

What is Texas?

In the three-sessions of this course, we will attempt to tell the story of Texas history and identify the traits that make Texas and Texans unique examples of American geography and character. The first session will deal with the birth of the Texas Republic in the 1830s after the overthrow of Mexican rule and its development -- first as an independent Republic and then as a state of the United States -- through the Civil War. The second session looks at how Texas grew into the exemplar of the American West, with cowboys and Indians, cattle ranchers and rustlers, six-shooters and Rangers on the frontier. Finally, in the third session we will look at the transformation of the state from a rural, Western way of life, to a modern "Sun Belt" state with an economy based on oil and gas extraction, petrochemical production and, increasingly, high tech. Coursing through the story will be the uneasy relationship between the deep-rooted Texas belief in local autonomy and the inevitable merging of the state's economy and culture into a larger, more urban and urbane America; a development that is viewed by some as a threat to the traditional rugged individualism of Texans, but upon which the future growth and prosperity of the state depends.

Lecture I: The Americanization of Texas

I have said that Texas is a state of mind, but I think that is more than that. It is a mystique closely approximating a religion. And it is true to the extent that people either passionately love Texas or passionately hate it and, as in other religions, few people dare to inspect it for fear of losing their bearings in mystery or paradox. – John Steinbeck (as quoted in Hendrickson, et al, page x)

In the early 1820's, before Mexico had overthrown Spanish rule, the American Moses Austin was asked by the Spanish authorities to bring settlers from the United States and, as a *empresario*, to establish them on land in the province of Texas. The province was far from the heartland of New Spain, soon to be the Mexican Republic, mostly uninhabited except by the original Indian residents, but potentially a rich agricultural area that could contribute to the wealth of the Spanish crown. Moses died before he could take up the Spanish offer, but his son, Stephen F. Austin, stepped forward and pressed the new government of a now independent Mexico (after 1821) to recognize the Spanish invitation. While in the throes of domestic unrest, the Mexican government did follow through on the Spanish initiative and the younger Austin proceeded to recruit, what he hoped to be, upstanding farmers who would come to this undeveloped land to put down roots. By the early 1830's, several hundred Americans had settled along the

Brazos River in the east-central part of the province and were writing their friends and relatives in the U.S. extolling their new home. These settlers agreed to become Mexican citizens and to loyally support the government in Mexico City and its local representatives in Texas, most of who resided in the small town of San Antonio. They also agreed to adopt the Catholic faith and to prohibit slavery in the province. Most of the settlers had no intention of abiding by these promises, and, with the Mexican authorities preoccupied with internal troubles, they were left largely to themselves.

The break with Mexico came initially over the question of customs duties levied by the Mexican government on goods shipped into the area by sea. Mexican customs officials at ports along the Gulf of Mexico called in soldiers from San Antonio and from across the Rio Grande to help them enforce the customs collections and this provoked the American settlers to launch an agitation against the central authorities. They demanded autonomy and the right to import and export through Texas ports without paying duties, often characterizing their cause as similar to that of the original American revolutionaries who rose up against the British in 1776, even to the point of claiming they were the victims of "taxation without representation." By the early 1830's, an influx of new settlers came across the Sabine River, the nominal boundary between Texas and the American state of Louisiana, and took up lands in places outside Austin's original mandate. In fact, at first, Austin tried to stop this uncontrolled settlement and seemed to side with the Mexican authorities.

The decisive break with the central government came, however, with the accession to power in Mexico City of the wily General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna in 1834. Stephen Austin had gone to the capital to meet with Santa Anna and plead the case for a continuation of Texas's autonomous position within a Mexican federated state, but the new leader proved to be intent on abolishing such local rule and got his rubber stamp congress to void the Mexican Constitution of 1824 which had provided for such a loose arrangement and to replace it with a highly centralized system. Austin made the mistake of sending letters back to his colleagues in Texas in which he hinted at the need for a break with the central government. These letters were intercepted by the Mexican authorities and Austin was clapped in prison on charges of sedition. Meanwhile, the more radical American settlers back in Texas mounted increasingly aggressive attacks on the local Mexican officials and established numerous volunteer militia groups to protect their settlements and, implicitly, to overthrow Mexican rule altogether. After almost a year in prison, Santa Anna approved Austin's release, thinking he might actually moderate the settler's ire if sent back to Texas. But, by the time Austin returned to his settlement on the Brazos, armed groups of

settlers were already moving to occupy Mexican forts, including the Alamo in San Antonio.

