



*The Battle of
San Jacinto
April 21, 1836*

*Historic Hike of the
San Jacinto Battlefield*

*Presented by
San Jacinto Battleground/
Battleship TEXAS
State Historic Site
for the
Boy Scouts of America
Sam Houston Area Council*



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Directions to the Park

From the North - Take I45 south or 59 south to Beltway 8, Sam Houston Tollway, or continue south to Highway 610. Take Beltway 8 or Loop 610 east, and then south, crossing the Houston Ship Channel. Exit Highway 225 east, Texas Independence Highway, to La Porte. Exit Independence Parkway - South (formerly Battleground Rd.) and turn left. When the road divides into two roads, remain in the left lane, continue through the tall stone park gates, and turn right into the park.

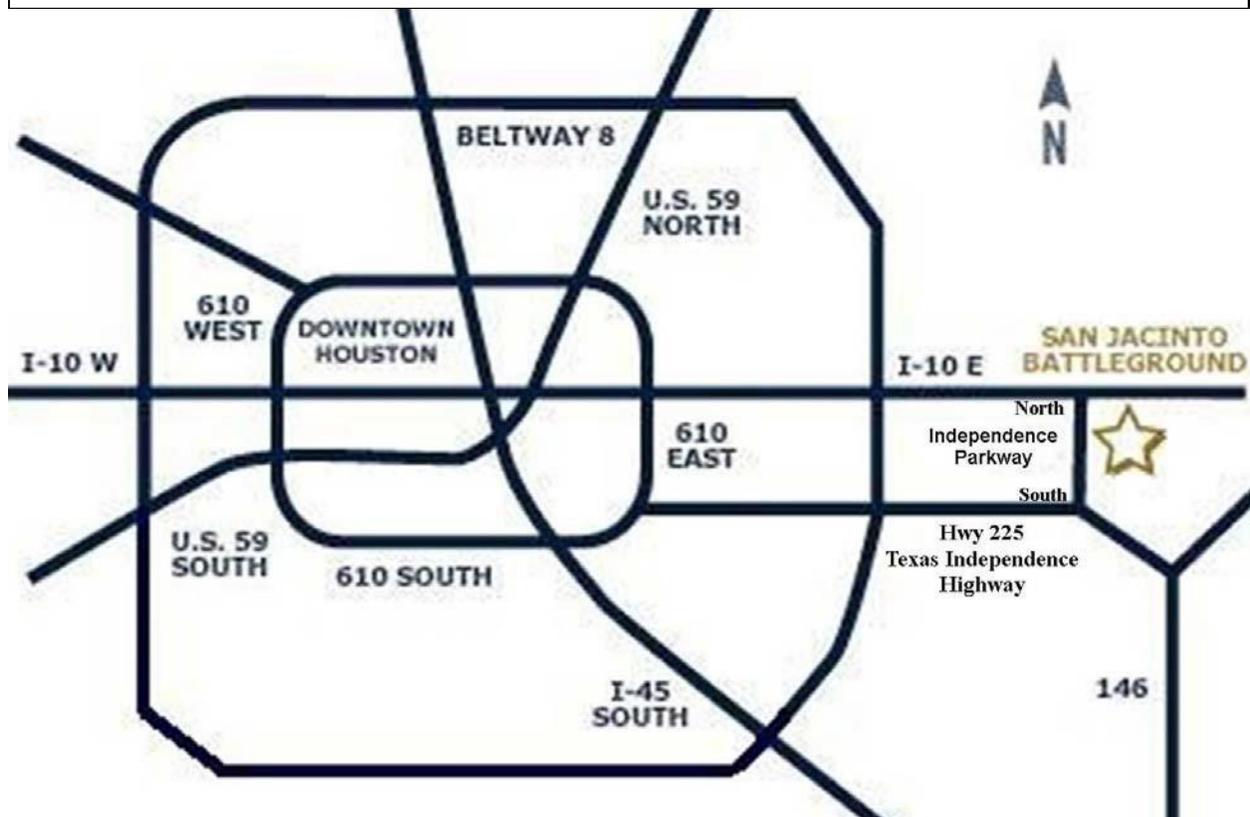
From the South - Take I45 north to Beltway 8, Sam Houston Tollway. Take Beltway 8 east, and then north. Exit Highway 225 east, Texas Independence Highway, to La Porte. Exit Independence Parkway - South (formerly Battleground Rd.) and turn left. When the road divides into two roads, remain in the left lane, continue through the tall stone park gates, and turn right into the park.

From the East - Take I10 west to Independence Parkway - North (formerly Crosby-Lynchberg Rd.), exit south, crossing the Houston Ship Channel by the Lynchburg Ferry to Independence Parkway - South. Turn left into the park for the monument.

Or

you can take I10 west to Highway 146 south, crossing the Houston Ship Channel by the Fred Hartman Bridge. Exit Highway 225 west, Texas Independence Highway. Exit Independence Parkway - South (formerly Battleground Rd.) and turn right. When the road divides into two roads, remain in the left lane, continue through the tall stone park gates, and turn right into the park.

