

= Texan schooner Independence =

The Texan schooner Independence was one of the four schooners of the First Texas Navy (1836 ? 1838) . In 1836 , Charles Hawkins , a veteran of the United States and Mexican navies , visited Texas Governor Henry Smith , seeking a commission in the new Texas Navy . Smith was impressed with his credentials and sent him to New Orleans , where he was given the task of acquiring the United States revenue cutter Ingham for the Texas Navy , which he did in early January 1836 , for \$ 1 @, @ 710 .

After the Texas victory at the Battle of San Jacinto in April , 1836 , Independence carried the Texas President and his captive , General Santa Anna , to Velasco , where the Treaty of Velasco was negotiated and signed .

While being refitted in New Orleans in early 1837 , her skipper died and a new captain was appointed . When next she sailed in April 1837 , Independence was attacked and surrendered to a superior Mexican force and her officers and passengers were imprisoned . The ship was later commissioned in the Mexican Navy where she served against her former masters .

= = Service during the Texas Revolution = =

From January until March , 1836 , before Texas declared her independence from Mexico , Commodore Charles Hawkins cruised the Coahuila y Tejas coast between Galveston and Tampico , destroying " a considerable number of small craft , with all material on board that could be used to the injury of Texas . " By 12 March , the Independence returned to New Orleans for refitting , but she quickly returned to Matagorda to block supplies to the Mexican Army . However , with the retreat of Sam Houston 's army after the Texans ' defeats at the siege of the Battle of the Alamo and Battle of Goliad , Hawkins was forced to move his ship up the Texas coast from Matagorda to Galveston . With the rebel government in disarray during the Runaway Scrape , Independence 's mission was to defend Galveston from invasion and block resupply of Santa Anna 's nearby army .

= = The Treaty of Velasco and after = =

Thereafter , Independence was involved in two important diplomatic missions , first in May 1836 carrying San Jacinto President David G. Burnet , with his cabinet , and Santa Anna to sign the Treaty of Velasco after the Battle of San Jacinto and then , in June , setting sail for New Orleans with commissioners Peter William Grayson and James W. Collinsworth on board . These men continued their journey to Washington , D.C. , where they negotiated with the United States for the recognition of the independence of Texas .

In the summer of 1836 , Independence was the only ship of the Texas Navy on duty in the Gulf of Mexico ; Liberty having been sold to pay the cost of refurbishment and Invincible and Brutus in New York City for repairs . Mexican authorities had recently repudiated the Treaty of Velasco claiming that General Santa Anna did not have the capacity to bind Mexico to recognize Texas ' independence . With rumors of an imminent invasion of Texas by Mexico , Independence carried out a screening and patrol action at Matamoros , which the Texans had ordered blockaded .

In the fall of 1836 , Independence returned to New Orleans for refitting and while there Commodore Hawkins died of smallpox . When Independence sailed from New Orleans on 10 April 1837 , with Texas minister to the United States , William H. Wharton aboard , she was skippered by her new Captain , George W. Wheelwright , who had been left without a command after the forced sale of Liberty in May 1836 .

= = Battle of Brazos River = =

On her next cruise , Independence had smooth sailing for about seven days when on 17 April she encountered the Mexican brigs @-@ of @-@ war Vencedor del Álamo and Libertador off the mouth of the Brazos River . The initial sighting of the two Mexican brigs was at about 5 : 30 am .

Outgunned and outmanned , Independence fled up Brazos River for protection at the small riverside town of Velasco . The Mexican vessels pursued the Texans ; eventually the two brigs came within cannon range several hours later at 9 : 30 am . Vincedor del Alamo of sixteen 8 @-@ pound guns and 140 men , sailed with Libertador of six 12 @-@ pound guns and one 18 @-@ pounder , crewed by about 100 men .

Independence of eight guns total , raised her colors followed by Libertador which then fired the first broadside that had no effect . Shortly afterward Independence fired a broadside with her weather battery of one 9 @-@ pound gun , three 6 @-@ pound guns , and one pivot gun . For two hours , Independence continued up Brazos River with the Mexican brigs in close pursuit , occasionally stopping to fire on each other . By 11 : 30 am the Texans had reached Velasco ; Captain Wheelwright had no choice but to fight to the end , apparently not being able to continue up the Brazos River any further . The final engagement took place right in front of the small Texan town and populace , including the Texas Secretary of the Navy Samuel Rhoads Fisher . The Mexicans not being far behind came within range and Captain Wheelwright ordered his men to engage once more . The shots managed to damage the main top @-@ gallant mast of the Libertador . After another broadside in Libertador 's direction , two Mexicans lay dead and a few more were wounded aboard the brig @-@ of @-@ war . More shots damaged Libertador 's foremast and knocked out one of her 12 pounders . However , these broadsides did not slow the Mexican ships ; Libertador approached Independence head on while Vincedor del Alamo maneuvered around to Independence 's other side . The two brigs quickly came within pistol shots range and both fired a mixture of cannon projectiles . This is when a ball smashed through Independence 's quarter gallery wall and into the Texan captain , taking off three of his fingers on his right hand . Severely wounded and taken below , command of the schooner passed to Lieutenant John W. Taylor , who finished the last few moments of battle before receiving orders from Wheelwright to surrender . With this action , the battle was over .

Taylor surrendered the ship . Imprisoned in Matamoros , Independence 's officers and Wharton eventually escaped or were released by the Mexican government . The ship was taken into service of the Mexican Navy under the new name La Independencia .