Austin himself now converted to the independence cause, which, in fact, had strengthened during his year in prison. Instead of moderating the radicals, they radicalized him. In a letter Austin wrote to his cousin while passing through New Orleans on his way back to Texas, he declared that "a great immigration from Kentucky, Tennessee, etc., each man with his rifle . . . would be of great use to us." He went on to assert that "nothing shall daunt my courage or abate my exertions to complete the main object of my labors to *Americanize Texas*." (Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, p. 188).

Santa Anna then set out at the head of a large army to reclaim Texas, drive the Americans back across the Sabine, and prevent any further immigration from the United States. The long trek from Mexico City to Texas exhausted his troops, however, and, although they managed bloody victories at the Alamo and Goliad (the latter an out-and-out slaughter of the American irregulars), he met his match at the Battle of San Jacinto in present-day Houston where the American's commanding general, Sam Houston, caught Santa Anna literally napping. This victory on April 21, 1836, cemented the independence of Texas from Mexico, which had already been declared by the settler's Congress on March 2. Santa Anna was eventually released after being held captive by the Americans for many months and being forced to sign a document recognizing Texas's independence. He even made his way to Washington, where he met with President Andrew Jackson. But once back in Mexico, he renounced the agreement to recognize Texas's independence, and the new Republic would carry on an intermittent war with Mexico for the next ten years, first as an independent country, and then, after 1846, as a U.S. state. Mexico, of course, lost the war of 1846-48 with the United States, and with it about one-third of its territory. The independence of Texas was recognized in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but a legacy of bitterness had been created which continued to color U.S.-Mexican relations for many years to come.

From 1836 to 1845 Texas existed as an independent country, the Lone Star Republic, with a constitution based on that of the U.S., but with many of the weak government elements found in the old Articles of Confederation and, later, in the constitution of the Confederate States of America. These ten years were a period of governmental ineptitude and financial distress, paired with a daunting struggle to fend off attacks by the Comanche Indians and incursions by Mexican bandits. The Mexican authorities provided haven to these raiders and many Mexican citizens continued to inhabit large haciendas in the arid space between the Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers. Without an adequate defense budget, the Texas government relied heavily

on poorly paid volunteers known as Rangers, many of whom owned property in the western reaches of the new country and were thus motivated to protect their own families and neighbors from attacks by Indians and Mexican bandits.

Anti-slavery Whigs and many northern Democrats (including Martin Van Buren) opposed the admission of Texas to the Union as a slave state, but the slaveholders continued to dominate the government in Washington and President John Tyler and his successor, James K. Polk (both slave holders) managed to get a joint resolution through Congress admitting the state in 1845. Some pro-slavery politicians even floated the idea of dividing the new state into five states, each with two senators and one congressman, as a way of balancing the influence of the growing non-slave states to the north and west. Although this idea did not enjoy wide support (even in Texas), the new state did manage to get the federal government to take over its \$20 million dollar debt. At this time, Texas was a financial basket-case, largely because the new settlers refused to support higher taxation to pay for defense against Mexican incursions and the ongoing conflict with the Indians. The Texas economy relied heavily on cotton cultivation, for which the eastern part of the state was ideally suited. In fact, for a time in the 1850's, the port of Galveston was the largest export route for cotton in the U.S., most of which went to Great Britain. Of course, the cotton plantations were worked by enslaved Black people and the state's plantation owners dominated the government in Austin.

