TEXAS AND SEPARATE INDEPENDENCE, 1860-61

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In December of 1860, a New Orleans newspaper commenting on the secession movement then underway in the lower South pointed out that the motives of Texas in leaving the Union were different from those of other Southern States. Texas was, the newspaper declared, "grievously disappointed at the poor results which followed to her from merging of her independence in the federal Union," and moved by the expectation of European alliances which would allow it to extend its boundaries westward to the Pacific Ocean and southward to Central America, Texas was "ready to cut adrift from a connection which has ceased to give her that assurance of future development and greatness she had been led to promise herself from its formation." The newspaper suggested that Texas could probably expect support from both England and France in a policy of territorial expansion so that by means of cheap labor supplied from the Far East, Texas would be able to compete in the yield of cotton and tropical products with the Southern States and the West Indies.

While the newspaper declined to speculate on the correctness of these views relating to Texas, it declared that they were considered "to be realisable by men of most enlarged views and deep reflection in our sister state," but they had little in common with sentiments that moved such "speculating politicians" as Senator Louis Wigfall of Texas.

In conclusion, the newspaper declared that the Union was in danger both from "the honest and determined disunionists . . . controlling Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, and from Texas, because of the brilliant future a disconnection from us so gorgeously presents. This is apparent to all."

The existence of sentiment for the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas was also apparent to an English woman who was living in Austin during the winter of 1860-61. She later wrote: "There were now three distinct parties: one for remaining in the Union; a second which demanded a Southern Confederacy, and a third which wished Texas to resume her independence and to fly the Lone Star flag again."

In 1860, Texas had been a member of the Federal Union only fifteen years. For many Texans memories of the Republic remained, and to some, annexation seemed a mistake. Therefore, it was only natural that there were Texans who believed the best policy for their State in this time of crisis was a return to the Republic. In a period of twenty-five years, Texans had won their independence from Mexico, maintained a republic for ten years, joined the Federal Union, and, then, after fifteen years in the Union, they were again facing the issue of disunion. To many Texans, the Republic was a proud memory and the Lone Star
flag was a symbol of their loyalty to the principles upon which the Republic of Texas had been founded.

When news of Lincoln's election as president of the United States reached Texas early in November of 1860, the Texans were moved to action. Their symbol of resistance was the Lone Star flag. One newspaper described the reaction to Lincoln's election in Brazoria County:

A look of contempt, mingled with indignation and determination passed from man to man, until with one universal voice of approbation, they proposed the raising again of the Lone Star Flag. By the assistance of kind and patriotic ladies, a beautiful flag was soon made, and unfurled to breeze. . . . The spirit of '36 is fully aroused in old Brazoria.

The Lone Star flag was raised also in Brenham, which caused the newspaper there to comment:

Long may it wave!!! and if the Black banner is planted at Washington, may [the Lone Star flag] again become the standard of a separate Nationality!! under which the freemen of Texas will rally with the spirit which actuated the hearts of their fathers of yore, for the maintenance of their rights and liberties!!

Citizens of Galveston also raised the Lone Star flag. After visiting Austin, Thomas Chubb wrote Governor Sam Houston on November 11: "I arrived home safe and sound Friday morning and found Galveston had cceeded [sic] from the Union and the Lone Star was floating from the House tops.

The Houston newspaper requested the opinions of leading citizens on what action Texas should take in the political crisis. David G. Burnet, a former president of the Republic of Texas, replied that he opposed separate secession and that, in his opinion, only a united South could survive. Burnet said he felt the election of Lincoln was not sufficient cause for secession and that the Southern States should secede only if forced to do so by hostile policies of the Lincoln administration. Francis R. Lubbock, a former lieutenant governor of Texas, declared that his first allegiance was to Texas and its laws. He favored immediate secession by Texas and he expressed a belief that the other Southern States would take similar action.

Opinions were received from other Texans. Ashbel Smith, secretary of state under the Republic of Texas, declared that Lincoln's election was sufficient cause for secession. He favored a return to the Republic of Texas with treaties with the other Southern States. He concluded that "if I live, let me live a Texian, and if I perish, let me perish a Texian."

Former Congressman George W. Smyth expressed his view that the election of Lincoln was not sufficient cause for secession but that he was not opposed to a consultation of the people if it reflected the sentiments of all citizens. He added that if the Union were dissolved, "Let Texas stand alone in her independence. Let her fall back upon her "constitution of the Republic.""

P. W. Kittrell, a former member of the Texas
legislature, wrote that he favored secession only after every attempt to gain assurances from the North for the security of and respect of Southern rights had failed. Then, he declared, “We should sever our connexion, and once more fling our banner of the Lone Star to the breeze, and attempt to maintain our independent sovereignty if we perish in the attempt.”

A. P. Wiley of Huntsville declared that Texas had no choice but secession, and that he would prefer that Texas should re-establish a national state.

E. H. Cushing, editor of the Houston Telegraph, also favored immediate secession and the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas, and he expressed the view that a large majority of Texans agreed with him. He added that those who favored a Southern Confederacy looked for this to happen only after Texas was independent. The editor declared that mercantile interests could see no alternative except secession, but they favored a Southern Confederacy as offering more strength to the government and affording a better guarantee of safety of life and protection of property. Cushing warned that secession might bring hard times for a year or two but that, once independent, Texas would become the center of slavery and the harbor of wealth attached to slavery on the North American continent.

The Houston newspaper reported that news of Lincoln’s victory had “filled the people of Texas with profound disgust.” The newspaper mentioned that it had received reports from nearly every town within a hundred and fifty miles, and that “everywhere the Lone Star flag has been given to the breeze.” In addition, the newspaper reported that a blue cockade was being worn by many citizens, and that this was a symbol that the wearer could “see no way of successful resistance but in the withdrawal of their State from the Union.”

