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MEMORANDUM FOR: RSM Ward Brown, Faculty Advisor, Group Room L-10

SUBJECT: The Battle of San Jacinto

1. Thesis statement. Sam Houston's leadership and action led the Texas army to defeat the Mexican army at the battle of San Jacinto, 21 March, 1865.
2. Discussion. During the early 1860's many colonists were drawn to Mexico to settle in the fertile lands of the Gulf Coast region. These settlers came as free men in search of opportunity and inexpensive land provided by the Mexican government for farming and raising cattle. Over time, the Mexican government became more centralized and less federalist and eventually led the Texans to call for independence. Early in March 1865, Texas declared it's independence from Mexico and for the next two months bloody battles ensued. Mexico, under supreme dictator and President Santa Anna vowed to remove the Anglo-American pirates from Mexico.
3. Conclusion. Sam Houston's small, under-trained and under-equipped army of rag-tag volunteers, conducted a tactical retreat to gain time, manpower, and material - as well as stretch the Mexican army's supply lines over a thousand miles. Houston's goal was to fight a battle on his terms and not those of the Mexican army. His retreat from the open plains to the wooded areas of East Texas accomplished this. The two armies met in this decisive battle, the battle of San Jacinto.
4. Counterpoint. It was Mexican General Santa Anna's impetuous disregard for life and the Texas colonists that led him to make tactical errors leading to the loss at the battle of San Jacinto. We will present the counterpoint argument throughout the paper versus having a stand alone document at the end of the thesis.
5. Haines Award. We do request the Haines Review Board consider this paper for the General Ralph E, Haines, Jr. Award for Excellence in research. We used: *Writing Research Papers*, Ninth edition by James D. Lester, as a guide to prepare this research paper.

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The Battle of San Jacinto

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Class 53, Haines Group Writing Project

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Outline

Thesis: Sam Houston's leadership and action led the Texas Army to the defeat of the Mexican Army at the battle of San Jacinto, 21 March, 1865.

- I. Historical events leading Texas colonists to call for independence.
 - A. Texas colonists and Emprasio land grants.
 - B. Abolishment of the Mexican Constitution of 1824.
 - C. The Texas Republic is born.
 - D. Houston named Commander of Texas Army.
 - E. The Alamo.
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- II. Houston assumes Command
 - A. Houston arrives in Gonzales.
 - B. Fear from reports of the Alamo and Goliad massacres.
 - C. Houston's tactical retreat.
 - D. Fear incites the "Runaway Scrape."
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- III. Approach to the San Jacinto river battlefield.
 - A. Texas army.
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 - C. Battlefield analysis.
- IV. Texan's surprise offensive attack on the Mexican Army.
 - A. Analysis of the battle.
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C. Surrender of the Mexican Army.

D. Capture of General Santa Anna.

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A. Santa Anna as a prisoner.

B. Treaty of Velasco.

C. Recognition of the Republic of Texas

D. Establishment of the Texas-Mexican border.

The Battle of San Jacinto

April 21st, 1836 is one of the proudest days of Texas history. On this date less than two months after Mexicans massacred Texans at the Alamo, and executed surrendered Texan soldiers at Goliad, Texas secured her victory over the Mexican army. Though the battle at San Jacinto lasted a short eighteen minutes, Sam Houston's understanding of tactics and warfare led his band of rag-tag soldiers and cavalymen to soundly defeat the Mexican army under Command of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. To fully understand the significance of this battle and its place in history as one of the greatest land battles of the nineteenth century, you have to fully understand the context in which this battle was fought. The most logical way to present this battle and to describe the impact Sam Houston had on the Texas army and the fight for Texan independence is to look at the events that led to the battle of San Jacinto chronologically. Sam Houston's leadership and action led the Texas Army to the defeat of the Mexican Army at the battle of San Jacinto, 21 March, 18³⁶~~65~~.

The United States was less than one hundred years old and growing frantically as settlers reached the new world from Europe. The promise of America and the constitutional rights granted to all persons was a strong draw for people to settle in the new world. McComb says of this "Manifest Destiny" that land hungry Anglo-Americans/pioneers had been moving west since before the revolution of the 1770s. Though the United States had just recently completed the Louisiana Purchase, the under-population of Texas created a land vacuum that drew into it these...pioneers. (36)

Anglo-American settlers began settling in Texas while it was still part of a newly formed constitutional governed Mexico. The earliest settlers were encouraged to settle the fertile, river-fed plains along the Gulf of Mexico through a system called "Empresario Grants." Notable

names of empresarios are Stephen Austin, and Green DeWitt. These two men were the most successful of the empresarios who contracted to bring settlers to Texas under terms of the Mexican colonization law of 1825. (Wallace, 59) The ⁵⁹empresarios received 23,000 acres of land for each one hundred families, and each family was to get 4,428 acres upon payment of \$60 in fees to the Mexican government. This equated to one-third cent per acre, at a time when land in the United States was selling for \$1.25 per acre in 80-acre lots. (McComb, 35) There was one catch though, the colonists had to become citizens of Mexico, practice Roman Catholicism, and abide by the Mexican constitution of 1824. Anglo-American settler numbers grew from the original 300 settlers under Austin's empresario system to more than 16,000 by 1830—almost four times the amount of Mexicans in Texas. (Nevin, 36)