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Col. Robert E. Lee was commanding units of the U.S. Army along the Rio Grande, where incursions by Mexican bandits put the two countries on a near war footing. The aged (in his sixties) Sam Houston had been narrowly elected governor in 1860 on a Unionist platform, but popular sentiment rapidly repudiated the Union with the election of Abraham Lincoln in November of that year. Despite his impassioned plea to remain in the Union, the sick and dispirited Houston saw his beloved state follow the other slave states in their revolt against the North. He mounted a last ditch campaign to stop the movement toward secession, but a state-wide referendum on March 2, 1861 resoundingly supported the move. The state convention called to ratify secession removed Houston as governor on March 16. With Texas's secession from the Union, the state became, again, an independent republic, at least in the minds of the members of the convention who voted for withdrawal from the American Union. Texas immediately, however, applied for admission to the new Confederate States of America, which was consummated forthwith. Although very little fighting occurred in Texas during the Civil War, the state's ruling class strongly supported the South's claim to independence and only conceded defeat in July of 1865, several months after Lee's

surrender at Appomattox in April. Federal forces had established a blockade of the Gulf coast ports of Texas early in the war, but made only a few sporadic attempts to engage Confederate forces on land. An indication of the slow process of Confederate defeat can be gleaned from the new holiday – Juneteenth – which celebrates the month of emancipation of enslaved people in Texas, that is, some two months after the official end of the war at Appomattox. As the Texas historian T.R. Fehrenbach notes: “There was no formal surrender in Texas The Confederate army and state government simply melted away.” (Fehrenbach, p. 393)

Lecture II: From Cotton to Cattle

Texas, like the other defeated Southern states, now had to redefine itself. The big plantations were broken up into smaller holdings by their owners and rented to tenant farmers. Only a few of the poor Blacks got title to the land. Most of it remained in the hands of Whites, many of whom had been owners of slaves before the war. The new system of “share cropping” took over, with poor Blacks living in shacks on the owner’s property, buying their daily necessities from the owner’s store (usually on credit), and receiving a pittance for the cotton they planted and harvested on the owner’s land. East Texas sank into abject poverty after the Civil War, much like the rest of the South, and the landowners became absentee landlords, living in Houston, Galveston, or even New Orleans, and probably pursuing other careers while their sharecropping labor force worked the land and lived from hand to mouth. Of course there were even more poor sharecropping Whites than Blacks working these fields and after the failure of Reconstruction in the 1870’s, the Black population found itself once again under the thumb of White-dominated local governments.

The 1870’s were also the heyday of the giant cattle ranches in the central and western part of the state. Part of the redefinition of Texas can be found in the change from a cotton-based economy and plantation and share cropping form of life, to a cowboy- dominated image. Before the ranchers and the farmers in the western parts of the state could settle down to their agricultural careers, however, the Indians had to be extirpated. The Comanche tribes that roamed the Great Plains up to the mid-1800’s posed a mortal threat to the White settlers, but the Whites posed an even more mortal threat to the Indians. While there were many stories of horrible slaughters by the Indians of men, women and children in the dispersed settlements, the Indians faced starvation as White hunters relentlessly slaughtered the buffalo upon which the Comanche way of life depended. These nomads ate almost nothing but buffalo meat and other game; no fruits and vegetables could be grown in the arid plains, and the tribal groups moved on so often that planting and harvesting would not have been

possible anyhow. The Comanche moved with the buffalo herds. Their clothing and teepees were also based on the animals' skins. Along with the buffalo, the Comanche depended on their horses, of which they had thousands. Observers judged a Comanche brave to be the most consummate horseman on the face of the earth, or at least in North America. The very loosely organized tribes and bands of braves were noted horse thieves, stealing them from each other, other Indian tribes, and, increasingly, from the encroaching Whites.

It was only after the Civil War, when federal troops under the command of Generals Philip Sheridan and William Sherman arrived in Texas, that the Comanche were finally subdued and driven into the reservations in Oklahoma Territory. The irony of their former Union Army enemies becoming their saviors from the Indians was not lost on the Texans, who actually found much to admire in the disciplined approach of these Northern soldiers compared with the haphazard actions of the Texas Rangers and other volunteer forces. It was also at this time that the Rangers and other Texans discovered the killing efficiency of the six-shooter. The Colt-45 and its improved models became a lethal weapon against the Indians and the Mexicans, as well as in shoot-outs with White outlaws of all sorts. The period after the Civil War turned out to be one of the most violent episodes in American history. With the proliferation of the repeating pistols, disputes were often settled by gunfire and the "Wild West" later mythologized by Hollywood was a bloody reality.