The Austin State Gazette reported that Governor Houston had been sending to other countries for fighting men to come to Austin. His object, according to the newspaper, evidently was to prevent the raising of the Lone Star flag on the Capitol grounds. The Gazette offered the Governor the protection of its office if he feared violence to himself, but it expressed the opinion that no one in the city wished to harm him. The newspaper stated that a Lone Star flag had been raised in the city, and declared that every citizen had a right to advocate secession, “either in the public press or by unfurling a flag.” The Gazette also declared: “We believe that Texas cannot safely or honorably submit to Abram [sic] Lincoln, and that she will assert and maintain her independence.”

Secession sentiment was reported from Richmond where a meeting was held and the Lone Star flag was raised on the top of the Veranda Hotel. “Nine whoops [were given] for the Lone Star banner and nine times nine for the Lone Star Republic. Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, we give our heart and our hand to the movement.” A Lone Star Club of Fort Bend County was organized at Richmond. The purposes of the club were “resistance to Northern Aggression, the defense of Southern rights and the protection of Southern institutions.”
A gold star on a blue ribbon was selected as the symbol of the organization.13

The editor of the Houston newspaper voiced a common feeling when he wrote:

The glorious flag of the Lone Star is dear to every Texian. It waved proudly over a free country, which true men wrested from the dominion of the savage. Tears flowed from eyes all unused to weeping, when it was hauled down from the flagstaff at the Capitol, on the consummation of annexation. It may yet be raised again. If so, it will not be dishonored. There are many of those sturdy spirits still left, who glared in that banner. Thousands of others have been attracted hither by the history of this country, by its unexampled advantages, by the love of liberty that dwells among our people. —Many of them love the Union, but all of them, we believe, love Texas more. Whatever may be the action of Texas, whatever steps she may take, whether to stay or go, that step once taken, will be supported by a united people.14

From La Grange one Texan reported that the "Lone Star flag of Texas' Independence" had been raised over the public square and a number of speeches were given all of which sustained "the right of Texas independence from under the administrative leadership of a Black Republican." In conclusion, he declared: "Old Fayette will stand to her post and battle for her rights under the Lone Star flag, achieved by the blood and valor of Texans upon the plains of San Jacinto."15

A public meeting held at Dallas on November 17, adopted a series of resolutions. The third resolution declared: "That rather than tolerate an administration of the Federal Government upon the principles of the Black Republican party, we decidedly prefer that Texas should withdraw from the Union, and take her place among the free and independent nations of the earth." Citizens of Walker County announced that "the Lone Star, as the emblem of State sovereignty, has been unfurled in our midst, and floats proudly and defiantly in the court house square of our town."16

At Gonzales, a public meeting was distinguished by a two hour speech by the Reverend James C. Wilson, a Methodist minister, who declared that Texas had received "but few and slight and doubtful benefits from annexation." Reverend Wilson commented that "a very large number of our people are in favor, unconditionally and absolutely, of proclaiming the Republic of Texas and leaving each State to act for herself." However, Wilson declared that he preferred a Southern confederacy to separate independence for Texans.17

The Rusk Enquirer declared it preferred the Union but if "we are to be slaves of fanaticism we had better throw ourselves upon our own resources either in a Southern confederacy or a separate republic."18 The Huntsville Item which was for disunion declared that it had never seen any necessity for annexation. The newspaper concluded that "we think the last straw has been laid on the camel's back. Hurrah for the
Lone Star! Reports from over the State indicated that the Lone Star had been raised as a symbol of resistance in almost every town.

A Colonel Woodward of Austin County reported that he had met few people while traveling through Eastern Texas who were opposed to secession. He added: "A large majority of all parties are in favor of quitting the confederation and say, no more confederations. I found in every town, and on every county store I passed the Lone Star floating in the breeze." At a mass meeting in Brazoria on November 17, the Court House was decorated with Lone Star flags and mottos such as "With the South or alone." Two committees were appointed to organize minute men who would wear "a Texas star upon the left lapel of their coats."

From his ranch near New Braunfels, the journalist turned sheep raiser, George W. Kendall, wrote to a Northern friend: "As for Texas, so far as I can gather, she is ripe and ready for Secession, and if the Union is to be split I believe that our best course will be to 'go it alone.'"

A fire-eating Texan, Ben McCulloch, wrote from Georgia to the editor of the Gazette urging action on secession:

For God's sake don't let Texas be the last to move in this great cause. Move she will, I feel certain; let it be prompt and in the right direction. Don't let the State split on the plan. Should she think of separate independence, now is not the time to speak of it. That will be used by the submissionists all over the South to break down the State rights party, by saying if we get out of the present Union we can never form another; there will be as many Governments as there are now States. This danger is only in our State. We of the South are one people, with one common interest. Let Texans throw no obstacle in the way of success, but act with her sisters of the South, and all will be well, and our rights and our honor will be in our own keeping, either in or out of the Union. Above all, let it not be said of Texas that she waited until the other Southern States had secured her rights, before she took action herself in the great cause.

Under the title, "The Future," the Gazette expressed its view:

Some of the submissionists are endeavoring to create the impression that the purpose of those in favor of resistance is to make Texas a separate Republic. The charge is gratuitous and unfounded. We believe that our safety is in secession. After the State shall act, then the question of an Independent Republic, or Southern Confederacy, will arise, and will be settled by the people. We have heard men express themselves in favor of each—perhaps the larger number in favor of a Southern Confederacy. Whether for one or the other, we are united in opposition to Black Republican rule, and will not permit ourselves to be divided by anticipating questions not now before us.

However, by the middle of January, the Gazette was openly in favor of Texas joining the Southern Confederacy. It advocated the prompt
secession of Texas, and added: "We can then accept the proposition of South Carolina, and enter into a Southern Confederacy." Evidently the secession of South Carolina had brought a change in the attitude of the Gazette.

Charles De Morse, the editor of the Clarksville Standard, considered the possibility of restoring the Republic of Texas; but he soon decided that the fate of Texas was so closely involved with that of the other Southern States that it would be unwise and impracticable for Texas not to act with them.

