After watching immigrants stream across the border into Texas year after year, government officials on the Texas side began to worry that their state was being transformed into a part-Mexican, part-Anglo society that would prove unmanageable and ungovernable as the growing number of immigrants asserted their political power. Some immigrants entered lawfully, patiently working through the government's cumbersome process; others came without regard for the laws, exploiting a border that was too long and too remote to be effectively monitored. Most of the new immigrants proved to be both hardworking and enterprising additions to Texas's society and economy. Many brought their families for a chance at a better life or planned to bring family along as soon as they earned enough money to do so. A few crossed the border to escape legal and financial problems back home and contributed to criminal enterprises or squandered their wages on alcohol and vice, eventually abandoning their families. Established residents worried that they would become foreigners in their own country or doubted that their new neighbors would ever prove anything but a challenge, since many newcomers refused to assimilate or adopt the politics and culture of their new home. Many of the new arrivals stubbornly clung to their native tongue; some even began to demand that official business be conducted in it.

The government felt that much of the problem lay on the other side of the border. Some of these immigrants seemed to be entering the state to foment change, and many had strong ties to political leaders back home. Sam Houston, the former governor of Tennessee, was a close political and personal friend of U.S. president Andrew Jackson. Davy Crockett, also a product of Jackson’s Democratic Party in Tennessee,
had served in the U.S. Congress and was one of the more dynamic political figures of the day. It seemed likely that his political ambitions had followed him to Texas.

Many of the early Texans who fought for independence from Mexico came to Texas against the expressed wishes of the Mexican government. Whereas early American colonists along the Eastern Seaboard settled among, and then pushed aside, the more loosely organized Native American populations, some early Texans violated a border officially recognized by the American government as they brushed aside Mexican law. The immigration issue—today as then—represents the challenge of governing a rapidly changing state. While immigrants today generate a great deal of revenue for the state through sales and income taxes, they also cost the counties and local governments a great deal in services. Immigrants contribute greatly to the economic success of the state by meeting the demand for inexpensive labor, but they sometimes do so at the expense of native-born labor.

Immigration, then and now, shows us that Texas’s placement at the crossroads between new and old has been one of the few constants in the politics of the state. Texas has relished its growth but has often been uncomfortable with the new arrivals who have fueled it. Texans have enjoyed the prosperity that growth brings but have only reluctantly accepted the new Texans and the changes they have triggered.

While change may be inevitable, a society is rooted by the stories citizens share and hand down from generation to generation. We Texans are especially attached to our state’s history and its legends of larger-than-life people and events. Stories from Texas history are more than dramatic scenes we retell and re-create for entertainment; these stories define who we are and remind us of our values. Texas’s unique relationship with its history is reflected in a favorite theme park, Six Flags Over Texas, an amusement park originally constructed around Texas history themes and that at one time featured rides such as “La Salle’s River Boat Adventure” in the French section and “Los Conquistadores Mule Pack Coronado Trek” in the Spanish section.¹ Like the state it represents, the theme park has undergone constant change since its inception. Today, the legends portrayed at Six Flags Over Texas are decidedly modern, and tourists are more likely to pose for pictures with Batman and Bugs Bunny in front of gleaming metal roller coasters than with the costumed deputies who duel horse thieves in front of the replica county courthouse.

Legends are stories passed down for generations—but stories that are often presented as history. While not always entirely true, legends play an important role in politics. Legends reveal a desire to be culturally connected to our fellow citizens and to a larger entity, and they also tell us a great deal about who we want to be.
So where, between legend and reality, is the true Texas? Even as it takes care to project a rustic frontier image, Texas today is home to many of the most innovative businesses in the global marketplace. Greg Abbott launched his campaign for governor in La Villita near the Alamo in San Antonio, but he did so in front of a large video screen that flashed his message digitally to the crowd. Thus, even as they remember the Alamo and the rest of Texas’s past, the leaders of Texas today embrace new technology as well as the state’s oldest traditions.

In this chapter, we will chart the contours of this gap. We will start by looking at Texas history and geography, casting an eye toward the traditions and transformations that have shaped the state’s politics. We will examine some of the legends behind Texas politics and highlight the differences between Texas and another one-time independent U.S. state. We will conclude the chapter by focusing on the state of Texas today—its people, economy, and culture.

TEXAS GEOGRAPHY

The landmass of Texas defines the state’s image as much as it has determined the course of its history. With a land area totaling 263,513 square miles, it is the second largest of the U.S. states, behind Alaska’s 663,276 square miles. From east to west, the state spans 773 miles and from north to south 801 miles. The 785-mile drive from Marshall to El Paso takes a traveler from the Piney Woods of East Texas to the sparse landscape of the West Texas desert. Driving the 900 miles north from Brownsville to Texline takes the traveler from the border of Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico to the borders of Oklahoma and New Mexico. The Texas Gulf Coast consists of shoreline and marshy areas, while the Trans-Pecos region includes the arid desert of Big Bend and Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas at 8,749 feet.

Texas runs the full gamut from urban to rural. The state’s most populous county, Harris County, which contains Houston, had 4,652,980 residents in 2017, making it more populous than half the states in the United States. All told, the state is home to five counties with populations over one million. Texas also has some of the nation’s least populated counties, with Loving County’s 677 square miles in the Panhandle occupied by only 134 residents. The state has eight counties with populations under 1,000, and about one-third (eighty-six) of Texas’s 254 counties have populations under 10,000.

Texas’s size encourages more than bragging rights. V. O. Key, a native Texan and one of the founders of modern political science, pointed out that the geographic size of the state has limited the face-to-face interactions needed to develop closely knit political organizations. While this helped inoculate Texas from the large party machines that corrupted politics in many other states during the nineteenth century, it has also inhibited the formation of beneficial groups that would bring together more benevolent forces from across the state.

The state’s size makes campaigning expensive for candidates trying to win votes statewide and has left the state’s politicians more dependent on those capable of financing a statewide campaign. The sheer size of the state has also rewarded a dramatic style. As Key observed after surveying the electoral history of his home state, “attention-getting antics substituted for organized politics.” In the absence of closely
knit state political networks, and given Texans’ fondness for independence, the path to power for the political outsider may be a little bit easier. The ability to quickly grab the imagination of voters has given Texas politics a colorful cast of characters rivaled by few other places. Texas’s political candidates are often larger than life, and while change has been a constant in Texas politics, subtlety is often lacking. These colorful characters often make for good storytelling, but they do not always make for good government. As former lieutenant governor Ben Barnes once mused as he looked out at the Texas Senate, “there were more eccentric, unpredictable, and flat crazy characters than you’d find in any novel.”

Size has contributed to the state’s mentality in other ways. With its seemingly endless frontier, Texas represents limitless potential to many. At the same time, its spaciousness offers an escape that reinforces Texans’ sense of independence and freedom. With Texans dispersed across such an extensive landscape, history and legends become even more important as a shared culture. The vast geographic distances and the differences in human geography leave many wondering exactly what it is that binds so tightly all these people from all these places and makes them into such fiercely loyal Texans. The answer, of course, is Texas’s unique history. As John Steinbeck wrote, “there is no physical or geographical unity in Texas. Its unity lies in the mind.”

While Texas’s history unites its citizens, it also represents a long string of transitions that brought with them conflict between old and new. As we will see, the Texas political system has often resisted the needs and wishes of new arrivals because those that preceded them were reluctant to give up the power for which they had fought. While this pattern is not unique to Texas, Texas’s history offers a vivid tableau of upheaval along the hard road of change.

**HISTORY: THE BIRTH OF TEXAS TRADITIONS**

The first wave of change began about 12,000 years ago when humans who had drifted into North America some 20,000 years ago eventually found their way into Texas. These earliest Texans hunted mammoths before those large animals became extinct. Later, bison served as a primary food source on the grassy plains that covered present-day West Texas. As changes in the climate began to warm the plains, the land could no longer support the large mammals the hunting tribes depended on, and as a result, hunter-gatherer tribes became more prevalent.

