

June 11, 1936

[San Jacinto, Texas]

FDR Speech File

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Reading Copy of President
San Jacinto--June 11, 1936.

There are but few spots in the United States which have witnessed events equal in significance to that which took place at San Jacinto.

Here a century ago was a great frontier of our civilization. On the twenty-first day of April, 1836, General Houston and the small body of less than eight hundred men under his command held in large measure in their keeping the future of our country as it is constituted today.

The patriots whose memories we are honoring today were victorious in the same spirit that fired the Colonists of 1776. I like to think of General Houston sending Deaf Smith back to destroy Vince's bridge, over which he had brought his army, so that neither reinforcements nor retreat were a possibility.

Most of these men had come across the Alleghanies or from the settlements of Kentucky and Tennessee and Missouri into that vast virgin territory over which our now friendly

neighbors, south of the Rio Grande, then held sway. The spirit of independence lived in the air. Veterans of Concord and Lexington, or Saratoga and of Yorktown still lived; the acquisition of the Louisiana territory and the second war for Independence were events of recent history; and, be it not forgotten, the people of Mexico themselves had won their independence from Spain but fifteen years before.

Venturous spirits were willing to meet the difficulties and dangers that came with carrying the civilization of the East into the further West -- the land of unlimited promise. They were willing to comply with all the conditions required by the Mexican Government when it gave to Stephen F. Austin permission to settle colonies in Texas and to grant to each settler a tract of land.

They rebelled, however, when their civil liberties were restricted, when trial by jury and public education for their children were taken away; but they did this, I am glad to say, only after a prolonged effort on their part to have Mexico modify this decision, had failed. These efforts

included two conventions, one in 1832 and one in 1833, and another trip by Stephen Austin to the Mexican Capitol to plead the cause of the Texas colonists. I am glad also that participating in these conventions and in these pleas were Mexicans living in this territory; the first convention, indeed, appointed Rafael Manchola, a Mexican of Goliad, as a delegate to carry its petitions to Saltillo.

And so, when all else failed, the Texas Declaration of Independence, signed at Washington-on-the-Brazos, March 2, 1836, was as natural and inevitable a consequence as the earlier Declaration at Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.

Such action could mean nothing short of a resort to arms, and the Fall of the Alamo and the Massacre at Goliad soon followed. Those were discouraging days for the Texans. The Army of Independence under General Houston could not immediately engage General Santa Anna, with his superiority in numbers and equipment. Delay and retreat were necessary, and Houston's sagacity in biding his time, notwithstanding criticism and opposition in his own camp, was rewarded at last here at San Jacinto. The story of the conflict on this field

has often been told. When the day was ended victory was overwhelming — Texas had won.

The vast territory first set up as the Lone Star Republic, and later admitted to the Union as the Lone Star State, had contributed generously in its sons and in its resources to the development of our Nation in these hundred years. San Jacinto opened another gateway for the westward sweep of the American people across the plains and the mountains to the shores of the Pacific.

It is easy, therefore, to share with you the pride which you take in San Jacinto — to share with you the fine thought of dedicating this field as one of the historic shrines of America.

We as a Nation desire no further expansion. The establishment of Texas, made possible at this spot by Sam Houston's men, seems to have been justified by the natural colonization of later years. But these heroes gave us more than territory — they set an example which in itself is a glorious heritage, a just cause for State pride and national commemoration.

It is a great personal satisfaction to me to come here and it is a special pleasure to meet Mr. Andrew Jackson Houston.

What a splendid combination of names! Though you are many, many years my senior, I am proud to know that my father knew your father. I shall always remember, when I was a boy, how my father used often to tell me that, when he was a very young man, he was sent to Washington by his law office to carry papers to Senator Houston. He told me how, on arriving in Washington, he was ushered into a huge, high-ceilinged room in one of the Capitol's balconied hotels on Pennsylvania Avenue. There, propped up in a great bed, nightgown and nightcap, though it was past the noon hour, lay that splendid old man, who had been Governor of Tennessee, liberator of Texas, President of the Republic, Governor of Texas and Senator from his State. There he was, holding a levee, transacting public and private business, and preparing for the session of the Senate, which, in those days, did not commence until the late afternoon. His office and his home was his hotel room. It would seem that the manners and customs of the Senators of the United States,

like other manners and customs, have undergone a great change.

