

Questions from Students: Texas Annexation

The Alamo frequently receives questions from students working on school projects. These questions come to us from students at Fox Tech High School in 2010. They were researching the topic of Texas Annexation for that year's National History Day. The answers were provided by Dr. Winders, Curator & Historian for the Alamo.

1. What does the annexation of Texas have to with debate & diplomacy?

The debate & diplomacy (or at least discussion) existed at different level. There was the diplomatic discussion between the US and Mexico, the US and Texas, and Texas and Mexico. The US first became diplomatically involved with Mexico over Texas prior to Jackson's administration. However, it escalated once Jackson became president. The internal debate over Texas' annexation involved several issues: (1) Would annexation cause a war between the US and Mexico and (2) What would be the effect of bringing another slave state into the Union have on the nation? Between Texas and Mexico, the issue was Mexico's contention that Texas was not an independent republic but instead a rebellious state.

The attempt to acquire Texas by diplomatic means (purchase, treaty, etc.) was driven by the desire to avoid war with Mexico.

2. What was the debate of annexation of Texas? And did diplomacy work because we went to war with México?

See the above answer. Although diplomacy postponed the war, it ultimately failed. It failed because the United States grew weary with negotiation that didn't produce what Polk's administration wanted. It failed because no Mexican administration could survive if it appeared ready to appease the United States. Thus, both countries had run out of room for compromises and were left with war as their only option.

3. Who was for it and who was opposed for it?

Most Texans were for annexation because they saw it as the best way to bring security and prosperity to the region.

The anti-slavery faction in the US (Liberty Party, Whigs, & Democrats) opposed annexation because they were opposed to the creation of another slave state.

Northern commercial interests supported annexation because they viewed it as a way to advance their economic interests.

Many Westerners (Ind., Ohio, Ill., etc.) supported annexation because they supported westward expansion.

Southerners supported annexation because they viewed Texas as another southern state.

Mexico opposed annexation because they viewed Texas as a rebellious Mexican state and feared the loss of Texas would lead to the loss of even more territory.

4. Your opinion on why the annexation was important, and why people would be opposed to the annexation.

Annexation was important to the US because the addition of Texas to the Union would dramatically upset the balance between free states-slave states in Congress. Texas was so big that there was talk of even breaking it up into several small states, which would add even more slave state Senators and Representatives. The South believed it was losing political power and Texas would help to restore its place on the national political stage. Increasingly, many in the North and West viewed the South as a backward region of the country and were glad that other regions were gaining prominence and positions of leadership.

There were some people in the US who saw annexation as the proverbial forbidden fruit. Once obtained, they contended that the republic envisioned by the nation's founders would change forever into something else. One concern was that the size of the country would mean that it couldn't be governed as a republic. Another concern was that the truce put in place by the Missouri Compromise would be voided, an act that would lead to a civil war between the North and the South.