Indian Policy

Some of the land distributed under the Republic's land policy was already inhabited by American Indians. As Texans moved into Indian land, conflicts arose. Before long, Texans were calling on the government to remove all Indians from Texas—by force if necessary. President Houston opposed such action and supported a peaceful solution. He wanted to avoid a full-scale Indian war, which the Republic could not afford.

Houston sympathized with Indians' desire to control their land. During the Texas Revolution, he had negotiated a treaty guaranteeing the Cherokees land in East Texas. The Texas Senate refused to **ratify**, or approve, the treaty, however.

After the war, some of the Cherokees who lived north of Nacogdoches were angry that they had not received the promised titles to their land. Houston urged the Cherokees to be patient. He told them that he would do everything in his power to help them hold on to their land. Houston wrote to **Chief Bowles**, a Cherokee leader and friend. "Do not be disturbed by the troubles which are around you, but be at peace." Houston then set aside land for the Cherokees in an attempt to keep peace. This action angered Texas settlers who wanted the land for themselves. Houston's efforts at peace seemed likely to fail.

Chief Bowles agreed to help Texas officials establish peace with Plains Indians to the west, where fighting had increased. In May 1836, before Houston took office, Comanche and Kiowa forces had attacked Fort Parker, near Groesbeck. The raiders killed most of the fort's 34 residents and took five captives, including a young girl named Cynthia Parker. As Texas moved west, conflict with the Plains Indians increased.

That's Interesting!

Houston: The Raven

As a young man, Sam Houston went to live with the Cherokees. Chief Olooteka adopted him and gave him the name Colonneh, meaning "the Raven." Later, Houston married Diana Rogers Gentry and became a citizen of the Cherokee nation. Houston admired many American Indian customs. He also enjoyed wearing Cherokee clothing, even after he moved to Texas.



BIOGRAPHY

Chief Bowles

(c. 1756–1839) Chief Bowles, whose Cherokee name was Duwali, was born in North Carolina. As U.S. settlement expanded in the South, he and his village were forced to move. In 1819 they settled in Texas. There, he served on a Cherokee decision-making council and later formed a strong friendship with Sam Houston. **Why do you think Chief Bowles chose to go to Texas?**

To reduce conflict and protect Texans on the plains, Houston and the Congress developed an American Indian policy. It established a line of forts along the frontier and encouraged trade with Indians. Houston hoped the policy would promote peace and friendship with Texas Indians. While Texas Rangers patrolled the frontier, Houston tried to negotiate and sign treaties with Texas Indians.

TEXAS VOICES

“Treaties of peace and amity [goodwill], and the maintenance of good faith with the Indians, present themselves to my mind as the most rational grounds on which to obtain their friendship. Let us abstain on our part from aggressions, establish commerce with the different tribes, supply their useful and necessary wants, maintain even-handed justice with them, and natural reason will teach them the utility of our friendship.”

—Sam Houston, quoted in *Documents of Texas History*,
edited by Ernest Wallace

Houston’s goal was to make peace with each American Indian group in Texas. He was one of the few Texas leaders who believed that Indians and settlers could live together in peace. Most Texans in the Republic disagreed, preferring to remove American Indians from Texas. Some Texans thought Houston’s policy was slowing westward development. Ongoing conflict between American Indians and Texas settlers over land made it difficult to maintain peaceful relations.

Reading Check Identifying Points of View Why did some Texans oppose President Houston’s American Indian policy?



Section 2 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- cabinet
- Texas Rangers
- expenditures
- revenue
- ratify

2. Identify and explain

the significance of each of the following:

- Texas Navy
- Chief Bowles

3. Locate on a map:

- Houston

4. Analyzing Information

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to show how Sam Houston’s administration tried to solve the Republic’s problems.

Problem	Solution/Action
Unruly army	
Debt	
Need for more people	
Conflict with American Indians	

5. Finding the Main Idea

- What were two early actions of the Republic’s Congress?
- What economic policies did the Republic establish, and how successful were they?

6. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Evaluating Imagine that you are a member of Sam Houston’s cabinet. Write a short evaluation of Houston’s American Indian policy explaining why you support it. Consider the following:

- the cost of a full-scale war against American Indians
- recent conflicts with American Indians