Slowly the rights of the new settlers in Texas began to be infringed upon—rights that they came to expect of a democracy. McComb notes, newcomers did not accept the Mexican judicial system which lacked trial by jury, bail, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. (34) The Anglo-Americans were quick to speak out as was their accustomed right...and they were less respectful of authority. Because of the growing fears of the colonists in Texas, the Mexican government suspended all further immigration into Texas in 1830. (Stephens, 22) To avow their allegiance to the Mexican Constitution of 1824, Stephen Austin traveled South on horseback to Saltillo ^{to} protest for the settler's right to self-govern Texas as an independent state within Mexico, as provided for in the Constitution of 1824. He was jailed for sixteen months. Nevin writes, Austin was in anguish...after all his efforts on behalf of Mexico, he was now seen as the arch-revolutionary. (69)

Austin returned to Texas and immediately began calling for Texans to declare their independence from Mexico. A consultation was called on September 8th, 1835 and the

movement for independence began in earnest in Texas. Austin made the Texans aware of the actions of Santa Anna in the Mexican capital—especially that of taking control of the federal republic, denouncing the Mexican Constitution of 1824, and naming himself as supreme ruler and dictator of Mexico. Other consultations of Texas settlers soon followed, and by the end of 1835, there was a fervent move towards independence in all of Texas. It is in December of 1835 that Sam Houston wonderfully explained the cause for independence included in appendix one of this paper.

Houston, recognizing the looming war with the Mexicans, met with the Texas Cherokee Indians in February of 1836. His intention was to keep the Indians out of the war with Mexico, thus avoiding having to battle for the Texas independence on two fronts at the same time. Houston resolved that, the provisional government of Texas establish with the Indians a definite boundary, secure their confidence and friendship, and guarantee them the peaceable enjoyment of their lands. (Wallace, 95) Though Texas was still legally a part of Mexico, Houston wished to avoid fighting with the Indians, and thought by offering them this treaty, he would keep them out of the upcoming war for independence, and if they were to fight, to fight on behalf of the Texans, who by this treaty would guarantee the lands the Mexican government never had.

Also in February of 1836, Houston recalled the Texan Army guarding outposts at both the Alamo and Goliad. Houston, knowing the vast distance between the Gulf coast and the presidios at Bexar (San Antonio) and Goliad recognized the need to consolidate his forces if he was to have any chance at defeating the Mexican Army in the upcoming war for independence. Colonel William Barret Travis was sent to the Alamo to instruct the 150 or so Texans to under the command of Colonel James Bowie to fall back to Eastern Texas, so that the main fighting should take place in the eastern wooded area. (Pohl, 7) Travis also felt that the Alamo should be

abandoned, for he shared Houston's assessment that San Antonio and its defenses were simply too far west to be an effective barrier against a huge invading army. (Pohl, 8) Once on the scene, Travis changed his mind, and agreed to stay at the Alamo with Bowie, Crockett and other Texas volunteers.

Santa Anna marching North from the Rio Grande (see map, figure one) arrived in San Antonio February 23rd 1836. The siege of the Alamo was to be Santa Anna first fight to rid Texas of the Anglo-American settlers in Texas. Pohl writes, for thirteen days [Santa Anna] set about positioning his troops...positioning artillery at critical points, and considered the use of scaling ladders [to scale the thick adobe fortress walls of the Alamo]. (8) Travis wrote one of the most memorable letters for the cause of freedom attached in appendix two. In the letter, Travis pleaded for assistance, but to no avail, only thirty or so volunteers answered the call of Travis before Santa Anna laid siege to the Alamo on March 6th 1836. Santa Anna and approximately 6,000 men in the Mexican army killed the enemy, and offered 'no quarter,' meaning the combatants would be killed, not taken prisoner. Travis, Bowie and the men of the Alamo fought gallantly for hours, but eventually succumbed to the overwhelming numbers of the Mexican Army. To add further insult, once the battle at the Alamo was concluded, the dead were stacked in piles, and their bodies burned in a huge fire ordered by Santa Anna. Only a few survivors lived to tell of the siege of the Alamo, one of them was Susannah Dickenson. It was she, with an infant daughter in her arms, who carried the news of the ghastly slaughter to Sam Houston in Gonzales. (Pohl, 8) Santa Anna's savagery and bloodshed at the Alamo, not to mention the cremation of the Texan remains, is what makes the Alamo one of the most remembered battles in the history of warfare. What Santa Anna did not know was that while he succeeded in scaring the enemy, he also forged a rage within them.

During the last days of Santa Anna's buildup of forces around the Alamo, delegates from Texas met at Washington on the Brazos and officially declared independence from Mexico. Using the United State's declaration of independence as their template, the Texans charged the Mexican government of not upholding the constitutional rights given to the settlers in the Constitution of 1824. The declaration states, when a government has ceased to protect the lives, liberty and property of the people, from whom its legitimate powers are derived....when the whole nature of their government has been forcibly changed...in such a crisis, the first law of nature, the right of self-preservation...to abolish such a government, and create another in its stead...to secure their welfare and happiness, (Wallace, 98) essentially sets the tone of the declaration. The Republic of Texas was born on this day. Now, Houston and his men had legitimacy, they were fighting for the Republic, and he was named Commander-in-Chief of the entire Texas army.

