When forces led by Andrew Jackson invaded and occupied the territory in 1810, the United States, in effect, dared Spain to do something about it. Spain decided to negotiate.

The fruit of these negotiations was the Adams-Onís Treaty, concluded in 1819. Under the terms of the treaty, Spain sold Florida to the United States and agreed to abandon all claims to lands in the Pacific Northwest, in exchange for a U.S. pledge to renounce its claim to Texas and to forgive $5 million worth of unpaid claims owed to U.S. citizens. The treaty set the boundary line at the Sabine River, the boundary between the modern states of Louisiana and Texas.

Though not apparent at the time, the Adams-Onís Treaty was a key development leading to the U.S.-Mexican War. The Mexicans, who inherited the treaty upon attaining their independence from Spain, maintained that it made their claim to Texas legally unassailable. Many Americans, for their part, heatedly denounced the treaty and its architect, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. In their view, Texas was clearly part of the Louisiana Purchase, and signing away the U.S. claim to it was positively treasonous. Those who were convinced that Texas was rightfully part of the United States were not easily dissuaded. Anglo-Americans had been mounting armed expeditions into the region since 1801. Incensed by the Adams-Onís Treaty, Dr. James Long, a friend of Andrew Jackson, invaded Texas in the summer of 1819 with a small band of armed adventurers in hopes of claiming the territory for the United States, but the expedition was ill-fated and eventually cost Dr. Long his life.

The government of independent Mexico generally shared Spain's view of Anglo-Americans, which held that they were unassimilable, subversive, and untrustworthy. Even so, the matter of colonizing Texas was pressing: only settlement could secure Mexico's claim to Texas, and Texas must be secured to serve as a buffer against U.S. expansion. It was a wicked conundrum, but accepting Anglo-American immigrants appeared to be the only recourse. Mexican officials consoled themselves with the thought that Anglo-Americans were skilled and diligent, and once they had tamed Texas, it might be a more attractive destination for migrants from other countries, including Mexico itself. Eventually, they hoped, a balance might be achieved.

In 1819 a man named Moses Austin, a New Englander who had made and lost a fortune mining lead in Missouri, traveled to Texas and solicited permission to start an Anglo-American colony there. After some initial hesitation, Texas governor Antonio Martínez granted him permission. The trip to and from Texas was so strenuous, however, that Moses Austin's health was irreparably ruined, and he died in the summer of 1821. His dying wish was that his son should take up his colonization project where he left off, and Stephen—then twenty-eight years old—proved more than equal to the task.

Stephen F. Austin was of a decidedly different breed from the rough-and-tumble filibusters who had tried since 1801 to take Texas by force. He was likable, handsome, hardworking, and well educated, with cultivated manners, a moderate temperament, and a sometimes unfortunate tendency to assume the good intentions of others. He arrived in Texas in June 1821, even as his father was dying in Missouri and as Mexico was in the process of securing its independence from Spain. During the Spanish period Texas had been a remote frontier region where intrepid missionaries sought to evangelize recalcitrant Indians. The scene of a savage military campaign during Mexico's war of independence, its Spanish-

speaking population had been reduced from a high of some four thousand in 1810 to barely more than two thousand in 1820, most of them concentrated in the dilapidated villages of San Antonio de Béxar and La Bahia (soon to be renamed Goliad, an anagram for Hidalgo, the hero of independence). The *tejanos* (as Mexican residents of Texas were called) kept some cattle and horses and raised a bit of corn, but it was the extremes of their poverty that most impressed Stephen Austin—they had, he reported, "little furniture or rather none at all in their houses—no knives, eat with forks and spoons and their fingers."[6] The province was also home to perhaps forty thousand Indians belonging to at least thirty-one tribes, many of whom were nomadic warriors—Comanches, Caddos, Kiowas, Karankawas, and others.

Austin's petition to have his father's colonization project reaffirmed was approved by Governor Martínez, and he began bringing in migrants. But in such uncertain times, there was doubt as to who had the authority to approve Austin's contract, and it became clear that his only hope of starting a legal settlement was to travel to Mexico City. Austin thus, from the outset, made plain his intention to do everything by the book, and for most of his adult life he never wavered from his commitment to be a good citizen of Mexico.

Austin arrived in Mexico City in early May 1822. There was no doubting his resolve: he diligently studied the Spanish language, eagerly solicited Mexican citizenship, and cultivated good relations with Mexican statesmen—especially those who served on the congressional colonization committee, which was in the process of writing Mexico's colonization law. Although Austin had near-superhuman patience and a remarkable ability to befriend men of all ideological persuasions, he was fairly appalled by the political intrigues of the Mexican capital. Such intrigues stretched what he had assumed would be a perfunctory trip of two weeks into an ordeal of eleven months.

The colonization committee drew up a colonization law and sent it to congress for debate within a month of the Emperor Iturbide's coronation. Although some details would change, this bill served as the model for all that followed. The law said that land would be distributed to *empresarios*, who would contract to bring in at least two hundred families to settle in the frontier regions. Settlers who were not already Roman Catholic would be required to adopt that faith, and the government would be bound to protect their property, freedom, and civil rights. To further induce settlement, settlers would be exempt from all taxation during their first six years in the country, and goods imported for use by the colonists were partially tax exempt. The children of slaves brought into Mexican territory would be free at the age of fourteen, and the slave trade was prohibited. A head of family was entitled to 4,438 acres of land for farming and an additional 177 acres if he planned to raise livestock. Empresarios would be awarded 66,774 acres for every two hundred immigrants they brought in. It was a remarkably generous law, with land grants twice as large as Austin had initially asked for.

