

= Fredonian Rebellion =

The Fredonian Rebellion (December 21 , 1826 ? January 23 , 1827) was the first attempt by Anglo settlers in Texas to secede from Mexico . The settlers , led by Empresario Haden Edwards , declared independence from Mexican Texas and created the Republic of Fredonia near Nacogdoches . The short @-@ lived republic encompassed the land the Mexican government had granted to Edwards in 1825 and included areas that had been previously settled . Edwards 's actions soon alienated these established residents , and the increasing hostilities between them and settlers recruited by Edwards led Victor Blanco of the Mexican government to revoke Edwards 's contract .

In late December 1826 , a group of Edwards 's supporters took control of the region by arresting and removing from office several municipality officials affiliated with the established residents . Supporters declared their independence from Mexico . Although the nearby Cherokee tribe initially signed a treaty to support the new republic because a prior agreement with the Mexican government negotiated by Chief Richard Fields was ignored , overtures from Mexican authorities and respected Empresario Stephen F. Austin convinced tribal leaders to repudiate the rebellion . On January 31 , 1827 , a force of over 100 Mexican soldiers and 250 militiamen from Austin 's colony marched into Nacogdoches to restore order . Haden Edwards and his brother Benjamin fled to the United States . Chief Richard Fields was killed by his own tribe . A local merchant was arrested and sentenced to death , but later paroled .

The rebellion led Mexican President Guadalupe Victoria to increase the military presence in the area . As a result , several hostile tribes in the area halted their raids on settlements and agreed to a peace treaty . The Comanche abided by this treaty for many years . Fearing that through the rebellion the United States hoped to gain control of Texas , the Mexican government severely curtailed immigration to the region from the US . This new immigration law was bitterly opposed by colonists and caused increasing dissatisfaction with Mexican rule . Some historians consider the Fredonian Rebellion to be the beginning of the Texas Revolution . In the words of one historian , the rebellion was " premature , but it sparked the powder for later success . "

= = Background = =

After winning independence in 1821 , several of Spain 's colonies in the New World joined together to create a new country , Mexico . The country divided itself into several states , and the area known as Mexican Texas became part of the border state Coahuila y Tejas . To assist in governing the large area , the state created several departments ; all of Texas was included in the Department of Béxar . This department was further subdivided into municipalities , which were governed by alcalde , similar to a modern @-@ day mayor . A large portion of East Texas , ranging from the Sabine to the Trinity Rivers and from the Gulf Coast to the Red River , became part of the municipality of Nacogdoches . Most residents of the municipality were Spanish @-@ speaking families who had occupied their land for generations . An increasing number were English @-@ speaking residents who had immigrated illegally during the Mexican War of Independence . Many of the immigrants were adventurers who had arrived as part of various military filibustering groups which had attempted to create independent republics within Texas during Spanish rule .

To better control the sparsely populated border region , in 1824 the Mexican federal government passed the General Colonization Law to allow legal immigration into Texas . Under the law , each state would set its own requirements for immigration . After some debate , on March 24 , 1825 , Coahuila y Tejas authorized a system granting land to empresario , who would recruit settlers for their particular colony . During the state government 's deliberations , many would @-@ be empresarios congregated in Mexico to lobby for land grants . Among these was Haden Edwards , an American land speculator known for his quick temper and aggressiveness . Despite his abrasiveness , Edwards was granted a colonization contract on April 14 allowing him to settle 800 families in East Texas . The contract contained standard language requiring Edwards to recognize all pre @-@ existing Spanish and Mexican land titles in his grant area , to raise a militia to protect

the settlers in the area , and to allow the state land commissioner to certify all deeds awarded .

Edwards 's colony encompassed the land from the Navasota River to 20 leagues west of the Sabine River , and from 20 leagues north of the Gulf of Mexico to 15 leagues north of the town of Nacogdoches . To the west and north of the colony were lands controlled by several native tribes which had recently been driven out of the United States . The southern boundary was a colony overseen by Stephen F. Austin , the son of the first empresario in Texas . East of Edwards 's grant was the former Sabine Free State , a neutral zone which had been essentially lawless for several decades . The boundaries of the new colony and the municipality of Nacogdoches partially overlapped , leading to uncertainty over who had jurisdiction over which function . The majority of the established settlers lived outside the eastern boundary of the Edwards colony .

= = Prelude = =

Edwards arrived in Nacogdoches in August 1825 . Mistakenly believing that he had the authority to determine the validity of existing land claims , Edwards , in September , demanded written proof of ownership , or their land would be forfeited and sold at auction . His action was at least partially driven by prejudice ; Edwards scorned those who were poorer or of a different race than himself . By removing less @-@ prosperous settlers , he could assign their lands to wealthy planters , like himself , from the southern United States .

