PRESERVE THE FUTURE

Help the Texas Historical Commission preserve the past while touring this historic site. Please be mindful of fragile historic artifacts and structures. We want to ensure their preservation for the enjoyment of future generations.

SEE THE SITES

From western forts and adobe structures to Victorian mansions and pivotal battlegrounds, the Texas Historical Commission's state historic sites illustrate the breadth of Texas history.

SAN JACINTO MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Experience the exciting story of the Battle of San Jacinto and explore over 400 years of Texas history. View "Texas Forever!! The Battle of San Jacinto," and travel to the top of the monument for spectacular views of the area.

PLAN YOUR NEXT TRIP
storiedsites.com

SAN JACINTO BATTLEGROUND STATE HISTORIC SITE
3523 Independence Parkway South,
La Porte, TX 78382
281-479-2431
visitsanjacinto.com

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
REAL PLACES TELLING REAL STORIES

TEXAS INDEPENDENCE TRAIL

Texas TIME TRAVEL

thc.texas.gov | texastimetravel.com

In accordance with Texas State Depository Law, this publication is available at the Texas State Publications Clearinghouse and/or Texas Depository Libraries.

VISITORS GUIDE

SAN JACINTO BATTLEGROUND

STATE HISTORIC SITE

La Porte, Texas

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
REAL PLACES TELLING REAL STORIES

Welcome to the San Jacinto Battleground, site of the final battle of the Texas Revolution and the birthplace of Texas. On a chilly April afternoon in 1836, this strip of coastal prairie rang with the boom of cannon, crack of musket fire, and shouts of "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!" Despite being outnumbered, Gen. Sam Houston's army of settlers, Tejanos, and foreign volunteers decisively defeated Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna's forces and won Texas independence.

Today, the 1,200-acre site and the 567-foot tall San Jacinto Monument celebrate their sacrifice and victory.

THE ROAD TO SAN JACINTO

Always tense, relations between the Centralist Mexican government and the Texian settlers reached a breaking point when President Santa Anna abolished the liberal Constitution of 1824 and established a dictatorship. Texians resisted, and by December 1835, armed revolutionaries had driven the Mexican army out of Texas.

Santa Anna quickly raised a 6,000-man army and marched north, declaring that the revolutionaries were to be considered pirates and he would take no prisoners.

Defiant, the General Convention met at Washington-on-the-Brazos, declaring Texas a free and independent country on March 2, and appointing Sam Houston commander of the Texian forces. Houston marched west to relieve the besieged Alamo, but had only made it as far as Gonzales before he learned that the garrison had fallen on March 6 and its defenders were dead.

Outmanned and outgunned, the Texian army retreated east before the Mexican army's advance, accompanied by a horde of terrified civilians, a dark time known as the Runaway Scrape. The Texian army had reached the town of Harrisburg (present-day Houston) when Houston learned that Santa Anna and a small vanguard had marched on New Washington (present-day La Porte). This was the chance he had been waiting for.

Before crossing Buffalo Bayou, Houston addressed his men, telling them, "The army will cross and we will meet the enemy. Some of us may be killed and must be killed; but, soldiers, remember the Alamo, the Alamo! the Alamo!" Then they turned east and marched toward San Jacinto and battle.

"The Battle of San Jacinto" by Charles Shaw, courtesy San Jacinto Museum of History.

THE BATTLE

Both armies reached San Jacinto, a cattle ranch owned by Peggy McCormick, by midday on April 20, 1836. The first to arrive, the 935-man Texian army made their camp along the densely wooden banks of Buffalo Bayou. Santa Anna's army of 750 men arrived a few hours later. The two forces exchanged cannon fire for several hours, but the Mexican army withdrew by mid-afternoon with neither side having done much damage. Late that afternoon, Col. Sidney Sherman led the Texian cavalry on a scouting mission but, eager for a fight, his men directly charged the Mexican cavalry and were soon under heavy fire, only barely managing to make it back to their camp.

The main action took place on the afternoon of April 21, 1836. That morning, 500 additional soldiers reached Santa Anna, bringing his army to approximately 1,250 men. To prevent further reinforcements and eliminate the possibility of escape, Houston ordered his chief scout, Erastus "Deaf" Smith, to destroy Vince's Bridge, cutting off the road to Harrisburg. Both armies were now trapped on the peninsula.

When noon came and went without an attack, Santa Anna let his tired men rest, neglecting to post sentries. Houston, after a mid-day council of war, decided to attack that afternoon. At 3:30, he gave his men the order to advance. While Sherman and his troops approached the Mexican army's northern flank

Sherman's infantry attacking the Mexican camp on April 21 by Charles Shaw, courtesy San Jacinto Museum of History.

and the Texian cavalry drew the attention of the Mexican cannon, the main Texas army marched across the prairie, screened by the tall grass and the slight rise between the two camps. The Texians were nearly on top of the enemy camp before the Mexican army realized they were under attack.