From the West - Take I10 east to Highway 610, east loop, or continue east to Beltway 8, east loop, Sam Houston Tollway. Take Loop 610 or Beltway 8 south, crossing the Houston Ship Channel. Exit Highway 225 east, Texas Independence Highway, to La Porte. Exit Independence Parkway - South (formerly Battleground Rd.) and turn left. When the road divides into two roads, remain in the left lane, continue through the tall stone park gates, and turn right into the park.



Preparing for your Visit

We have 2 types of hikes available:

Self - Guided History Program - Your scout master will lead the troop on a hike around the San Jacinto Battlefield. The hike consists of 5 “History Stops” that will take you through the battle. The hike is approximately 2.0 miles. No reservations are required.

Guided Historic Hike - Led by a park historian, the troop will be hiking in the footsteps of Sam Houston and his Texas Army. Scouts will see the weapons and uniforms of the day and participate in a mock charge of the Mexican Camp. The hike is approximately 2.0 miles. Reservations are required.

Fees:

Self-Guided History Program

Scouts

Activity Fee

Free

Adults

Free

Guided Historic Hike

Scouts

\$1

Adults

Free

For Reservation for the Guided Historic Hike, please contact:

Timothy Reeves - Lead Park Interpreter

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Self-Guided History Program

This 2.0 mile hiking tour was developed to see the battleground with a minimum of back tracking and incorporates a visit to the San Jacinto Monument for a look at historical materials that will enhance your understanding of the events leading to Texas independence from Mexico in 1836. We will see and comment on sites in the sequence in which they are encountered geographically, rather than in the sequenced of their chronological significance.

Preparation

1. Examine the attached site map showing sites relevant to the battle and the hike route.
2. Since this tour has been developed for a one way hike, you may want to stage some of your group's vehicles at the far end of the site, near stone Marker # 17, Almonte's Capture Site, so they can either ferry participants back to the starting point or depart from the end point of the hike.
3. Assemble your group on the steps of the San Jacinto Monument. You may wish to purchase booklet's showing the soldiers uniforms or describing events of the Battle of San Jacinto in the monument's store.
4. **Read the following aloud to your group:**
 - a. Although there have been no reported snake bites on the battlefield, site staff members have seen poisonous snakes including black Water Moccasins, generally in or near water, and brown and/or tan Copperheads, often under logs or similar shelters. Hikers should be alert to avoid encounters with these snakes and other animals within the site.
 - b. The site contains vegetation that may cause allergic reactions in some people. People with asthma or similar respiratory conditions should take appropriate measures. Please don't trample or pick the wild flowers.
 - c. The site contains insects common to the Houston area. Hikers should apply mosquito repellent. Insect repellent is sold at the Ship' Store, located next to the Battleship TEXAS.
 - d. The Texas sun can be intense. Sunscreen, hats, and clothing to cover vulnerable skin are recommended. Sunscreen is also sold at the Ship's Store, located next to the Battleship TEXAS.
 - e. Drinking water and restrooms are available at the main restroom, located next to the Battleship TEXAS, at the start of your hike-inside the monument, and at the far end of the recreation area of the site where the hike concludes. You should use the facilities to avoid discomfort during the hike.
 - f. Although the hike is only about 2.5 miles, you may wish to carry something to drink. You can fill your canteens at the main restrooms, located next to the Battleship TEXAS, or purchase cold drinks or water at the concession stand, also located next to the Battleship. No food or beverages are sold at the monument or at the recreation end of the site where the hike ends.
 - g. Hikers should exercise caution to avoid vehicles when crossing or walking along the roads. Hikers should not approach mowers or other power equipment where there may be flying debris or other potential for injury.

Congratulations! By requesting this package covering the San Jacinto Battlefield Hike you and your Scouts have again declared an interest in your State's Heritage. We believe that this cooperative effort between the Sam Houston Area Council Boy Scouts and the State of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will not only prove to be fun but highly interesting and instructive for all.

Here's How It Works:

1. Arrive at the San Jacinto Monument. Park in the parking provided around the monument. Disembark your crew and walk back to Point A. **Reading stops** are defined on your map with the letters A – E **Battleground markers** are defined with squares around the numbers 1 through 20.
2. At **History Stop Program A** have one or more of your group start reading the narrative program to your group. When you have finished take your group down the road as indicated by the arrow on your map. Please have your group be aware that the road they are on does have motorized traffic. On your way following the arrows notice the marked markers as you pass them. By the completion of your trip you will be able to relate the events to these battlefield marked monuments.
3. Your walk has now taken you past monument markers 12 and 9, across TEXAS 134, and the monument marker 4 and **History Stop Program B**. Here you are to have one or more of your group read History Stop Program B. After completion of your reading, continue past monument marker 3, monument marker 2, around to Monument marker 1, down past the concession building (restrooms & water here) The Battleship TEXAS is on your left but we would recommend that you complete your hike and come back and visit the Battleship TEXAS later, walk past monument marker 5, and back up to monument marker 8. In this area you have seen a number of grave markers. The largest group of these markers is the burial site of eight (8) of the nine (9) Texans who died in the Battle of San Jacinto.
4. You now leave this portion of the park and again cross Texas 134 to monument marker 10 beside the reflection pool. This is History Stop Program C where you again have to stop and read to your group. Afterwards, follow the arrows to the small family cemetery located on the way to the San Jacinto Monument. This cemetery has no significance to the battle of San Jacinto. Follow the arrows around the San Jacinto Monument and down the road to History Stop Program D.
5. At the History Stop Program D again read the narrative while moving through the monument markers 15, 14, 19, 13, and 16. You are now at **History Stop Program E**. Stop and read the final narrative.
6. After completing the narrative at the history stop program E continue down the roads over to monument marker 17 where the biggest portion of the carnage occurred as Mentioned in History Stop Program E. Peggy Lake is over the breastworks in front of you.

You have now completed your historical hike. We hope that you have had fun doing it.

We hope you enjoy your visit and your hike at San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site.

Remember though: **Qualification for the patch consists of participation in the hike!**

The other items: battleship, monument, slide show, are all extras if you wish to participate in them. Complete your patch request form and send it with your payment to the council office as indicated.

History Stop A

The first of five history stops scattered at key locations across the battleground. Here we will talk about the background events leading up to the 21st of April, 1836, including the events here on the previous day, the 20th.

In 1836 this was the north pasture of the Widow Peggy McCormick's ranch. Her husband, Arthur McCormick, drowned in 1825 in Buffalo Bayou, but she continued to operate the ranch.

The terrain is much different today than it was in 1836. The land has sunk 10-12 feet through subsidence caused by the pumping out of underground water in this area. The marshes along the San Jacinto River, to the east, where much of the battle took place, are now under several feet of water. There is far less vegetation and trees here today. The contours of the Battlefield have remained much the same, except around the monument and reflecting pool, where the landscape was altered during construction in the late 1930's.

The reason the two armies met in this pasture is because of Nathaniel Lynch's ferry across the San Jacinto River, where it joins Buffalo Bayou, about a mile to the north. It was the only practicable crossing in the area to proceed from the region to the southwest eastward toward the Trinity and Sabine Rivers. Santa Anna had pursued interim president David G. Burnet and other members of the new Texan government to New Washington, at Morgan's Point on Galveston Bay, in present La Porte. He almost captured the official party there on April 19.

Houston arrived at Harrisburg, on Buffalo Bayou about 11 miles to the west, just southeast of downtown Houston, on the 18th. Santa Anna had already been there and burned the town. That night, Houston learned of Santa Anna's movements from documents carried by a captured Mexican courier. Santa Anna planned to come to Lynch's ferry, and Houston knew he must get here first, to place himself between the Mexican forces and the fleeing Texas settlers in the Runaway Scrape beyond the San Jacinto. So on the 19th, Houston left the army's baggage and sick soldiers under guard and crossed his army to the south side of Buffalo Bayou and headed this direction. They marched almost all night, stopping only twice, briefly to rest.

Houston dispatched two cavalry detachments before sunrise, one here to the ferry, and the other toward New Washington, to reconnoiter Santa Anna's movements in this area. The first troops arrived at Lynch's not long after sunrise on the 20th, and captured a flatboat of provisions, which Santa Anna had sent up the river in advance of his arrival. Houston arrived here with the main force of his army about mid-morning and ordered camp to be set up along the bayou.

The second detachment arrived as the camp was being established. They had seen Santa Anna's forces preparing to leave New Washington, and had skirmished briefly with a small Cavalry troop north of that town.

History Stop A Cont'd

Santa Anna burned New Washington and headed north, arriving here about 11:30 a.m. He immediately sought to draw the Texans into battle. The Texans were busy butchering some of the Widow McCormick's beeves when the Mexicans arrived. Santa Anna positioned the "Golden Standard," a 12-pound cannon, and his only artillery, along the east slope of the swale between here and the reflecting pool, about 400 yards from the Texan camp, and began firing. Houston responded with the "Twin Sisters," which he had positioned in a point of timber on the high ground near where this road meets Hwy. 134.

Santa Anna then dispatched sharpshooters from his veteran Toluca Company to within rifle shot of the Texan Camp, positioning them in a grove of trees near the lower end of the reflecting pool. After a brief exchange of rifle fire, a shower of grape and broken horseshoes from the "Twin Sisters" sent the infantrymen into retreat.

Sporadic artillery exchanges continued into the afternoon, as Santa Anna established his camp on the high ground overlooking the marshes along the San Jacinto River, about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the Texan camp. Two men were wounded during the cannonade, one from each side. The Texan was the commander of the artillery, Colonel J. C. Neal.