However, some citizens of Galveston disagreed with the views of De Morse. A group of former Unionists there led by Oscar Farish formed a "Lone Star Association" to work for the separate independence of Texas.

Any discussion of sentiment for separate independence in Texas during the winter of 1860-61 would be incomplete without consideration of the attitude of Governor Sam Houston. On November 20, 1860, Houston sent a letter to a group of Huntsville citizens presenting his views on the political crisis. Houston declared that he regretted the election of Lincoln but added that, since Lincoln was constitutionally elected, "no alternative is left to me but to yield to the Constitution." If the time came, the Governor declared, when it was necessary to choose between a loss of constitutional rights and revolution, he would choose the latter.

Included in the letter was a rather cryptic remark that "the people who have to bear the burdens of revolution must themselves effect the work."

Eight days later, Houston sent to the Governors of the other Southern States a proposal for a consultative convention of the Southern States in order to "preserve the equal rights of such States in the Union." Then, on December 3, Houston issued a long "Address to the People of Texas" explaining his actions and defending them from attacks made by secessionists. While waiting for reaction to his proposal from the Governors of the other Southern States, Houston declined to call the Texas legislature into special session as requested by many Texans.

To a request by citizens of Leon County that he call a special session of the Legislature, Houston replied that while there was no money in the treasury, "If I believe it is the general desire of the people of the State, I will not stand in the way of a call of the Legislature."

To a committee sent by citizens of Harris County to urge the convening of the legislature, Houston reportedly said that, with his conviction of right and the impositions imposed by the Constitution, he could not call a convention or convene the legislature but when a majority of the people expressed such a desire by petition he would resign.

After the committee returned from Austin, a group of Harris County citizens issued on December 1, a call for a State convention to meet at Austin on the fourth Monday of January, 1861. This call which had been written by a group of secessionists at a meeting in Austin was soon announced from other parts of the State.
Early in December, Governor Houston visited the cities of Houston and Galveston. The Governor arrived in Houston on the night of December 6. However, he did not speak at Houston until the night of the twelfth. In the interval, he probably visited Galveston. Governor Houston was given a noisy reception by secessionists in the city of Houston. A reported 2,500 citizens turned out to hear his speech which was frequently interrupted by individuals expressing their disapproval of his tardiness in calling the legislature. Houston’s speech consisted mainly of a recounting of the many services and sacrifices he had made to Texas. He declared that it was folly to believe that he would mislead Texas.

The reception given the Governor on his tour evidently caused him to change his tactics. When he returned to Austin, he issued on December 17, a call for a special session of the legislature to meet January 21, 1861. Houston gave as a reason for the call of the legislature his desire that “a free expression of the popular will through the ballot box,” could be given on the course that Texas should pursue, “in order to maintain, if possible, her rights in the Union, as guaranteed by the Federal Constitution.”

Ten days later, Houston issued a proclamation for an election to be held on February 4, 1861, of seven delegates to a Southern convention. On New Year’s Day, the Governor spoke at Waco. Houston declared that he would yield to the decision of the people, but should secession come he would prefer “a separate Republic of the Lone Star.” The audience answered him with three cheers for South Carolina.

However, Houston was not, as usual, disturbed by opposition. On January 7, he reasserted his position in a letter to J. M. Calhoun, the commissioner from Alabama to Texas. In answer to Calhoun’s request that Texas join Alabama in forming a Southern Confederacy, the Governor replied that Texans might prefer “a separate Nationality, to even an equal position in a Confederacy, which may be broken and destroyed at any moment, by the caprice or dissatisfaction of one of its members.” Houston added: “Texas has views of expansion not common to many of her sister States. . . . The same spirit of enterprise that founded a Republic here, will carry her institutions Southward and Westward.” He ended with an appeal for “at least one firm attempt . . . to preserve our constitutional rights within the Union.”

Houston was, perhaps, dreaming old dreams. Essentially a Union man, he had begun to see the handwriting on the wall. It is possible that he knew before he wrote the letter to Calhoun that secession could not be prevented. If he could not keep Texas in the Federal Union, then he could restore the Republic of Texas and re-new his old plans of expansion to the Pacific.

The day before the legislature was to meet, Governor Houston wrote to General D. E. Twiggs, commander of U. S. troops in Texas. The Governor asked Twiggs whether he would surrender Federal forts, arsenals and property within the State to a State officer on the order of the State Executive. Houston wrote that he was moved to this course
of action because he had received information that a mob was planning
to seize the Federal property.\textsuperscript{42}

When the legislature met on January 21, 1861, Governor Houston
sent a message expressing his views on conditions facing the State of
Texas. Referring to the political crisis, Houston declared that the Federal
government seemed to be “tottering to ruin,” and he declared it was
their duty to restore the Union “to its original pride and grandeur if
we can; and if we can not [sic], to see that our own liberties perish
not beneath its ruins.” He added that he felt the time had come for the
solution of the question of relations with the Federal government, and
he believed all would be well if the issue of secession was left to the
people.\textsuperscript{43}

On January 30, the Governor sent to the legislature a copy of Joint
Resolutions adopted by the legislature of Tennessee offering aid to any
Southern State facing coercion. Houston added this comment:

Having called you together to provide for an expression of the
sovereign will of the people at the ballot box, I also deem it my
duty to declare that while the freemen of Texas are deliberating
upon this question no impending threat of coercion from the people
of another State should be permitted to hang over them without
at least meeting the condemnation of their Representatives. What­
ever that sovereign will may be when fairly expressed, it must be
maintained. Texas as one man will defend it. While the Executive
would not counsel foolish bravado, he deems it a duty we owe to
the people to declare that even though their action should bring
upon us the consequences which now seem impending, we will all,
by our views in the past or the present what they may, be united.\textsuperscript{44}

