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Summary Article: **Texas**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(tĕk'sƏs), largest state in the coterminous United States. It is located in the south-central part of the country and is bounded by Oklahoma, across the Red River except in the Texas panhandle (N); Arkansas (NE); Louisiana, across the Sabine River (E); the Gulf of Mexico (SE); Mexico, across the Rio Grande (SW); and New Mexico (W).

Facts and Figures

Area, 267,338 sq mi (692,405 sq km). *Pop.* (2010) 25,145,561, a 20.6% increase since the 2000 census. *Capital*, Austin. *Largest city*, Houston. *Statehood*, Dec. 29, 1845 (28th state). *Highest pt.*, Guadalupe Peak, 8,751 ft (2,667 m); *lowest pt.*, sea level. *Nickname*, Lone Star State. *Motto*, Friendship. *State bird*, mockingbird. *State flower*, bluebonnet. *State tree*, pecan. *Abbr.*, Tex., TX

Geography

Texas is roughly spade shaped. The vast expanse of the state contains great regional differences (the distance from Beaumont to El Paso is greater than that from New York to Chicago).

East Texas

East Texas—the land between the Sabine and Trinity rivers—is Southern in character, with pine-covered hills, cypress swamps, and remnants of the great cotton plantations founded before the Civil War. Cotton farming has been supplemented by diversified agriculture, including rice cultivation; almost all of the state's huge rice crop comes from East Texas, and even the industrial cities of Beaumont and Port Arthur are surrounded by rice fields. The inland pines still supply a lumbering industry; Huntsville, Lufkin, and Nacogdoches are important lumber towns. The real wealth of East Texas, however, comes from its immense, rich oil fields. Longview is an oil center, and Tyler is the headquarters of the East Texas Oil Field. Oil is also the economic linchpin of Beaumont and Port Arthur and the basis for much of the heavy industry that crowds the Gulf Coast.

Gulf Coast

The industrial heart of the coastal area is Houston, the fourth largest city in the nation. Houston's development was spearheaded by the digging (1912–14) of a ship canal to the Gulf of Mexico, and the city today is the nation's second largest port in tonnage handled. Other Gulf ports in Texas are Galveston, Texas City, Brazosport (formerly Freeport), Port Lavaca, Corpus Christi, and Brownsville.

The S Gulf Coast is a popular tourist area, and some of the ports, such as Galveston and Corpus Christi, have economies dependent on both heavy industry and tourism. Brownsville, the southernmost Texas city and the terminus of the Intracoastal Waterway, is also the shipping center for the intensively farmed and irrigated Winter Garden section along the lower Rio Grande, where citrus fruits and winter vegetables are grown.

Rio Grande Valley

The long stretch of plains along the Rio Grande valley is largely given over to cattle ranching. Texas has c.1,000 mi (1,610 km) of border with Mexico. Some S and W Texas towns are bilingual, and in some

areas persons of Mexican descent make up the majority of the population. Laredo is the most important gateway here to Mexico, with an excellent highway to Mexico City and important over-the-border commerce.

Blackland Prairies

The first region to be farmed when Americans came to Texas in the 1820s was the bottomland of the lower Brazos and the Colorado, but not until settlers moved into the rolling blackland prairies of central and N central Texas was the agricultural wealth of the area realized. The heart of this region is the trading and shipping center of Waco; at the southwest extremity is San Antonio, the commercial center of a wide cotton, grain, and cattle country belt. To the north, Dallas and the neighboring city of Fort Worth together form one of the most rapidly developing U.S. metropolitan areas. Their oil-refining, grain-milling, and cotton- and food-processing capabilities have been supplemented since World War II by aircraft-manufacturing and computer and electronics industries.

