

Section

3

Conventions and Petitions

Main Ideas

1. Texans hoped that a new government in Mexico would lead to changes in Texas.
2. The Conventions of 1832 and 1833 requested changes in immigration policy and statehood for Texas.
3. Stephen F. Austin was arrested while in Mexico to present the Convention of 1833's requests.

Why It Matters Today

Texans held two conventions in the early 1830s to discuss government reforms. Use current events sources to find information on a recent state, national, or international conference.

Key Terms and People

- reforms
- delegates
- Convention of 1832
- William H. Wharton
- Convention of 1833

The Story Continues

As details of the conflict between Anastacio Bustamante and Antonio López de Santa Anna filtered into Texas, people realized that Santa Anna would probably take control of the government. Stephen F. Austin wanted to assure Santa Anna that Texas supported the general. Austin met with Santa Anna supporter Colonel José Antonio Mexía in Matamoros to discuss the situation in Texas. Austin and other leaders convinced Mexía that Texas was loyal to Santa Anna and that the local disturbances were under control.



TEKS: 1B, 3A, 3B,
17B, 21A, 21B, 21D,
22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the goals of Texans at the Conventions of 1832 and 1833.

★ The Convention of 1832

Colonel Mexía had traveled to Texas to put down what he thought was a rebellion. Instead of fighting, he was welcomed with a party. When he returned to Mexico, Mexía gave a favorable report on Texas.

As Texans had expected, Santa Anna defeated Bustamante's forces in 1832. He was elected president of Mexico in 1833. Santa Anna was not interested in the day-to-day affairs of the government, which he left to his vice president. However, he still controlled the policies of the Mexican government.



Political Protest

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the right of free speech. Participating in a convention, as Texans did in 1832 and 1833, can be one form of protest. There are many other ways to stage a protest. For example, some people hold marches or demonstrations. Many people draft petitions that express an opinion and are signed by citizens. Petitions are given to government officials or other leaders. Some people use the Internet to protest issues. There are Internet sites that keep track of the various protests occurring throughout the world. **Why do you think freedoms of speech and petition are important in a democratic society?**

Texans were excited about the rise of Santa Anna, who had promised to restore the Constitution of 1824. Since the passing of the Law of April 6, 1830, many Texans had been unhappy with the central government. With a new government taking power in Mexico, though, some thought that change would come to Texas as well. They called a convention in San Felipe de Austin to discuss possible **reforms**, or changes in policy, that they would like to see in Texas. Each district in Texas was asked to send **delegates**, or representatives, to San Felipe on October 1, 1832.

On that date delegates from 16 settlements began the **Convention of 1832**. The leaders of San Antonio, the largest Tejano settlement in Texas, chose not to take part in the convention. The delegates chose Stephen F. Austin as president of the convention. During the six-day convention, the delegates adopted several resolutions.

1. They asked the Mexican government to allow legal immigration from the United States.
2. They requested that Texas become a separate Mexican state instead of being joined with Coahuila.
3. They asked that customs duties be removed for three years.
4. They asked for land for public schools.

The convention chose delegates **William H. Wharton** and Rafael Manchola to present their resolutions to the state and federal governments. Partially because San Antonio refused to participate, though, the resolutions were never presented.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea What did most Texans hope would happen with the Constitution of 1824, and what reforms did the Convention of 1832 propose?



The Convention of 1833

Stephen F. Austin realized that for reform to take place, Texans had to work together. The Convention of 1832 had lacked the backing of Tejanos in San Antonio, and so nothing had come of it. Before trying to make any more changes, Austin wanted to gain the support of the city's leaders. While he was meeting with them, though, a group of impatient Texans called for another convention.

The **Convention of 1833** met at San Felipe on April 1. Few of the 56 delegates had attended the first convention. The delegates chose William Wharton as president. He led a group that wanted to push harder for changes in Mexican policy. Among his supporters was delegate Sam Houston of Nacogdoches, a former member of the U.S. Congress and governor of Tennessee who had just arrived in Texas. Like many of the delegates, he wanted action.