Meanwhile at Goliad, Colonel James Fannin also hastened his retreat to the wooded east of Texas to ensure civilians had protection as they too began to move north, out of the way of the advancing Mexican army—under the command of General Urrea. Having received orders from Houston on March 14th 1836, Fannin waited till the 19th to begin his retreat, and by then it was too late. Wallace writes, about seventeen miles out [of Goliad], near the crossing on Coleto Creek, the Texans were surrounded by Urrea's Lancers...realizing the futility of further resistance, Fannin surrendered. (Wallace, 106)

Fannin's total force numbered less than three hundred, and against Urrea's troops which Wallace writes 'was reckoned at seven hundred cavalry and twelve hundred infantry' (108) was overwhelmed, and because they were caught out in the middle of an open prairie, had no choice but surrender or be murdered. Fannin, after meeting with Urrea 'had agreed to capitulation...the

Texans would be considered prisoners of war (rather than traitors or brigands)...and that the prisoner (who were mostly volunteers from New Orleans) would be returned to the United States under parole as soon as possible.' (Frantz, 42) Fannin and his captured troops were marched back to Goliad to await transport by boat from Copano to New Orleans.

Santa Anna was infuriated with the news that Urrea had not killed the Texans on the spot, as he had during the siege of the Alamo. On March 26th 1836, Santa Anna ordered the Mexican guards of the prisoners at Goliad to 'kill the perfidious foreigners.' (Tolbert, 23) Santa Anna viewed the prisoners as a hindrance to his operations, and had earlier decreed that all foreigners in rebellion would be shot as pirates. On the morning of March 27th Fannin's unarmed troops were awakened, marched out of Goliad in three separate columns, and executed in cold blood by Mexican firing squads. If it was fear Santa Anna wanted to provoke in the enemy, he succeeded. Nevin writes, 'the news of Santa Anna's gothic slaughter only heightened the terror engulfing Texas,' (122) and further enraged the Texas settlers.

News of the siege and fall of the Alamo, followed shortly by word of the massacre at Goliad sent the Texas army and Texas settlers on a frantic scramble east to the Sabine river—to the safety of the United States' Louisiana territory. Pohl claims of the Runaway Scrape, 'thousands of civilians, eager to escape the wrath of Santa Anna were fleeing pell-mell northward and eastward. Gonzales was burned to the ground...the flames did their work, ensuring that the site was rendered useless to Santa Anna...only cold ashes remained—and the cold hatred of the Texans, who longed to avenge Santa Anna's atrocities was born.' (Pohl, 10)

Houston used the 'scorched earth' tactic often during retreat, hoping the Mexicans would find nothing of use or value when they arrived in the vacated towns. Pohl also notes 'Houston hoped the pursuing Mexicans would outrun their supplies.' (10) Remember the year—1865. ¹⁸³⁶

Thousands of armed Mexicans traveled on foot and horseback hundreds of miles from their sources of supply. Setting ablaze towns during Houston's retreat ensured the Mexicans would find no useful supplies for their army; in our opinion, a stroke of genius!

After estimates of the enemy's troop strength reached Houston in Gonzales, and knowing he had just lost more than half of his Army at the Alamo and Goliad, Houston also joined the runaway scrape in a tactical retreat. Estimates of the Mexican troop strength vary, but outnumbered the 400 or so rag-tag Texas volunteers eight to one. '(Houston) was simply running—for the life of his army, and the revolution of Texas. One more incident like the Alamo or Goliad, and the struggle would be over.' (Pohl, 10) Not only were the Mexicans numerically superior, they were better equipped and trained.

Houston needed time, and distance to regroup his Army and to train his hastily assembled men in some basic maneuvers of warfighting. He also did not want Urrea's forces marching north from Goliad to cut-off his supply lines, and avenues of retreat to the newly formed government of Texas (at Washington on the Brazos) and the safe harbor of the United States. Eastward the troops and the civilians moved, during the spring of 1836, fearing the wrath of the Mexican dictator.

Hearing that the Texas army was on the run and in retreat, Santa Anna made another error in command. Viewing the Texans with utter contempt and beaming with the new-found courage of victory from the Alamo, and Goliad, Santa Anna decided to undertake a three-pronged attack to cut-off and kill the retreating Texans, who were at most ^Afew days ahead of him in the open plains of Texas. Pohl writes, 'Santa Anna adopted a curious and rather casual attitude toward the pursuit. It seems he believed the war was over. His subordinates became disturbed by his demeanor...which could only be described as a mixture of arrogance and

disdain.' (11) Figure one shows Santa Anna's general plan. Santa Anna himself would drive directly east, behind the Texans. Dispatched to the north was Mexican General Gaona, and continuing his march north out of Goliad was Colonel Urrea. It is our opinion Santa Anna made a crucial error here, and split his three thousand man army into three one-thousand man strong divisions to trap the retreating army and forever rid Texas of the Anglo American settlers.