Some quotations from Fehrenbach's history of Texas give us a sense of "How the West was Won," :

"Nowhere was the frontier violence in America so bloody, or so protracted, as on the soil of Texas." This violence was directed primarily against Mexicans and Indians and aimed to wrest the land from their control: "the dominant Texan viewpoint was not that Texans settled Texas, but they conquered it." Only gradually was the legacy of lawlessness overcome in the state, and well into the 20th century violence characterized many Texas disputes. To the old-fashioned Texan, this violence arose when two or more people (usually armed men) could not come to an agreement and the matter had to be settled by direct action. By the 1930's, the Texas Rangers, whose later years were characterized by ruthless violence directed largely at poor Hispanics, were disestablished by the state legislature and their law enforcement duties folded into a more bureaucratic and less uncontrolled Department of Public Safety. Lawbreakers henceforth could look forward to a trial by jury rather than summary "justice" somewhere out of the public eye.

The 1870's were also the peak of the cattle drives north to the railheads in Kansas, a brief period that, again, found its way into the myth of the open range where cowboys lived on horseback for weeks at a time. Of course there was a kernel of truth in the cowboy story, but when the railroads reached west Texas in the early 1880's, the need for long cattle drives ended. The longhorn cattle that had proliferated wildly in southwest Texas since Spanish times had provided the early beef for eastern markets. But improved cattle breeds soon replaced them and the cattle business became just another industry. Actually, more beef cattle were raised in the Middle West, where they could just graze on the ample grass available in Iowa and Illinois, they didn't need to be herded to find forage and water and, of course, didn't need to be "rounded-up" and branded like on the open range.

The "open-range" itself soon disappeared with the rapid adoption of barbed wire to fence in pasturage. Ranchers objected to the use of this wire, at first, since it restricted the movement of their herds to grass and water, and because the main users of the wire were farmers trying to protect their fields. But as the ranches grew through consolidation to thousands of acres, the wealthy owners discovered the advantages of fencing off their property, thereby reserving the grass and water for their own herds exclusively. By 1900, many would-be farmers had discovered that the Hill Country west of Austin and, even more so, the arid plains of west-Texas, were not suitable for growing crops like wheat and corn. West of the 98th meridian came to be known as The Great American Desert, where rainfall averaged less than 30 inches per year, and wind storms were apt to carry off the topsoil from plowed fields. This hard fact finally sank in during the Dust Bowl years of the 1930's.

Texans (especially male politicians) still wear "cowboy" boots with their suits and maybe even bolo "string" ties, from time to time. The state has given us three (and by some counts, four) presidents in the post-war years: Eisenhower was born in Texas, but grew up in Kansas. Of course Lyndon Johnson with his ranch on the Pedernales outside of Austin in the Texas Hill Country was the most authentic Texan. Although he was born and raised in a small house in Johnson City, he did eventually reacquire the ranch that his father Sam had had to sell to pay his debts. Johnson authentically expressed the "larger than life" life-style and personality of the classic Texas politician. He donned his boots and Stetson hat when on his ranch, but eschewed the horseback photo op in favor of roaring around the place in a big Lincoln, one that he could actually ford the river with: it was amphibious. The Bushes were a different matter. George H.W. Bush arrived in Texas from New England, looking to make a fortune in business, but never really left his northern roots. George W. Bush, although born in New Haven, Connecticut, epitomized the politician who sought to project the

Texas image of rugged individualism, but never succeeded in overcoming his privileged background and "fratboy" demeanor. "W" did grow up in Texas, but he got his education in New England, at a pricey private academy and then at Harvard. He did, however, buy a ranch in Crawford, outside of Waco, and pretend to be a rancher, and when he talked, he did evince a slight Texas drawl. In retirement, however, he spends most of his time at his home in Dallas. Needless to say, one did not have to be from Texas to live on a ranch: Ronald Reagan became a California rancher at his spread outside Simi, and was frequently photographed on horseback and wearing a Stetson and doubtless cowboy boots. But, as Texas author Larry McMurtry wrote of his home state in the 20th century, "The cattle range had become the oil patch; the dozer cap replaced the Stetson almost overnight." (McMurtry, *Narrow Grave*, p. 19)