This and the eastern part of your great State, through which I came this morning, can truly be called the cradle of Texas liberty. I have been glad to revisit your beautiful city of Houston. Typical of American enterprise, you have brought the commerce of the world to your door by the ship canal through which I have recently passed.

And, too, I have seen a glimpse of the future, for I have in my office at the White House a model of the beautiful Memorial you are to erect here as an everlasting reminder of the bravery of Sam Houston and his men.

Men fought here for principles they loved more dearly than their own lives. Liberty-loving people will always do battle for principles they believe to be right. Civilization, alas, has not yet made it unnecessary for men to die in battle to sustain principle. It is, however, my hope that in this generation the United States, by its own example, can maintain and help to maintain principles by means of peace rather than by means of war.

The pioneers and the liberators of Texas, looking down on us today, would, I am certain, say Amen to that.

Fate has been kind to me today. In my many travels, a visit to the Alamo has hitherto been impossible. I, therefore, welcome the opportunity in visiting this shrine to pay my small tribute to the heroes who laid down their lives a hundred years ago, in order that Texas might become, first, an independent nation, and later a mighty State in our Union.

We are not lacking in many monuments of noble deeds, but the Alamo stands out in high relief as our noblest exemplification of sacrifice, heroic and pure.

Travis and Bowie and Crockett and Bonham, and the hundred and seventy-eight who were their comrades, by their supreme sacrifice, made Texas live.

Without the inspiration of the cry - "Remember the Alamo" - the great Southwest might never have become a part of the Nation.

Without the tradition of the Alamo, every community throughout the land, every young man and young woman about to enter upon the duties of citizenship would have lacked one of our noblest symbols of the American spirit.

I cannot help but feel that the brave men who died here saw on the distant horizon some forecast of the century beyond. I hope they know that we have not discarded or lost the virility and the ideals of the pioneer. I hope they know that the overwhelming majority of the Americans of 1936 are once more meeting new problems with new courage -- that we, too, are ready and willing to stand up and fight for truth against falsehood, for freedom of the individual against license by the few.

Unlike them, we do not need to take up arms; we are not called upon to die; we can carry on a national war for the cause of humanity without shedding blood. The heroes of the Alamo fought not solely for their individual homes or their individual communities. They knew their families and their immediate neighbors could not survive if the great Southwest fell. United action alone could win. So we, in this latter day, are thinking and acting in terms of the whole Nation, understanding deeply that our firesides, our villages, our cities and our states cannot long endure if the Nation fails.

Travis' message - "I shall never surrender" - is a good watchword for each and every one of us today.

It is with a feeling of deep reverence and humble
veneration that I place a wreath on this shrine where the blood
of a hundred and eighty-two Americans was ~~shed~~ shed ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~.
-- but not in vain.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
SAN JACINTO, TEXAS (BATTLEGROUND)
June 11, 1936

Governor Allred, Mr. Mayor, Mr. Jones and
you good people of Texas who have come here today:

I am grateful to you for the sympathy and
sincerity in your welcome to me in coming back to Texas:

There are (but) very few spots in the United States which have witnessed events equal in significance to that which took place at San Jacinto a century ago.

Here (a century ago) was a great frontier of (our) the civilization of America. On the twenty-first day of April, 1836, General Houston and the small body of less than eight hundred men under his command held in large measure in their keeping the future of our country as it is constituted today.

The patriots whose memories we are honoring (today) were victorious in just the same spirit that fired the Colonists of 1776. I like to think of General Houston sending Deaf Smith back to destroy Vince's bridge, over which he had brought his army, so that neither reinforcements nor retreat were a possibility.

Most of these men who fought in this battle had come across the Alleghanies or from the settlements of Kentucky and Tennessee and Missouri into that vast virgin territory over which our now friendly neighbors, south of

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

the Rio Grande, then held sway. And I think it is worthy of note that in front of me are six flags, six flags that flew over this ground on which we stand, the fleur-de-lis of France, the flag of Spain, the flag of Mexico, the flag of the Republic of Texas, the Stars and Bars and at last the Stars and Stripes. (Applause) The spirit of independence lived in (the) this air. Veterans of Concord and Lexington, of Saratoga and of Yorktown were still (lived) alive a century ago; the acquisition of the Louisiana territory and the second war for Independence were events of very recent history; and, be it not forgotten, the people of Mexico themselves had won their independence from Spain but fifteen years before.

