

GROWTH AND REFORM

Biography

Politician and military leader Sam Houston influenced American relations with Native Americans and helped make Texas part of the United States. His victory over Mexican general Antonio López de Santa Anna secured Texan independence from Mexico, setting the stage for the later Mexican-American War. ♦ *Read the following biography of Sam Houston. Then, answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.*

Sam Houston (1793–1863)

In 1807, Sam Houston relocated from his native Virginia to Tennessee. Two years later, he ran away from his family farm, spending the next three years living among the Cherokees and learning their customs and language.

At age 18, he joined the U.S. Army to fight in the War of 1812. His courage brought him to the attention of General Andrew Jackson, and the two developed a friendship that would later aid Houston's political career. After the war, Houston worked for the federal government relocating Cherokees to Arkansas. In 1823, Houston was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. He left that post in 1827 to become Tennessee's governor.

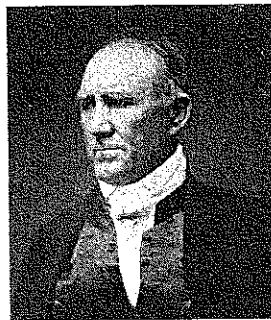
In 1829, Houston left his governorship to again live with the Cherokees. He received tribal citizenship and went twice to Washington, D.C., to argue for Native American rights. In 1832, Andrew Jackson—now President—sent Houston to Texas, then under the control of Mexico. There, Houston became prominent among

the settlers, who chose him as their military commander when they revolted against Mexican rule in 1835. Within weeks, Houston and his forces achieved a stunning victory over the Mexican army.

After the revolt, Texans elected Houston the first president of the Republic of Texas. He served two terms while working to gain admission to the United States for the republic. When Texas became a state in 1845, Houston was elected one of its first two senators.

As a senator from 1846 to 1859 and as Texas's governor from 1859 to 1861, Houston spoke out against breaking with the Union, arguing that "To secede from the Union . . . would cause war. If you go to war with

the United States, you will never conquer her. . . . It will take the flower of the country—the young men." When Texas seceded from the United States, Houston refused to take an oath supporting the Confederacy. Texans removed him from office and Houston retired to Huntsville, Texas, where he died a few years later.



Sam Houston,
Library of Congress

Questions to Think About

1. With which Native American tribe did Houston have a long relationship?
2. How did Houston help Texas become part of the United States?
3. **Identify Points of View** Why might Houston have considered himself a loyal Texan despite his refusal to support the Confederacy?