As with native people from other parts of the continent, the Native American tribes of Texas were diverse. About 1,500 years ago, the Caddo people developed agricultural tools and practices that gave them a more stable food supply, which meant less need to roam and more time to form a society with social classes and to establish trading relations with other tribes. By 1500, an estimated 200,000 Caddos inhabited a society that was extensive enough to lead some historians to call the Caddos the “Romans of Texas.” Along the Gulf Coast, the Karankawa tribe relied on fish and shellfish for much of their diet. Dubbed cannibals by some, the Karankawas ate only their enemies and were in fact so shocked to learn that the Spanish survivors of the Narváez expedition had cannibalized each other that some Karankawas expressed regret at not having killed the Spanish explorers when they first came
ashore. Coahuiltecan tribes roamed the area southwest of the Karankawas, surviving on a diverse diet of whatever they could gather or catch. Because subsistence needs forced them to move about the prairies, these small hunter-gatherer bands lacked the cohesive society that developed among tribes such as the Caddos. The Apaches, who inhabited areas of what would become the Texas Panhandle, lived in large, extended families in a peaceful and well-ordered society.

Christopher Columbus's first voyage brought great change to the Texas region as the Spanish Empire in America began to take root in the Caribbean, Central America, and the Southwest. As would many others after them, the conquistadores Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and Hernán Cortés visited the region seeking wealth. One of the most significant instruments of change the Spanish brought with them was the horse. Even though the Spanish forces were never a large enough presence to transform the region, the horses they brought changed American Indian society by giving some tribes the means to move their camps more quickly and become more effective hunters and warriors.

The French, led by René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, managed only a brief presence in Texas. La Salle, who, in the view of one historian, had the sort of personality and exhibited the kind of behavior that "led many to question his mental stability," had an ambitious plan to build a series of posts down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico, claim all the land drained by the Mississippi, and name it Louisiana in honor of the French king Louis XIV. La Salle's venture into Texas failed, and La Salle himself was killed in an ambush. However, La Salle's incursions spurred the Spanish to increase their settlement of East Texas to counter any future French arrivals.

Although relative newcomers themselves, the Spanish, like the American Indian tribes before them, were suspicious of the motives of new arrivals and sought to bar outsiders; they attempted to strengthen their hold on the area by encouraging their own people to establish or expand settlements in the area. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the Spanish gradually established themselves in Texas through a system of missions and presidios (forts). The missions were designed to bring American Indians closer to God while pushing the French away from the area. Native Americans in the area showed little interest in converting to Catholicism, however, and the Spanish had to supplement their religious outposts with presidios. Given the high costs of maintaining these forts, Spanish investments in the area ultimately proved inadequate, and by the 1790s, there were fewer than 3,200 Spanish-speaking people in Texas.

Building a border wall to keep American immigrants out of Spanish territory was out of the question, but Spanish officials declared in 1795 that local officials should take "the utmost care to prevent the passage to this kingdom of persons from the United States of America." In one of the first recorded verbal assaults on immigrants, one Spanish official colorfully warned that the American immigrants "are not and will not be anything but crows to pick out our eyes." Despite the efforts of Spanish officials, the tides of change proved too strong to resist, and eventually the Spanish government resorted to giving citizens of the United States land grants to settle in Louisiana (before that territory was acquired by France in 1800). While recruiting Anglo settlers from the United States to serve as a buffer against intrusion by the U.S. government seems self-defeating, the Spanish
government had little choice. Many in Spain realized that closing off Texas was futile. Spanish officials hoped that by abandoning Florida and negotiating the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, which established clear boundaries between Spanish and U.S. claims, American interest would be diverted away from Texas long enough for Spain to build a stronger presence there.

The Spanish legacy in Texas can be seen on any Texas map, as every major river except the Red River bears a Spanish name. Spanish rule also left a different, but particularly Texan, kind of mark: a 1778 Spanish proclamation stated that all unbranded cattle were property of the king, which led to the practice of cattle branding to identify ownership.

The roots of the organized Anglo settlement of Texas in the early nineteenth century can be traced to the last years of Spanish rule in Texas. A Missouri resident, Moses Austin, visited Texas in 1820 in hopes of winning the legal right to form colonies in the area. Unfortunately, the return trip took its toll on Austin after his horses were stolen, and he died soon after returning to Missouri, though not before expressing the hope that his son Stephen would carry on the endeavor. In fact, Stephen F. Austin had little interest in serving as an empresario (an entrepreneur who made money colonizing areas), and Texas was initially a somewhat unwanted inheritance. However, Austin, a canny businessman, came to see the potential of the land and ultimately warmed to his task.

**Mexican Independence**

The next round of change began on September 16 (still celebrated by many Tejanos—Texans of Mexican origin—as Diez y Seis de Septiembre) when Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla launched the Mexican War of Independence against Spain through his revolutionary “Call of Hidalgo” (also known as the “Grito de Dolores”), which demanded that those born in the New World be endowed with the same rights as those born in Europe. Mexican independence ended Spanish control of Texas, but it did not end the desire of local authorities to stop the growing trickle of immigrants from the United States. The fledgling Mexican government eventually approved Austin's colonization plan in the hope that legal settlers brought by authorized empresarios like Austin would become loyal to the Mexican government rather than their U.S. roots.

By 1824, Austin had assembled the 300 families allowed under his initial contract and begun to settle in Texas. While these colonists suffered more than their share of hardships, Austin’s colonies prospered so much that he received four additional contracts to bring settlers to the area over the next seven years. In what would become a
familiar problem in Texas, the same opportunities that drew legal settlers and other empresarios to the colonies of Austin also drew illegal immigrants unwilling to deal with the encumbrance of law. Soon Austin and other empresarios found themselves laboring to protect their legal colonies from a flood of illegal squatters.

By the 1830s, there were about 10,000 Anglo settlers in Texas. Some came to Texas hoping to make money quickly in land speculation, but most were subsistence farmers looking for a chance to own land and control their own destiny. Some were fleeing financial ruin brought on by the Panic of 1819; others came to Texas to escape legal problems in American states. Tensions between the Anglos and the Mexican government developed as a result of differences in political culture and the Mexican government’s insistence on Spanish as the official language. In addition, many Anglo settlers were Protestants who resented the Mexican government’s requirement that they become Catholics. Finally, some wanted to use their land to produce cotton, a cash crop that depended heavily on the labor of the approximately 1,000 slaves they brought with them. This, too, created conflict, as the Mexican government was opposed to slavery. In fact, the risk of losing their slaves kept many wealthy southern plantation owners from moving into Texas.

The Texas Revolution

The tension between the Mexican government and the Anglo settlers eventually turned into that most dramatic political transformation—revolution. Initially, Anglo settlers were divided on the issues of revolution and independence. Stephen F. Austin and many of the established settlers advocated a moderate course, asking for separate statehood within the Mexican nation. The Mexico Constitution required that Texas have a population of 80,000 before becoming a state, a number far greater than the 30,000 inhabiting the area at the time. During the early 1830s, the Mexican government granted some of the Anglos’ other requests: the right to trial by jury and the official use of the English language. Despite these concessions, many Anglos remained unhappy and began to openly defy the Mexican government. When Texans in Gonzales fired on Mexican troops who came to take away the cannon the town used for its defense, the Texas Revolution began.

Tejanos were in a difficult position. In the 1820s, about 4,000 Tejanos inhabited the region, including many former soldiers who had been stationed in the area and remained after leaving military service. Many had become community leaders and owned large ranches. While Anglo settlers were unhappy about life under the Mexican government, Tejanos were uneasy about the possibility of living under the rule of Anglo settlers, many of whom considered Mexicans and their culture inferior. At the same time, Tejanos shared the concerns of Anglo settlers who did not want a central government in Mexico City controlling their fate and hampering their economic development.

The politics of the independence movement was often chaotic. When Mexican president Antonio López de Santa Anna became less tolerant toward the Texans’ aspirations and sent troops to enforce his laws, the Texans began to mobilize politically, calling for a meeting to organize their response. They termed the meeting the “Consultation” of the people of Texas to avoid drawing the ire of Mexican officials.
with the label “convention,” which implied the authority to rewrite the constitution. The Consultation assembled on November 1, 1835, and on November 13 passed the Organic Law. This law created a government with a governor, lieutenant governor, and the General Council, which comprised representatives from each geographic district. Henry Smith, the leader of the more radical group favoring immediate independence, was elected governor by a 30–22 vote, beating out Stephen F. Austin, who clung to a more moderate course. Perhaps Texans should have worried more about their choice. Smith had been married to—and quickly widowed by—two sisters in succession, only to marry a third sister, the twin of his second wife. Smith’s political relationships died even more quickly than his romantic relationships. Smith resisted compromise and suspended the General Council. Meanwhile, the council impeached him after less than four months in office. The effect of all this was a government paralyzed.