The following day Governor Houston replied to a committee sent by
the Secession Convention to obtain the cooperation of the Governor. Hous­
ton pledged his aid in submitting the question of secession to a vote
of the people. He added: “And when the voice of the people of Texas
has been declared through the ballot-box, no citizen will be more ready
to yield obedience to its will, or risk his all in its defence [sic], than
myself. Their fate is my fate, their fortune is my fortune, their destiny
is my destiny, be it prosperity or gloom, as of old, I am with my country.\textsuperscript{45}

When the legislature gave its approval to the Secession Convention
subject only to the provision that it submit the question of secession
to a vote of the people, Houston approved the resolution but added
this comment: “With a protest against the assumption of any powers,
on the part of the said Convention beyond the reference of the question
for a longer connection of Texas with the Union, To the people.”\textsuperscript{46}

During the campaign before the vote on secession, Houston remained
silent, although most Texans, both secessionists and anti-secessionists,
were vocal. In answer to rumors that he was in favor of secession,
Houston replied that he was “in favor of peace, of harmony, of com­
promise, in order to obtain a fair expression of the will of the people.”
He added: “I still believe that secession will bring ruin and civil war.
Yet, if the people will it, I can bear it with them.”\textsuperscript{47}
The Governor issued, on March 4, a proclamation “declaring that a large majority of the votes received and counted ... are in favor of the ‘secession’ of the State of Texas from the United States of America.” The following day the Secession Convention, by a vote of 109 to 2, adopted an ordinance joining Texas to the Confederate States of America. This action ended Governor Houston’s cooperation with the Convention, and, the next day, Houston informed a committee of the Convention that the only power the Convention had was “to submit the question of Secession to a vote of the people.” On March 8, the Convention answered Houston by unanimously declaring:

Resolved that this Convention do now declare that it not only had power to pass and submit the ordinance of secession, but that also it possesses and will exercise the right, on behalf of the people of Texas, to do whatever may be incidental to the same, and that may be necessary and proper for the protection of the rights of the State in the present emergency, and that it will as speedily as practicable consummate the connection of Texas with the provisional government of the Confederate States of America, whose constitution has already been ratified by an ordinance of this Convention.

Then on March 14, the Convention adopted an ordinance “for the continuance of the existing State government” which included a requirement that all State officials take an oath to support the Confederate States of America. When Houston did not appear to take the oath, the Convention deposed him and declared Lieutenant Governor Edward Clark the Governor of Texas.

Despite offers of aid from both the Lincoln administration and his supporters in Texas, Houston refused to resist his expulsion from office. He issued a long address to the citizens of Texas and sent a message to the legislature defending his course of action and protesting “ALL THE ACTS AND DOINGS OF THIS CONVENTION, AND I DECLARE THEM NULL AND VOID!” Houston retired from office and the legislature declined to interfere with his removal.

Governor Houston was not the only person seriously seeking to prevent Texas from joining the Confederacy. However, the leaders of the secession movement in Texas did not share his views and neither did they entertain any serious thoughts of restoring the Texas Republic on a permanent basis. Since many of those who favored the restoration of the Lone Star Republic had originally been opposed to secession, these people were viewed with suspicion by the secessionists who saw in the proposal an attempt to weaken the South and the institution of slavery.

Many Unionists continued to oppose secession at least until an attempt at compromise between the sections had been made. If compromise failed, they favored a peaceful separation of the South from the North. A group of such men in Houston formed the Harris County Club for United Southern Action.

It is difficult to judge on what basis the delegates to the Secession
Convention were elected. A slate of candidates in Nacogdoches and Angelina counties in favor of Southern cooperation defeated a slate pledged to state action and a Southern Confederacy. However, the winning delegates voted for secession in the Convention. This is only one example of the inconsistent pattern that existed in the election of delegates to the secession Convention.

Despite this uncertainty over the attitude of the delegates, the leaders of the secession movement were able to predict the exact pattern the movement would follow. On January 17, George J. Durham, secretary of the Executive Committee of Texas, wrote to Howell Cobb that he had been directed by the committee to apprise him of “the true condition of public sentiment in this State” as to secession. Durham reported that the legislature would sustain the Convention despite the hostility of Governor Houston, and that the Convention would pass a secession ordinance which would go into effect as soon as it had been ratified by the voters. He assured Cobb that “of our co-operation with the Gulf states there can be no doubt.”

The Secessionist Convention met at Austin on January 28, 1861. O. M. Roberts, associate justice of the Texas Supreme Court, was elected president of the Convention by acclamation. The Convention quickly adopted, by a vote of 152 to 6, a resolution declaring “that without determining how the manner in which this result should be effected, it is the deliberate sense of this Convention that the State of Texas should separately secede from the Federal Union.”

On January 30, the Convention received from the Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives a copy of the Ordinance of Secession passed by the State of Alabama. It included a resolution inviting the other Southern states to send delegates to a convention at Montgomery, Alabama, on February 4, 1861. The ordinance was referred to the committee on Public Safety.

Then Spencer Ford of Caldwell County offered a series of resolutions providing for the selection of seven delegates to the convention at Montgomery in order to aid in the formation of a Southern confederacy. The resolutions were laid on the table. Following that action, A. P. Wiley of Walker County offered a resolution providing for the appointment by the Secession Convention of three commissioners to attend the convention at Montgomery to assure that convention “of the co-operation of Texas in extending and strengthening a Southern confederacy, as soon as her people can act authoritatively in the premises. . . .” Peter W. Gray of Harris County offered a substitute resolution declaring “that the people of Texas are in favor of the speedy formation of a federal union with other slave-holding States.” Both the resolution and the substitute were laid on the table.