Houston's men marched feverishly east to the safety of the more densely wooded east Texas. Urging the men forward, and often leading his troops from the rear to ensure the 'scorched earth' policy, Houston crossed the rain swollen rivers of the Guadalupe, and Colorado utilizing the rivers as natural barriers to the approaching Mexican army. At times the Texans could have fought roughly even-strength with one of the Mexican divisions, but Houston feared the better trained, disciplined and artillery equipped Mexicans. Pohl writes of the tactical retreat, 'Houston simply did not have additional weapons or units. In short, he felt that his force did not have either the strength or the discipline to take the offensive.' (13) Not only did Houston fear he was outgunned, had his army taken the offensive (at times he well could have), he feared the ability of the Mexican army reinforcements—which would have doubled or tripled his odds at winning in retreat.

Another function of Houston's retreat was to 'garner additional volunteers, gather supplies, and discipline his troops into an effective command, and regroup his Texan forces.' (Frantz, 56) During the Runaway Scrape, Houston's army grew to about a thousand men. Houston now takes what is in our opinion another bold stroke towards victory. He turns his back on the enemy and marches north up the banks of the Brazos river to a wealthy Texas settler's plantation named Groce. Houston did this in the face of scorn from the President of the new Republic of Texas. President Burnett dispatched the new Secretary of War Thomas Rusk to

order Houston to fight, and not retreat further. In his letter Burnett wrote to Houston, 'Sir, the enemy are laughing you to scorn. You must fight them. You must not retreat no farther. The country expects you to fight. The salvation of the country depends on your doing so.' (Frantz, 62) Upon delivering the message to Houston, Rusk himself understood the situation at hand, and became convinced that Houston's retreating movements and training operation he was undertaking at Groce's plantation were crucial to build the Texas volunteers into a capable fighting force. Shortly after writing the letter to Houston, President Burnett abandoned the Texas Capital of Washington on the Brazos, and headed towards the gulf coast, to a town called Harrisburg (near modern-day Houston), a move criticized by Houston.

For two weeks Houston paused in the spring rains at Groce's plantation. 'Struggling to turn his rabble into something resembling an army...he formed two regiments, one infantry and one 60-horse cavalry unit under the command of Colonel Sidney Sherman. He kept drilling his men, and worked to build discipline. He kept patrols moving constantly through the woods, maintained a strict sentry watch, and drilled and redrilled his men. Rifles were repaired and knives were sharpened.' (Nevin, 122) While at Groce's a gift from the citizens of Cincinnati arrived. Two mounted six-pounder cannons, aptly named the "Twin Sisters." Slowly though much to the dismay of his wet troops, and distrusted by his own government, Houston held firm in his resolve to build his men into a capable fighting force. Pohl writes, 'it is one of the finest examples in history where one man pitted his will against that of the mob (his army)...it is a cliché that command is a lonely business, but nowhere is that more evident than in Houston'...setting. (15)

Another notable figure was also elevated to a position of high responsibility while at Groce's. A small mounted scouting platoon was created, and in that platoon was a man named

Erastus "Deaf" Smith. Nevin writes, 'Smith's defective hearing, which was caused by a childhood disease, had sharpened his other senses acutely. His eyesight was particularly keen, and his intuitiveness was such that the intrepid old reconnoiterer could detect people and animals long before most other scouts could. Married to a young Mexican girl, he spoke faultless Spanish and was so thoroughly versed in Mexican customs and manners that his very appearance was Mexican—all of which made him invaluable to the Texans. He was one of the half-dozen men on whom Sam Houston relied the most, and his loyalty was unswerving.' (125)

Early in April 1836, and Generalissimo Santa Anna, 'at the head of his 1,400 men strong division...on the whole was pleased with his success up to that point, for he had marched halfway from San Antonia to the Gulf of Mexico (he was now in San Felipe de Austin, twenty miles south of Houston at Groce's plantation) and had encountered no serious opposition.' (Pohl, 15) Here, in our opinion Santa Anna makes another serious error in judgment. Santa Anna learned from a capture^d Texan picket (soldier deployed to give advance warning of the enemy approach) that Houston and his 500 or so men were only twenty miles upstream. Why Santa Anna did not move north with his men to battle Houston can not be known. But what Santa Anna did find out was the seat of the Texas government had relocated to the town of Harrisburg. With that bit of intelligence, Santa Anna sent orders to Gaona in the north, and Urrea along the coast to join him at San Felipe de Austin. An excerpt from the message reads, 'from San Felipe, the campaign would be carried to its conclusion with a united army.' (Tolbert, 67)

Not waiting for his two other divisions to rendezvous with him at San Felipe, Santa Anna, 'leaving about eight hundred men with Colonel Sesma...to wait for the other columns...rode down the west bank of the Brazos, with five hundred grenadiers and fifty dragoons.' (Tolbert, 67) 'The generalissimo immediately determined that he should march in the

town (Harrisburg) in order to capture the government and, simultaneously, to demonstrate his ease of movement over the enemy's countryside. It seemed reasonable, but it was, perhaps, the fundamental error of his campaign.' (Pohl, 15) We agree with Pohl that Santa Anna lost sight of his original intentions, and 'involved two miscalculations. First, he lost sight of his original objective, which was to capture or destroy Houston; second, he divided his forces even further so that he no longer moved in strength at critical points.' (16) Had Santa Anna kept his forces together, awaited the arrival of his other two divisions, we think he could have easily overpowered the Texans with military power.