When Santa Anna ordered the "Golden Standard" withdrawn from the field in later afternoon, Colonel Sidney Sherman petitioned Houston to let him attach the withdrawing artillery, in hopes of capturing the piece, but Houston declined. Finally, shortly before sundown, Houston let Sherman lead a cavalry troop to reconnoiter the Mexican camp. Sherman encountered a Mexican cavalry squad out to protect the slowing withdrawing artillery. A heated skirmish ensued in the area across this road, probably out in the brush and a little to the east.

The Texans fell back in confusion and disarray, and narrowly escaped disaster. Only one man was mortally wounded. The most notable aspect of this confrontation was the heroism of Private Mirabeau B. Lamar. He rescued several comrades, including Secretary of War, Thomas J. Rusk, and 19-year-old Walter P. Lane, who 25 years later would become a Confederate General. For his exploits, Lamar was promoted to Colonel and led the cavalry on the field the next day. When the two cavalry units returned to their respective camps, both armies retired for the night.

History Stop B

The bulk of the Texas Army arrived here in the woods along Buffalo Bayou in the mid-morning of April 20, after a long arduous all-night march from Harrisburg, which was about eleven miles to the west, just this side of downtown Houston.

The spring of 1836 had been uncommonly cold and wet, the rivers and creeks were in flood, and traveling even short distances on foot was extremely difficult. The morning of April 20th was cold and gray.

Houston ordered the camp established along the bayou. The camp stretched for about 500 yards among the woods. There was much more timber here then. On the right, down toward the battleship, was the camp of the 2nd Regiment of Volunteers, commanded by Colonel Sidney Sherman. To his right was Colonel Edward Burleson's 1st Regiment of Volunteers. Next in line, just to the left of the sundial, was Lt. Colonel Henry Millard's Regiment of Regulars. Regulars were recruited members of the army, who wore some semblance of uniform, carried weapons issued by the Republic, and were supposed to be paid more than the volunteers. On the far right was the 61-man Cavalry Regiment, commanded at first by Sidney Sherman, then later by Colonel Mirabeau B. Lamar.

The Texas artillery, which consisted of two small six-pound cannons called the "Twin Sisters", and commanded by Lt. Colonel J.C. Neal, was positioned at the top of this rise, in a little neck of timber located over there near the entrance to this area of the park.

The cannons were sent to the Texan Army by the citizens of Cincinnati, Ohio, and they were received by Sam Houston less than two weeks before the battle. As a matter of fact, the army was so short of powder that neither cannon had been fired before they were brought to this battleground. The cannons over there near the sundial are not replicas, but serve to represent the originals. The originals were lost after having been used in the Civil War. It is said that they were called the "Twin Sisters" after two young ladies on the Mississippi River steamboat by which the cannons were shipped to New Orleans. The shipping crate was labeled "hollow ware".

The appearance of the Texan camp was not what one might expect of an army camp. The only tent mentioned in the historical records was that of Sam Houston, although there were probably a few others. The men slept on the cold, damp ground rolled in soiled blankets around 20-30 campfires.

Houston's army on the fields of San Jacinto numbered about 800 men, and came from all parts of the United States and Europe. The majority were recent arrivals in Texas; less than 200 owned land in the newly declared Republic. Land was a major attraction for the newcomers, as they were to be paid in land for their services. Of course, some came for the adventure, others to fight for the principles of freedom and liberty.

History Stop B Cont'd

Among those fighting for those ideals of democracy were a company of fifteen to twenty "Tejanos," Texas Mexicans who were as tired of Santa Anna's rule as the Anglos and fought for the Texan cause. Their captain was Juan Seguin. When the army was at Harrisburg, Houston had wanted to leave the Tejano company to aide in guarding the sick for fear they might be mistaken for the enemy in a fight, but the Tejanos would not be left behind. Through their English-speaking spokesman, Jose Antonio Menchaca, they made it clear that they had as much right as the Anglos to die defending their land, if not more.

The appearance of the men themselves would have been considered deplorable by accepted military standards. A recruit who arrived with eight others on the morning of the 21st stated that "a more savage looking band could scarcely have been assembled". They were "unwashed and unshaven, their hard, beards, and mustaches untrimmed and matted, and their clothes were in tatters and plastered with mud".

The Texans were armed with a broad variety of weapons. The regular infantry were the only men whose weapons were consistent, having been issued Model 1816 Harper's Ferry smoothbore flintlock muskets, with bayonets. None of the volunteer infantrymen had bayonets, although most were probably armed with knives of varying descriptions, including the Bowie knife. The rifles of the volunteers were described as being of "every shape and size". Some of the cavalrymen must have carried flintlock pistols and sabers, as well.

