

Political Unrest in Texas

Main Ideas

1. The Fredonian Rebellion was an attempt to create an independent republic in East Texas.
2. General Mier y Terán toured Texas and concluded that American influence in the area was too strong.
3. The Law of April 6, 1830, banned American immigration to Texas.

Key Terms and People

- Fredonian Rebellion
- Mier y Terán Report
- Law of April 6, 1830
- customs duties

Why It Matters Today

In the early 1830s many Texans were unhappy with the Mexican government and began thinking about rebellion. Use current events sources to find information on protests or rebellions against governments in the world today.



TEKS: 1B, 3A, 9A,
17C, 21A, 21B, 21E, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on political unrest and changes in Texas.

The Story Continues

The son of a U.S. Senator from Kentucky, Haden Edwards was not a typical *empresario*. Although trained as a lawyer, Edwards was more interested in acquiring land than in practicing the law. In 1820 he moved with his wife and brother to Mississippi, where he bought a plantation. Eventually he moved to Texas with Stephen F. Austin and created his own colony near Nacogdoches.



The Fredonian Rebellion

Haden Edwards received his *empresario* contract from the Mexican government in 1825. The contract gave him permission to settle some 800 families near Nacogdoches. When he arrived, Edwards found that a number of Mexican families, Anglo settlers, and Cherokees had lived on the land for years. Some families had been living on the land for more than 100 years. They had become known as “old settlers.”

Edwards’s contract required him to respect the property rights of all settlers who had legal titles to their land. In this case, the only legal titles were those issued by Spain or Mexico. Edwards, however, was not happy about this rule. He declared some of the old settlers’ titles to be forgeries. He also demanded that people pay him additional fees for land they had already purchased.

Edwards's actions enraged many of the old settlers. Their rage increased the following year after a questionable election. Edwards's son-in-law was elected alcalde of the settlement, but many old settlers suspected fraud. They complained to the government, which sided with the old settlers. In October 1826 the Mexican government canceled Edwards's contract, declaring that he was not fulfilling its terms.

A group of Edwards supporters took action. They arrested the new alcalde and tried to force him from office. The Mexican government sent troops to support the alcalde. In response, Edwards, his brother Benjamin, and their supporters—including some Cherokees—declared themselves free from Mexican rule. They planned to establish the republic of Fredonia. On December 21, 1826, they issued the Fredonian Declaration of Independence.

TEXAS VOICES

"The Government of the Mexican United States, have by repeated insults, treachery and oppression, reduced the . . . [people of Texas] to the dreadful alternative of either submitting their freeborn necks to the yoke . . . or of taking up arms in defence of their unalienable rights and asserting their Independence."

—Fredonian Declaration of Independence, quoted in *Documents of Texas History*, edited by Ernest Wallace

Most Texans—both Tejanos and Anglo settlers alike—opposed the **Fredonian Rebellion**. Stephen F. Austin, who supported the Mexican government's decision, called out the militia. In January 1827 the Fredonians learned that Mexican troops and the militia were coming. The rebels, including Haden Edwards, fled. The republic collapsed.

Reading Check Summarizing What events led to the outbreak of the Fredonian Rebellion?

Analyzing Primary Sources Identifying Points of View

According to this document, why did the Fredonians rebel?



Image Credit: ©Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Interpreting Visuals

Nacogdoches. The Fredonian rebels used the Old Stone Fort in Nacogdoches as a base. The Stone Fort Museum, shown here, is a reconstruction of the original building on the campus of Stephen F. Austin University. **Why do you think the rebels would have chosen such a building as their base?**

★Texas Cities★



Laredo

History: Laredo was founded in 1755 when Mexican rancher Tomás Sánchez established a settlement there. Lying on a road from Mexico to Texas, Laredo served as an important location for trade. The town prospered and grew along with Mexico's northern territories.

Population in 2012: 244,731 (estimate)

Relative location: On the Rio Grande, southwest of San Antonio

Region: Gulf Coastal Plain

County: County seat of Webb County

Special feature: Located on the Texas-Mexico border, Laredo is a center of trade and tourism.

Economy: After the arrival of railroads in the late 1800s, Laredo's importance as a trade center grew even more. Its economy was also boosted by the discovery of oil and natural gas in the 1920s. Since the passage of NAFTA, Laredo has grown as a center of import and export trade with Mexico.



★The Mier y Terán Report

The Fredonian Rebellion was a minor event, but it attracted a lot of attention. Even newspapers in the United States carried stories about the revolt. This American interest in the rebellion greatly worried the Mexican government. During the 1820s the U.S. government had made several offers to purchase Texas from Mexico, which had refused to consider such a sale. However, the repeated offers—coupled with trouble caused by American immigrants like Haden Edwards—made some Mexican officials worry about the number of Americans in Texas.

To investigate their concerns, these officials sent General Manuel de Mier y Terán with a group to tour Texas. Officially, the purpose of his trip was to examine the resources and Indians of Texas and to help determine the formal boundary with Louisiana. At the same time, the general was asked to determine how many Americans lived in Texas and what their attitudes toward Mexico were.

Mier y Terán began his inspection tour in Laredo in early 1828 and arrived in San Antonio on March 1. From there, he traveled on to San Felipe de Austin, where he met with Stephen F. Austin. The two men discussed many of the concerns with which Anglo settlers in Texas dealt. Austin also reconfirmed his own loyalty to Mexico.

The tour continued to Nacogdoches. While there, the general wrote a report to the president of Mexico. In the **Mier y Terán Report**, he noted that Mexican influence in Texas decreased as one moved northward and eastward. Around Nacogdoches, settlers from the United States outnumbered Tejanos by 10 to 1. He warned that the American influence, particularly in East Texas, was growing stronger every day.