Rushing to Harrisburg to cut the head off of the rebellious government, in a sort of decapitation strike, Santa Anna lost his strategic advantage. Not only did he lose his strategic advantage, his men were unable to capture the Texas President Burnett, as he rowed off shore to a Texas navy schooner off Morgan's point by Galveston Island. Furthermore, a young Texan boy (who understood Spanish) raced to Houston's camp at Groce's to tell him that Santa Anna with less than 750 men were going to try and seize the government at Harrisburg. 'It was the opportunity Houston had been praying for—a chance to fight Santa Anna on something approaching equal terms.' (Nevin, 127)

Houston poured over his maps, and his knowledge of the terrain around Harrisburg would prove invaluable. The following morning, the now better organized, and trained Texan army broke camp at Groce's and began the march to intercept Santa Anna by Lynch's Ferry—on the San Jacinto plain. Houston's determined army force-marched 60 miles in two and a half days, and took cover along side Lynch's ferry road in a grove of Spanish moss covered oak wood trees. Now it was up to the scouts to track down Santa Anna, and report back to Houston the Mexican army position and intent.

Nevin explains, 'Deaf Smith, and a little luck gave (Houston) the answer. The veteran scout swam his horse across the bayou and seized a Mexican courier carrying a saddlebag of dispatched for Santa Anna. The bag had the name "William Barrett Travis" (the slain Alamo Commander) stamped into the leather...The messages were important—very important indeed. They indicated that Santa Anna was at New Washington with about 750 men, and therefore vulnerable. But one dispatch informed Santa Anna that 500 reinforcements were coming on with all possible speed to join him at Lynch's Ferry.' (128) For Houston the news was almost too good to be true. He realized for the first time in this struggle he could not only meet the enemy on approximately equal terms but also, if successful, could seize the president of Mexico, to whom he could dictate the terms of peace.

Houston assembled his troops into a hollow square, and strode to the middle of the formation atop a big white stallion. From atop his mount Houston addressed the Texan army. "The army will meet the enemy. Some of us may be killed and must be killed; but soldiers, Victory is certain! Trust in God and fear not! The victims of the Alamo and the names of those who were murdered at Goliad cry out for vengeance. Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" (Nevin, 128) Sam Houston succeeded in arousing the warrior spirit in his men, and coined the battle cry, "Remember the Alamo" in that brief but inspirational speech.

Santa Anna well rested after a spoiled attempt to capture the president the cabinet of the Republic of Texas, set ablaze the town of New Washington, and headed north to encounter Houston's army at Lynch's Ferry. The morning of April 20th 1836 was the first encounter of the Mexican and Texan armies as Mexican dragoons and Sherman's mounted cavalry met each other some mile south of the San Jacinto battlefield. Sherman and his scout team returned to Houston at the north edge of the battlefield. Santa Anna called for his cannon; a twelve-pounder called

the “golden standard,” and directed it be fired into the tree line where Sherman’s cavalry had retreated. Santa Anna then directed his dragoons forward to engage the enemy. As the mounted Mexicans approached the tree line where the Texans were hiding, they sounded the bugle call, ‘el Deguello’ (the beheading song) signifying there would be ‘no quarter’ given to the Texans. Much to Santa Anna’s and the dragoon’s surprise, the Texans answered with a cannon shot, killing some of the Mexican dragoons. The skirmish at San Jacinto had begun. (See figure two)

At one point during the day, Sherman sought Houston’s permission to attempt to capture the Mexican cannon, left unmanned ahead of the Mexican fighting positions. Houston reluctantly agreed, and Sherman unsuccessfully attempted to capture the cannon. What is important is the Texan army (with the exception of the Twin Sisters) remained out of sight, so the enemy did not know the size of the Texan force. Sherman called for reinforcements from the Texan line, but Houston withheld it, and let Sherman fight his way back to friendly lines. Why Houston did not join the attack then can not be known. Pohl writes, ‘Perhaps (Houston) felt because of the day’s actions that the element of surprise was gone and therefore preferred to reconsider his options. (31) Santa Anna was certain the Texans were going to attack on the evening of the 20th. Confident of his troops, Santa Anna had his men construct hasty breastworks (fighting positions) using boxes of supplies, saddles, and whatever tree branches they could find. Nevin explains, ‘(Santa Anna) felt it necessary to fortify his position. All night while the Texans slept, the Mexicans labored to erect barricades of pack saddles and supplies.’ (132) ‘Neither Houston or Santa Anna slept that night. Houston remained awake from the habit of the campaign; Santa Anna, from a nervous anxiety which would permit him no rest. (Santa Anna) realized he ^{had} placed himself in needless jeopardy...he had lost the advantage of overwhelming numbers.’ (Frantz 70) This would change on the morning of April 21st.

