Today, we will see the eruption of tensions that had been growing in Texas, where the Americans who lived there increasingly found themselves at odds with the Mexican government. We won’t see Texas statehood or the Mexican-American war just yet, but we are setting the stage for that now.

In the early 19th century, a number of Americans had crossed the Sabine River, settling in disputed territory that was claimed by Spain but the United States had been led to believe might be theirs by virtue of the Louisiana Purchase. The Adams-Onis Treaty had settled the boundary between America and Mexico in 1819 (TX and FL), despite political upheavals. In 1810, a revolutionary uprising had begun in Mexico. The Mexican Revolution was long and bloody, and it decimated the Mexican economy. The Mexican population in Texas, called **Tejanos**, fell to nearly half its pre-revolution size in 1800. But in 1821, after 11 years, Mexico was finally independent.

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Even before Mexican independence, Spain allowed Missouri merchant **Moses Austin** to start a colony in Texas, hoping to stabilize the border there. His son **Stephen Austin** began building a settlement in 1821, along with the liberal Tejano **Erasmo Seguin**. Two years later, the Mexican government empowered Austin to act as an ***emprasario****,* or colonizing agent for the territory. By 1835, 27,000 American colonists had arrived, bringing 3,000 slaves with them. (By comparison, there were only around 3,000 Mexicans living in Texan territory.) Generally, the Americans ignored the rules that had been laid down by the Mexican government, refusing to convert to Catholicism as promised or to free their slaves. (Mexico had banned the institution.) All this occurred despite Mexican concerns over illegal American immigration; concerned by ever-increasing numbers and the Americans’ tendency to flout the rules, Mexico had tried to close Texas to further American immigration around 1830. After the government re-routed trade routes away from American communities and stationed more soldiers in Texas, revolts broke out, some assisted by Tejanos.

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A group of American colonists called for autonomy within the Republic of Mexico. That next year, the war hawks organized an army under the command of **Sam Houston** and sent Austin (who was more peaceful-minded at first) to Mexico City to negotiate. After Austin was arrested and jailed for nearly two years, he—and others—determined that war was the only recourse, especially as Santa Anna cracked down on dissent and attempted to institute greater national control within Texas. Throughout 1835–1836, Texians (as the Americans in Texas were called) fought pitched battles with Mexican troops, taking command of the Alamo fortress in 1835 and occupying the town of Goliad. Meanwhile, a Texian envoy traveled to Washington, DC to try to secure American support for the insurrection.

In response, Mexican president **Santa Anna** sent the Mexican army to put down the rebellion, capturing the Alamo and killing its defenders in March 1836. “Remember the Alamo” became a rallying cry for Texas independence, spurred by American newspapers who also drew on anti-Catholic sentiment and romantic notions of sacrifice in battle thanks to the Alamo, and the phrase stuck around through the war with Mexico barely a decade later. Later in March 1836, Goliad surrendered too, with all troops there executed as well.

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By that time, Texian leaders had already declared the Republic of Texas independent and adopted a constitution. In April, Houston defeated Santa Anna at the **Battle of San Jacinto**, executing hundreds of Mexican prisoners. The next day, Santa Anna was captured and forced to sign the **Treaty of Velasco**, promising to end the war and recognize Texas independence. Sam Houston was elected president of the new republic; Austin became secretary of state.

Texian political leaders were not seeking long-term independence, but hoped for annexation by the United States. The U.S., however, was wary. Many Americans worried about the consequences of the addition of what would almost certainly be a powerful slave state, and they were concerned as well about the interference in Mexican-American trade. The U.S. recognized the Republic, but that was all. War with Mexico would come within a decade.