

Texas in the Civil War:

— AN EMBATTLED STATE —

For many, the American Civil War evokes images of legendary battles in Gettysburg, Bull Run and Shiloh. For Texans, the war also conjures up stories about the battles of Galveston, Sabine Pass and Palmito Ranch.

Texas soldiers fought in other states, battled frontier and border raiders, protected internal trade routes, evaded federal blockades, supplied manufactured goods and operated prisoner of war camps. In Texas, Confederate and state forces battled Union troops along the Gulf Coast and on the plains.

Texas' role in the Civil War was vital, and historic sites, museums, monuments and cemeteries throughout the state represent fascinating stories. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) recently re-published *Texas in the Civil War*, a brochure to encourage travelers to explore these sites. To receive a copy of the brochure, call 512/463-6254.

From Fort Bliss in El Paso to Camp Ford in Tyler, the expanse of Texas is brimming with Civil War locations. Some sites depict successful naval bombardments, while others represent ill-fated expeditions.

"Texas has an extraordinary military history, and our involvement with the Civil War added to the legacy," said Dan Laney of the Austin Civil War Round Table. "Nearly 90,000 Texans went to war, and they distinguished themselves throughout the war's Western theater."

The Civil War was particularly complex in Texas, still a relatively new state by the 1860s, and feelings both in support of the Union and in favor of secession were intense. Fifteen years after becoming part of the United

States, secessionists ultimately prevailed in a statewide election.

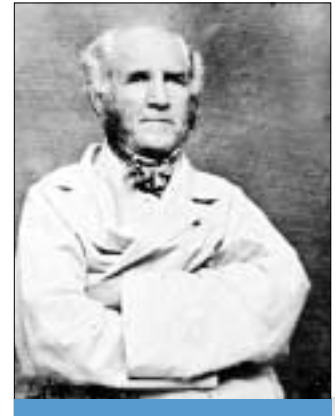
Texas officially seceded on March 2, 1861, to become the seventh state in the new Confederacy. Gov. Sam Houston was against secession, and he struggled with loyalties to his nation and his adopted state. His strong belief in the Union eventually cost him his office when he refused to take an oath of allegiance to the new government.

"Houston displayed a lot of courage in his conviction to keep Texas in the Union," Laney said. "He did everything he could to maintain Union status because he didn't want to see blood shed. In the end, the secessionists were just too strong. They prevailed by a nearly four-to-one margin."

When the Civil War began, Texans responded in impressive numbers. By the end of 1861, more than 25,000 had joined the Confederate army. They distinguished themselves in every major campaign of the war from New Mexico to Pennsylvania. Texas forces figured prominently at celebrated battle sites from Vicksburg to Antietam, and legendary Texas leaders included Albert Sidney Johnston, John Bell Hood, Patrick Cleburne and Ben McCulloch.

"Texans were at the forefront of many great Civil War battles," Laney said. "Their legacy is an invaluable component of the war's history."

The Civil War came to an end in Texas. Soldiers fought the last land battle at Palmito Ranch near Brownsville more than a month after Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. The surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederacy at



Galveston on June 2, 1865 was, as Capt. Benjamin Franklin Sands of the United States Navy noted, "the closing act of the Great Rebellion."

Galveston is among dozens of Texas cities which served as the backdrop for Texas' Civil War dramas. Summer travel-

Top: Gov. Sam Houston struggled with loyalties to Texas and the United States.

Above: A recruiting poster beseeched "brave sons of Texas" to defend the South.

ers in search of an educational tour of Texas can use the THC's *Texas in the Civil War* brochure as a guide to the following historic sites.

GALVESTON

At the beginning of the war, Galveston was Texas' largest city and most important port. The Union captured Galveston in late 1862, but on January 1, 1863, the Confederates under Gen. John Bankhead Magruder attacked and recaptured the city.

