



The National Standard

BULLETIN OF THE VEXILLOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

NUMBER
THIRTY

SPRING-SUMMER
2026



FDR with RFC Chairman Jesse H. Jones in Houston. Unknown. 1936. *Houston Post*.

90TH ANNIVERSARY: FDR'S SAN JACINTO SPEECH

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt visited Texas in June 1936 in part to mark the Centennial. He gave an address at the San Jacinto Battleground on June 11. We feature two texts of the address side-by-side: the official text published in his papers and a typescript text from the National Archives reflecting the delivery. FDR's address helps us to understand the many uses of the Texas patriotic myth.

Address at San Jacinto Battleground

No. 65

"To Maintain Principles by
Means of Peace Rather Than by
Means of War"—

Address at San Jacinto Battleground,
Texas. June 11, 1936

*Governor Allred, Mr. Mayor, Mr.
Jones and you good people of Texas who
have come here today:*

I am grateful to you for the sympathy and sincerity in your welcome to me in coming back to Texas:

There are very few spots in the United States which have witnessed events equal in significance to that which took place at San Jacinto a century ago.

Here a century ago was a great frontier of the civilization of America. On the twenty-first day of April, 1836, General Houston and the small body of fewer than eight hundred men under his command held in large measure in their keeping the future of our country as it is constituted today.

Address of the President
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CONTENTS

FDR Address1-4

SAN JACINTO ADDRESS EXTOLLED TEXANS' "VENTUROUS SPIRITS"

The patriots whose memories we are honoring today were victorious in just the same spirit that fired the Colonists of 1776. I like to think of General Houston sending Deaf Smith back to destroy Vince's bridge, over which he had brought his army, so that neither reinforcements nor retreat were a possibility.

Most of these men who fought in this battle had come across the Alleghenies or from the settlements of Kentucky and Tennessee and Missouri into that vast virgin territory over which our now friendly neighbors, south of the Rio Grande, then held sway. And I think it is worthy of note that in front of me are six flags that flew over this ground on which we stand, the fleur-de-lis of France, the flag of Spain, the flag of Mexico, the flag of the Republic of Texas, the Stars and Bars and at last the Stars and Stripes. The spirit of independence lived in this air. Veterans of Concord and Lexington, of Saratoga and of Yorktown were still alive a century ago; the acquisition of the Louisiana territory and the second war for Independence were events of very recent history; and, be it not forgotten, the people of Mexico themselves had won their independence from Spain but fifteen years before.

Venturous spirits were willing to meet the difficulties and the dangers that came with carrying the civilization of the East into the further West—the land of unlimited promise. They were willing to comply with all the conditions required by the Mexican Government, when it gave to Stephen F. Austin permission to settle colonies in Texas and to grant to each settler a tract of land.

The settlers rebelled, however, when their civil liberties were restricted, when trial by jury and public education for their children were taken away; but they did this, I am glad to say, only after a prolonged effort on their part to have Mexico modify this decision had failed. Those efforts included the two conventions, one in 1832 and one in 1833, and another trip by Stephen Austin to the Mexican capital to plead the cause of the Texas colonists.

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Venturous spirits were willing to meet the difficulties and the dangers that came with carrying the civilization of the East into the further West. (— the land of unlimited promise) They were willing to comply with all the conditions required by the Mexican Government, (when it) when that Government gave to Stephen F. Austin permission to settle colonies in Texas and to grant to each settler a tract of land.

(They) But the settlers rebelled, however, when their civil liberties were restricted, when trial by jury and public education for their children were taken away; but they did this, I am glad to say, only after a prolonged effort on their part to have Mexico modify this decision had failed. And those (these) efforts included the two conventions, one in 1832 and one in 1833, and another trip by Stephen Austin to the Mexican Capitol to plead the cause of the Texas colonists. (I am glad also that participating in these conventions and in these places were Mexicans living in this territory; the first convention, indeed, appointed Rafael Manchola, a Mexican of Goliad, as a delegate to carry its petitions to Saltillo.)

THE NATIONAL STANDARD (Continuing VAST News) (ISSN 2165-0101 (Print); ISSN 2165-011X (Online)) is published twice each year by the Vexillological Association of the State of Texas, member of the Fédération internationale des associations vexillologiques. For questions or information, contact: VAST, 504 Branard Street, Houston, Texas 77006-5018 USA. E-mail: info@texflags.org Internet: www.texflags.org

VEXILLOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF TEXAS
H.P. (PETE) VAN DE PUTTE JR. FF FVAST President
HUGH L. BRADY FF Vice President | **CHARLES A. SPAIN** FF WSF Secretary-Treasurer

And so, when all else failed, the Texas Declaration of Independence, signed at Washington-on-the-Brazos, March 2, 1836, was as natural and inevitable a consequence as the earlier Declaration at Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.