TEXAS VOICES

"I tell myself that it could not be otherwise than that from such a state of affairs should arise an antagonism between Mexicans and foreigners. . . . Therefore, I am warning you to take timely measures. Texas could throw the whole nation into revolution."

—Manuel de Mier y Terán, quoted in *Documents of Texas History*, edited by Ernest Wallace

To help curb American influence in Texas, Mier y Terán made several recommendations to the Mexican president. First, he encouraged increasing trade between Texas and Mexico to discourage trade with the United States. Second, he argued that more soldiers needed to be sent to Texas to help keep order and to increase Mexico's control over the region. Finally, he felt that Mexico should encourage more Europeans and Mexicans to settle in Texas. Mier y Terán believed these actions would weaken Texas ties with the United States and reinforce Mexico's determination to keep Texas.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea What conclusion did Mier y Terán draw, and what did he advise?



The Mexican government sent additional troops to Texas to enforce the Law of April 6, 1830.

★ The Law of April 6, 1830

In response to Manuel de Mier y Terán's report, the Mexican government passed the **Law of April 6, 1830**. This sweeping law was intended to strictly control the American presence in Texas. It banned immigration from the United States and made it illegal for settlers to bring more slaves into Texas. The law also suspended unfilled *empresario* contracts. Only a few American *empresarios*, including Stephen F. Austin and Green DeWitt, were allowed to keep their contracts. To keep unauthorized immigrants out of Texas, the government placed military bases and government offices along the borders.

Although Americans could no longer become *empresarios* under the new law, the government did not stop issuing land contracts. The government hoped to bring more Mexicans and Catholic Europeans to Texas. As a result, it issued *empresario* grants to members of these groups, making it clear that they were not to bring American families to their settlements.

In addition to restricting immigration, the Law of April 6, 1830, also began to tax all U.S. imports in Texas. These import taxes, or **customs duties**, served two purposes. Like all taxes, they raised money for the government. In addition, however, they were designed to encourage internal trade within Mexico. With the duties, goods from the United States would now be more expensive than goods from Mexico. The rest of Mexico had been paying such duties for many years. Under the new law, Texans had to pay customs duties on imports as well.

LINKING

Past to Present

Trade Relations

One source of conflict between Texans and the Mexican government was customs duties. Trade still plays an important role in Texas-Mexico relations. In 1994 the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect. NAFTA removed trade barriers—such as import and export taxes—between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. As a result of NAFTA, trade between Texas and Mexico has greatly increased.

Why do you think the U.S. government agreed to the terms of NAFTA?

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

The Antislavery Movement Abroad

In 1829 the Mexican president abolished slavery, and the Law of April 6, 1830, banned the importing of slaves to Texas. Mexico's actions reflected a growing world trend. Great Britain outlawed the buying of slaves in 1807, and the United States passed a similar law the next year. In 1823 Chile made slavery illegal. In 1833 Britain abolished slavery in the British Empire. During this time, the antislavery movement was also growing in the United States. **Why were some Texans worried about the antislavery movement?**

The Law of April 6, 1830, angered many people in Texas. They feared that the new restrictions would hurt the growing Texas economy. Immigration had led to population growth and trade, which helped the economy. Many Anglo settlers were also upset that their relatives and friends in the United States could not move to Texas.

Stephen F. Austin disliked the new law, but he tried to work with Mexican officials. He encouraged colonists to respect the law. However, Austin's own faith in the central government had been shaken by the change in its dealings with Texas. In a letter, he expressed concerns that the government was treating the people of Texas like children or slaves.

Tejanos who supported immigration, such as Erasmo Seguín, José Antonio Navarro, and Francisco Ruiz, also opposed the Law of April 6, 1830. After the law went into effect, the *ayuntamiento* of San Antonio held a special meeting. Its members, including Seguín, Navarro, and Ruiz, noted several of the advantages of having people from the United States move to Texas.

TEXAS VOICES

"The advantages of liberal North American immigration are innumerable: (1) The colonists would afford a source of supply for the native inhabitants. (2) They would protect the interior from Indian invasions. (3) They would develop roads and commerce to New Orleans and New Mexico. (4) Moreover, the ideas of government held by North Americans are in general better adapted to those of the Mexicans than are the ideas of European immigrants."

—The *ayuntamiento* of San Antonio, quoted in *Foreigners in Their Native Land*, edited by David J. Weber

Reading Check Evaluating How did Mier y Terán's tour of Texas and report lead to the passage of the Law of April 6, 1830?

Section 1 Review

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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- customs duties

2. Identify and explain

the significance of each of the following in Texas history:

- Fredonian Rebellion
- Mier y Terán Report
- Law of April 6, 1830

3. Locate on a map:

- Nacogdoches
- Laredo

4. Identifying Cause and Effect

Copy the graphic organizer below. As you move up the ladder, describe the events that led to the Law of April 6, 1830.

Law of April 6, 1830
Mier y Terán Report
Mier y Terán Investigation
Fredonian Rebellion

5. Finding the Main Idea

- How did disputes over land and other issues lead to the Fredonian Rebellion, and what was the government's response to it?
- What steps did Mier y Terán recommend in his report?

6. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Supporting a Point of View Imagine that you are living in Texas in the 1830s. Would you have supported or opposed the Law of April 6, 1830? Explain why or why not. Consider the following:

- the importance of Texas to Mexico
- the growth of the Texas economy and population