The committee on Federal Relations offered an ordinance to dissolve the union between the State of Texas and the other States. It included a provision (Section 2) for the submission of the ordinance to a vote of the people of Texas. That evening, Wiley offered a substitute ordinance providing for the submission, at the same time as the secession
ordinance, "of any constitution of general government for the Southern United States that may be adopted at Montgomery, Alabama, with a view to make Texas a party thereto, or for the rejection thereof. . . ." The substitute resolution offered by Wiley was laid on the table.\(^5\)

The following day, January 31, the Convention refused by a vote of 145-29 to strike out Section 2 of the Ordinance of Secession.\(^6\) However, that evening, the delegates voted to replace a phrase referring to "the interests and prosperity of the Southern people," with the phrase, "the interests and prosperity of Texas and her sister slave-holding States."\(^7\) Then on February 1, the Convention adopted the Ordinance of Secession, declaring Texas to be "a separate sovereign State," by a vote of 166 to 8.\(^8\)

The next day, the Convention adopted "a declaration of the causes which impel the State of Texas to secede from the Federal Union." The declaration included a statement that: "By the secession of six of the slave-holding States, and the certainty that others will speedily do likewise, Texas has no alternative but to remain in an isolated connection with the North, or unite her destinies with the South."\(^9\) Obviously there was another alternative, but the committee that prepared this declaration evidently did not wish to acknowledge it.

On February 4, the Convention voted, 102-38, to send seven delegates to represent Texas at the Montgomery convention, "in order that the views and interests of the people of Texas may be consulted with reference to the constitution and provisional government that may be established by said Convention." That evening the Convention elected the seven delegates to represent Texas.\(^7\) However, a resolution offered by A. T. Rainey, providing that "when the ordinance of secession takes effect on the 2nd day of March next, Texas will immediately unite with the other States which have seceded in the formation of a Southern confederacy," was laid on the table. The Convention adjourned that night until March 2.\(^1\)

Concern that Texas might not join with other Southern States in a confederacy was shown by commissioners sent by the States of South Carolina, Georgia, and Louisiana.\(^7\) General John McQueen of South Carolina was present at the passage of the secession ordinance and he spoke to the delegates the same afternoon. McQueen invited the Convention to send delegates to the Montgomery convention in order to form "a government with a homogeneous people, identical in interest with you, and whose effort it will be to perpetuate the institutions of our fathers." He added that he was gratified that he would be able to report on his return to South Carolina "that your own noble State of Texas, in her own way, and at her own time will very soon be . . . ready to unite with them in a Southern Confederacy."\(^2\)

On February 4, General J. W. A. Sanford of Georgia was presented to the Convention. Sanford told the delegates that when the Ordinance of Secession was ratified by the voters of Texas, "a great question arises in regard to your future position." He declared that the people of the Southern States still wished "to be associated together under the same
general government.” Therefore, “I cannot but indulge the hope that no unhallowed ambition or selfish purpose will array itself in opposition to a policy so indispensably necessary to the prosperity, happiness and safety of all.”

During the adjournment following the first session of the Convention, George Williamson of Louisiana arrived in Austin. His views were presented in a letter to the Convention sent to its president on February 11. The Louisiana Commissioner also sought “the hearty co-operation of Texas in the formation of a Southern Confederacy.” He added: “The people of Louisiana would consider it a most fatal blow to African slavery, if Texas either did not secede or having seceded should not join her destinies to theirs in a Southern Confederacy.”

On February 23, James H. Rogers, a member of the Convention, in New Orleans to procure arms for the State of Texas, wrote to the Governor of Louisiana. In reporting on the action of Texas, Rogers evidently felt it necessary to reassure the Governor of the intentions of the State of Texas. He declared:

...The determination of the people of Texas is fixed! Whatever may be the consequences, Texas has thrown her influence, and will throw her sword into the scales with her Southern sisters. The relations both social and commercial which have grown up and so closely entwine each make the interests and future destiny of Texas and Louisiana the same. The idea of a separate republic has never been seriously entertained by the people of Texas.

The enemies of secession have attempted to embarrass immediate action by intimating such a course. I beg to assure you, as the recent action of our Convention in sending delegates to the Montgomery Convention indicates, that Texas will link her destinies with the fortunes of her sister cotton and sugar growing States, and the banner which waves over their patriotic sons, in peace or war, will float over the undaunted sons of the “Lone Star State.” The mansion and cottage hearthstone shall be made desolate, and the west bank of Red River become a frontier, before a hostile Federal troop will from her direction ever place foot upon the soil of Louisiana.

Shortly after the Convention recessed, its president, O. M. Roberts, wrote the Governor of Georgia. Roberts reported the passage of the Ordinance of Secession and its submission to the voters. He wrote that there was no doubt of its ratification by a large majority and that there was full assurance of the cooperation of the branches of the State government when the Ordinance was ratified. He added: “It is the earnest desire of the people of Texas to unite their destiny with that of each and all of the slaveholding states in one common Federal Union.”

On February 10, Roberts issued an address titled, “To the People of Texas.” He described the action taken by the Convention and urged every voter to go to the polls on February 23, and express his wishes on the issue of secession. He stated that the Texas Convention had sent delegates to a convention at Montgomery which hoped to establish a general government, based upon the Constitution of the United States,
for those States that had seceded. Roberts mentioned the many ties that Texas had with the States of the lower South and their desire to united with Texas in a common destiny. Roberts urged that Texas not turn its back on the States of the lower South "but share their lot for weal or woe," and vote on February 23 not to continue to live under "Black Republican rule." The possibility of Texas returning to the status of a separate republic was not mentioned by Roberts.78

A group of Unionists, who were either members of the Convention or the legislature, or both, issued on February 6, an "Address to the People of Texas." They acknowledged the wrongs born by the South but expressed their opposition to secession as a remedy for those evils. The “Address” questioned the powers claimed by the Convention and declared: "It may be that if you secede from the Union, you may wish Texas to unite her destiny with other slaveholding States; but surely you will claim the right to be consulted as to the terms upon which you will unite with them.” The Unionists concluded with a plea for calmness, and for an attempt, if possible, to restore the Union. If this were not possible, then let Texas “choose whether she will stand alone, or unite her destiny with that of others.”79

The Convention re-convened on Saturday, March 2. The following Monday, the vote on secession was counted and Texas was declared to be since March 2, 1861, “a free, sovereign and independent nation of the earth,” and the Lone Star flag was unfurled from the dome of the Capitol and saluted by a discharge of artillery.80

On March 5, an ordinance of union between Texas and the Confederate States of America was presented to the Convention. That afternoon the ordinance was amended so that a provision requiring the submission of the permanent constitution of the Confederate States to a vote of the people of Texas was deleted. The ordinance was then adopted by the vote of 109 to 2.81 This was the action that brought the Convention into conflict with Governor Houston and led to the removal of the Governor by the Convention.