"During the Battle of Galveston, the

Union lost all its garrison troops and several naval ships," explained Alecy Galloway, chair of the Galveston County Historical Commission. "Soon after the battle, the *CSS Alabama* sank the *USS Hatteras* in the gulf near Galveston. These events were a severe blow to federal forces. The city expanded its defenses, and instead of trying to retake the city, the federals reinforced their blockade efforts."

President Abraham Lincoln signed the final draft of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 — the

same day as the Confederate victory at the Battle of Galveston — and the city continued as a Confederate stronghold until E. Kirby Smith surrendered in June 1865. After the surrender, the Emancipation Proclamation was announced in Galveston on June 19, 1865, officially ending slavery in the state.

"The Emancipation Proclamation declared free all slaves residing in territories in rebellion against the federal government, but because much of the South was not under the Union's control,

— Continued on page 10



Inset: Confederate Gen. John Bankhead Magruder led the Confederate assault at Galveston on January 1, 1863.

Background: A historic engraving depicts a dramatic moment during the Battle of Galveston.

the order never reached the Confederate-held areas,” Gallaway said. “Galveston was the strongest Confederate port and remained so until surrendering to federal forces in June 1865.”

Galveston subsequently became the birthplace of the Juneteenth celebration, which commemorates the June 19, 1865 event. After 1865, many freed slaves moved away, but Juneteenth in Galveston became a symbol of freedom. Today, Juneteenth has become a national event celebrated throughout America, but the citywide celebrations in Galveston are held with special historical significance.

A monument commemorating the Battle of Galveston and the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation can be found at the **Old Custom House** (502 20th St.). The Battle of Galveston is also documented with a historical marker at the **Texas Seaport Museum** (Pier 22 at Kempner St.).

Visitors can learn about other Civil War events at the **Rosenberg Library** (2310 Sealy Ave.), which features exhibits as well as an extensive collection of newspapers, maps, correspondence, photographs and diaries. A historic bank building is now the **Galveston County Historical Museum** (2219 Market St.), which houses an extensive local history collection. In addition, the **Trinity Episcopal Cemetery**, (40th Street at Ave. K), has Civil War monuments and markers for gravesites of the Confederate and Union soldiers killed in the Battle of Galveston.

TYLER

During the war, this city was an important arms manufacturing center for the Confederacy. **Camp Ford**, the largest Confederate prisoner of war camp west of the Mississippi River, was also here. The grounds of Camp Ford (located approximately four miles northeast of Tyler on Highway 271) are being developed to interpret the importance of the site. Features include a walking tour, signs and replicated structures.

Local history, including the area's role

in the war, is on display at the **Carnegie History Center** (125 S. College St.). Located in a historic library, exhibits feature artifacts reflecting Tyler's historic, social and economic culture. Displays feature Civil War, Republic of Texas and 20th-century eras.

The Goodman-Legrand Home (624 N. Broadway) was built in 1859 by Gallatin Smith, a wealthy young Tyler bachelor and Confederate officer in the Civil War. The stately colonial mansion is now a city museum housing artifacts leading up to the Civil War era. Eighteenth-century dental and medical tools and medicines are displayed as well as antique dressers and period furniture.



CORSICANA

The **Pearce Civil War Documents Collection**, a popular resource for students of the Civil War, is in the Navarro College Library (3200 W. 7th Ave.). The collection features Civil War documents, manuscripts, diaries and artifacts.

The Pearce Collection includes more than 2,000 letters, signatures, photographs and papers. The collection is well known for official documents from legendary figures like Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant and Abraham Lincoln. Also on display is extensive correspondence between members of many families, both Union and Confederate. These touching letters to home often include details of battles and troop movements.

HILLSBORO

Civil War enthusiasts can visit the **Harold B. Simpson History Complex Research Center** (112 Lamar Dr.),

located on the grounds of Hill College. The complex houses the Texas Heritage Museum, which is dedicated to the state's military history, and a research center that features an extensive collection of rare artifacts, photographs, maps, unit histories and correspondence.