Although he supported the convention, Austin was upset that it had been called in his absence. In a letter, he explained his concerns.



TEXAS VOICES

“That measure placed me in an awkward position. . . . I went there [San Antonio] to consult with the authorities of that place. I considered that very great respect . . . was justly due to them as native Mexicans, as the capital of Texas, and as the oldest and most populous town in the country, and I knew the importance of getting them to take the lead in all the politics of Texas.”

—Stephen F. Austin, quoted in *The Life of Stephen F. Austin*, by Eugene C. Barker

In the end, the convention adopted many of the same resolutions as the previous year’s meeting had. Again, Texans asked that immigration from the United States be allowed. They requested that Texas be separated from Coahuila so they could have more control over their own affairs. They even wrote a constitution for the proposed state.

Stephen F. Austin, Erasmo Seguín, and James B. Miller were chosen to present the convention’s proposals to Santa Anna. Neither Seguín nor Miller could make the trip, however, so Austin set out for Mexico City alone on April 22, 1833.

Reading Check Analyzing Information Why was the Convention of 1833 called?

Mexico City was a busy commercial center when Stephen F. Austin traveled there in 1833.

★ Austin Is Arrested

The trip took Austin nearly three months. When he finally arrived, he faced one problem after another. Mexican officials were still trying to organize a new government. Santa Anna was out of the city, so Austin had to meet with Vice President Valentín Gómez Farías instead. Gómez Farías promised to present the Texans’ requests to the Mexican Congress. However, the government had many other problems to handle.

That's Interesting!

Austin in Prison

Stephen F. Austin was kept in a tiny windowless cell. His food was passed through a slot in the door. When he was allowed outside his cell, he saw other prisoners but was not permitted to speak to them. He spent time writing letters to his friends. Austin pleaded with them not to take any violent action. "Such a thing would have increased my difficulty."

A disease called cholera had swept through the city, and thousands of people were sick and dying.

In September, Austin was still waiting for the Congress to discuss the proposals. He asked Gómez Farías once again to review the documents. Austin also noted that Texans might go ahead with organizing a state government without official approval. Gómez Farías thought Austin was threatening him and angrily ended the meeting. In October a frustrated Austin wrote to the local government in San Antonio. He had not yet received permission for Texas to become a separate state. Yet Austin advised Texans to meet "without a moment's delay for the purpose of organizing a local government for Texas."

When Santa Anna returned to Mexico City the following month, Austin was finally able to meet with him. Santa Anna agreed to nearly all of the resolutions of the Convention of 1833. He agreed to allow immigration from the United States and to lower taxes on U.S. imports. However, he refused to make Texas a separate state from Coahuila.

Austin left Mexico City on December 10, 1833. Although he had failed to gain permission to make Texas a state, he headed home full of hope because he had achieved his other goals. Austin's hopes were soon dashed, however. In January, when he reached Saltillo, the capital of Coahuila y Texas, Austin was arrested. Mexican officials had read his letter. The officials thought Austin had challenged Mexican authority.

Austin was taken back to Mexico City under armed guard and was put in prison without a trial. After nearly a year in prison, Austin was released on December 25, 1834. Even then, he was not permitted to return to Texas until July 1835. Back in Texas, many people worried and waited for him to return home.

Reading Check Sequencing List in order the events that led to Austin's arrest.



Section 3 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- reforms
- delegates

2. Identify and explain

the significance of each of the following in Texas history:

- Convention of 1832
- William H. Wharton
- Convention of 1833

3. Categorizing

- Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to show what reforms Texans hoped to gain from the Conventions of 1832 and 1833.

Convention of 1832

Convention of 1833

4. Finding the Main Idea

- a. How did the right to free speech, including the right to protest, shape events in Texas?
- b. Why was Stephen F. Austin arrested?

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Making Generalizations and Predictions

Write a paragraph explaining how you think Austin's arrest might have led to more conflict between Mexico and Texas.

Consider the following:

- why Austin went to Mexico
- what happened in Mexico City