On March 20, the Convention adopted an ordinance conferring jurisdiction over the forts, navy yards, arsenals and light houses in the State of Texas upon the Confederate States of America. The same day the Convention received a certified copy of the Constitution of the Confederate States of America.82

Resolutions calling for the submission of the Confederate Constitution to the voters of Texas were referred to committee.83 On March 23, the Convention took up the consideration of the permanent Constitution of the Confederate States. A proposal to submit the Constitution to a vote of the people of Texas was defeated, 93-32. The Convention then adopted the ordinance ratifying the Confederate Constitution by a vote of 126 to 2.84 That evening the Convention voted to establish a committee of three to prepare a brief exposition of the activities of the Convention as an address to the people of Texas. On the following Monday, March 25, the Convention adjourned sine die.85 The address authorized by the
Convention was prepared by a committee composed of Pryor Lea, John Henry Brown and John D. Stell. It is dated March 30, 1861.86

The Address first mentions the origin of the political crisis which has led to secession. It declares that the object of the secession movement was the separation of the Southern from the Northern States with the former subsequently to be joined in a confederacy “as the best means if not the only mode of securing essential and inalienable rights.” But it also mentions the special situation that had existed in Texas:

In this State, the public mind was exercised by the question of our final separation from all other States; but the idea of such a result had no favor; and the apprehension of it was used as an argument against secession, while the objection was met by the assured policy of a seceded confederacy. Hence, with few exceptions, the advocates and opponents of immediate and separate secession of this State commenced and prosecuted the canvass, differing on the leading proposition of secession but uniting in opinion that consummated secession should result in confederation as an incident. So the decisive issue was on secession.87

In reference to the election on the question of secession, the Address declared that while the “election was to be decisive on the question of separation, it was in its nature to be conclusive on the question of confederation, unless some unexpected event should occur to require another direct and formal expression of the public will.” It defends the Convention against charges of usurpation and declares that the Convention had the power to “do whatever the occasion required, but no more.”88

In addition, the Address defends the Convention in its action in ratifying the permanent Constitution of the Confederate States since the people “felt the importance of early relief from strife within this State as to its political position.”89

The two Austin newspapers differed in opinion on the actions of the Secession Convention. The Intelligencer condemned “the gross usurpation of power by the Convention,” and praised the resistance shown by Governor Houston. “In the estimation of the patriots of Texas, his course has been right, and the people will upon reflection become thoroughly convinced of this fact.”89 The Gazette defended the Convention from the charges of usurpation. “Before the Convention submitted the secession ordinance to the people of Texas, the delegates to the Montgomery Congress were elected. The papers which advocated the secession ordinance, also advocated a Southern Confederacy. Therefore, the people of Texas in ratifying the secession ordinance, indicated their desire to join the Southern Confederacy.” The newspaper then charged that opponents of the Convention could not be satisfied “without selling the State to Lincoln.”81

However, at least one other Texas newspaper did not agree with the Gazette. Charles De Morse, editor of the Clarksville Standard, declared:

We feel that our political rights have been outraged by a body which we assisted in calling into being in its purely primary dem-
ocratic form ... to which we, like all good citizens who voted for it, imparted all the power it had ... of which the annexation of Texas to the new Confederacy and a change of the State Constitution were no part—never considered or suggested.2

While the coming of war silenced the controversy over Texas joining the Confederacy, the following year a history of the secession movement in Texas mentioned the sentiment for separate independence:

Pending the brief period between the passage of the Ordinance of Secession by the Convention and its ratification by the people, and up to the time of the final annexation of Texas to the Southern Confederacy, the Lone Star flag, the former emblem of our independence as a Republic, was generally used all over the State as evidence of the almost universal desire to resume our State Sovereignty. There were numbers in various parts of the State, embracing many of the early settlers, who took active measures to organize what was called Lone Star Associations, advocating the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas in opposition to annexation to the Southern Confederacy. Gen. Houston was understood to be in favor of attempting to maintain the separate independence of Texas in case of her secession from the old Union. However, the members of the party were so few that no general organization of it ever took place.3

There can be no doubt that sentiment did exist in Texas during the winter of 1860-61 for the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas. It was substantial but exactly how strong it was there is no way of knowing. It was not well organized, but it found its way into editorials, letters and even poetry. T. J. Stokes offered these lines under the title, "The Single Star;" which could be sung to the tune of "The Yellow Rose of Texas":

The Single Star of Texas,
Now let it single be;
That blazing star of beauty,
Oh! that's the orb for me;
And let it hang suspended,
In rays of freedom bright,
The glory of the nation,
The fullest Star of light.4

But this sentiment found no favor with the leaders of the secession movement in Texas who were determined that Texas would join the Southern Confederacy. O. M. Roberts, the president of the Secession Convention, did not indicate any awareness of the sentiment for re-establishing the Republic of Texas.5 And John H. Reagan, a prominent member of the Convention, was in favor of joining the Confederacy. On his way to Austin to take part in the Convention, Reagan passed through Houston and sent a note to the editor of the local newspaper which read: "Nothing will be done at Washington to give this country repose. And our State must place herself in line with
the seceding States, if she would be true to the best interests of the people."