Their food was poor and scarce, and seldom consisted of more than boiled beef. In fact, a number of the Widow McCormick's beeves were being butchered when Santa Anna arrived. The Mexican provisions captured at the ferry that morning was welcomed by all. The men had bread and coffee with their boiled beef for the first time in several days.

Sam Houston organized a contingency plan of retreat. Several barges, rafts, and flat boats found floating in Buffalo Bayou, were gathered and moored along the banks adjacent to the camp. If retreat became necessary in the face of a full Mexican attack, at least some of his men could escape with their lives, avoiding sure death if captured. The bayou was not nearly as wide then probably no more than 200-300 yards.

Let us shift our attention to the events in this camp on the 22nd, the day after the battle. The Texans buried their eight fallen comrades here in their camp. Their graves are right over there, marked by the obelisk. Houston dispatched search parties at dawn to look for Mexicans who had escaped the afternoon before, and especially Santa Anna.

A small party of Texans, led by Sgt. James Sylvester, captured a soldier they thought was a private near Vince's Bridge, on the road to Harrisburg. As they were bringing him back into Camp they pass a group of captives, and some of them called out, "El Presidente! El Presidente!" They had in fact captured Santa Anna, the President of Mexico and self-styled Napoleon of the West.

Sylvester's party brought Santa Anna to Sam Houston, who lay wounded beneath a large oak tree, which stood on the edge of the bayou right over there beyond the sundial. A small monument marks the spot. Santa Anna agreed to cease hostilities, and wrote orders to his other commanders to withdraw from Texas. The war was over and independence won.

Had Santa Anna escaped, however and rejoined his 4,000 man army west of the Brazos River, the war would have continued, and would have probably ended differently. The Texans probably would not have been so fortunate in a second battle with Santa Anna, and the Battle of San Jacinto might have been relegated to a footnote in a Mexican history book.

History Stop C

This is an ideal vantage point from which to survey the movements of the Texas Army as it prepared to attack on the afternoon of the 21st of April. But first let us talk about some of the events leading up to the attack.

The night of the 20th, after posting sentries, Sam Houston ordered his men to eat and rest, for they had had little sleep the previous night. Sam was worried, and he spent a sleepless night pondering his dilemma. His men were in an ugly mood. They were filled with frustrations and disgust. Many of them had been grumbling for days and weeks because their commander kept retreating, refusing to stand and fight the advancing Mexicans. On the 20th some of them had tasted battle, and all were straining at Houston's refusal to engage the enemy. They were brimming with vengeance for what Santa Anna had done at the Alamo and at Goliad. Some of the men had friends and relatives who had fallen at the hands of the dictator. Houston knew he could not hold them in check much longer.

The lack of discipline displayed in the near disastrous cavalry skirmish the previous afternoon bothered him deeply. His men were strong-willed individualists aching to fight. That they would fight, he could not doubt, but they were not properly trained, and they would be fighting an enemy superior in discipline and equipment. Houston knew that once unleashed in battle, they would be beyond his control.

Houston had stopped twice in his long retreat to train the men, but it was time mostly wasted, for men are obstinate when they are constantly wet and hungry. Rain, mud, and the lack of food hampered his training efforts severely.

Houston had Santa Anna where he wanted him, however – isolated from his main army with a force nearly equal to his own, he could not let him get away, nor could he wait much longer, for Mexican reinforcements might arrive at any time.

Sure enough, at 9:00 o'clock on the morning of the 21st, Santa Anna's brother-in-law, General Martin Perfecto de Cos, arrived with about 500 troops. The situation suddenly became critical. A small party under Sgt. Erastus "Deaf" Smith was sent to destroy Vince's Bridge on the main road to Harrisburg, over which Cos and Houston himself had crossed. Supposedly, Houston told Smith to hurry back, or he would miss the fighting.

Smith led his party of six mounted men rapidly to the bridge, about eight miles distant. It spanned Vince's Bayou, about a mile south of Buffalo Bayou, about three miles this side of Harrisburg. They used axes to cut the main supports and burned the remainder. This action would make further reinforcement of Santa Anna difficult and would cut off the retreat of either army. After insuring that the bridge would be destroyed, Smith headed back here.

Meanwhile, at noon, Houston called his first and only council of war with his officers. He listened to their pleas of attack, and their counsel about when to attack. But the men left the meeting disappointed, for nothing had been decided. Houston kept his thoughts to himself.

Finally at 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, Houston ordered his army to parade and he inspected the men. He polled his officers about their readiness to fight. At 4:00 o'clock he formed the battle lines.

History Stop C Cont'd

Colonel Sherman's volunteer infantry formed over there to the right, Colonel Lamar's cavalry gathered on the far left and here in the center were Houston and the main force of Colonel Burleson's volunteer infantry, Lt. Colonel Miller's regular infantry, and the "Twin Sisters", now commanded by Lt. Colonel George W. Hockley, who replaced the wounded J.C. Neal.

The Mexican camp was about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to the east, about 400 yards beyond the monument. The day had warmed, and the sun was at the Texan's backs as they slowly began their march toward the Mexican line.