Venturous spirits were willing to meet the difficulties and the dangers that came with carrying the civilization of the East into the further West. (— the land of unlimited promise) They were willing to comply with all the conditions required by the Mexican Government, (when it) when that Government gave to Stephen F. Austin permission to settle colonies in Texas and to grant to each settler a tract of land.

(They) But the settlers rebelled, however, when their civil liberties were restricted, when trial by jury and public education for their children were taken away; but they did this, I am glad to say, only after a prolonged

effort on their part to have Mexico modify this decision had failed. And those (these) efforts included the two conventions, one in 1832 and one in 1833, and another trip by Stephen Austin to the Mexican Capitol to plead the cause of the Texas colonists. (I am glad also that participating in these conventions and in these pleas were Mexicans living in this territory; the first convention, indeed, appointed Rafael Manchola, a Mexican of Goliad, as a delegate to carry its petitions to Saltillo.)

And so, when all else failed, the Texas Declaration of Independence, signed at Washington-on-the-Brazos, March 2, 1836, was as natural and inevitable a consequence as the earlier Declaration at Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.
(Applause)

Such action could mean nothing short of a resort to arms, and the Fall of the Alamo (and the Massacre at Goliad soon) followed. Yes, those were discouraging days for the Texans. The Army of Independence under General Houston could not immediately engage General Santa Anna, with his superiority (in) of numbers and equipment. Delay and retreat were necessary, (and) but Houston's sagacity in biding his time, notwithstanding criticism and opposition in his own camp, (was) were rewarded at last here at San Jacinto. The story of the conflict on this field has often been told. When the day was ended victory was so overwhelming that a new Texas had won.

The vast territory first set up as the Lone Star (Republic) State, and later admitted to the Union as the Lone Star, first a republic and then a state, that territory had contributed generously in its sons and in its resources to the development of (our) the Nation (in) all through these hundred years. San Jacinto opened another gateway for the westward sweep of the American people across the plains and the mountains to the shores of the Pacific.

It is easy, therefore, to share with you the pride which you take in San Jacinto -- to share with you the fine thought of dedicating this field as one of the historic shrines of America.

You will agree with me that we as a Nation desire no further expansion. The establishment of Texas, made possible at this spot by Sam Houston's men, seems to have been justified by the natural colonization of (later) the succeeding years. But (these) those heroes gave us more than territory -- they set an example which in itself is a glorious heritage, a just cause for State and national commemoration.

(It is) It has been a great personal satisfaction to me to come here and it is a special pleasure to me to meet (Mr.) Colonel Andrew Jackson Houston. (Applause)

What a (splendid) magnificent combination of names that is! (Though) Although, Colonel Houston, you are

many, many years my senior, yet I am proud to know that my father knew your father. I shall always remember, when I was a small boy, how my father used often to tell me that, when he was a very young man, he was sent to Washington by his law office to carry papers to Senator Houston of Texas. (He) And my father told me how, on arriving in Washington, he was ushered into a huge, high-ceilinged room in one of (the Capitol's) those old balconied hotels on Pennsylvania Avenue. There, in this great room, propped up in a great bed, nightgown and nightcap, even though it was past the noon hour, lay that splendid old man, that gentleman who had been Governor of Tennessee, liberator of Texas, President of the Republic, Governor of his state of Texas and Senator from his State. There he was, holding a levee, transacting public and private business, and preparing for the session of the Senate, which, in those days, did not (commence) begin until (the) late in the afternoon. His office and his home (was) were in his hotel room. My friends, it would seem that the manners and customs of the Senators of the United States, like other manners and customs, have undergone a great change. And my good friend, Morris Sheppard, agrees to that. (Laughter and applause)

This and the eastern part of your great State, through which I came this morning, can truly be called the cradle of Texas liberty. I have been glad to revisit

your beautiful city of Houston. Typical of American enterprise, you have brought the commerce of the world to your door by the ship canal through which I have recently passed.

And, too, I have seen a glimpse of the future, for I have in my office at the White House a model that Jesse Jones gave me, a model of the beautiful memorial that you are to erect here as an everlasting reminder of the bravery of Sam Houston and his men. (Applause)

Men fought here for principles they loved more dearly than their own lives. Liberty-loving people will always do battle for principles that they believe to be right. Civilization, alas, has not yet made it unnecessary for men to die in battle to sustain principle. It is, however, my hope that in this generation the United States, by its own example, can maintain and help to maintain principles by means of peace rather than by means of war. (Applause)

The pioneers, the pioneers of Texas and the liberators of Texas, I think, looking down on us today, I am certain would say Amen to (that) the thought that we can win by peace and eliminate the necessity of war. (Prolonged applause)

OK
San Jacinto Speech
July 11, 1856

There are ~~but~~ few spots in the United States which have witnessed events equal in significance to that which took place ~~now~~ at San Jacinto.