High Plains

The Balcones Escarpment marks the western margin of the Gulf Coastal Plain; in central Texas the line is visible in a series of waterfalls and rough, tree-covered hills. To the west lie the south central plains and the Edwards Plateau; they are essentially extensions of the Great Plains but are sharply divided from the high, windswept, and canyon-cut Llano Estacado (Staked Plain) in the W Panhandle by the erosive division of the Cap Rock Escarpment.

No traces of the subtropical lushness of the Gulf Coastal Plain are found in these regions; the climate is semiarid, with occasional blizzards blowing across the flat land in winter. The Red River area, including the farming and oil center of Wichita Falls, can have extreme cold in winter, though without the severity that is intermittently experienced in Amarillo, the commercial center of the Panhandle, or in the dry-farming area around Lubbock. Cattle raising began here in the late 1870s (settlers were slow in coming to the High Plains), and huge ranches vie with extensive wheat and cotton farms for domination of the treeless land. Oil and grain, however, have revolutionized the economy of this section of the state.

West Texas

All of West Texas (that part of the state west of long. 100°W) is semiarid. South of the Panhandle lie the rolling plains around Abilene, a region cultivated in cotton, sorghum, and wheat and the site of oil fields discovered in the 1940s. The dry fields of West Texas are still given over to ranching, except for small irrigated areas that can be farmed. San Angelo serves as the commercial center of this area. The Midland-Odessa oil patch lies northeast of the Pecos River and is part of the Permian (West Texas) Basin, an oil field that extends into SE New Mexico.

The land beyond the Pecos River, rising to the mountains with high, sweeping plains and rough uplands, offers the finest scenery of Texas. There are found the Davis Mts. and Guadalupe Peak, the highest point (8,751 ft/2,667 m) in the state. The wilderness of the Big Bend of the Rio Grande is typical of the barrenness of most of this area, where water and people are almost equally scarce. El Paso, with diverse industries and major cross-border trade with Mexico, is a population oasis in the region.

Places of Interest

The Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center is in the Houston area. Other places of interest in the state include Big Bend National Park, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Amistad and Lake Meredith national recreation areas, Padre Island National Seashore, San Antonio Missions National Historical Park (see

National Parks and Monuments, table), and Arkansas National Wildlife Refuge, winter home of the whooping crane. Austin is the capital; Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio are the largest cities.

Economy

Mineral resources compete with industry for primary economic importance in Texas. The state is the leading U.S. producer of oil, natural gas, and natural-gas liquids, despite recent production declines. It is also a major producer of helium, salt, sulfur, sodium sulfate, clays, gypsum, cement, and talc. Texas manufactures an enormous variety of products, including chemicals and chemical products, petroleum, food and food products, transportation equipment, machinery, and primary and fabricated metals. The development and manufacture of electronic equipment, such as computers, has in recent decades become one of the state's leading industries; the area around Dallas–Fort Worth has become known as “Silicon Prairie,” a name now also extended to Austin and its suburbs.

Agriculturally, Texas is one of the most important states in the country. It easily leads the nation in producing cattle, cotton, and cottonseed. Texas also has more farms, farmland, sheep, and lambs than any other state. Principal crops are cotton lint, grains, sorghum, vegetables, citrus and other fruits, and rice; the greatest farm income is derived from cattle, cotton, dairy products, and greenhouse products. Hogs, wool, and mohair are also significant. Among other important Texas crops are melons, wheat, pecans, oats, and celery. Texas also has an important commercial fishing industry. Principal catches are shrimp, oysters, and menhaden.

Government, Politics, and Higher Education

The present constitution of Texas was adopted in 1876, replacing the “carpetbag” constitution of 1869. The state's executive branch is headed by a governor elected for a four-year term. Democrat Ann Richards, elected governor in 1990, was defeated for reelection in 1994 by Republican George W. Bush; Bush won reelection in 1998. After Bush was elected president of the United States, Lt. Gov. Rick Perry succeeded him as governor (Dec., 2000) and was elected to the office in 2002, 2006, and 2010. In 2014, Republican Greg Abbott was elected governor. The state's legislature has a senate with 31 members and a house with 150 representatives. The state elects 2 senators and 36 representatives to the U.S. Congress and has 38 electoral votes. Texas politics were dominated by Democrats from the end of Reconstruction into the 1960s, but Republicans achieved parity in the 1990s and then dominance.