Very few of the English @-@ speaking residents had valid titles . Those who had not arrived as filibusters had been duped by fraudulent land speculators . Most of the Spanish @-@ speaking landowners lived on grants made to their families 70 or more years previously and were unable to produce any paperwork . Anticipating the potential conflict between the new empresario and the long @-@ time residents of the area , the acting alcalde of the municipality , Luis Procela , and the municipality clerk , Jose Antonio Sepulveda , began validating old Spanish and Mexican land titles , a function legally assigned to the state land commissioner . In response , Edwards accused the men of forging deeds , further angering the residents .

By December 1825 , Edwards had recruited 50 families to emigrate from the United States . As required under his contract , Edwards organized a local militia open to his colonists and established residents . When militia members elected Sepulveda as their captain , Edwards nullified the results and proclaimed himself head of the militia . Following this debacle , Edwards , acting outside his authority , called for elections for a new alcalde . Two men were nominated for the position ? Edwards 's son @-@ in @-@ law , Chichester Chaplin , seen as the representative for the newly arrived immigrants , and Samuel Norris , an American who had married the daughter of a long @-@ time resident and was sympathetic to the more established residents . After Chaplin 's victory , many settlers alleged vote @-@ stacking in an appeal to Juan Antonio Saucedo , the political chief of the Department of Bexar . In March , Saucedo overturned the election results and proclaimed Norris the winner . Edwards refused to recognize Norris 's authority .

Shortly after Saucedo 's ruling , Edwards left to recruit more settlers from the United States , leaving his younger brother Benjamin in charge of the colony . Benjamin could not maintain stability in the colony , and the situation deteriorated rapidly . A vigilante group of earlier settlers harassed many newcomers , and Benjamin Edwards made several complaints to state authorities . Unhappy with Benjamin 's tone and the increasing tension , Mexican authorities revoked the land grant in October and instructed the Edwards brothers to leave Mexico . Rumors that Haden Edwards had returned to the United States to raise an army and not just to recruit settlers likely influenced the government action . Unwilling to abandon his \$ 50 @,@ 000 (about \$ 1 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 as of 2016) investment in the colony , Haden Edwards rejoined his brother in Nacogdoches in late October , continuing their business affairs despite the cancellation of his colonization contract .

= = Conflict = =

In October , Norris ruled that Edwards had improperly taken land from an existing settler to give to a new immigrant . Norris evicted the immigrant , angering many of the colonists . Later that month ,

another new immigrant was arrested and ordered to leave the country after refusing to purchase a merchant license before trading with the Indian tribes . On November 22 , 1826 , local militia colonel Martin Parmer and 39 other Edwards colonists entered Nacogdoches and arrested Norris , Sepulveda , and the commander of the small Mexican garrison , charging them with oppression and corruption . Haden Edwards was also arrested for violating his expulsion order but was immediately paroled , possibly as a ploy to disguise his own involvement in the plot . A kangaroo court found the other men guilty , removed them from their positions , and banned them from ever holding another public office . The court disbanded after appointing a temporary alcalde . These actions benefitted Parmer personally ; several weeks before , after Parmer killed a man in a dispute , Norris had issued a warrant for Parmer 's arrest . With Norris removed from office , the arrest warrant was voided .

Throughout the fall , Benjamin Edwards had tried to gather support from the Edwards colonists for a potential armed revolt against Mexican authority . Largely unsuccessful , he approached the nearby Cherokee tribe for assistance . Several years previously , the tribe had applied for title to the lands they occupied in northern East Texas . They were promised but never given a deed from the Mexican authorities . Benjamin Edwards offered the tribe clear title to all of Texas north of Nacogdoches in exchange for armed support for his plans .

On December 16 , the Edwards brothers invaded Nacogdoches with only 30 settlers , seizing one building in town , the Old Stone Fort . On December 21 , they declared the former Edwards colony to be a new republic named Fredonia . Within hours of the announcement , the Fredonians signed a peace treaty with the Cherokee , represented by Chief Richard Fields and John Dunn Hunter . Fields and Hunter claimed to represent an additional 23 other tribes and promised to provide 400 warriors . In recognition of the agreement , above the Old Stone Fort flew a new flag containing two stripes ? one red , one white ? representing the two races . Inscribed on the banner was the motto , " Independence , Liberty , and Justice " . Haden Edwards also sent messengers to Louisiana to request aid from the United States military , which refused to intervene . Another emissary sent to invite Austin and his colonists to join the rebellion garnered the rebuke , " You are deluding yourselves and this delusion will ruin you . "

Edwards 's actions disturbed many of his colonists due to either their loyalty to their adopted country or fear of his alliance with the Cherokee . Mexican authorities were also concerned with the Cherokee alliance , and both Peter Ellis Bean , the Mexican Indian agent , and Saucedo , the political chief , began negotiations with Fields . They explained to the Cherokee that the tribe had not followed proper procedures to attain a land grant and promised that if they reapplied through official channels the Mexican government would honor their land request . These arguments and a planned Mexican military response convinced many Cherokee to repudiate the treaty with Edwards .

