Steps Toward Independence

Lesson 1: The Texas Revolution Begins

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Why does conflict develop? How do governments change?

Terms to Know

- military: the armed forces
- committee of correspondence: a local group formed to share political and military information with other communities
- schedule: to plan to do something on a certain date
- parley: a brief truce between enemies so both parties can discuss issues
- siege: a military blockade of a city or fortress
- adopt: to accept formally

What do you know?

In the first column, answer the questions based on what you know before you study. After the lesson, fill in the last column.

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<td>What was the first battle of the Revolution?</td>
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<td>What role did Stephen F. Austin play in the Revolution?</td>
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The First Battle

Guiding Question  What drove the colonists to battle in 1835?

In 1835, Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna made himself a dictator. He tried to assert more control in Texas. He and other leaders were concerned about the actions Texans were taking. They worried that Texans like William B. Travis were becoming disloyal. So General Martín Perfecto de Cós and his armed forces were sent to San Antonio. This additional military power brought the total number of Mexican soldiers in San Antonio to 650.

Identifying

1. Who became dictator of Mexico in 1835?
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Lesson 1: The Texas Revolution Begins, *continued*

This increase in Mexican **military** power in Texas worried the settlers. Rumors spread that General Cós was planning to arrest Texan leaders and march them back to Mexico. **Committees of correspondence**—local groups sharing political and military information—helped unify Texans.

The first conflict between Mexican troops and Texans came at Gonzales on October 2, 1835. The people of Gonzales had a small cannon. In September 1835, Colonel Domingo de Ugartechea (oo-gahr-teh-CHAH-ah), the Mexican commander of Texas, sent a small group of soldiers to retrieve the cannon. Meanwhile, the people of Gonzales buried it. When the soldiers arrived, the mayor of Gonzales refused to turn it over, and the soldiers left.

On hearing that the Texans had refused to give up the cannon, Ugartechea sent Lieutenant Francisco de Castañeda and 100 soldiers to seize it. On September 29, Castañeda and his men reached the Guadalupe River. Their entry into Gonzales was blocked by high water and a small force of Texans. Over the next few days, Castañeda asked for the cannon, but the Texans still refused. Meanwhile, about 160 more Texans came to Gonzalez to help. The townspeople dug up the cannon and mounted it on a wagon, and a blacksmith made ammunition. The Texans put a flag on the cannon that read, “Come and Take It.”

These Texans, under the command of Colonel John H. Moore, decided to attack the Mexicans. On October 2, the Texans advanced toward the Mexican troops, and then the blacksmith fired the cannon.

Castañeda arranged for a **parley**, or a brief truce. He asked why the Texans had attacked his men. Moore replied that they were fighting to keep the cannon and to uphold the Constitution of 1824. The two leaders broke off their talks, and the fighting began again. However, Castañeda did not want to start a war, so he withdrew toward San Antonio.

The Battle of Gonzales launched a fight for Texas independence. A week after the battle, a force of about 120 Texans attacked the Mexican garrison at Goliad. After scarcely 30 minutes, the Mexicans surrendered. The Texans also captured a large amount of weapons and ammunition at Goliad.

The victories at Gonzales and Goliad increased the Texans’ confidence. The only large Mexican force remaining in Texas was at San Antonio de Béxar. Texans began gathering near Gonzales, eager for another fight. Many took up the cry: “On to San Antonio!”
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Lesson 1: The Texas Revolution Begins, continued

Stephen F. Austin was asked to command the 300 Texans at Gonzales. Although Austin lacked military experience, the colonists trusted his judgment and leadership. Austin’s Army of the People started their advance toward San Antonio. More joined on the march until they numbered almost 400.

However, General Cós commanded about 650 soldiers. After a brief battle at Concepción near San Antonio, the Texans realized that San Antonio would not fall as quickly as Goliad. Because the Texans had no large guns or cannons, they knew that an all-out attack on the Mexican stronghold would be risky.

Austin’s army decided to lay siege to San Antonio de Béxar rather than fight a battle. A siege is a military blockade. The Texans hoped that Cós would run out of supplies and surrender.

Texas Consults

Guiding Question What decisions did the delegates make at the Consultation of 1835?

The fighting at San Antonio caused a change of plan for the Consultation. The Texans decided to move the meeting from Washington-on-the-Brazos to San Felipe. San Felipe had a printing press, so they could create records of their meetings. The Consultation was also postponed for a month. When it began on November 3, 1835, the delegates faced a decision. Should they work with Mexican Federalists who opposed Santa Anna and try to restore the rights granted in the Constitution of 1824? Or should they seek independence from Mexico?

Most delegates aligned themselves with one of two groups. One group—led by William Harris Wharton and Henry Smith—wanted an immediate declaration of independence from Mexico.

The second group, the Peace Party, were just as committed to fighting Santa Anna’s rule. However, they were not ready for independence. They wanted the Consultation to declare that Texans were fighting for the Constitution of 1824. They hoped that this moderate approach would convince other Mexican states to join the struggle. On November 6, the delegates made a decision. Fourteen delegates voted in favor of independence and thirty-three voted against it.

The next day the Consultation adopted, or formally accepted, the “Declaration of the People of Texas in General Convention Assembled.” In it, the delegates stated that they were loyal to Mexico. They declared their support of the Constitution of 1824 and their desire to have it restored.
They blamed Santa Anna for the troubles, saying that they had fought only for protection. They urged all citizens of Mexico to join their struggle. Also, the delegates said that due to Santa Anna’s treatment, they were no longer bound with Mexico. Finally, they offered land to anyone who fought with them.

Even though they were technically still part of Mexico, the Texans felt they needed their own government. The delegates decided on a government with a governor, a lieutenant governor, and a general council. The council would include one representative from each major community.

Delegates chose Henry Smith as governor and James W. Robinson as lieutenant governor. Both Smith and Robinson belonged to the War Party. However, most of the people chosen for the general council were from the Peace Party. The Consultation also created a regular, or official, army and named Sam Houston its commander. He was not given control over the Army of the People, however.

The Consultation also chose Stephen Austin, William Wharton, and Branch T. Archer as commissioners to the United States. They were to go to the United States to ask for the troops, money, and supplies necessary to carry out a war for independence. The delegates knew that war was coming.

10. Circle the name of the first governor of independent Texas.

11. Why was San Felipe chosen as the site for the Consultation?

Writing Check for Understanding

1. Expository What two political parties took part in the Consultation of 1835, and how did their ideas differ?

2. Expository What roles were Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin given by the Consultation of 1835?