Willard Richardson, editor of the Galveston News, wrote a friend from Austin during the early days of the first session of the Convention. He promised: "But of one thing you may be certain, and that is that the Slave States will present the most united front to their enemies that was ever yet presented by independent States. You will speedily see them all Confederated together into a Solid phalanx, and if they are conquered, the plains of the South will have to flow with the blood of their assailants [sic]."

The leading Unionist in Texas, James W. Throckmorton, was not in sympathy with the sentiment for the re-establishment of the Texas Republic. Throckmorton in a letter to Reagan expressed his opposition to secession but declared that if the North would not remedy the wrongs done the Southern States then the South would have only one course open and that was to withdraw from the Union.

Governor Sam Houston was the most prominent advocate of the re-establishment of the Republic of Texas. But his support came too late. He had already lost the confidence of the secessionists and his advocacy of a return to the Republic of Texas probably killed any chance the movement might have had. In addition, it gave the Unionists grave doubts about the sincerity of his support of their cause.

The movement for separate independence was not tied either to the secession or the Union cause. It was a separate sentiment, never fully organized and always remaining in the background. It was not favored by the leaders of the Texas secession movement who wished to join Texas to a Southern Confederacy. Like a majority of Texans, they felt the ties of family and culture as well as of political and social institutions with the rest of the South. In addition, there were many obvious advantages in a confederacy with other Southern States. In case of a war, a Southern union might be necessary for survival.

Whether the majority of Texans actually preferred to remain a separate republic or join a Southern confederacy is unknown. In any case, the citizens of Texas were not given a choice in the matter. The Convention, for good or bad, made the decision for Texas. And the sentiment which motivated the Convention in making its decision was aptly summed up later by Francis Lubbock:

As an original question, secession, perhaps, would have failed to carry in Texas; but, the six leading cotton States having already resorted to an exercise of the right, banded themselves together in a new confederation, and formed a new government, Texas was apparently confronted with the alternative of becoming a party to the new compact, remaining in the Union, or resuming her sovereignty as a separate republic. Had she desired to desert her sister States of the South in this hour of need and peril (which she did not) and resume her former station as a republic, it was realized that she could not preserve a neutral attitude and maintain herself
in that condition. The idea of remaining in the Union, and thereby arraying herself with the avowed enemies of the South, was not to be thought of. The course that was adopted was the only one that was open to her.109

FOOTNOTES


See “New Orleans Correspondence,” in Indianola Courier, November 24, 1860, in which the correspondent declares that it is an almost universally held opinion in New Orleans that Texas would return to her status as the “Lone Star Republic.”


3 These quotations from the Columbia Democrat and Planter and the Brenham Ranger are in Houston Weekly Telegraph, November 20, 1860.

4 Chubb to Houston, November 11, 1860, Governor’s Letters, Archives, Texas State Library.

5 Houston Weekly Telegraph, November 6, 1860. Burnet was born in New Jersey but moved to Texas in 1826. Lubbock, a native of South Carolina, migrated to Texas in 1836.

6 Ibid., November 27, 1860. Ashbel Smith was a native of Connecticut who came to Texas in 1837. The term “Texian” usually referred to a person who lived in Texas before annexation to the United States.

7 Ibid., December 4, 1860. Smyth was born in North Carolina and came to Texas in 1830.

8 Ibid., December 11, 1860. Kittrell came to Texas from Alabama in 1850.

9 Ibid., December 25, 1860. Wiley was born in Georgia and came to Texas in 1846.

10 Ibid., November 13, 1860. Cushing, who was a native of Vermont, came to Texas in 1850.

11 Ibid., November 20, 1860. Also see Indianola Courier, November 24, 1860, which declared: “Lone Star flags have been hoisted at so many places in the State since the election that it would be a difficult task to enumerate them.”

12 Austin State Gazette, November 17, 1860. See the letter of Sam Houston to Ed Burleson in which Houston requested Burleson to come to Austin “as early as possible, with all of the men you can bring, who are true to the Country and on whom you can rely in any emergency. When you arrive I will explain every thing to you.” Houston to
Burleson, November 9, 1860, Edward Burleson Papers, Archives, University of Texas Library.

Ibid., November 17 and 24, 1860.

Ibid., November 27, 1860.

Houston Telegram, as quoted in Indianola Courier, November 10, 1860.

Houston Weekly Telegraph, November 20, 1860.

Austin State Gazette, December 1, 1860. The Gazette itself declared that Texas would soon unfurl “the Lone Star of Southern Independence, and take care of her own destinies.”

Address delivered in Gonzales, Texas, November 17, 1860, by Rev. James C. Willson, at the request of his Fellow-Citizens, without distinction of party (Gonzales, 1860); Houston Weekly Telegraph, November 27, 1860; Austin State Gazette, November 24 and December 1, 1860.

Ibid., Houston Weekly Telegraph, November 20, 1860.

Ibid., November 27, 1860.

See editorial, “What the Country Says,” in Houston Weekly Telegraph, November 20, 1860. Also see notices in the Telegraph for this date and for November 27 and December 4. However, in at least one town (Port Sullivan), the Lone Star flag was inscribed with the words, “Southern Rights.” See Telegraph, December 4, 1860.

Ibid., A meeting in Collin County on December 13, 1860, passed a series of resolutions, one of which declared that “we hold the Lone Star as the standard of our gallant state, hope soon to see its light blended with the kindred beams of a great southern constellation.” See Claude Elliott, Leathercoat: The Life of James W. Throckmorton (San Antonio, 1938), 48.

Houston Weekly Telegraph, November 27, 1860.

Harry James Brown (ed.), Letters from a Texas Sheep Ranch (Urbana, Illinois, 1959), 130. Kendall added that he was “a thorough Union man and American.”

Austin State Gazette, December 8, 1860.

Ibid., December 15, 1860.