The revolution was further hamstrung when the council created a regular army under the command of Sam Houston without formally bringing the volunteers already in the field under Houston’s command. The volunteers were notorious for their autonomy and lack of discipline, as Austin would find out on November 23 when he ordered them to attack Mexican troops in Bexar, only to have his order refused.

Voters on February 1, 1836, elected representatives to serve as delegates to a new convention that began deliberations on March 1. Shunning most of the more cautious men who had served in the earlier Consultation and in the General Council, Texans chose younger men, many of whom were newcomers—nearly half of the fifty-nine delegates had lived in Texas fewer than two years. They met in the town of Washington (on the Brazos River) in part because local business owners provided a building without charge. There the delegates adopted, without debate, a declaration of independence drafted by George C. Childress, who had been in Texas for fewer than eight months. The convention continued meeting until it completed the Constitution of the Republic of Texas on March 17. The constitution protected slavery and permitted a freed slave to live in Texas only with the permission of the Texas Legislature. A government ad interim, made up of the members of the constitutional convention, was empowered to run the affairs of the state. One of the first orders of business was the election of David G. Burnet as Texas’s first president. For vice president, the convention selected Lorenzo de Zavala, who had served as Mexican minister to Paris under Santa Anna but left his post when Santa Anna claimed dictatorial powers in 1835.

While united by their struggle against the Mexican government, the revolutionary leaders of Texas often fought among themselves even after independence was won. After Houston’s ankle was shattered in the Battle of San Jacinto on
April 21, 1836, President Burnet denied the victorious general permission to leave for New Orleans to seek medical treatment. Burnet eventually relented when the captain of the boat Houston was set to embark on refused to take anyone at all if he was not allowed to take Houston.

The Republic of Texas

On September 5, 1836, Sam Houston was elected president of the Republic of Texas by a landslide, receiving 5,119 votes compared to 743 for Henry Smith and only 586 for Stephen F. Austin. The Constitution of the Republic of Texas also won approval from voters, as did a referendum on pursuing annexation to the United States. With over 3,000 citizens voting to seek annexation and fewer than 100 objecting, Texas’s interest in joining the United States was clear from its first day of independence.

The government was temporarily located in Columbia but soon moved to a new town located on Buffalo Bayou that backers, much to the new president’s delight, suggested be named Houston. The new capital city, like much of the republic, was improvised; the legislature met in an unfinished capitol building with tree branches forming the roof.

While the period of Texas independence was relatively brief, it was neither simple nor quiet. The population of Texas doubled. Just after the revolution in 1836, Texas had about 30,000 Anglos; 5,000 black slaves; 3,470 Tejanos; and 14,500 American Indians. By 1847, its “white” population (including 12,000–14,000 persons of Mexican descent) had soared to 102,961 and its black population had climbed to 39,048 (38,753 slaves and 295 freed blacks).

Change was not limited to population. While the republic’s second president, Mirabeau B. Lamar, helped develop the Texas education system, his administration proved disastrous for the American Indian tribes living in Texas. Houston had worked to build friendships with Texas’s tribes, but Lamar sought to eradicate them. During the three years of the Lamar administration, the Republic of Texas’s debt skyrocketed from $2 million to $7 million and the value of its currency plummeted. Lamar opposed annexation by the United States at a time when the United States was expressing doubts of its own. Sam Houston returned to the presidency only after a bruising political battle. Once back in office, Houston helped make peace with the American Indians and brought fiscal discipline back to government, spending one-tenth of what Lamar had spent.

The path to statehood would not be as simple as Houston hoped. In the United States, northern interests in the U.S. Congress, led by John Quincy Adams, balked at bringing another slave state into the nation. Houston managed to stir U.S. interest by making overtures to European powers—a course of action designed to pique the jealousy of the United States and make it wary of foreign intervention along its borders. As threats from Mexico continued into the 1840s, Texas turned to England and France for help in obtaining the release of Texas soldiers imprisoned in Mexican jails. Houston also positioned Texas for future bargaining by claiming for the republic disputed land reaching west and north as far as Wyoming, including portions of the Santa Fe Trail used for trade between the United States and Mexico. The Texas Congress went even further and passed (over Houston’s veto) a bill that claimed all the land south of the
forty-second parallel and west of Texas to the Pacific, as well as portions of Mexico—a claim that would have made Texas larger than the United States at the time.

**TEXAS STATEHOOD**

The issue of the annexation of Texas eventually became central to the 1844 U.S. presidential election when James K. Polk, the candidate backed by Andrew Jackson, campaigned for the acquisition of Texas. Texas’s expansive claim to territory was resolved when Henry Clay crafted a compromise whereby Texas accepted its present borders in return for a payment of $10 million. While the joint resolution inviting Texas to join the United States passed the U.S. House easily, it barely squeaked through the Senate, 27–25. John Quincy Adams and Texas’s opponents made one final, last-ditch effort to stop Texas statehood by asserting that the admission of Texas through a joint resolution was unconstitutional because that method of admission was not spelled out in the U.S. Constitution.

Texas called a convention for July 4, 1845, to approve annexation and draft a constitution to accommodate Texas’s new role as a U.S. state. The only vote in the Texas Legislature against entering the United States came from Richard Bache, who allegedly voted against annexation because he had come to Texas to escape his ex-wife and did not care to live in the same country with her again.11 Texas was able to retain ownership of its public lands, a term of annexation that other new states did not enjoy. The U.S. Congress accepted the state’s new constitution in December, and President James K. Polk signed the bill on December 29, 1845. Texas formally entered statehood on February 19, 1846.

A telling part of the residual folklore of Texas’s admission is the notion that Texas retains the right to secede—and if it so chooses, to reenter the United States as five separate states. The origins of this idea come from a compromise designed to overcome objections in the U.S. Congress to the original admission of Texas. The joint resolution that admitted Texas to the Union provided that Texas could be divided into as many as five states. New states north or west of the Missouri Compromise lines would be free; in states south of the compromise lines, a popular vote would determine the legality of slavery. However, the power to create new states ultimately rests with the U.S. Congress, and the right to divide was not reserved to Texas.

J. Pinckney Henderson earned the honor of serving as Texas’s first governor after winning the election by a large margin. Texas sent Sam Houston and Thomas Jefferson Rusk to serve as the state’s first two U.S. senators. Texas’s only Jewish member of Congress for 130 years was among its first: David Kaufman of Nacogdoches, a Philadelphia-born Jew who had worked as a lawyer in Mississippi before arriving in Texas, distinguishing himself as an Indian fighter, and then serving two terms as the Speaker of the Republic of Texas’s legislature. Kaufman was only the second Jewish member of the U.S. House, taking office the year after Lewis C. Levin became the nation’s first Jewish representative in 1845. Passed over in the selection of Texas’s first congressional delegation was Anson Jones, who had been sworn in as president of Texas on December 9, 1844. Jones was embittered by this perceived slight and set
about putting together his own volume of the history of the republic, published posthumously a year after Jones shot himself on the steps of the old capitol in Houston.

Americans who had resisted the admission of Texas for fear of provoking war with Mexico soon saw those fears realized when fighting broke out in 1846. Many historians believe that U.S. president Polk orchestrated the Mexican-American War by ordering General Zachary Taylor into territory near the mouth of the Rio Grande that Mexican officials had claimed was part of Mexico. Mexico responded by declaring a defensive war on April 23, with the United States responding with its own declaration of war on May 13. The Mexican-American War ended after troops under the command of U.S. general Winfield Scott moved into Mexico City. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed on February 2, 1848, recognizing the Rio Grande as the official boundary between Texas and Mexico. While the treaty offered assurances that the rights of erstwhile Mexican citizens who suddenly found themselves citizens of the United States would be protected, this promise proved fragile.

The rapid population growth following Texas’s annexation further transformed the state. However, not every group grew at an equal rate. Despite the general population surge, the Tejano population declined, and by the 1847 census, the 8,000 Germans in Texas were one of the largest ethnic minorities in a state with a total population of around 142,000, including 40,000 slaves and only 295 free people of color. Even though the Tejanos had fought for independence, many were forced to move to Mexico as the clash of Mexican and Anglo cultures intensified, marking one of just a few times in its history that Texas saw people moving away.