Sherman's infantry proceeded along the edge of the marshes. Of course, that levee along the far side of the reflecting pool was not there then. He kept his regiment to the low ground to the left of the monument until they were almost upon the Mexican camp.

Lamar's cavalry circled around to the south, where the trees and brush are at the edge of the park, and attacked Santa Anna's cavalry camp from that side.

The main body of the army, with Houston in the lead and dragging the "Twin Sisters" through the mud, went straight forward, passing through the swale in front of us and keeping to the low ground over and to the right of the reflecting pool. They emerged on high ground just this side and to the right of the monument, and continued for about another 100 yards before being detected, 200-300 yards short of Mexican line.

By the way, Deaf Smith and his party returned from Vince's Bridge just in time to participate in the battle.

History Stop D

Santa Anna, with his force of about 1,000 men, established his camp across this rise during the afternoon of April 20, while his single piece of artillery, the “Golden Standard”, was firing on the Texas camp from a position about a half-mile to the east, beyond the monument.

Once Santa Anna realized that he faced a force nearly equal to his own, and that his enemy had somehow obtained two artillery pieces, he ordered breastworks erected in front of the camp. The breastworks were located along where the tree line is now, about a hundred yards to the west, and were made up of packsaddles, trunks, and other baggage carried by the army. When the “Golden Standard” was withdrawn from the field in late afternoon, it was positioned in the center of the makeshift barricades.

The camp sprawled across this high ground and back to the north and east toward the marshes and south for 200-300 yards. There were many tents and the camp formation was surely orderly and in keeping with strict military procedures.

Santa Anna’s men were a mixture of professional companies of veterans from Guadalajara, Toluca, Aldama, Guerrero, and Matamoras, and peasant conscripts from those areas of Mexico through which the army had passed. They were reasonably well-equipped, well-disciplined, and orderly. Their dress uniforms were of the classic Napoleonic style – blue and red with white leather accoutrements and white and gold trim. They also wore a white cotton fatigue uniform, in which they are so often, and improperly, portrayed.

The Mexican “soldado’s” weaponry was the standard .75 caliber English flintlock musket equipped with a bayonet, commonly called the Brown Bess”. Models of this weapon had been produced by the English and sold to nations worldwide since the 1760’s and were the primary weapon on both sides of the American Revolution. Their effective range with reasonable accuracy was probably no more than fifty yards, and less than most of the weapons carried by their adversaries on this field. The infantrymen also carried sabers, but only the cavalymen would have been armed with pistols.

Santa Anna’s troops were consistently better fed than the Texans. Provisions were confiscated in every little town before it was put to the torch. Santa Anna himself is reputed to have lived sumptuously in the field.

When his army settled down for the night on the 20th, Santa Anna, like Houston, was faced with a dilemma. He surely realized the predicament into which he had gotten himself. Through his relentless pursuit of the “land Thieves,” as he called the Texans, he had isolated himself from his main forces. And he had lost his normal overwhelming superiority of numbers; the enemy across the way was nearly equal to his own forces. Santa Anna obviously anticipated that Houston would attack at first light, because he posted an extensive watch and had his troops rest in battle formation with their weapons at hand.

Santa Anna’s men knew their predicament, as well. They had penetrated deeply into an alien territory. They had been on the march for months, and had lost many comrades to the elements during the winter. The weather had been horrible; the rains of the cold spring had worn on their stamina and their spirits. Santa Anna’s army was 1000 miles from home, demoralized, nearing total exhausting, and now they faced an enemy bent on avenging the deeds of their commander-in-chief. When the order came for them to sleep with their weapons in battle formation, something they had not done on this campaign, surely fear and uncertainly seeped into the ranks. It is doubtful that few, if any, slept more than fitfully that night.

History Stop D Cont'd

When the dawn passed without an attack, Santa Anna undoubtedly relaxed a little, rejoicing in the fact that Houston again had refused to engage him in open battle. This would give him more time for reinforcements to arrive.

At 9:00 on the morning of the 21st, Santa Anna's prayers were answered. His brother-in-law, General Martin Perfecto de Cos arrived with 500 troops. They were not the "crack" veterans he had asked for, but with this increase in numbers, he apparently felt even more confident that Houston would not attack, and that the field would be his for the taking.

The arrival of Cos' reinforcements seemed to break the tension in the Mexican camp. The new troops established their camp on unoccupied ground to the north, toward the marshes, and immediately retired for much-needed sleep. The remainder of the army stacked their arms and relaxed. Neither Santa Anna nor any of his subordinate officers, some of them excellent military tacticians, saw fit to keep sentries posted. This oversight proved fatal.

The atmosphere in this camp late that afternoon was relaxed, seemingly comfortable and confident in the two-to-one numerical, superiority they enjoyed. Most of the new troops in Cos' camp were still asleep, those that weren't resting were busying themselves with cooking and eating. Throughout the remainder of the camp soldiers were relaxing; several games of "Monte," a card game, were being played. Santa Anna was in his tent.