Houston's scout Deaf Smith brought bad news that fateful morning. "At about 9 a.m. (Santa Anna's) reinforcements arrived from Fort Bend; 500 men under his brother-in-law, General Martin Perfecto de Cos. The new arrivals raised Santa Anna's force to about 1,250 men. But they were tired as the rest (who stood-to all night waiting for Houston to attack). When the Texans seemed in no mood for a fight, the Mexican camp relaxed and the men rested." (Nevin, 132) Cos's men had marched across the same bridge the Texas and Mexican armies had taken a few days earlier: a small wooden bridge crossing Buffalo Bayou at Vince's plantation—hence the name Vince's Bridge.

After the arrival of Santa Anna's reinforcements, early in the morning of the 21st of April 1836, Houston called his subordinate commanders together for a consultation. He questioned his men: "Shall we attack the enemy in position, or receive their attack in ours?" (Nevin, 132) Pohl explains, "Houston gave no indication as to his own preference but he informally polled his officers as to their judgments. The results indicated...the majority favoring defense." (33) Houston dismissed his commanders, and "passed around the camp and asked his men if (they) wanted to fight. They replied with a shout that they were most anxious to do so. Then Houston replied, 'Very well, get your dinners, and I will lead you into the fight, and if you whip them every one of you shall be a captain.'" (Nevin, 132)

Mid-day of the 21st of April came, and "Santa Anna was convinced the Texans would not attack. Accordingly, without any apparent concern, he decided that it would be a good idea to let Cos's weary troops spend the day at rest. Then, on the morrow, relaxed and refreshed, (Santa Anna's) forces would assault Houston's position." (Pohl, 33) Santa Anna knew now that his enemy was outnumbered, and "with his usual confidence, was certain that he could cut them off and could enjoy the leisurely execution of the stragglers as they fled on food[†]. In a self-satisfied

mood, (Santa Anna) retired to his tent, secure in the knowledge all was in order...in any event he relaxed, and so apparently did his troops. It was the hour of siesta, and there appeared to be no threat from the Texans.” (36)

We think Santa Anna here made another crucial error in judgment, and agree with Pohl as he cites: “if one characteristic in Santa Anna’s psyche may be described as his fatal flaw it would be his over confidence...for example, on April 21 he posted no guards. In the face of an enemy drawn up in line of battle and no more than a thousand yards away, he (Santa Anna) cannot escape responsibility of seeing to it that, at the very minimum, pickets are provided and battle stations are assigned.” (36) Making matters worse, Houston’s scouts also noticed this careless attitude towards the Texas army.

In another bold stroke of understanding of the terrain, Houston then set about isolating the battlefield from further reinforcements to the Mexican army, or from retreat from the Texas army. Houston ordered his trusty scout Deaf Smith “to destroy the only bridge on the road to Brazos, distance eight miles (from the Texas camp),” (Tolbert, 130) and be back in camp by four o’clock to be part of the action. Smith and a handful of others set out on horseback, and successfully set the wooden bridge across the Bayou afire. Houston now had isolated the battlefield.

Three-thirty in the afternoon on the 21st of April 1836, Houston formed up his attacking line. They initially formed up under cover of the trees along the north side of Lynch’s Ferry road, and using the defilade in terrain ahead of his position slowly urged the men quietly forward. Nevin describes the scene: “the attacking wave of foot soldiers was two men deep, the men in each row separated by a couple of yards or perhaps a little more. The line stretched some

900 yards along the front of the woods. The enemy soldiers were a mile away across the tall grass, behind breastworks, water-blocked, their only escape to the southwest. The Texas cavalry, led by Mirabeau Lamar, moved into position on the right wing to prevent that escape. To the cavalry's left was the artillery...with four companies of infantry." (133) (See figure two)

With a wave of his sword as he rode atop his white stallion, Houston ordered the line of skirmishers to move slowly and deliberately forward. The Texans could not believe the Mexican camp remained silent on their approach. "It is difficult to believe; even without the benefit of sentinels...that the Texans' forward movement...passed unnoticed...Remarkably, the Mexicans were completely unprepared for the assault. (Pohl, 37) It was late in the afternoon on the 21st of April and when they were within 200 yards of the Mexican barricades, "Houston signaled with a sweep of his battered campaign hat...the gunners wheeled and fired (the Twin Sisters). (Nevin, 136) Houston's training at Groce's plantation was paying off. The men stayed in somewhat of a liner formation, two men deep, and waited till their weapons were within effective firing range before unloading on the 'stood-down' Mexican army.

The Battle of San Jacinto and the fight for the independence of Texas was underway. The Texans successfully caught the Mexicans completely off guard. Members of the Mexican army attempted to gather some sort of effective resistance, but the enraged Texans, shooting and screaming "Remember the Alamo, Remember Goliad," laid waste to the 1,200 or so Mexicans encamped before them. All the accounts of the next fifteen minutes read similar to one described by Pohl. "...blood and carnage ruled. No one was exempt. Even Houston had two horses shot from under him...the bloody eyed Texans killed as many as they could. (37) Houston's frontal attack followed by Sherman and Lamar's second wave of the attack sent the Mexican fleeing for their lives. The Battle of San Jacinto was won, in eighteen minutes!