**Texas in the Confederacy**

The rise of cotton farming in Texas increased the importance of slavery to the Texas economy as production of cotton grew from 40,000 bales in 1848 to 420,000 bales in 1860. By 1860, Texans held 182,566 slaves, compared to a total population of 604,215. While much of Texas was becoming dependent on slave labor, Sam Houston battled slavery and in 1855 became one of the few southern members of Congress to publicly oppose it. Once again, Houston’s personal popularity was undone by an unpopular stand on the burning issue of the day. In 1857, two years before his term expired, the Texas Legislature voted to not return Houston to the Senate for another term, leaving Houston to serve the remainder of his term as a lame duck. Houston responded to the insult by running for governor in 1857. Over the course of this campaign, he traveled over 1,500 miles, visited forty-two cities, and gave endless speeches, many lasting as long as four hours. Despite his efforts, Houston lost the election to Hardin R. Runnels by a vote of 32,552 to 28,678. Houston’s loss came in part from his association with the anti-immigrant Know-Nothing Party, which proved unpopular among voters of Mexican and German ancestry who might otherwise have sympathized with Houston’s antislavery stance.

After serving out the remainder of his term, Houston left the U.S. Senate in 1859 to run once again for governor, hoping that when the South seceded from the Union he could lead Texas back to independence. This time, Houston was successful,
By the time he became a Texan and led Texas to independence, Sam Houston had gone through two wives and lots of alcohol and was, in the words of Texas historian James L. Haley, “considered in respectable circles as unsavory as he was colorful.” However, no one better reflects the reality that the greatness of Texas's legends can be found in less-than-perfect people, as Houston guided Texas through some of its most dramatic transitions.

In his youth, Houston generally preferred sneaking away to live among the American Indians to working in the family business. Houston distinguished himself during the War of 1812, serving bravely and winning the admiration of General Andrew Jackson. Houston followed Jackson, his new mentor, into politics and was sometimes mentioned as a successor to President Jackson. However, Houston's first marriage abruptly ended in 1827 in the middle of his term as governor of Tennessee and just two months after his wedding. His marriage over and his political career in ruins, Houston went to live again among the Cherokees. During this time, he took a Cherokee wife without entering into a formal Christian marriage. Over time, Houston's state of mind deteriorated and his hosts eventually stripped him of his original American Indian name (“The Raven”) and began to call him Oo-tse-tee Ar-deet-ah-skee (“The Big Drunk”). After abandoning his second wife and returning to public life in America, Houston narrowly avoided jail after assaulting a member of Congress who had insulted his integrity. Brought before Congress to face charges, Houston delivered an impassioned defense on his own behalf, allegedly because his lawyer, Francis Scott Key, was too hung-over to speak.

During the Texas Revolution, gossips frequently attributed Houston's disappearances to drinking binges rather than military missions. Some questioned his bravery and military leadership during the war. Many Texans wanted Houston to turn and fight the Mexican Army sooner, despite Houston's protest that his troops were undertrained and outnumbered. While most Texans sided with Houston after his victory at San Jacinto, criticisms of his conduct of the war reappeared in political campaigns for the rest of his career.

After leading Texas through the revolution, Houston continued to play a major role in the changes in the state while serving as Texas's first president during its years as an independent nation. Houston struggled in the years after the Texas Revolution to protect the Tejanos who had served alongside him during the war. Similarly, his years among the Cherokees and his continued fondness for them left him at odds with many Anglos who preferred to see Native Americans driven off or killed.

After playing a central role in winning Texas's entry into the United States, Houston's final political act was the struggle to keep Texas from seceding and joining the Confederacy. Houston disliked slavery and defied state law by freeing his own slaves. He had been one of few southern senators to speak out against slavery, a sentiment that led the Texas Legislature to vote against his return to the Senate. His final departure from politics came when he refused to support the secession of Texas in the American Civil War and, as a result, was forced by the legislature to resign his governorship. If Texans had followed Houston's leadership, the lives of many Texas soldiers would have been saved and the state spared postwar Reconstruction.

Houston finally settled down after marrying his third wife and finding redemption, but he never denied his faults. When asked if his sins had been washed away at his river baptism, Houston joked and said, “I hope so. But if they were all washed away, the Lord help the fish down below.”

However numerous his sins, Houston's principles make him a much more heroic historical figure than many of his more sober peers. From the moment Houston arrived in Texas, he became a central figure in the transformation of the state, and for thirty years he guided Texas through its most turbulent times. While Houston might not be able to be elected today, he did more to shape modern Texas than any other person.

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**Sam Houston**

How should Sam Houston’s contribution to Texas shape how voters think about elected officials?

**Personal Responsibility**

How do people’s personal lives shape how they can serve the public?

**Critical Thinking**


iii. Haley, Passionate Nation, 277.
defeating Runnels 33,375 to 27,500. Nonetheless, over the objections of Governor Houston, the Secession Convention was subsequently convened, and on February 1, 1861, it voted overwhelmingly in favor of secession. A few weeks later, voters statewide approved a secession ordinance by a three-to-one margin. The Secession Convention approved a requirement that all state officers swear an oath of loyalty to the Confederacy. After Houston refused to take the oath, the governor’s office was declared vacant.

The Confederate regime in Texas was a disaster for many. Not only were free blacks victimized, but Germans were targeted for harassment because of their opposition to slavery. Tejanos saw their land seized, and many Tejanos chose to align themselves with the Union. Some enlisted, becoming the heart of the Union’s Second Cavalry, while others fought as pro-Union guerrillas. Many pro-Union Anglos were forced to flee the state. William Marsh Rice, whose wealth would one day endow Rice University, had to leave Houston and move his businesses to Matamoros in Mexico.

**Reconstruction in Texas**

Northern rule arrived with the end of the Civil War on June 19, 1865, when Union forces under General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, bringing with them a proclamation ending slavery in Texas. That date, known as “Juneteenth” in Texas, was the day on which the slaves in Texas were actually freed, despite President Abraham Lincoln having signed the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863. While many transformations in Texas history involved the arrival of new citizens from outside the state, the end of slavery meant that former slaves were now new citizens in their old state. Joining with a small number of Anglo Republicans, African Americans helped elect Republicans to statewide offices and constitutional conventions.

Freedom proved a mixed blessing for the “freedmen.” While legally they were free, in practical terms freedmen endured horrendous intimidation and exploitation. State law would not recognize any marriage involving African American Texans until 1869. Although the Freedmen’s Bureau was created to help former slaves, the bureau’s efforts were sometimes limited by administrators who, while supporting the end of slavery, doubted the goal of racial equality. Texas, like other southern states, passed so-called Black Codes that were designed to limit the rights of the former slaves. In Texas, any person with one-eighth or more of Negro blood could not serve on a jury or vote. With local law enforcement often in the hands of Confederate sympathizers, African Americans relied on Union troops for protection. As elsewhere in the former Confederate states, the Ku Klux Klan became a vehicle for terrorizing former slaves and those sympathetic to their cause, as well as “carpetbaggers” (people from the North who came south to assist or cash in on Reconstruction) and “scalawags” (Republicans of local origin).

In January 1866, Texans elected delegates to a convention to draft a new state constitution aimed at winning the state readmission into the United States. However, the Texas Legislature seemed to have missed the news that the South had lost the war: the legislature refused to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment (ending slavery) and Fourteenth Amendment (guaranteeing equal rights) and instead drafted a framework of laws limiting the rights of freed slaves. The Constitution of 1866 failed to meet the
demands of the Radical Republicans, who had won control of the U.S. Congress in the 1866 election. While much has been made of the influx of carpetbaggers during this time, in fact the political transition to Republican control of Texas government during Reconstruction resulted less from an influx of outsiders from the northeast and more from freed slaves gaining the right to vote at the same time that supporters of the Confederacy lost their right to vote or hold office after Congress passed the Second Reconstruction Act. With most white Democrats purged both from office and from voting lists, the next constitutional convention was dominated by Republicans, who accounted for seventy-eight of the ninety delegates. The resulting Constitution of 1869 won for Texas readmission to the United States by including many provisions granting rights to freed slaves: the rights to vote, run for office, serve on juries, testify in court against whites, and attend public schools.