This brings us to the most famous, or notorious, controversy about the events of April 21, 1836. That Santa Anna was in his tent is an uncontested fact. Just what he was doing in his tent is the core of the controversy. He later claimed he was asleep. But the story soon spread that he was having a rendezvous with a woman, Emily Morgan, a slave on the plantation of James Morgan at Morgan's Point, near New Washington, which the army had burned two days before. Emily Morgan, whether real or fictitious, became known as "The Yellow Rose of Texas."

No record or mention of the presence of a woman on the battlefield exists. Santa Anna's own officers, who later castigated his actions, never mentioned this allegation. The only evidence, and very weak at that, is a cryptic statement written by one of the Texans present: "Our victory was aided by Santa Anna's voluptuousness." One can read what he or she wants into that statement, with its very strange choice of a word ---- at least with respect to its modern meanings.

Whether the "Yellow Rose" was real or fictitious will never be settled. But when someone cried out that the Texans were attacking, it was already too late for Santa Anna – no matter if she was in his tent or not.

History Stop E

We are standing about in the center of the line of Mexican breastworks of packsaddles, trunks and other baggage. It was along this line that the Texans made their final assault at 4:30 in the afternoon of April 21, 1836.

If you have been to the history stop in the Mexican camp, you know that they were totally unprepared for battle that afternoon. They had not even posted sentries, so were taken completely by surprise when the Texans attacked.

The Texans main force, under Sam Houston, camp up over the edge of that rise, just to the left of the monument, and advanced to within 200-300 yards of this spot before being detected. When they saw that they had been detected, they charged forward in double-quick time. The loaded "Twin Sisters" were fired. According to tradition, the little Texan band of fifes and a drummer struck up the tune of "Will You Come to the Bower?" a popular song of the day.

Somewhere along the charging line, someone cried out, "Remember the Alamo! Remember La Bahia!" The rallying yell was picked up and spread along the line. Later Mexican accounts of the battle mentioned how the screaming of the Texans terrified the troops.

Let us pause briefly to mention the differences in battle tactics employed by the two armies. The Mexicans were trained in the traditional European fashion, with ranks of rifleman kneeling and firing, then stepping back to reload in orderly fashion – in an almost gentlemanly manner. The Texans, on the other hand, were more of a guerilla-type force, charging and firing at will, then pausing to reload before charging again a most ungentlemanly way to conduct a proper battle. The comparison can be made between this battle and the Battle of New Orleans in 1814 and with several pitched battles during the American Revolution. On this battlefield, the Mexican army never had the chance to form its defensive ranks.

Back to the battle. The Texans held their fire until they were within about sixty yards of this line, about where that second tree is located. Some of the Mexican troops rallied quickly to the line. The "Golden Standard" fired the first volley of the two it would fire during the battle.

Over to the right, Colonel Sherman's volunteer infantry swarmed up out of the marshes and struck hard and quick at the camp of General Cos' recently arrived reinforcements. Most were still sleeping when the attack began. Some of their rifles were never unstacked, as the Texans poured through the part of the camp meeting little resistance.

Here in the center, the fighting was soon hand-to-hand here along the line of breastworks. Houston directed the fighting from his horse out in front of the line. He had two horses shot from beneath him, the second time he himself was wounded, with a rifle ball in his right ankle. That marker at the end of the road commemorates his having been wounded, but is not likely to be the spot where it happened, for it is 90 yards away, beyond the effective range of Mexican rifles. He mounted again to direct the battle.

History Stop E Cont'd

The “Golden Standard” was captured, loaded with its third charge, but unfired. It was located about where that cannon is situated. That is not the original cannon, nor is it a replica. The breastworks were soon breached, and Burleson’s volunteers and Millard’s regulars entered the Mexican camp. Organized resistance lasted 18 minutes.

As soon as it was apparent that the Texans would breach the lines and overwhelm the camp, the dispirited Mexican soldiers began to flee in all directions, many dropping their weapons, if they had picked them up to begin with.

Over to the northeast, near the marshes on the backside of the camp, the final resistance was met. Colonel Juan Almonte, Santa Anna’s aide, valiantly managed to rally a sizable group of fleeing soldiers and organize them to hold their ground and fight. But these efforts were short-lived, as the Texans quickly overwhelmed them.

The soldiers fled into the marshes to the north, into the mire of Boggy Bayou, just behind the camp, just beyond the restroom facility, and to the open prairie to the south, leading to the New Washington and Harrisburg roads.

Sometime early in the battle, Santa Anna emerged from his tent, and, according to the later accounts of his subordinates, stood wringing his hands, unable to give orders or establish enough authority to mount a defense or a counterattack. When he realized that all was lost, he mounted a nearby horse and fled toward the prairie and the road to the Brazos River and the remainder of his army. Had he not been captured the next day, this battle might not have meant much.