Among the many institutions of higher learning in Texas are the Univ. of Texas, mainly at Austin, but with large branches at Arlington, El Paso, and the Dallas suburb of Richardson; Baylor Univ., at Waco; East Texas State Univ., at Commerce; Univ. of North Texas, at Denton; Rice Univ., at Houston; Southern Methodist Univ., at Dallas; Texas A&M Univ., at College Station; Texas Arts and Industries Univ., at Kingsville; Texas Christian Univ., at Fort Worth; and Texas Southern Univ. and the Univ. of Houston, both at Houston.

History

Spanish Exploration and Colonization

The region that is now Texas was early known to the Spanish, who were, however, slow to settle there. Cabeza de Vaca, shipwrecked off the coast in 1528, wandered through the area in the 1530s, and Coronado probably crossed the northwest section in 1541. De Soto died before reaching Texas, but his men continued west, crossing the Red River in 1542. The first Spanish settlement was made (1682) at Ysleta on the site of present day El Paso by refugees from the area that is now New Mexico

after the Pueblo revolt of 1680. Several missions were established in the area; but the Comanche, Apache, and other Native American tribes resented their encroachment, and the settlements did not flourish.

A French expedition led by La Salle penetrated E Texas in 1685 after failing to locate the mouth of the Mississippi. This incursion, though brief, stirred the Spanish to establish missions to hold the area. The first mission, founded in 1690 near the Neches, was named Francisco de los Tejas after the so-called *tejas* [friends]: Native Americans. This is also the origin of the state's name. In general, however, Spanish attempts to gain wealth from the wild region and to convert the indigenous population were unsuccessful, and in most places occupation was desultory.

American Expeditions and Settlement

By the early 19th cent. Americans were covetously eyeing Texas, especially after the Louisiana Purchase (1803) had extended the U.S. border to that fertile wilderness. Attempts to free Texas from Spanish rule were made in the expeditions of the adventurers Gutiérrez and Magee (1812–13) and James Long (1819). In 1821 Moses Austin secured a colonization grant from the Spanish authorities in San Antonio. He died from the rigors of his return trip from that distant outpost, but his son, Stephen F. Austin, had the grant confirmed and in Dec., 1821, led 300 families across the Sabine River to the region between the Brazos and Colorado rivers, where they established the first American settlement in Texas. Austin is known as the father of Texas.

The newly independent government of Mexico, pleased with Austin's prospering colony, readily offered grants to other American promoters and even gave huge land tracts to individual settlers. Americans from all over the Union, but particularly from the South, poured into Texas, and within a decade a considerable number of settlements had been established at Brazoria, Washington-on-the-Brazos, San Felipe de Austin, Anahuac, and Gonzales. The Americans easily avoided Mexican requirements that all settlers be Roman Catholic, but conflict with Mexican settlers over land titles resulted in the Fredonian Rebellion (1826–27).

By 1830 the Americans outnumbered the Mexican settlers by more than three to one and had formed their own society. The Mexican government became understandably concerned. Its sporadic attempts to tighten control over Texas had been hampered by its own political instability, but in 1830 measures were taken to stop the influx of Americans. Troops were sent to police the border, close the seaports, occupy the towns, and levy taxes on imported goods. The troops were withdrawn in 1832, when Mexico was again in political upheaval, but the Texans, alarmed and hoping to achieve a greater measure of self-government, petitioned Mexico for separate statehood (Texas was then part of Coahuila). When Austin presented the petition in Mexico City, Antonio López de Santa Anna had become military dictator. Austin was arrested and imprisoned for eighteen months, and Texas was regarrisoned.