Race relations in Texas mirrored those of the rest of the South in the 20th century: strict segregation of Blacks and (unlike the other old Confederate states) an emarginated life for the large and growing Hispanic population concentrated in the southwestern part of the state. Both Blacks and Hispanics were consigned to their own, clearly delimited neighborhoods while the White population occupied the more desirable areas of Houston and Dallas, or San Antonio. In fact, the Black population rapidly declined as a proportion of the total population of Texas in the post-World War II years, with African-Americans moving to states north and west in large numbers. On the other hand, the high Hispanic birth rate and in migration from Mexico threatened to overwhelm the White majority by the end of the 1900's. Today, more Hispanic babies are born in Texas than White babies. But, at the same time, the very conservative and very White Governor of the state (Greg Abbott) is married to a second-generation Mexican lady and garnered 42 per cent of the Hispanic vote in the last gubernatorial election.

Lecture 3: The Politics of Oil and Immigration

Until the early 1900's, Texas was a poor state. Like the rest of the South and much of the West, it had slow population increase, and actual decline in many parts. The price of cotton had fallen to less than ten cents a pound in many years, while ranching enriched a few large operators, but was otherwise a losing proposition. There was little industry, and urbanization had hardly begun. Houston, San Antonio and Dallas were the largest cities, but could not compare to Northern and Eastern metropolises for wealth and importance. Then oil was discovered in southeast Texas at Spindletop in 1901, just as the automobile age was dawning. For the remainder of the 20th century and now again in the 21st, Texas and oil became synonymous. The state's economy diversified somewhat, especially into petrochemicals. The oil fields seemed to be pretty much played out by 2000, but then the

revolutionary practice of “fracking” came into use and formerly unrecoverable oil deposits suddenly became accessible and productive. Texas and the U.S. as a whole became once again the leading oil and gas producers in the world.

The vast wealth created by the oil industry flowed largely to millionaire investors and large Eastern oil companies, but thousands of Texans also benefited and the state became famous for its rich, but rather crude, oil millionaires. The long-running soap opera, “Dallas,” captures the tensions that erupted between the ruthless oil tycoon, J.R. Ewing, and the land-loving old Texas ranching family he marries into, with J.R., of course, depicted as a man everyone loved to hate, and Miss Ellie, the widowed owner of the Southfork Ranch, whose daughter brings this evil influence into the family when she marries J.R, as the guardian of the old Texas values. Oil millionaires bought their own ranches, of course, and proceeded to dominate Texas politics and social life for most of the 20th century. The Bushes themselves relied heavily on these millionaires for their political backing, as did a host of Democratic politicians earlier in the century. Lyndon Johnson and long-time House Speaker Sam Rayburn were exceptions to this rule and managed to make political careers in the Populist mold common to the first half of the 1900’s.

Unlike most of the American West, Texas entered the Union as an independent country and therefore “public” lands in the new state were the property of the state of Texas rather than the U.S. Government. Today only 1.7 per cent of the land of Texas is under Federal Government jurisdiction compared to 50 to 80 per cent of the land in states like Wyoming and Nevada, which existed as U.S. territories before achieving statehood in the 1800’s. Texas also claimed the ten miles of offshore seabed as state territory – the so-called “Tidelands” – where vast oil deposits were known to exist. Federal administrations through the Truman years (1945 to 1952) resisted Texas’s attempt to lay claim to these areas, but the Eisenhower Administration with a brief Republican majority in both houses of Congress after the 1952 elections, turned over sovereignty of the Tidelands to the state. Oil and gas royalties provide a large part of the state’s revenues as a result, approximately \$25 billion in 2022, some ten percent of the state’s \$250 billion dollar budget in that year. Like many states, Texas has no state income tax, relying on the oil royalties and sales taxes for most of its revenue. The University of Texas system enjoys the largest endowment of any state higher education system – about 49 billion dollars at last count. The University System and the Texas A & M system reap a royalty of about 23 per cent on oil and gas pumped from their 2.1 million acres of land in the Permian Basin. The land was deeded by the state to the university system in the early 1900’s when it appeared quite valueless, being used only for