Such action could mean nothing short of a resort to arms, and the fall of the Alamo and the massacre at Goliad soon followed. Those were discouraging days for the Texans. The Army of Independence under General Houston could not immediately engage General Santa Anna, with his superiority of numbers and equipment. Delay and retreat were necessary, but Houston's sagacity in biding his time, notwithstanding criticism and opposition in his own camp, was rewarded at last here at San Jacinto. The story of the conflict on this field has often been told. When the day was ended, victory was overwhelming. Texas had won.

The vast territory first set up as the Lone Star Republic, and later admitted to the Union as the Lone Star State, has contributed generously in its sons and in its resources to the development of the Nation all through these hundred years. San Jacinto opened another gateway for the westward sweep of the American people across the plains and the mountains to the shores of the Pacific.

It is easy, therefore, to share with you the pride which you take in San Jacinto—to share with you the fine thought of dedicating this field as one of the historic shrines of America.

You will agree with me that we as a Nation desire no further expansion. The establishment of Texas, made possible at this spot by Sam Houston's men, seems to have been justified by the natural colonization of the succeeding years. But (those) heroes gave us more than territory; they set an example which in itself is a glorious heritage, a just cause for State and national commemoration.

It has been a great personal satisfaction to me to come here and it is a special pleasure to me to meet Colonel Andrew Jackson Houston.

What a magnificent combination of names that it! Although, Colonel Houston, you are many, many years my senior, yet I am proud to know that my father knew your father. I shall always remember, when I was a small boy, how my father used often to tell me that, when he was a very young man, he was sent to Washington by his law office to carry papers to Senator Houston of Texas. And my father told me how, on arriving in Washington, he was ushered into a huge, high-ceilinged room in one of those old balconied hotels on Pennsylvania Avenue. There, in this great room, propped up in a great bed, nightgown and nightcap, even though it was past the noon hour, lay that splendid old man, that gentleman who had been

And so, when all else failed, the Texas Declaration of Independence, signed at Washington-on-the-Brazos, March 2, 1836, was as natural and inevitable a consequence as the earlier Declaration at Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. (Applause)

Such action could mean nothing short of a resort to arms, and the Fall of the Alamo (and the Massacre at Goliad soon) followed. Yes, those were discouraging days for the Texans. The Army of independence under General Houston could not immediately engage General Santa Anna, with his superiority (in) of numbers and equipment. Delay and retreat were necessary, (and) but Houston's sagacity in biding his time, notwithstanding criticism and opposition in his own camp, (was) were rewarded at last here at San Jacinto. The story of the conflict on this field has often been told. When the day was ended victory was so overwhelming that a new Texas had won.

The vast territory first set up as the Lone Star (Republic) State, and later admitted to the Union as Lone Star, first a republic and then a state, that territory had contributed generously in its sons and in its resources to the development of (our) the Nation (in) all through these hundred years. San Jacinto opened another gateway for the westward sweep of the American people across the plains and the mountains to the shores of the Pacific.

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Governor of Tennessee, liberator of Texas, President of the Republic, Governor of his state of Texas and Senator from his State. There he was, holding a levee, transacting public and private business, and preparing for the session of the Senate, which, in those days, did not begin until late in the afternoon. His office and his home were in his hotel room. It would seem that the manners and customs of the Senators of the United States, like other manners and customs, have undergone a great change. And my good friend, Morris Sheppard, agrees to that.

This and the eastern part of your great State, through which I came this morning, can truly be called the cradle of Texas liberty. I have been glad to revisit your beautiful city of Houston. Typical of American enterprise, you have brought the commerce of the world to your door by the ship canal through which I have recently passed.

And, too, I have seen a glimpse of the future, for I have in my office at the White House a model that Jesse Jones gave me, a model of the beautiful memorial that you are to erect here as an everlasting reminder of the bravery of Sam Houston and his men.

Men fought here for principles they loved more dearly than their own lives. Liberty-loving people will always do battle for principles that they believe to be right. Civilization, alas, has not yet made it unnecessary for men to die in battle to sustain principle. It is, however, my hope that in this generation the United States, by its own example, can maintain and help to maintain principles by means of peace rather than by means of war. (Applause)

The pioneers of Texas and the liberators of Texas, looking down on us today, I am certain would say Amen to the thought that we can win by peace and eliminate the necessity of war.

—5 *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* 203–206 (1938)

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The pioneers, the pioneers of Texas and the liberators of Texas, I think, looking down on us today, I am certain would say Amen to (that) the thought that we can win by peace and eliminate the necessity of war. (Prolonged applause)

—Nat'l. Archives, FDR Personal Files: NAID 197561.