Independence from Mexico

The Texas Revolution broke out (1835) in Gonzales when the Mexicans attempted to disarm the Americans and were routed. The American settlers then drove all the Mexican troops from Texas, overwhelming each command in surprise attacks. At a convention called at Washington-on-the-Brazos, Texas declared its independence (Mar. 2, 1836). A constitution was adopted and David Burnet was named interim president.

The arrival of Santa Anna with a large army that sought to crush the rebellion resulted in the famous defense of the Alamo and the massacre of several hundred Texans captured at Goliad. Santa Anna then divided his huge force to cover as much territory as possible. The small Texas army, commanded by Samuel Houston, protected their rear, retreating strategically until Houston finally maneuvered Santa Anna into a cul-de-sac formed by heavy rains and flooding bayous, near the site of present-day Houston. In the battle of San Jacinto (Apr. 21, 1836), Houston surprised the larger Mexican force and scored a resounding victory. Santa Anna was captured and compelled to recognize the independence of Texas.

The Texas Republic and U.S. Annexation

Texans sought annexation to the United States, but antislavery forces in the United States vehemently opposed the admission of another slave state, and Texas remained an independent republic under its Lone Star flag for almost 10 years. The Texas constitution was closely modeled after that of the United States, but slaveholding was expressly recognized. Houston, the hero of the Texas Revolution, was the leading figure of the Republic, serving twice as president.

Under President Mirabeau Lamar large tracts of land were granted as endowments for educational institutions, and Austin was made (1839) the new capital of the republic. Despite the efforts of presidents Houston and Anson Jones, a combination of factors—confusion in the land system, insufficient credit abroad, and the expense of maintaining the Texas Rangers and protecting Texas from marauding Mexican forces—contributed to impoverishing the republic and increasing the urgency for its annexation to the United States.

Southerners pressed hard for the admission of Texas, the intrigues of British and French diplomats in Texas aroused U.S. concern, and expansionist policies began to gain popular support. President Tyler narrowly pushed the admission of Texas through Congress shortly before the expiration of his term; Texas formally accepted annexation in July, 1845. This act was the immediate cause of the Mexican War. After Gen. Zachary Taylor defeated the Mexicans at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, the Mexican forces retreated back across the Rio Grande.

Civil War and Reconstruction

During the pre-Civil War period settlers, attracted by cheap land, poured into Texas. Although open range cattle ranching was beginning to spread rapidly, cotton was the state's chief crop. The planter class, with its slaveholding interests, was strong and carried the state for the Confederacy, despite the opposition of Sam Houston and his followers. During the Civil War, Texas was the only Confederate state not overrun by Union troops. Remaining relatively prosperous, it liberally contributed men and provisions to the Southern cause.

Reconstruction brought great lawlessness, aggravated by the appearance of roving desperadoes. Radical Republicans, carpetbaggers, and scalawags controlled the government for several years, during which time they managed to lay the foundations for better road and school systems. Texas was readmitted to the Union in Mar., 1870, after ratifying the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments. Although Texas was not as racially embittered as the Deep South, the Ku Klux Klan and its methods flourished for a time as a means of opposing the policies of the radical Republicans.

The Late Nineteenth Century

Reconstruction in Texas ended in 1874 when the Democrats took control of the government. The

following decade was politically conservative, highlighted by the passage of the constitution of 1876, which, although frequently amended, remains the basic law of the state. As in the rest of the South, the war and Reconstruction had resulted in the breakdown of the plantation system and the rise of tenant farming. This did not, however, have as marked an effect as elsewhere, partly because much of the land was still unsettled, but in greater measure, perhaps, because the Texas tradition is only partly Southern.