This is generally where the junior high and high school textbooks end the story of the Battle of San Jacinto, with the end of the “18 minutes of glory.” But there is more, and it could be called, appropriately, the “90 minutes of gore.”

As the Texans routed the camp, as we have said, many Mexican soldiers fled, filled with terror, toward the marshy terrain behind and to the north of the camp. Many of the Texans, filled with vengeance for the execution of so many of their number at the Alamo and Goliad, continued killing. Using their rifles as clubs until they broke at the breach, then picking up Mexican rifles, with bayonets, they continued the slaughter with blind hatred.

Some Mexican soldiers, stumbling through the quagmire of the marshes in an attempt to get to the river and swim to safety, were shot or stabbed. Some fell, begged for mercy, crying “Me no Alamo! Me no Alamo!” The pleas went unheeded. The shallow water along the San Jacinto soon ran crimson.

Houston and numerous other officers and men tried in vain to stop the senseless slaughter. Houston wanted to regroup his forces; he feared that more reinforcements would arrive at any time. This battle was won, he was afraid of another.

Finally, an hour and a half later, just before sundown, the killing stopped. The captured Mexican soldiers were grouped and put under guard. The few Texans with medical training began to treat the wounded, first the Texans, then the Mexicans. A makeshift hospital was set up across Buffalo Bayou, at Lorenzo de Zavala’s plantation. All throughout the night the air was pierced by the screams of the wounded and dying.

The final casualty count was: 630 Mexican soldiers killed, about 200 wounded, and just fewer than 700 captured. The Texans had 8 killed and 30 wounded. The bloody battle of San Jacinto was finally over.

Frequently Asked Questions

Most of the questions asked by the public will deal with people and events covered more extensively at other stops. Answer these as briefly as possible and direct the person to the history stop program which covers their question in detail. Familiarize yourself with all information. There will be, however, questions not covered in the briefing material. The following are a few which might be anticipated, along with sufficient information to give an answer.

1. **What happened to Sam Houston after the battle?** He left the battleground on May 5, turning his command over to Thomas J. Rusk. He sailed to Galveston, then to New Orleans for medical treatment. His wound finally healed and he returned to Texas in August. He was elected President of the Republic, and was inaugurated at Columbia in October.
2. **How old was Sam Houston?** He was born in Virginia on March 2, 1793, so he was 43 years old. He died at Huntsville, on July 26, 1863, at the age of 70.
3. **What happened to Santa Anna?** He was taken to Velasco where he signed a treaty. Then he was sent to Washington, D.C. where he met with American officials, then returned to New Orleans, where he boarded a ship and went back to Mexico.
4. **How old was Santa Anna?** He was born on February 21, 1794 in Vera Cruz, and was 42 years old at the time of the battle. He died in Mexico City, on June 22, 1876 at the age of 82.
5. **What happened to the prisoners?** The government could not afford to feed the prisoners, so they were farmed out to farmers and ranchers in the area as laborers. Most eventually returned to Mexico, but some stayed and became Texas citizens.
6. **When was the monument built?** The monument and the reflecting pool were completed in 1939. Refer other questions about the park to the park brochure.
7. **What happened to the bodies of the dead Mexican soldiers?** The bodies remained lying on the battleground for the rest of the Spring and most of the Summer. The Widow McCormick and others complained to the government, but nothing was done, officially. Finally, folks in the neighborhood gathered the remains and buried them in a common grave at an unknown location.

There may be questions about the discrepancies between what we say and the information on the 20 Granite markers located around the park. If so, just tell them that those were placed there in the 1930's, and that more recent research has proven some of them to be incorrect.

Please keep notes on questions you are unable to answer, and one of our staff will try to come up with the answer; in case it might be asked again.

Thank you for visiting us here at San Jacinto Battleground/Battleship TEXAS State Historic Site, and we hope everyone enjoyed their walking historic tour hike. Let us know if there is anything any of us can do for you.

San Jacinto Battlefield Award

To qualify for this award, units must meet to following requirements:

1. Hike the San Jacinto Battleground.
2. Participate in the Guided Hike or Self-Guided History Program.
3. Submit the completed report form and fees (see below).

Upon qualification, units may purchase one San Jacinto Battlefield patch for each participant meeting the above requirements.

San Jacinto Battlefield Report

Unit Number: (Pack),(Troop),(Post), (Crew) _____

District: _____

Council: _____

Our unit has qualified for the San Jacinto Battlefield award as follows:

Date: _____

Total Patches: _____ @ \$2.25 each = _____ enclosed.

Deposit to Account # 1-6301-011-90

Mail Awards To:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

I hereby certify that the above unit has observed all rules of the hike and met all requirements for the award.

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____

Position: _____

Mail To:

San Jacinto Battlefield Award
Sam Houston Area Council, B.S.A.
2225 North Loop West, Suite B
Houston, TX 77008