**The End of Reconstruction and Rise of the “Redeemers”**

Texas politics was transformed again when Reconstruction ended and more Confederate sympathizers were allowed to vote. The Democrats (the party of the white Confederate sympathizers) won control of the legislature in the election of 1872. Like the emancipation of the slaves, this transformation of Texas politics did not arise from an influx of new Texans but rather resulted from the renewal of citizenship of old citizens. Republican E. J. Davis was widely despised by Democrats, who considered him at best a symbol of northern oppression and at worst incredibly corrupt. Once in control of Texas government, the Democrats proclaimed themselves “Redeemers” and removed the last remnants of Republican rule. On August 2, 1875, the Texas Legislature authorized a new constitutional convention and elected three delegates each from the state’s thirty senatorial districts. None of the ninety members of the 1875 convention had been members of the convention that drafted the Constitution of 1869, and the partisan composition was dramatically different. Seventy-five members were Democrats while only fifteen were Republicans. At least forty were members of the Patrons of Husbandry, also called the Grange, an economic and political organization of farmers. Voters ratified the constitution on February 15, 1876, by a vote of 136,606 to 56,652.

The rise of the Redeemers and the impact of the Grange are especially important transitions in Texas politics because the constitution of this era remained in force long after the politics and politicians responsible for it had vanished. Texas has continued to change and grow, but the Texas Constitution has not been replaced since, only amended—piecemeal changes resulting in minor alterations to the basic design of 1876. The twenty-five years that followed the Civil War spawned the cowboy imagery that Texans still relish. It was during this brief period that the frontier truly existed, when Texas was in fact home to the quintessential rugged cowboy who tended large ranches and oversaw herds of cattle—a stereotype that has remained rooted in the Texan persona ever since. And even then, the image of Texas as the “Old West” was based on the lives of only a small number of Texans. Although Texans hold the legend of the cowboy in high esteem, the cowboy’s life was anything but glamorous. Most were young. About one-third were Hispanic or African American. The
ranch owners generally regarded them as common laborers on horseback, and the men who rode the range and drove the cattle were paid less than the trail cooks.¹⁴ By the 1890s, the fabled trail drives had come to an end, finished by drought, quarantines, barbed-wire fencing across the open range, and competition from the railroads.

The state government encouraged immigration in the last half of the nineteenth century to help settle and populate the western part of the state and drive off Native American tribes. Some state officials saw the immigration of white settlers and farmers as a means of counteracting the increase in former slaves, many of whom had become sharecroppers. Germans flooded into Texas, their numbers surging from 41,000 in 1870 to 125,262 in 1890; at this time, Texans of Mexican ancestry numbered only 105,193. While Texas west of Austin may have resembled the Wild West, most Texans resided in the eastern portion of the state, which resembled the “New South” that was emerging elsewhere out of the former Confederacy and was characterized by railroad networks and urbanized cities, such as Dallas.

The Era of Reform

As Texas transitioned from the farming and ranching of the nineteenth century to the industrial and oil economy of the twentieth century, the state began to struggle with the limits of the Constitution of 1876. In 1890, Attorney General James Stephen Hogg decided that his office lacked the resources to adequately enforce regulations on the state’s railroads. Hogg’s call for the creation of a railroad commission became a centerpiece of his campaign for governor. The railroads labeled Hogg “communistic,” but his economic and political reforms proved popular, and his election represented the first stirrings of the reform movement in Texas. While the creation of the Texas Railroad Commission was heralded as a means to achieve fair competition, in practice it was often used to restrict out-of-state railroads and protect Texas-based businesses from international competitors.

Frustrated by the lack of responsiveness from the Democrats to their needs, farmers organized the People’s Party, more commonly known as the Populist Party. While the populists were short-lived, their call for radical reforms, including public ownership of the railroads, and their willingness to reach out to black voters rattled the political order. After the populists were absorbed into the Democratic Party, the progressives took up the role of reform party. In contrast to the populists’ narrow base in agricultural communities, the progressives emerged in the 1890s as a broader reform movement attacking both the railroads that bedeviled the farmers and the big industries that challenged urban labor.
While progressive candidates for governor won elections, their legislative victories were limited. Thomas Campbell won the governorship in the election of 1906 only to see much of his progressive agenda hijacked or sidetracked by the legislature. Most crucially, Campbell was unable to win approval of statewide referenda and recall. Legislation requiring that insurance companies invest 75 percent of their premiums in Texas did change the way insurance companies operated, but this mainly benefited Texas businesses and drove foreign insurers from the state.

The progressive movement in Texas became consumed by the alcohol prohibition issue, in part because Texas politics lacked the large corporations and big-city political machines that energized the efforts of progressives in the North. Much of the prohibitionists’ efforts took place at the local level; they were especially successful at winning local option elections that outlawed drinking. In 1891, the Texas Legislature put a prohibitionist constitutional amendment before the state’s voters. The campaign was intense, and voters turned out at more than twice the rate they had in the previous gubernatorial election to narrowly reject the amendment by a 237,393 to 231,096 vote.

While the emergence of a new Texas economy early in the twentieth century and the reforms of the progressive movement captured the attention of many voters, others remained fixated on the old issues of race and the Civil War. In a struggle that foreshadows today’s battle over the history that is taught in Texas’s classrooms, Governor Oscar Branch Colquitt struggled in his 1912 reelection bid because he had criticized the state textbook board for rejecting a history book because it contained a photograph of Abraham Lincoln. Meanwhile, voters flocked to see Colquitt’s opponent, William Ramsay, who played upon southern sentiments in his speeches and had bands play “Dixie” during campaign events. Prohibition was a hotly contested issue on its own and reflected old racial hatreds as alcohol was portrayed as a vice of the Germans and Mexicans.

No one better personifies the failures of Texas progressives to produce reform in the state than James E. “Pa” Ferguson. While the rest of the Texas political system obsessed over prohibition, “Farmer Jim” shunned the issue and instead won office with promises of capping how much rent tenant farmers could be charged by their landlords. Ferguson’s tenant farmer law was ultimately ruled unconstitutional, but he remained a hero to the state’s small farmers. Ferguson could be charming, but his politics were often petty. For example, he used appointments to the board of Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College to remove Principal Edward Blackshear, who had had the temerity to support a political rival. Ferguson also took his personal political fight to the University of Texas (UT), demanding the removal of William J. Battle, the president of the university. When asked his reason for wanting Battle’s removal, Ferguson proclaimed, “I don’t have to give any reason. I am Governor of the State of Texas.” Later, Ferguson vetoed appropriations for the university. After Ferguson was elected to a second term in 1916, his battle with the university and its allies ultimately brought him down. On July 23, 1917, the Speaker of the Texas House called for a special session to consider impeachment, and in August the Texas House voted on twenty-one articles of impeachment, including charges dealing with Ferguson’s personal finances, especially bank loans. The Senate found him guilty on ten charges, primarily those dealing with his finances. While impeachment removed Ferguson from the governor’s office and disqualified him from holding other public office, Texas was not so easily rid of his influence.
Ferguson's departure made passage of statewide prohibition easier. The presence of military training camps in Texas led prohibitionists to argue that patriotism required that the state protect young recruits from liquor. Initially, the Texas Legislature simply made it illegal to sell alcohol within ten miles of a military base. The next year, in May 1919, Texas voters approved an amendment to the Texas Constitution that brought prohibition to Texas a year before it went into effect nationwide.

As in other states, prohibition in Texas proved unworkable, as many Texans refused to give up alcohol. The legislature contributed to the failure of the initiative by providing very little funding for the enforcement necessary to make prohibition a success. Organized crime thrived on the revenue that illegal alcohol distribution and sales brought and allegedly worked with prohibitionists to keep alcohol illegal. During prohibition, over 20 percent of all arrests in the state were related to prohibition. Galveston became a major center for liquor smuggling as foreign ships anchored along “Rum Row,” a line just beyond U.S. territorial waters where boats dropped anchor to distribute alcohol just out of the reach of American law.

While voters were approving prohibition, they also rejected an amendment that would have embraced another item on the progressives' list of reforms: the right of women to vote in all elections. Some of the resistance was based solely on gender discrimination, but some southern voters believed that granting equal rights to women would open the door to “Negro rule” and socialism.