In the decades following the Civil War the Western element in Texas was strengthened as stock raising became a dominant element in Texas life. This was the era of the buffalo hunter and of the last of the Native American uprisings. From the open range and then from great fenced ranches, Texas cowboys drove herds of longhorn cattle over trails such as the Chisholm Trail to the railheads in Kansas and even farther to the grasslands of Montana. The traditional symbols of Texas are more the “ten-gallon” hat, the cattle brand, and spurs and saddles than anything reminiscent of the Old South.

As railroads advanced across the state during the 1870s, farmlands were increasingly settled, and the small farmers (the “nesters”) came into violent conflict with the ranchers, a conflict which was not resolved until the governorship of John Ireland. Many European immigrants—especially Germans and Bohemians (Czechs)—took part in the peopling of the plains (they continued to arrive in the 20th cent., when many Mexicans also entered). Agrarian discontent saw the rise of the Greenback party, and during the 1880s demands for economic reform and limitation of the railroads' vast land domains were championed by the Farmers' Alliance and Gov. James S. Hogg. However, antitrust legislation was insufficient to curb the power of big business.

Oil, Industrialization, and World Wars

The transformation of Texas into a partly urban and industrial society was greatly hastened by the uncovering of the state's tremendous oil deposits. The discovery in 1901 of the spectacular Spindletop oil field near Beaumont dwarfed previous finds in Texas, but Spindletop itself was later surpassed as oil was discovered in nearly every part of Texas. Texas industry developed rapidly during the early years of the 20th cent., but conditions worsened for the tenant farmers, who by 1910 made up the majority of cultivators. Discontented tenants were largely responsible for the election of James Ferguson as governor.

World War I had a somewhat liberating effect on African-American Texans, but the reappearance of the Ku Klux Klan after the war helped to enforce “white supremacy.” The economic boom of the 1920s was accompanied by further industrialization. The Great Depression of the 1930s, while severe, was less serious than in most states; the chemical and oil industries in particular continued to grow (the East Texas Oil Field was discovered in 1930).

The significance of the petrochemical and natural gas industries increased during World War II, when the aircraft industry also rose to prominence and the establishment of military bases throughout Texas greatly contributed to the state's economy. Postwar years brought continued prosperity and industrial expansion, although in the 1950s the state experienced the worst drought in its history and had its share of destructive hurricanes and flooding.

Many projects for increased flood control, improved irrigation, and enhanced power supply have been undertaken in Texas; notable among these are Denison Dam, forming Lake Texoma (shared between Texas and Oklahoma); Lewisville Dam and its reservoir, supplying Fort Worth and Dallas; Lake Texarkana on the Sulphur River; and Falcon Dam and its reservoir on the Rio Grande. The Amistad Dam on the Rio

Grande, serving both the United States and Mexico, was completed in 1969.

Industry in the Late Twentieth Century

In the 1960s, Texas began to develop its technology industries as oil became less easy to exploit—even though soaring oil prices in the 1970s caused the energy industry to boom. Since then, the state has become a preferred location for the headquarters of large corporations from airlines and retail chains to telecommunications and chemical companies. High-technology industries have boomed since the 1980s, especially in the Dallas–Fort Worth, Houston, and Austin areas. The state's economy proved still vulnerable to the fluctuations of the energy industry in the mid-1980s, however, when falling oil prices resulted in massive layoffs, hurting the state's real estate market and in turn precipitating the failure of hundreds of savings and loans in the state.

Texas has, however, continued to grow, becoming the second most populous state in the nation. Its population increased by nearly 23% between 1990 and 2000, and its economy slowly recovered in the 1990s. Its political influence has grown commensurately, and since the 1960s three sons (or adopted sons) of Texas have been president of the nation: Lyndon Johnson, George Herbert Walker Bush, and George Walker Bush. In 2001, 2005, 2008, and 2017, SE Texas suffered extensive damage as a result of Tropical Storm Allison and Hurricanes Rita, Ike, and Harvey, respectively, and in 2011 the effects of severe drought and unusually hot summer temperatures contributed to numerous and sometimes devastating wildfires in parts of the state.

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