The passage of the law was long delayed by Iturbide's dissolution of congress in October, and by the rebellion that erupted against his regime in December. The emperor finally signed the law on January 4, 1823. It was annulled along with all other Iturbide-era legislation upon his overthrow in March, but in August 1824 another, nearly identical, colonization law replaced it. Austin's own empresario contract was approved by congress in early April, and he returned to Texas, a bit chastened and more cynical than he had been a year earlier. "They are a strange people," he wrote of the Mexicans, "and must be studied to be managed." Austin held that the Mexicans made much of their national honor but would cheerfully betray that honor if they could do so without being exposed. Ever the good citizen, however, he sternly admonished his colonists in Texas "not to meddle with politics, and to have nothing to do with any revolutionary schemes."[7]

Austin, who soon negotiated two additional colonization contracts, was by far the most successful of several empresarios, who settled large numbers of American families in the state. Adding to these numbers were many Americans who migrated into Texas illegally. Soon Anglo-Americans became the overwhelmingly dominant element in the Texas population. Most of them had no intention of abiding by their end of the bargain.

POLITICS AND POINSETT

As the Anglo-American colonies began to grow and flourish, Mexican officials became increasingly uneasy about U.S. intentions toward Texas. U.S. newspapers, complained Mexican chargé d'affaires Manuel Zozaya in 1823, routinely sang the praises of Texas and suggested that it rightfully belonged to the United States. Political opponents of John Quincy Adams, Zozaya reported, made the former secretary of state's role in signing away U.S. claims to Texas a major political issue in the 1824 presidential campaign, in which Adams was the leading contender. The secretary of the Mexican legation at Washington, Colonel José Anastasio Torrens, added further to Mexican anxieties when he recounted a conversation he had had with General Andrew Jackson. Jackson, the most dynamic political force in the country, allegedly explained to Torrens that the best way to gain territory was to occupy it and, after effective possession was gained in that fashion, to "treat for it." That, he said, was how the United States got possession of the Floridas, an affair in which Jackson himself had played a leading role. Torrens and other diplomats also complained of American haughtiness, for many American politicos were brazenly contemptuous of Mexicans and disdained Mexican claims. Torrens and others warned against al-

lowing Anglo-Americans to become predominant in Texas, even as Stephen F. Austin was consolidating his colony there.

Adding still further to Mexican anxiety was the appointment in 1825 of the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, one Joel Roberts Poinsett. A former high-ranking official of the Iturbide government claimed that during an 1822 visit to Mexico, Poinsett had unfurled a map of North America and, pointing to the boundary specified in the treaty of 1819, declared it "undesirable." The United States, Poinsett had casually explained, wanted Texas, New Mexico, and Upper California, as well as parts of Lower California, Sonora, Coahuila, and Nuevo León. It was no great leap for Mexicans to assume that Poinsett was the advance guard of American avarice.

No issue was more vexing to the Texas colonists than slavery. The colonists were convinced that they could not possibly create a thriving agricultural economy without the use of slaves. That, of course, placed them very much at odds with the government in Mexico City and, indeed, with the rest of the Mexican states. Slavery was practically nonexistent in Mexico at the time of its independence, and the founders of the republic regarded it with repugnance. A law was passed on July 13, 1824, prohibiting "commerce and traffic in slaves," but both the Constitution of 1824 and the federal colonization law of 1825 were silent on the issue and the July 13 law was subject to interpretation. Although the law did stipulate that slaves were to be considered free the instant they trod Mexican soil, the Texas colonists elected to assume that this referred only to the buying and selling of slaves and did not apply to slaves brought by colonists for their own use.

The Texas colonists became adept at arguing that they be made an exception to any law restricting slavery in the country. Proposed laws on the subject invariably brought anguished howls of protest from them, depicting widows and orphans beggared, the land of Texas reverting to a howling wilderness infested by savages and reprobates, and hardworking families brought to ruin. The colonists were remarkably successful in their protests. In 1825 the committee writing a constitution for the state of Coahuila and Texas considered a provision that would have prohibited slavery "absolutely and forever in all its territory, and slaves now in it shall be free from the day the constitution is published in this capital." After intense lobbying by the Anglo-Texans, the clause was watered down to provide only that children of slaves would be born free and that the migration of slaves into the state would be outlawed after six months. The colonists dealt with this provision by erecting the fiction that slaves were in fact indentured servants who had voluntarily contracted themselves to some years of labor.

The simple fact that Mexico officially disapproved of slavery and sought to protect the rights of slaves was, to the slave-owning colonists, a constant threat. According to Terán, it made the slaves restive and eager to "throw off their yoke, while their masters believe they can keep them by making [the yoke] heavier. They commit the barbarities on their slaves that are so common where men live in a relationship so contradictory to their nature: they pull their teeth, they set dogs upon them to tear them apart, and the mildest of them will whip the slaves until they are flayed."[5]