The economic changes that came with the new century resulted from a flood of oil, not of new citizens. While oil's presence in Texas had been noted since Spanish explorers used natural tar seeps to patch their boats, its impact on the state was not realized until the early twentieth century. A few wells were drilled in Texas in the 1890s, but the state lacked the refinery capacity to make use of the oil. After the first refinery was built in Texas, interest in oil exploration increased, but the state remained a minor producer. That changed in 1901 when the Spindletop oil rig near Beaumont hit oil and gas, eventually producing 100,000 barrels of oil a day. Investors began streaming into the state in search of oil; by 1928, Texas was leading the nation in oil production, providing 20 percent of the world's supply. By 1929, oil had replaced “King Cotton” as the largest part of the Texas economy.

Just as oil investors transformed much of the Texas countryside and economy, oil revenues had a huge impact on Texas government, contributing almost $6 million to state accounts by 1929 and reducing the need for other state taxes. Texas's other major business was lumber, which grew dramatically early in the twentieth century, eventually topping 2.25 billion board feet in 1907 before overcutting slowed production. Highway construction boomed in Texas, and by the end of the 1920s, Texas had almost 19,000 miles of highway. Fruit trees were introduced into southern Texas, providing a new segment of the economy and planting the seeds for future immigration, as seasonal, migratory labor was needed to harvest these fruits. By the 1920s, Texas seemed well on its way to establishing a strong and diverse economy—a trend that would be undone by the Great Depression.

**The Great Depression and the New Deal in Texas**

By the late 1920s, Texans were beginning to show a little independence from the Democratic Party. The state went for a Republican presidential candidate for the first
Bob Bullock

When Texas governor George W. Bush delivered the eulogy for Bob Bullock in June 1999, he honored him as “the largest Texan of our time.” Although the state’s historical museum in Austin now bears his name, Bullock’s path to legendary status was neither steady nor straight. Bullock began his political career aligned with segregationists, transformed himself into a liberal Democrat, and then metamorphosed into one of Republican George W. Bush’s most important political allies. Bullock was very much like Sam Houston, a Texan who transcended personal failing to rise to greatness and become a state icon. As Bullock quipped when Hill Junior College put his name on a building, “I’m so happy that they named a gym after me instead of a prison.”

Bullock grew up in Hillsboro, Texas, where it seemed to many that he was more likely to end up inside the walls of one of the state’s penal institutions than atop its political institutions. Some in Hillsboro attribute to a young Bob Bullock a prank right out of *American Graffiti*. One night someone wrapped a chain around the rear axle of a police cruiser, tied it to a telephone pole, and then called the police to tell the officer on duty that evening about a big fight at a local café. When the officer leaped into his car, the car lurched as far as the end of the chain before its rear end was yanked clear off.

Bullock battled his way through Texas government as legislator, lobbyist, staffer for Governor Preston Smith, and secretary of state. Even as he worked his way up in Texas politics, he chain-smoked and drank a fifth of whiskey daily. In 1974, Bullock won statewide election to the position of comptroller of public accounts, and he modernized the office’s accounting practices by replacing paper-and-pencil account ledgers and mechanical adding machines with computers. Bullock won an expanded budget for his office by promising legislators that, with a few more million dollars provided for auditors and enforcers, he would find a few hundred million more in revenue that the legislature could appropriate. Bullock used these resources to stage dramatic, highly visible seizure raids at some businesses. The raids encouraged other delinquent businesses to settle their accounts. Bullock never shied from controversy that often swirled around him. “There is nothing left for me to do but what’s good for Texas.” When George W. Bush became governor, he immediately realized that Bullock’s years of experience, fund-raising skills, and legislative connections made him an indispensable partner, especially for a governor new to state government. Working closely with Bullock, Bush built the record of bipartisan legislative success that helped propel him to the White House. The endorsement of Bullock, a longtime Democrat, gave Bush an important boost. Known for closing his remarks with “God bless Texas,” Bullock found a way to move beyond the personal controversy that often swirled around him and help Texas forge ahead.

How did Bullock survive political scandal?

Critical Thinking

Would a candidate like Bob Bullock be electable today?

Personal Responsibility

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ii. Ibid., 7
iii. Ibid., 114.
iv. Ibid., 141.
time in 1928 when Texans shunned Democrat Al Smith, a Catholic New Yorker who drank. However, many Texans regretted their vote for Republican Herbert Hoover, as Texas was hit hard by the depression that many blamed on him. As many as one-third of farmers in some areas were driven from their farms by the depression, and the Texas oil boom did little to spare the state. Overproduction of oil caused prices to fall to as low as three cents a barrel. When the Railroad Commission refused to act to reduce overproduction, Governor Ross S. Sterling declared martial law and used members of the National Guard to shut down the East Texas oil fields. The desperation of the times brought about the repeal of national prohibition, with “wets” arguing that repeal would aid recovery.

Burdened with a depressed economy and the overproduction of oil and cotton, Governor Sterling ran for reelection against “Pa” Ferguson’s legacy, his wife, Miriam “Ma” Ferguson, who trounced Sterling at the ballot box. While the Fergusons finally departed the governor’s office for good in 1935, it wasn’t long before another character, Wilbert Lee “Pappy” O’Daniel, ushered in a new brand of populist politics. O’Daniel, a former sales manager for a flour mill, became known statewide as the host of a radio show that featured the music of the Light Crust Doughboys mixed with inspirational stories. Purportedly encouraged by listeners’ letters urging him to run—although some suggested that wealthy business interests and a public relations expert had done the urging—O’Daniel declared his candidacy, proclaiming the Ten Commandments as his platform and the Golden Rule as his motto. He won the Democratic nomination without a runoff and, facing no real opposition, won the general election with 97 percent of the vote.

Although a colorful personality on the campaign trail, O’Daniel accomplished little of importance once in office, as he lacked the skill to work with legislators and tended to appoint less-than-qualified people to office. After winning reelection to the governorship in 1940, O’Daniel shifted his sights to Washington, DC, when the death of Senator Morris Sheppard created a vacancy in 1941. O’Daniel won the special election to replace Sheppard, narrowly edging out a young ex-congressman named Lyndon Johnson in a disputed election.

**TRANSITIONS TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

Texas spent the rest of the twentieth century in transition, shedding some old habits. Even with the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954, Texas managed to resist desegregation, despite the court’s mandate of instituting it with “all deliberate speed.” Many Texas schools remained segregated well into the early 1970s, when federal courts ordered them to desegregate. In 1954, Texas women belatedly won the right to serve on juries, but further progress toward equality was slow. In the 1960s, only six women served in the Texas Legislature, and the state failed to ratify the national equal rights amendment (ERA). However, in 1972, voters approved an equal rights amendment to the state constitution, and the legislature voted to ratify the ERA (although it would fail to get the required three-quarters of states nationally). In 1975, Liz Cockrell was elected mayor of San Antonio, making her the first woman mayor of a major Texas city.
By the 1960s, the partisan legacy of the Civil War was finally beginning to wear off. In 1961, John Tower was elected to the U.S. Senate, becoming the first Republican to win statewide office since Reconstruction. With the Republican Party showing signs of viability, many conservative Democrats shifted their allegiance to the Republican Party in state elections. This followed years of dividing their loyalty by voting for Republicans in national elections while supporting Democrats for state and local offices, a practice labeled *presidential republicanism*. The career of Texas governor John Connally is a case in point. Connally, although friendly with Lyndon Johnson and elected governor as a Democrat, served in the cabinet of Republican president Richard Nixon before eventually seeking the presidency himself as a Republican candidate. Texas did not seat its first Republican governor until 1978 when William P. Clements won an upset victory. His narrow victory proved a significant first step, as Texas Republicans thereafter began to score more and more successes. Once conservatives saw that they could win elections under the Republican banner, they began to shift their party affiliation. By the 1996 elections, Republicans dominated, winning every statewide office on the ballot.

**Texas Today**

Texas can be viewed through a variety of lenses. In a political science course, it is natural to look at the boundaries that define Texas politically. Such boundaries create the most obvious sketch of the state, but this is not the only way of looking at Texas and its citizens. If Texas is, as John Steinbeck suggested, as much a state of mind as a geographic state, then we may need to look at who we are and where we come from.