cattle grazing and some irrigated agriculture. The discovery of vast oil and gas deposits in the 1940's, however, dramatically changed the value of the land. It now also provides a home to some of the largest wind and solar power installations in the country (and the world), with the university system also enjoying a substantial income from the leased property upon which these "green power" installations are located. None of the endowment money can be used for university operating expenses, however, and tuition at the Austin flagship campus was about \$11,000 in 2022, higher than the average of \$10,000 for all U.S. public institutions of higher learning. In 2022 the system was taking in about \$9 million dollars per day in royalty payments (with oil prices over \$100 per barrel during the early part of the year). Lower level public schools, however, remained poorly funded, and the state remains near the bottom in money spent per student (42nd place) and teachers' salaries (17th place) in comparison to other states. The conservative Republican Party which dominates the state advocates education vouchers which would allow families to send their K-12 students to private schools largely at public expense.

The Texas Board of Education mandates the teaching of Texas history in all grades from elementary through high school. The uniqueness of Texas is stressed by both detractors and boosters of the state's history and culture. The schools were racially segregated until the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of 1954, and are largely de facto segregated to the present day, since the Black population remains concentrated in a few geographically defined areas and the schools in these areas are perforce attended by an almost one hundred per cent Black enrollment.

Nowhere is the conflict between Texas and the federal government more pronounced than along the one thousand mile border between the state and Mexico. With the recent influx of thousands of undocumented aliens into the state, Governor Abbott has taken steps of questionable legality to try to prevent entry over the Rio Grande, the main route for migrants. Most recently he has dispatched the state's National Guard to patrol the border and erected border walls and barricades topped with razor wire to stop the migrants from entering the state. The Supreme Court has recently ruled that the border with Mexico is under federal jurisdiction and that the state cannot prevent U.S. Border Patrol personnel access to areas along the Rio Grande where migrants have been crossing into the U.S. to claim asylum. This ongoing dispute echoes a conflict from over one hundred years ago when Mexican bandits and migrants entered the state. In one instance, Texas Rangers were dispatched to pursue miscreants into Mexico itself, raising the issue to the level of international conflict. Eventually, the Rangers were pulled back and the U.S. Army took control of the border, but

not until the Rangers had inflicted summary "justice" on a number of Mexican nationals accused of various crimes.

"Direct Action" has long been a Texan trait. The idea of waiting for the federal authorities (or even authorized state authorities) to act is often rejected and local officials or just plain vigilantes "take the law into their own hands."

Despite the fact that Texas has traditionally rejected Federal aid of all sorts – for instance, like many Republican-led states it refuses to accept Federal Medicaid subsidies for its poorest residents -- the state's representatives in Washington have had outsize -- one might say "Texas-size" -- influence on national politics. I have already mentioned the three post-war presidents from Texas -- Johnson and the two Bushes – but a few other political figures, such as FDR's vice president from 1933 to 1941, John Nance Garner, and Sam Rayburn, who served as House Speaker from 1940 to 1961 whenever the Democrats had the majority (which was for all but four years) have had almost as much influence on national affairs. In the 1990's the state produced one more speaker, the Democrat Jim Wright, but he was a victim of the "no-holds-barred" attacks of his Republican opponents, led by Newt Gingrich, and ended up leaving the House in disgrace. For several years in the same decade Republican majority leader in the House, Tom DeLay, wielded great power, but he too eventually resigned in a welter of corruption charges, accused of using political contributions for personal enrichment.

In the first half of the 20th century the Populist tradition continued to be strong in the state, which even after the oil boom continued to be populated largely by hardscrabble sharecroppers and other poor rural residents. The Republican Party hardly existed in Texas in these years. As throughout the rest of the South, the Party's association with the North's war against the South and the freeing of the enslaved Blacks essentially ruled it out as a governing group. Southern Democrats, including those in Texas, could be both in favor of Federal assistance for the poor (mainly White) farmers, and adamantly opposed to racial integration. These Populists supported the direct election of Senators in the early 1900s, as well as the Federal income tax, and Federal (and state) regulation of the giant railroad monopolies. Roosevelt's New Deal drew heavily upon Texas Democrats, including Jesse Jones, head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a Hoover-era creation that Jones turned into a mammoth government credit organization during the 1930s. He finished his government career as Roosevelt's Secretary of Commerce from 1940 to 1945. A wealthy Houston banker, Jones nonetheless projected an "aw shucks" populism which endeared him to the New Dealers. Jones never sought elective office, but in the 1930's he

was one of Washington's most important bureaucrats, a role that would, of course, have made him anathema to today's Republican establishment in Texas.