On news of the November arrest of the alcalde , the Mexican government began preparing to retaliate . On December 11 , Lieutenant Colonel Mateo Ahumada , the military commander in Texas , marched from San Antonio de Béxar with 110 infantry , and initially stopped in Austin 's colony to assess the loyalty of his settlers . On January 1 , Austin announced to his colonists that " infatuated madmen at Nacogdoches have declared independence . " Much of his colony immediately volunteered to assist in quelling the rebellion . When the Mexican army left for Nacogdoches on January 22 , they were joined by 250 militiamen from Austin 's colony .

Impatient with the army response time , Norris led 80 men to retake the Old Stone Fort . Although Parmer had fewer than 20 supporters with him , his men routed Norris 's force in less than ten minutes . On January 31 , Bean , accompanied by 70 militiamen from Austin 's colony , rode into Nacogdoches . By this time , Parmer and Edwards had learned that the Cherokee had abandoned any intention of waging war against Mexico . When not a single Cherokee warrior had appeared to reinforce the revolt , Edwards and his supporters fled . Bean pursued them to the Sabine River , but most , including both Edwards brothers , safely crossed into the United States . Ahumada and his soldiers , accompanied by political chief Saucedo , entered Nacogdoches on February 8 to restore order .

Although the Cherokee had not raised arms against Mexico , their treaty with the Fredonian revolutionaries caused Mexican authorities to question the tribe 's loyalty . To demonstrate their

loyalty to Mexico , the Cherokee council ordered both Fields and Hunter to be executed . Under tribal law , certain offenses such as aiding an enemy of the tribe were punishable by death . By sentencing Fields and Hunter to death for this reason , the Cherokee affirmed that Edwards and his cohorts were their enemies . Both men fled , but were soon captured and executed . When the executions were reported to Mexican authorities on February 28 , the commandant general of the Eastern Interior Provinces , Anastasio Bustamante , praised the Cherokee for their prompt action .

Bustamante ultimately offered a general amnesty for all who participated in the conflict except for Haden and Benjamin Edwards , Martin Parmer , and Adolphus Sterne , a local merchant who had provided supplies to the rebel force . Like the Edwards brothers , Parmer escaped into Louisiana . Sterne remained and was sentenced to death for treason but was paroled on the condition that he swear allegiance to Mexico and never again take up arms against the Mexican government .

= = Aftermath = =

The rebellion changed the dynamic between settlers and local tribes . Although the Cherokee repudiated the rebellion , their initial support caused many settlers to distrust the tribe . The rebellion , and subsequent Mexican army response , also changed the settlers ' relationships with other tribes . In preceding years , the Tawakoni and Waco tribes , allied with various Comanche bands , had regularly raided Texas settlements . Fearing that these tribes , like the Cherokee , could ally with other groups against Mexican control , Bustamante began preparations to attack and weaken all hostile tribes in East Texas . On learning of the imminent invasion , in April 1827 the Towakoni and Waco sued for peace . In June , the two tribes signed a peace treaty with Mexico , promising to halt all raids against Mexican settlers . The Towakoni then assisted their allies , the Penateka Comanche , in reaching a treaty with Mexico . When Bustamante 's troops left Texas later that year , the Towakoni and Waco resumed their raiding . The Comanche tribe upheld their treaty for many years and often assisted Mexican soldiers in recovering livestock stolen by the other tribes .

The failed rebellion also affected Mexican relations with the United States . Even before the revolt , many Mexican officials had worried that the United States was plotting to gain control of Texas . Once the rebellion came to light , officials suspected that Edwards had been an agent of the United States . To help protect the region , a new , larger , garrison was established in Nacogdoches , to be commanded by Colonel Jose de las Piedras . As a direct result of Edwards 's actions , the Mexican government authorized an extensive expedition , conducted by General Manuel de Mier y Terán , to inspect the Texas settlements and recommend a future course of action . Mier y Teran 's reports led to the Law of April 6 , 1830 , which severely restricted immigration into Texas . Within Texas , the laws were widely denounced by both recent immigrants and native @-@ born Mexicans and led to further armed conflict between Mexican soldiers and Texas residents .

Some historians regard the Fredonian Rebellion as the beginning of the Texas Revolution . Historian W.B. Bates remarked that the revolt was " premature , but it sparked the powder for later success " . The people of Nacogdoches played instrumental roles in other rebellions in Texas over the next few years ; in 1832 they expelled Piedras and his troops from Nacogdoches , and many Nacogdoches residents participated in the Texas Revolution .