What happened to the brilliant General Santa Anna? Rumor has it he was in his tent being entertained by a captured Texan slave girl—possibly indulging in some opium. Nevertheless, the lack of any forewarning of the Texas attack (because no pickets were posted), and the complete lack of command and control once the attack begun demonstrated Santa Anna's total apathetic attitude towards the Texans. Frantz tells us, "Santa Anna rushed from his tent in a panic on hearing the cannonade. While musket popped and balls whined through the camp, Santa Anna went to pieces 'running around...in utmost excitement, wringing his hands, and unable to give an order.'" (73) Houston and his men had completely surprised the Mexican army.

Frantz continues by describing the melee on the battlefield, "The wild Texans erupted on the escaping enemy with a blood lust that was uncontrollable and seemed to increase the more they killed. When guns ere emptied they (the Mexicans) were clubbed literally to beat the brains out of the trembling Mexicanos. (73) Houston though shot through the ankle and on his third mount of the battle, remained in command of the battlefield. He "continually turned to the west, scanning the horizon (looking for reinforcements), to try and determine his next move. (Pohl, 43) Houston was aware there still were several thousand armed Mexicans coming to reinforce Santa Anna via San Felipe de Austin. Knowing this he urged his men not to use their weapons as clubs—damaging them beyond repair. Houston's later wrote: "at that moment of the battle, a hundred disciplined Mexican troops could have wiped out the berserk Texans." (Nevin, 140)

By late afternoon, the guns were silent. The Mexicans suffered 600 or more killed and 650 taken prisoner. The Texans amazingly suffered only two dead, and 23 wounded (of whom six would eventually die.) Yet Nevin writes, "The war was not over. Santa Anna had escaped and would undoubtedly try to reach his fresh troops...Houston told his men 'You will find the Hero of Tampico (Santa Anna)...you will find him retreating on all fours in high grass. And he

will be dressed as badly as the common soldier...examine every soldier you find very closely.””

(140) It was as if Houston had a premonition about the capture of Santa Anna. The following morning, a lone straggler was found by a Texas search team. Santa Anna was dressed in discarded slaves clothing. As the search team was bringing the prisoner back into the Texan camp, the other prisoners called out his name—Generalissimo, or El Presidente. Houston had his man. As Frantz notes of Santa Anna’s capture, “with Santa Anna a prisoner, the Texan Revolution was over, and it was this great coup which made San Jacinto the tremendous victory it was.” (75)

Santa Anna was taken to see Sam Houston who was resting against a tree nursing his shot-wounded ankle. It was said Santa Anna was trembling nervously, as many Texans wanted to execute him for his barbaric actions at the Alamo and Goliad. Houston knew that a live Santa Anna would be more helpful than an executed one. “Santa Anna also demanded the courtesy he had denied others at the Alamo and Goliad that he be treated honorably as a prisoner of war. Houston replied tersely “that Santa Anna should have remembered that bromide at the Alamo.” (Pohl, 47)

Houston knew there were still loyal divisions of the Mexican army wandering around the Mexican countryside. Houston pressed Santa Anna saying, “If Santa Anna wished to live, he must order all his remaining forces out of the country.” Santa Anna complied and a dispatch a message to Urrea’s and Gaona ordering them out of the country, ending the note with, “I have agree with General Houston upon an armistice that may put an end to the war forever. (Nevin, 141) By his order, the remaining 4,000 troops back at Fort Bend packed up and marched out of Texas. Nevin tells of Houston’s resolve, “to make certain that the Mexican president did not

soon mount another assault, the Texans kept Santa Anna captive till the following November, and then released him. (141)

Houston then turned Santa Anna over to President Burnett, who held him captive on the Texas navy schooner *Invincible* anchored off of Velasco. During this time the Texans had Santa Anna sign a public and secret treaty with the Republic of Texas. "By the public treaty he agreed to: never take up arms again against Texas; end all hostilities between the two nations; withdrawal the Mexican army south of the Rio Grande; and held Texas prisoners would be released. By the secret treaty Santa Anna pledged himself to work within Mexico to achieve four things: diplomatic recognition of Texas; Texas independence; a treaty of commerce; and recognition of the Rio Grande as the Texas-Mexico border." (Fehrenbach, 241)

With the signing of the Treaty of Velasco on May 14th 1836, it appeared the victory at San Jacinto was in fact the decisive battle for independence of Texas. Pohl summarizes the significance of the battle by stating, "Measured by its results, San Jacinto was one of the decisive battles of the world. The freedom of Texas from Mexico won here led to annexation and to the Mexican War, resulting in the acquisition by the United States of the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California, Utah, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Oklahoma. Almost one-third of the present area of the American nation, nearly a million square miles, changed sovereignty." (Pohl, 48)

We agree with Pohl and his words on the significance of the Battle of San Jacinto, and also believe that it was Sam Houston's leadership and action led the Texas Army to the defeat of the Mexican Army at the battle of San Jacinto, 21 March, 1865.

Appendix 1.

Proclamation of Samuel Houston, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Texas.