Vice President Garner came late to the Roosevelt camp and never really fit in. Before Roosevelt selected him as his running mate (primarily because he needed Garner's delegates to reach the 2/3rds majority required at the time to get the Democratic nomination). He had served briefly as Speaker of the House from 1930 to 1932, when Democrats took control of the chamber following the stock market crash and the beginnings of the Great Depression. Garner had served in the House since 1902, elected repeatedly from a sprawling southwest Texas district that included a large Hispanic population. He spent nearly his whole life (he died in 1967 at the age of 98) in Uvalde, Texas, serving as a local judge and then as representative from the Fifteenth Congressional District of Texas for some thirty years. After his retirement from politics in 1941, following his rejection by FDR as his running mate for the third term, Garner returned to Uvalde and lived the life of a local celebrity and canny businessman. By the end of his life, his politics had become "hard right" and his influence quite insignificant.

Garner had been a big help in getting the early New Deal legislation through Congress, his experience in the body was invaluable as was his role as president of the Senate, the vice president's only Constitutionally-mandated duty. Garner may be most famous for his salty comments on public office: "the vice presidency is not worth a bucket of warm p__s." and the capturing of Federal money for his home district: "Every time one of those Yankees gets a ham, I am going to do my best to get a hog." But his populist programs endeared him to his poor constituents and Uvalde still remembers him fondly with a small museum and a monument. One wonders what he would have said about the heartless murder of the students at the Uvalde school a few years ago. He is not on record of ever having had a harsh word for the Hispanic voters who were instrumental in furthering his long Congressional career, although he was an unreconstructed racist where the Black population was concerned.

When Americans from places like Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi started to pour into Texas in the 1830's, the local Mexican population numbered no more than a few thousand, mainly located in the San Antonio area. The "Anglo" population rapidly surpassed the Hispanic natives, known as "Tejanos," and for most of the next century, the Spanish-speakers were confined to the state's southwest quadrant, along the Rio Grande. San Antonio itself rapidly became a majority Anglo town, and new cities like Houston, Austin, and Dallas had relatively small Hispanic populations. After the Civil War, Houston's black population increased

considerably, but it only became a Mecca for Blacks seeking opportunity after World War II. It still has a growing Black population, unlike many northern cities, which are losing Black inhabitants to surrounding suburbs or, in many cases, southern states. The phenomenon of northern Blacks migrating South to Atlanta, Charlotte, Jacksonville, and Houston has been quite marked in the past twenty years and is traceable both to a cultural preference (African-Americans obviously have deeper southern roots than most people in Chicago or Detroit), and to places with jobs and a generally lower cost of living, not to mention warmer winter weather.

Houston also has a large Asian community. Indian and Pakistani immigrants favor it for climate and job opportunities, for instance. Given this growing ethnic diversity in the state, it becomes harder and harder to maintain the old image of Texas as a redoubt of white supremacy. It is only a matter of time before one of the major political parties nominates a Hispanic or Asian-American for state-wide office, even the governorship. This has happened already in those two bastions of the Old South – Louisiana (with Bobby Jindal) and South Carolina (with Nikki Haley) – but only with candidates whose conservative credentials pass muster with the Republican electorate. With growing urbanization and the continued influx of new residents from north and west, there is even a chance that the Democratic Party may come back to life and elect someone to statewide office.