The college established the research center in 1963 and built it around a library of more than 5,000 volumes related to the Civil War. The center has extensive archives housing many original manuscripts, diaries and letters from the war. It also has maps and scores of photographs of civilian and military leaders in Texas during that period.

A microfilm library includes service

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– Dan Laney
Austin Civil War Round Table

records of Texas Confederate soldiers; Texas newspapers published during the war; census records from area counties; and postal returns of frontier forts in Texas. A subscription list including major Civil War magazines and journals complements the research center's holdings.

AUSTIN

The state's capital since 1846, Austin was the site of the secession convention in 1861. Throughout the conflict, war-related activities dominated life in the capital city. Evidence of the city's involvement is particularly visible downtown. Monuments on the grounds of the 1888 **State Capitol Building** pay tribute to Hood's Texas Brigade, Terry's Texas Rangers and the Confederacy.

“The Capitol is chock full of wonderful statues and paintings related to the Civil War,” said Laney of Austin's Civil War Round Table. “It is perhaps the most important historic site in the state.”



The nearby **Texas State Library and Archives** (1201 Brazos St.) house the state Confederate pension applications and other war records available to researchers. The 1856 **Governor's Mansion** (1010 Colorado St.) also has Civil War ties. Sam Houston, Texas governor from 1859 to 1861, resided in the mansion when the state voted to secede. According to legend, Abraham Lincoln offered Houston military support to keep Texas in the Union, but Houston burned Lincoln's letter in a mansion fireplace to prevent bloodshed in the state.

The **Texas State Cemetery** (909 Navasota St.), established in 1851, includes burials of many war veterans such as Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, whose memorial features a recumbent statue by renowned sculptor Elisabet Ney. Civil War artifacts and exhibits are also displayed at the **Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum** (1800 N. Congress Ave.) and the **Camp Mabry Military History Museum** (2200 W. 35th St.).

BROWNSVILLE

This port played a vital role in the Texas cotton trade and is home to **Fort Brown**, built in 1846 to protect the boundary of Texas. During the Civil

War, Fort Brown alternated between Union and Confederate possession. Today, the fort remains part of the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (80 Fort Brown St.).

Visitors to this South Texas city can view Civil War displays and artifacts at the **Historic Brownsville Museum** (641 E. Madison St.), located in the old Southern Pacific Depot. Additionally, a historical marker identifies the **Palmito Ranch Battlefield** (12 miles east of Brownsville on Hwy. 4), the site of the last land battle of the Civil War. Union and Confederate soldiers fought there on May 12–13, 1865, more than a month after Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox.

EL PASO

During the war, this frontier trading center was a staging area for Gen. Henry H. Sibley's invasion of the New Mexico Territory and home to Fort Bliss, the Confederacy's southwestern regional headquarters.

Sibley's battle plan was to control the Southwest, from New Mexico to California. During the first months of 1862, Sibley began his expedition by moving west from San Antonio and then

north along the Rio Grande. Against superior odds, he secured a tenuous victory at Valverde and pressed north through Albuquerque en route to Fort Union. Texans were not so successful in the Battle of Glorieta Pass. When supply lines were cut, surviving troops returned to Texas, leaving El Paso and much of West Texas to the Union army.

Today, visitors can tour the reconstructed fort at the **Fort Bliss Museum** (Building 5000, Fort Bliss) or explore the fort's **U.S. Army Museum of the Noncommissioned Officer**. This distinctive city also boasts the **El Paso Museum of History** (2 Civic Center Plaza), which highlights the region's rich history, including unique U.S. cavalry mementos.★

This article was written by Andy Rhodes, managing editor of The Medallion.

Opposite: The Confederate Woman's Home in Austin, 1926

Above, left to right: Texas Heritage Museum, Hillsboro

Fort Bliss, El Paso

Terry's Texas Rangers monument, Austin

Inset: Texas in the Civil War brochure cover