Amidst the roar of cannons, the Texian infantry only had time to fire one round before charging the Mexican breastworks, shouting "Remember the Alamo! Remember La Bahia!"

In the confusing melee, the Mexican army was unable to implement its battle plan. It was a quick fight; in his official report, Houston wrote, "The conflict lasted about 18 minutes from the time of close action, until we were in possession of the Enemy's encampment."

After the battle, Texian soldiers, enraged by the mass executions at the Alamo and Goliad (also called La Bahia), hunted down the fleeing Mexican soldiers until dark. "It was nothing but a slaughter," Sgt. William Swearingen wrote in a letter to his brother the next day. "They shot everyone that attempted to swim the bayou as soon as he took to the water, and them that remained they killed as fast as they could load." An estimated 650 Mexican soldiers died at San Jacinto. The Texians only lost nine men.

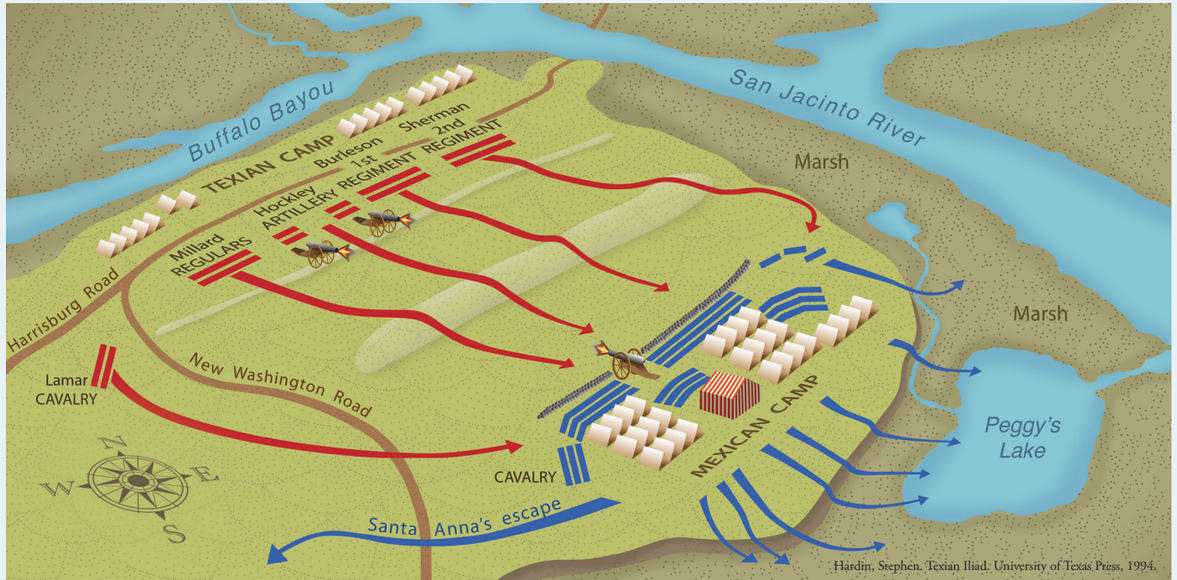
The Texian army was victorious in battle, but they had failed to capture Santa Anna, who had fled in an attempt to rejoin the rest of his army. The next day, April 22, a Texian scouting party captured the Mexican president hiding in the tall grass near Sim's Bayou (in present-day Pasadena). The Texians didn't discover their captive's identity until they returned to camp and the Mexican prisoners began shouting his name. Santa Anna was brought before an injured Houston and agreed to order his army to leave Texas in exchange for his life. After being held prisoner for several weeks, Santa Anna and President Burnett signed the Treaties of Velasco on May 14, 1836, ending the Texas Revolution. Santa Anna was eventually allowed to return to Mexico. The Treaties of Velasco required all Mexican troops to be withdrawn South of the Rio Grande and all private properties restored. It also required all slaves to be returned that the Mexican army sheltered. Many former slaves followed the army back to Mexico where they could be free.

MEMORIALS AND MONUMENTS

San Jacinto has been hallowed ground to Texans for as long as Texas has existed. In 1882, the Brigham Monument, a seventeen-foot tall marble obelisk, was placed at the gravesite of the nine Texian soldiers who lost their lives during the battle and others who lived in the town of San Jacinto. The following year, the state purchased the first 10 acres of what would eventually become the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site. It became Texas first state park in 1907.

In 1901, the San Jacinto Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas and one of the surviving veterans visited the battleground to identify key locations from the battle. These spots were originally marked with iron crosses, then replaced in 1912 with the large granite markers still seen today.

Towering above the battleground, the 567-foot tall San Jacinto monument is the ultimate memorial to Houston's victory. Built from 1936 to 1939 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto, the monument became the prototype for building high-rise structures on expansive soils and in areas hit by tropical storms. It was designated a Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 1992. Today, the Monument is an enduring symbol of independence and Texas pride.



Hardin, Stephen. Texian Iliad. University of Texas Press, 1994.