For generations, waves of people have come to Texas to make new lives for themselves; in the process they have brought with them new ideas and new customs. Texas has always been a meeting ground for different ambitions and cultures. These cultures have clashed, blended, and evolved into a complicated modern state that can be a challenge to govern.

In a classic study of political life in America, Daniel Elazar focused on political culture. *Political culture* is the shared values and beliefs about the nature of the political world that give us a common language to discuss and debate ideas. The *individualistic political culture* that many observers attribute to Texans holds that individuals are best left largely free of the intervention of community forces such as government and that government should attempt only those things demanded by the people it is created to serve. Government operates in a marketplace; its goal is to encourage private initiative but not particularly create “good society.” The individualistic subculture is most dominant in western parts of the state where vast amounts of land created opportunities for individual success. Texans, initially attracted to the state by the promise of land, were often forced to develop and protect that land without help from the government. According to Elazar, the individualistic subculture is present where people seek to improve their lot and want the government to stay out of their lives. From these roots, a preference for as little government as possible and a general distrust of government persists today across much of the state.

In contrast, the *traditionalistic political culture* sees government as having a limited role concerned with the preservation of the existing social order. The traditionalistic culture can be seen in areas such as East Texas that were more heavily influenced...
WHO IT SERVES

Population by Race and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American alone*</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native*</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone*</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone*</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino**</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone, not Hispanic or Latino**</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Includes persons reporting only one race. ** Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.

Percent Hispanic Population by State

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2016. https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_5YR_DP05&prodType=table

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moralistic political culture

rare in Texas, the view that the exercise of community pressure is sometimes necessary to advance the public good; it also holds that government can be a positive force and citizens have a duty to participate.

How does the state’s ethnic diversity differ from that of the U.S.?

EMPIRICAL AND QUANTITATIVE

How will the growing Hispanic population change Texas politics?

CRITICAL THINKING

by the traditions of the Old South. Finally, the moralistic political culture sees the exercise of community forces as sometimes necessary to advance the public good. In this view, government can be a positive force and citizens have a duty to participate. While this view can be found in many places in New England and other parts of the United States, it is rare in Texas.

Elazar’s division, based on immigration patterns, is useful in distinguishing political cultures between states overall. However, its applicability to a large and complex state like Texas is limited. Texas continues to be significantly characterized by its long-standing frontier. For most of its existence, Texas had a vast and significant frontier that hampered the ability of Spain and later Mexico to govern the state. Political culture in Texas, as in other frontier states, would develop peculiar preferences and institutions quite distinct from those of states far from the frontier. Life on the frontier was more difficult and more uncertain than life in Massachusetts or Virginia. Moving to Texas meant that in exchange for inexpensive land, settlers had to build their homes, cultivate the land, and defend their home. Law enforcement, for example, was sparse in Texas, with the Texas Rangers traveling around the state. If the average Texan preferred small government and few social services, as Elazar contended, they also came to prize their guns and their right to defend their home. Justice needed to be swift and harsh to deter criminals. This created a punitive understanding of justice rather than a preference for rehabilitation. We see the influence of the frontier continue today in our preferences for little gun control, a permissive castle doctrine (the right to defend your castle), a greater amount of behavior criminalized, and a punitive justice system including the death penalty.

While the discussion of distinct cultures or nations within Texas or the United States might seem foreign at first, it reflects an ongoing discussion in political science about distinguishing nations from states. A nation is “groups of people who share—or believe they share—a common culture, ethnic origin, language, historical experience, artifacts and symbols.”20 On the other hand, a state represents a sovereign political entity with defined political boundaries.

Colin Woodard has argued that the United States includes eleven such nations, four of which can be found in Texas: the Deep South, Greater Appalachia, the Midlands, and El Norte. (See Map 1.2.) El Norte is actually part of the oldest area of civilization on the continent. It took root when Columbus arrived in the New World and witnessed the Spanish expeditions that had viewed the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and the Grand Canyon by the time the English arrived in Jamestown. This nation, which includes parts of northern Mexico as well as southern Texas, shares a language, cuisine, and societal norms that are distinct both from other parts of Texas and from the interior of Mexico. While the political divisions created by the Texas Revolution may have tried to divide El Norte, like the nortenos of northern Mexico, Tejanos value a reputation for being more independent, self-sufficient, adaptable, and work centered than residents of the interior of Mexico.

Parts of Texas are also included in the Deep South nation, a tradition where the remnants of aristocratic privilege and classical republicanism can still be seen in the notion that democracy is a privilege of the few. The Deep South is internally polarized on racial grounds and deeply at odds with other nations over the direction of the state and the country. Greater Appalachia runs through much of the northern part of the state and shares some of the Deep South’s resistance to the intrusion of northern nations via the Civil War, Reconstruction, and subsequent social and economic reforms. Greater
Appalachia holds a deep commitment to individual liberty and personal sovereignty but is as adverse to the aristocrats of the Deep South as it is to social reformers from the northeast. The Midlands, which comprises only the northernmost counties of the state, is skeptical of government but subscribes to the idea that it should benefit ordinary people. Residents of the Midlands are moderate and at times even apathetic about politics and care little about either ethnic or ideological purity.

The mixing of cultures in Texas has produced entirely new cultures unique to the state. In no place is this unique mixture more evident than in Laredo's annual Washington's Birthday Celebration, a monthlong festival to celebrate George Washington's birthday. Created in 1898, it takes an American-style celebration and unites it with the city's diverse roots. Today, Mexican food, colonial gowns, and fireworks all star in this celebration of the city's multicultural roots, and Laredoans and their guests move easily from an International Bridge ceremony to jalapeño-eating contests to formal colonial pageants and a Princess Pocahontas pageant. In this sense, Laredo perfectly embraces the tradition of change that defines Texas as very different cultures find their place in the Texas spirit.

Much was made of Texans' independent streak after Governor Rick Perry tossed around language about secession. However, a 2009 Rasmussen Poll taken after Perry's comments revealed that 75 percent of Texans wanted to remain part of the United States and only 18 percent would support secession. The issue arose again in 2016 when Texas Republicans rejected the effort of some members to put Texas secession up for a vote at the state Republican convention. Clearly, most Texans love being Americans just as much as they love being Texans.

The diverse range of legends underlying modern Texas has given Texans a choice of legends from which to draw on. According to historian Randolph B. Campbell, Texans have opted to draw upon the rugged individualism of the cowboys of the cattle drive rather than the slavery, secession, and defeat of the Old South. Even then, the lonely cowboy driving cattle across the open plains is an uncertain guide for Texans trying to find their place in the state today. Texans' identity and expectations of their government are grounded in images of the past that may not be entirely true. Thus, we have to wonder how our understandings of our past are shaping the state's future.

A TRADITION OF CHANGE

Texas continues its tradition of change. For hundreds of years, people left their old lives to build new ones in Texas, leaving behind them signs declaring “Gone to Texas.” While these generations of new Texans brought different languages
and cultures, all consistently brought one thing—change. Such transformations have defined Texas since the 1500s when newly arrived Spanish explorers turned the Caddo word for friend (techas) into Tejas, a term describing the Caddo tribe. In the centuries since, waves of people have come to Texas seeking opportunity and bringing change.

The changes have not always been welcome by established Texans. When explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado’s expedition arrived and proudly proclaimed to the Zuni Indians who lived in Texas that the tribe now enjoyed protection as subjects of the Spanish king, the Zunis answered with a volley of arrows. The arrows bounced off the Spanish armor, and today immigrants arriving from across the nation and around the world generally receive a better reception. Still, new arrivals have often been seen by many Texans as competitors rather than partners in the state’s future.

New arrivals remain a constant in Texas. The state’s population has increased about a hundredfold since joining the United States, growing at an average of just over 40 percent each decade (see Figure 1.1). The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that there were 28,304,596 Texans in 2017, up 12.6 percent since 2010. Viewed differently, the 3.1-million-person growth that Texas saw from 2010 to 2017 is larger than the population of twenty states. Seven counties in Texas grew more than 50 percent in the ten years between the 2000 and 2010 censuses: Rockwall (81 percent), Williamson (69 percent), Fort Bend (65 percent), Hays (61 percent), Collin (59 percent), Montgomery (55 percent), and Denton (53 percent). Of the ten counties nationwide with the biggest population growth from 2015 to 2016, four were in Texas: Harris, Tarrant, Bear, and Dallas.

