



The Daughters of the Republic of Texas

CHAPTER - , TEXAS

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Contact:

Texans Observe San Jacinto Day

April 21 is San Jacinto Day in Texas, commemorating the anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto. On this date in 1836, General Sam Houston and the Texas Army defeated Santa Anna's Mexican troops, winning independence for Texas in a decisive battle that lasted only eighteen minutes. April 21 has been celebrated every year since the battle and in a joint resolution, the 14th Texas Legislature of 1874 pronounced April 21 as San Jacinto Day, a legal state holiday.

San Jacinto Day is also a day to honor all who fought for the independence of Texas. They were "Texians"-- native citizens and immigrant citizens; speaking Spanish, English, German, and more-- all with a common purpose of self-preservation and liberty. It was the Battle of San Jacinto that assured their success. The Battle of San Jacinto is the most important in Texas history and many historians now view the battle as one of the most decisive in world history. By comparison with other great battles, the number of soldiers involved was very few and the battle very short, but the course of history was changed forever at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836.

Many factors led to the battle and though the Texas Revolution actually began with the Battle of Gonzales in October 1835, incidents had occurred earlier. Settler unrest had grown particularly since changes were made to Mexican immigration laws in 1830 and the subsequent brutal dictatorship of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. In 1836, the Revolution progressed rapidly. Four days after independence was declared on March 2, the Alamo fell. Settlers were terrified, fearful of Santa Anna's cruelty, and many fled eastward in a move known in Texas history as the "Runaway Scrape." Meanwhile, Sam Houston was serving as a delegate in the 1836 convention of the provisional government at Washington-on-the-Brazos. With news of the Alamo, he quickly hurried to Gonzales to take command of the Texas troops. General Houston knew his army was outnumbered and no match for Santa Anna's well-trained troops. He needed time to recruit and train more soldiers. From March 13 until April 20, he marched the "Texians" eastward and away from Santa Anna's advancing army, plodding at times through mud and heavy rain. On April 20, they camped near Lynch's Ferry on a wooded ridge, less than a mile from Santa Anna's camp. Though weakened and frustrated, the "Texians" were anxious to fight.

Thursday, April 21, 1836 was a clear and sunny day for the Texas Army of only 750 men. That morning, Sam Houston sent Deaf Smith with a couple of soldiers to destroy the nearby Vince's bridge, thereby removing the only available escape route for Santa Anna and his army of 1,500 soldiers. At mid-afternoon, Houston gave the order to advance and the "Texians" did not hesitate. To shouts of "Remember the Alamo" and "Remember Goliad" they attacked, and in less than twenty minutes, the battle for Texas was won.

The victory at San Jacinto marked the final military engagement of the Texas Revolution. Texans were free and embarked on their path as a new nation, the Republic of Texas. For almost ten years, Texas remained an independent country until becoming the twenty-eighth state in the United States of America. On February 19, 1846, the formal transfer of authority was made in Austin from the Republic of Texas to the new State of Texas.

The significance of the Battle of San Jacinto led not only to the annexation of Texas, but also to the Mexican War, which resulted in the U.S. acquisition of the states of New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and Wyoming. Approximately one million square miles of territory, or almost one third of the present day U.S. nation, changed sovereignty because of the victory at San Jacinto.

Celebrations in honor of April 21, 1836 have been held every year since the battle. An historical marker in Sam Houston Heritage Park in Houston records the events of the first anniversary of the battle. "That muddy April saw the city hold its first big social event -- the anniversary celebration of the San Jacinto victory, with parade, reception, and ball." (*Texas Historical Marker #10692*)

The San Jacinto Monument, a memorial to honor all who fought for the independence of Texas, stands at the battle site. It was begun on San Jacinto Day, 1936 and dedicated on San Jacinto Day, 1939. The monument is the tallest column memorial in the world and is topped with a 34-foot Lone Star. Standing 567 feet tall, it is 12 feet taller than the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.

Today, events are held throughout the state to celebrate San Jacinto Day.

Best known are those at the San Jacinto Battleground State Park, which features a re-enactment of the battle and a festival highlighting Texas history. The 1,200-acre park site is located about 25 miles east of Houston and consists of the Battleground site, San Jacinto Monument, and the Battleship Texas. For more information about the Park and activities, visit the website at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/san-jacinto-battleground or phone (281) 479-2421.

(Room for description of your local events)

San Jacinto Day is one of twelve Texas Honor Days designated by The Daughters of the Republic of Texas. The D.R.T. is the oldest women's patriotic organization in Texas and is dedicated to the preservation and education of Texas history. For more information on Texas Honor Days and the work of the D.R.T., please visit the website at www.drinfo.org

*Sources: Texas Honor Days, The Daughters of the Republic of Texas, website: drinfo.org
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