Headquarters, Washington, Dec.12, 1835. Citizens of Texas-your situation is peculiarly calculated to call forth all your manly energies. Under the Republican Constitution of Mexico, you were invited to Texas, then a wilderness. You have reclaimed and rendered it a cultivated county. You solemnly swore to support the Constitution and its laws. Your oaths are yet inviolate. In accordance with them, you have fought with the Liberals against those who sought to overthrow the Constitution in 1832, when the present usurper was the champion of Liberal principles in Mexico. Your obedience had manifested your integrity. You have witnessed with pain the convulsions of the interior, and succession of usurpations. You have experienced in silent grief the expulsion of your members from the State Congress. You have realized the horrors of anarchy, and the dictation of military rule. The promises made to you have not been fulfilled. Your memorials for redress of grievances have been disregarded; and the agents you sent to Mexico have been imprisoned for years, without enjoying the rights of trial according to law. Your constitutional Executive had been deposed by the bayonets of a mercenary soldiery. While your Congress had been dissolved by violence, and its members either fled or were arrested by the military force of the country. The Federation had been dissolved—the Constitution declared at an end, and Centralism has been established. Amidst all these trying vicissitudes you remained loyal to the duty of citizens, with a hope that Liberty would not perish in the Republic of Mexico. But while you were fondly cherishing this hope, the Dictator required the surrender of the arms of the civic militia, that he might be enabled to establish, on the ruins of the Constitution, a system of policy which would forever enslave the people of Mexico. Zacatecas, unwilling to yield her sovereign rights to the demand, which struck at the

root of all liberty, refused to disarm her citizens of their private arms. Ill fated State! Her power, as well as her wealth, aroused the ambition of Santa Anna, and excited his cupidity. Her citizens became the first victims of his cruelty, while her wealth was sacrificed in payment for the butchery of her citizens. The success of the usurper determined him in exacting from the people of Texas submission to the Central form of Government; and, to enforce his plan of despotism, he dispatched a military force to incase the Colonies, and exact the arms of the inhabitants. The citizens refused the demand and the invading force was increased. The question then was, shall we resist oppression and live free, or violate our oaths, and wear despot's stripes? The citizens of Texas rallied to the defence of their constitutional rights. They have met four to one, and by their chivalry and courage, they have vanquished the enemy with a gallantry and spirit which is characteristic of the justice of our cause.

The Army of the People is now before Bexar, besieging the Central army within its walls. Though called together at a moment, the citizens of Texas, unprovided as they were in the necessary munitions of war and supplies for an army, have maintained a siege for months. Always patient and untiring, in their patriotism and zeal in the cause of Liberty, they have borne every vicissitude of season, and every incident of the soldier, with a contempt of peril which reflect immortal honor on the members of the Army of the People.

Citizens of Texas—Your rights must be defended. The oppressors must be driven from our soul. Submission to the laws, and union among ourselves, will render us invincible; subordination and discipline in our army will guarantee victory and renown. Our invader has sworn to exterminate us, or sweep us from the soul of Texas. He is vigilant in his work of oppression, and has ordered to Texas ten thousand men to enforce the unhallowed purposes of his ambition. His letters to his subalterns in Texas have been intercepted, and his plans for our

destruction are disclosed. Departing from the chivalric principles of civilized warfare, he has ordered arms to be distributed to a *portion of our population*, for the purpose of crating in the midst of is a *servile war*. The hopes of the usurper wee inspired by a belief that the people of Texas were disunited and divided in opinion; and that alone had been the cause of the present invasion of our rights. He shall realize the fallacy of his hoes in the union of her citizens, and their ETERNAL RESISITANCE to his plans against constitutional liberty. We will enjoy our birth-right, or *perish in its defence!*

The services of five thousand volunteers will be accepted. By the first of March net we mist meet the enemy with an army worthy of our cause, and which will reflect honor upon freemen. Our habitations must be defended; the sanctity of our heaths and firesides must be defended from pollution. Liberal Mexicans will unite with us; our countrymen in the field have presented an example worthy of imitation. Generous and brave hearts from a land of Freedom have joined our standard before Bexar. They have, by their heroism and valor, called for the admiration of their comrades in arms, and have reflected additional honor on the land of their birth. Let the brave rally to our standard!

SAM HOUSTON, Commander-in-Chief of the Army. (Newell, 209-210)

Appendix 2.

Travis's letter to the people of Texas while under siege at the Alamo.

To the People of Texas and All Americans in the world—Fellow Citizens and Compatriots: I am besieged....I have sustained a continual Bombardment and cannonade for 24 hours and have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. *I shall never surrender or retreat.* Then, I call upon you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, and every thing dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due his honor and that of his country. VICTORY OR DEATH.

William Barret Travis, Lt.Col. Comdt.

P.S. The Lord is on our side. When the enemy appeared in sight we had not three bushels of corn. We have since found in deserted houses 80 to 90 bushels and got into the walls 20 or 30 head of Beeves. Travis. (Frantz, 13)

Figure 1

Routes of Mexican Army Advance and Texas Army Retreat to the San Jacinto Battlefield.

(Stephens, 26)

Figure 2

Map of the Battlefield at San Jacinto, and Texas Army Movements, 21 April 1865.

(Stephens, 28)

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