Ibid., January 19, 1861.

Ernest Wallace, Charles De Morse, Pioneer Editor and Statesman (Lubbock, 1943), 134-135.

Earl W. Fornell, The Galveston Era: The Texas Crescent on the Eve of Secession (Austin, 1961), 286. Also see Houston Weekly Telegraph, December 18, 1860, for an expression of Parish’s view that he desired “to see Texas resume her nationality and separate independence,” and was not opposed to secession.

Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker (eds.) The Writings of Sam Houston, 1813-1863 (8 vols.; Austin, 1938-43), VIII, 192-197.
Houston's proposal was based on a resolution passed by the Texas legislature on February 16, 1868, during the strife in Kansas.

Houston Weekly Telegraph, December 4, 1860. O. M. Roberts wrote Congressman John H. Reagan giving a similar report on the attitude of Governor Houston. See Roberts to Reagan, November 25, 1860, Reagan Papers, Transcripts, Archives, University of Texas Library. However, a different view came from one newspaper, the Bellville Countryman, which predicted that Houston would again be the president of the Republic of Texas. Bellville Countryman, quoted in Houston Weekly Telegraph, December 4, 1860.

Williams and Barker (eds.), Writings of Houston, VIII, 220-221. A second call for a secession convention issued from Austin including a provision that any action taken by the convention would be submitted to a popular vote. See Austin State Gazette, December 8, 1860.

Williams and Barker (eds.), Writings of Houston, VIII, 225-226. When the legislature met in special session, it repealed on January 22, 1861, the resolution which gave Houston authority to call this election so the election was not held. See Austin State Gazette, January 26, 1861.

Lleerena Friend, Sam Houston: The Great Designer (Austin, 1954), 334.

Williams and Barker (eds.), Writings of Houston, VIII, 226-231. The Austin State Gazette, January 19, 1861, reprinted part of Houston’s letter to Calhoun and commented that Houston “would discourage the friends of secession in the South generally, but in the event of a dissolution of the Union, would like to see Texas separate from the other slave States, who have so long distrusted him, and whom he no doubt cordially hates.”

Twiggs answered that he was without instructions but that if the Governor requested the surrender of Federal property after secession, he would receive an answer. See War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1880), Series I, Volume I, 581-584.

Williams and Barker (eds.), Writings of Houston, VIII, 234-235.
Ibid., 257-258.

Ibid., 263-264. Houston's letter expressing his views on secession was published in the Austin Southern Intelligencer, February 20, 1861. The San Antonio Herald said of Houston's letter: "No body ever supposed that he was for secession, at heart—no body could infer, however, from recent documents of his, and from his conduct during the sitting of the Convention, that he was opposed to the action of that body, or that he could for a moment, entertain the idea of submission. We accept, however, his last explanation of his position, and hope he will adhere to it during the next sitting of the Convention, so that the people may know exactly where to find him." San Antonio Herald, as quoted in Austin Southern Intelligencer, March 3, 1861.


Ibid., 100-102.

Ibid., 113-114. In answer to a letter from Confederate Secretary of War LeRoy Pope Walker informing Houston that the Confederate President had assumed control of military operations in Texas, Houston had his Secretary of State write Walker denying that Texas was a member of the Confederacy or that the Convention could legally join Texas to the Confederacy. See Williams and Barker (eds.), Writings of Houston, VIII, 268-271.


Austin State Gazette, March 16, 1861.


Williams and Barker (eds.), Writings of Houston, VIII, 278.

Friend, Houston, 339.

Houston Weekly Telegraph, January 29, 1861.

Ibid., February 12, 1861.


Winkler (ed.), Journal of Secession Convention, 49. Only three of the four delegates elected on this slate attended the Convention. See Ibid., 412-413.


Ibid., 29-32.

Ibid., 32-34.

Ibid., 35-36.

Ibid., 38-40.

Ibid., 44.

Ibid., 46.

Ibid., 49.

Ibid., 61-66. The chairman of the committee which wrote the "declaration" was John Henry Brown. He later expressed himself as having been "ever since the election of Lincoln an unswerving advocate of the secession of Texas and the formation of a Southern Confederacy." Brown did not indicate in his statement knowledge of any sentiment for the maintenance of a separate Texas Republic. See Ibid., 84-85.

Ibid., 74-80.

Ibid., 83-85.

Alabama sent a commissioner, J. M. Calhoun, to Texas early in January of 1861. Finding that neither a convention nor the legislature were in session, he addressed himself to Governor Houston, See Ibid., 31.

Ibid., 50-52.

Ibid., 72-73.

Ibid., 120-123.

Ibid., 314.


Austin State Gazette, February 16, 1861.

Austin Southern Intelligencer, February 13, 1861.


Ibid., 95-97, 100-102.

Ibid., 211, 209.

Ibid., 212.

Ibid., 232-235.
The Address is printed as Appendix I, in Winkler (ed.), Journal of the Secession Convention, 252-261.

Ibid., 252-253.

Ibid., 254-255.

Ibid., 258.

Austin Southern Intelligencer, March 27, 1861.

Austin State Gazette, March 30, 1861


Texas Almanac, 1862 (Houston, 1862), 16.

Houston Weekly Telegraph, March 5, 1861.


Throckmorton to Reagan, December 9, 1860, United States War Department Files, Letters Received, National Archives.

Houston’s reasons for advocating the return to the Republic are not clear. Perhaps, he sought to keep Texas out of the civil war that he felt was sure to come. Walter Prescott Webb believed that Houston had plans to conquer Mexico after he became governor of Texas in 1859. See Webb, The Texas Rangers (Boston, 1935), 197-216. Professor Charles Ramsdell seems to have agreed with Webb for he wrote that Houston "had a plan, in case secession carried, to restore the Republic of Texas and, by conquering Mexico, to extend the boundaries of the Republic to the Pacific and the Isthmus." See Austin American-Statesman, April 28, 1940.