Here a century ago was a great frontier of our civilization. On the twenty-first day of April, 1836, General Houston and the small body of less than eight hundred men under his command held in large measure in their keeping the future of our country as it is constituted today.

The patriots whose memories we are honoring today were victorious in the same spirit that fired the Colonists of 1776. I like to think of General Houston sending Deaf Smith back to destroy Vince's bridge over which he had brought his army so that neither reinforcements nor retreat were a possibility.

Most of these men had come across the Alleghanies or from the settlements of Kentucky and Tennessee and Missouri into that vast virgin territory over which our now friendly

neighbors, south of the Rio Grande, then held sway. The spirit of independence lived in the air. Veterans of Concord and Lexington, of Saratoga and of Yorktown still live; the acquisition of the Louisiana territory and the second war for Independence were events of recent history; and, be it not forgotten, the people of Mexico themselves had won their independence from Spain but fifteen years before.

Venturous spirits were willing to meet the difficulties and dangers that came with carrying the civilization of the East into the further West - the land of unlimited promise. They were willing to comply with all the conditions required by the Mexican Government when it gave to Stephen F. Austin permission to settle colonies in Texas and to grant to each settler a tract of land.

They rebelled, however, when their civil liberties were restricted, when trial by jury and public education for their children were taken away; but they did this, I am glad to say, only after a prolonged effort on their part to have Mexico modify this decision, had failed. These efforts included two conventions, one in 1832 and one in 1833, and another trip by Stephen Austin to the Mexican Capitol to plead the cause of the Texas colonists. I am glad also that participating in these conventions and in these pleas were Mexicans living in this territory; the first convention, indeed, appointed Raphael

Manchola, a Mexican of Goliad, as a delegate to carry its petitions to Saltillo.

And so, when all else failed, the Texas Declaration of Independence signed at Washington-on-the-Brasos, on March 2, 1836, was as natural and inevitable a consequence as the earlier Declaration at Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.

Such action could mean nothing short of a resort to arms, and the fall of the Alamo and the Massacre at Goliad, soon followed. Those were discouraging days for the Texans. The Army of Independence under General Houston could not immediately engage General Santa Anna with his superiority in numbers and equipment. Delay and retreat were necessary, and Houston's sagacity in biding his time, notwithstanding criticism and opposition in his own camp, was rewarded at last here at San Jacinto. The story of the conflict on this field has often been told. When the day was ended victory was overwhelming -- Texas had won.

The vast territory first set up as the Lone Star Republic and later admitted to the Union as the Lone Star State, had contributed generously in its sons and in its resources to the development of our Nation in these hundred years. San Jacinto opened another gateway for the westward sweep of the American people across the plains and the mountains to the shores of the Pacific.

It is easy, therefore, to share with you the pride which you take in San Jacinto -- to share with you the fine thought of dedicating this field as one of the historic shrines of America.

We as a Nation desire no further expansion. The establishment of Texas, made possible at this spot by Sam Houston's men, seems to have been justified by the natural colonization of later years. But these heroes gave us more than territory -- they set an example which in itself is a glorious heritage, a just cause for State and National commemoration.

It is a great personal satisfaction to me to come here and it is a special pleasure to meet Mr. Andrew Jackson Houston.

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SAN JACINTO SPEECH

JUNE 11, 1936.

X file

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Such action could mean nothing short of a resort to arms, and the Fall of the Alamo and the Massacre at Goliad soon followed. Those were discouraging days for the Texans. The Army of Independence under General Houston could not immediately engage General Santa Anna, with his superiority in numbers and equipment. Delay and retreat were necessary, and Houston's sagacity in biding his time, notwithstanding criticism and opposition in his own camp, was rewarded at last here at San Jacinto. The story of the conflict on this field

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San Jacinto speech. STATEMENTS FILE
Shorthand By Kanner

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CONFIDENTIAL

June 11, 1936

CAUTION: The following address of the President must be held in confidence until released. Release only when delivery actually has commenced.

STEPHEN EARLY
Assistant Secretary to the President.

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Aug. 4th