The booming oil and natural gas industries are bringing large numbers of Hispanic laborers to the oil fields of western Texas. Previously majority Anglo cities like Uvalde, Midland, and Odessa, are likely to turn into majority Hispanic urban areas. People stream across the Rio Grande primarily to gain a foothold in the U.S. economy, and many end up staying in Texas because it offers plenty of opportunities for people with little education, little English ability, and (usually) some kind of kinship with other recent arrivals from south of the border. Despite Governor Abbott's efforts to bus new arrivals to the northern cities, it seems likely that most of those seeking asylum will remain in Texas, with all that entails for the state's education and welfare budgets. Needless to say, this will remain a major political issue for some time to come. It seems likely that more generous federal assistance for Texas to help it cope with this influx is apt to be part of any agreement with the Abbott government. Apparently the numbers crossing into Arizona and New Mexico are far fewer, probably due to the perils of crossing the Sonoran Desert. Still, Tucson and Phoenix remain magnets of immigration, much to the chagrin of local governments in these Arizona cities.

Texas attracts ambitious capitalists of all sorts, with Elon Musk being the latest big name to establish a corporate headquarters in the state. Before

Musk and Tesla, there were Ken Lay and Jeff Skillings, who turned the energy company Enron into a rampant corporate phenomenon before its spectacular collapse in 2001. Perhaps a more telling example of Texas business success is Michael Dell, a native Texan who created a tech company that has actually managed to stay in business for several decades. Texas also produced Texas Instruments, one of the first tech companies to usher in the digital age. But Exxon-Mobil, headquartered in Houston, remains the largest and most profitable company in Texas and, in many ways, continues to epitomize the big, brawny Texas image.

Texas is also the home to the largest "mega-church" in the country: the 43,000 member Lakewood Church in Houston, Joel Osteen, pastor. There are many other huge congregation churches in the state, which ranks second to California in this department. Lakewood is non-denominational and provides its attendees with an uplifting, positive message, sometimes called "Christianity Lite." Texas has a long history of militant Christianity, but its one-time antipathy toward Catholicism (John Kennedy famously sought to convince one Texas mega-church congregation that he wouldn't follow the Pope's orders if elected) has clearly been overcome, with Governor Abbott being only the latest Catholic politician to achieve state-wide office. But, as elsewhere in the country, church attendance is declining and the role of religion in state affairs (except, it appears, in the case of the anti-abortion movement) has also diminished. The influx of youthful northerners and non-religious immigrants is also reducing the influence of the churches in the state.

So what is Texas? The idea persists in that state, more than 170 years after the Civil War, that the United States is a federation of states, not a union. Three-term governor Rick Perry even suggested that if Texas did not like the way the federal government was treating it, it could "secede" from the Union and live quite well as an independent republic again. Since the Republican Party swallowed the old Confederacy, taking it over and legitimizing its hard right politics after the Democratic Party disavowed it during the movement for Black civil rights, the decentralizing tendencies of "states rights" has grown to perilous size, with constant challenges to federal authority and to the civil rights of citizens within the borders of the states. Texas stands out in this respect because of its unique history as a one-time independent country that joined the union as a co-equal political entity with the national government, or at least that is the way it sometimes seems in the minds of the state's more conservative elements. With its vast oil wealth and its position on the border with Mexico, the state has taken on certain aspects in common with old Prussia (minus the oil) within the German confederation. Like Prussia, it stands as a pillar of racial supremacy facing a sea of lesser peoples, in this case Hispanics and other foreigners rather than the Slavic

masses formerly under German rule. Like Prussia, the territory of Texas was wrested from the indigenous population by the "master race" of white Anglo-Saxons. Like the Prussians, these conquerors passed on to their heirs a belief in their superiority and their right to impose their will upon Indians, Mexicans, and, for many years, enslaved Blacks. And also like the Prussians – who viewed themselves as the personification of German patriotism – the conservative Texan views himself as more American than other Americans because he has had to stand up to these non-Anglos, often with brutal methods. At one time it was the Texas Rangers and other assorted vigilantes who struck down those who challenged the white man's authority, while today it is a state government dominated by men (and a few women) who self-righteously claim the right to act "above the law" to achieve their aims. Prussia came to dominate Germany as a whole, of course. With the accession to power of the Prussian *junker* Otto Von Bismarck to the chancellorship of Germany in the late 1800's, Germany became, in its militarized way, a reflection of Prussian values. The rest of the United States, on the other hand, is unlikely to become "Texanized" given the relatively small portion of the total population and land area occupied by "true Texans." This does pose something of a dilemma as we seek to work out a lasting understanding between the desire for "home rule" and the necessities of broad national policy.