![Figure 1.1: Population and Percentage of Growth in Texas since 1850](image_url)

According to the Office of the Texas State Demographer, Texas will do a lot more growing. Changes in immigration and birth rates make predictions difficult, but the state could have as many as 31.2 million citizens in 2050, even if there is zero migration into the state. If migration into the state continues at the pace seen from 2000 to 2010, then 2050 could see over 54.4 million Texans. How today's Texans make room for the millions of new residents expected over the next two decades will be an important part of the state's politics.

While we often focus on the arrival of new Texans and the state's growing population, part of the change that defines Texans is that we have people both coming and going. In 2013, Texas had an estimated 545,715 “in-migrants” and 411,966 “out-migrants.” We sometimes focus on the number of “net migrants” (the increase in the number of residents) while forgetting that some years see almost 1 million people move to or move out of the state.

Change is especially difficult for a political system that must meet the needs of a large, diverse, and ever-shifting population. Political systems tend to represent the status quo, and established groups are inherently threatened by changes to the government's base of power. Because politics is, in the words of a classic definition, about who gets what, newcomers compete against established residents, leaving the government to resolve the conflict and determine who wins and who loses. Politics becomes a battle between the old and the new, and this battle is often repeated in Texas. The Texas Revolution, which came about when Mexican officials refused to meet the needs of Anglo settlers, is probably the most dramatic—and ultimately literal—example of politics as a battle.

A snapshot of Texas reveals increasing population diversity as the state grows. In 2005, Texas became a majority-minority state, joining Hawaii, New Mexico, and California as states in which the nation's majority (Anglos) make up less than half of the state's population. In Texas today, Anglos account for 42.6 percent of the state's population. While about 77 percent of Texas residents describe themselves as white, this category includes both Anglos and Hispanics (see the “How Texas Government Works: Who It Serves” infographic). About 16.7 percent of Texans (compared to 13.2 percent of Americans) are foreign born, and just over one in three Texans speaks a language other than English at home (compared to one in five Americans).

The state's future will be even more diverse. The state demographer estimates that from 2010 to 2050, Texas's Hispanic population will grow from just under 10 million to just over 30 million. During that same time, the Anglo population is expected to stay relatively unchanged at 11 to 12 million. While some of the rise of Hispanics in Texas may result from immigration, the number will rise even if immigration ends because the state's Hispanic population is much younger than its Anglo population. In 2017, Hispanics in Texas under age thirty-seven outnumbered Anglos in the same age group. Thus, the Texans most likely to make baby Texans in the immediate future are Hispanic.

While much has been made of the emergence of a Latino majority in Texas, we have to remember how broad these racial categories are and how many differences exist within such groups. The term Hispanic includes many recent immigrants
who may share a language but have origins that go beyond those of the Mexican Americans usually considered Hispanics in Texas. In fact, Texas has seen immigration from both Central and South America. While Hispanics who come from countries in these regions may share a language, the nations are very different. At the same time, some Hispanics in Texas trace their lineage to Spain's control over the region before the United States, Texas, or even Mexico existed. These Texan families represent some of the state's oldest, and including them in the same category with the state's newest arrivals illustrates the problems of relying on such broad categories.

At the start of the twentieth century, German Americans were considered distinct and foreign enough to generate fear among some that they would align themselves with Germany during World War I. Many of 2050's Hispanics will be the product of several generations of living in America and all of the socialization inherent in the public school system, media, and broader culture.

Some observers believe that the rising number of Hispanics will lead inevitably to a Democratic electoral majority in Texas. In 2016, Hispanics nationally favored Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump 66 percent to 28 percent, but in Texas the margin was slimmer at 61 percent to 34 percent. Of course, the popularity of the two parties among Hispanics will turn on a variety of policy issues. Hispanics, like German Americans and other groups, will continue to evolve and eventually become a natural part of political life in Texas. Further, while segregation remains a reality in the United States, that barrier is often not enough to stop the cause of true love; as one study found, 26 percent of Hispanics had married someone of another race or ethnicity. By 2050, several generations will have married Texans from other demographic groups and have produced Texans who do not fit the demographic labels we attach so much meaning to today. Today's great-grandchildren of the German and Irish immigrants likely put little stock in the distinctions between these groups.

Also overlooked in the debate over immigration today is the rising number of immigrants coming from Asia. A recent analysis by the state demographer's office found that while 44.1 percent of noncitizen immigrants came to Texas from Latin America, 35.8 percent came from Asia and another 13.1 percent from Africa and other regions. Thus, new Texans are more increasingly diverse, a reflection in part of the state's continued involvement in an increasingly complex global economy.

The state's rural nature has been transformed, and today about 80 percent of Texans live in 1,210 cities or suburbs. In fact, Texas has four of the country's fifteen largest cities: Houston (#4), San Antonio (#7), Dallas (#9), and Austin (#11). Texas's suburbs have seen even higher rates of growth. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau found that five Texas cities were among the ten fastest-growing cities in the United States, with Conroe (#1), Frisco (#2), McKinney (#3), Georgetown (#5), and New Braunfels (#9) having growth rates of 4.7 percent or higher from 2015 to 2016.

Texans often quip that they are “the buckle in the Bible Belt,” reflecting a strong Christian presence in the state. A 2016 study found that Texas rated as the eleventh most religious state, with 63 percent of Texans saying religion is very important in
their lives and 69 percent reporting that they believe in God with absolute certainty (Alabama led the nation with 77 percent saying religion is very important in their lives and 82 percent saying they believe in God with absolute certainty). While most Texans might generally fall under the label “Christian,” the more specific practices that fall under that broad category are quite diverse. For example, one recent poll found that the percentage of Catholics (18 percent) and Baptists (16 percent) was roughly equal in Texas. (See Figure 1.2.)

The state's economy is as diverse as its people. The state still has more farms and ranches (241,500 averaging 537 acres) than any other state, but Texans today are engaged in providing virtually every kind of product and service (see Table 1.1). Educational services and health care are the biggest industries, while agriculture, despite the image, is one of the smallest, with fewer people working in agriculture than in public administration.

The Texas economy is massive and still growing. In 2016, the state's economy was estimated to have produced almost $1.6 trillion in gross state product (GSP). If Texas were a country, its economy would be one of the largest in the world, just behind Brazil and ahead of Canada. (See Table 1.2.)

Texas is a state on the move, sometimes more than others. While Texas is often defined by its open spaces, many Texans spend much of their day stuck in traffic. According to the Census Bureau, the average working Texan spends 25.9 minutes every day getting to and from work. As more people move to Texas, the demand for roads

**FIGURE 1.2 Religious Traditions in Texas**

![Religious Traditions in Texas](https://static.texastribune.org/media/files/9ec7041712e3c2c2cd2212f8b87d2282/ut-tt-201810-summary-3.pdf)
and mass transit systems will only increase, presenting new challenges for local governments as well as the state.

Even as Texas grapples with challenges within its borders arising from its diverse, growing population and expansive economy, it also must deal with competition from overseas. While Texans have always relished their independence, the state today must work to ensure its place in a growing global economy. Even farmers must look overseas as they attempt to cultivate foreign markets for their products while warding off foreign competitors.

While the wealthy Texas oil baron or cattle rancher is a familiar image in movies and television, Texans fall below the national average on many measures of wealth. Compared to the national average, Texans have a lower per capita income ($27,828 versus $29,929 in 2017), a higher poverty rate (15.6 percent versus 12.7 percent of all Americans), and a lower rate of home ownership (61.9 percent versus 63.6 percent). While Texas may be a land of great wealth, it is also a land of great need. One study found that Texas ranked seventh in income inequality.

### TABLE 1.1 Texas Civilian-Employed Population, Sixteen Years and Older

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Number Employed</th>
<th>Percentage of Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining</td>
<td>354,801</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>1,121,391</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1,082,507</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>380,131</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>1,479,675</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and warehousing, and utilities</td>
<td>714,666</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>230,634</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing</td>
<td>870,728</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services</td>
<td>1,471,877</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational services, and health care and social assistance</td>
<td>2,826,330</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services</td>
<td>1,204,191</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services, except public administration</td>
<td>682,935</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>507,590</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,927,456</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the state with a constitution that was authored in the nineteenth century by isolated farmers who formed the Grange to connect with other farmers has become a booming high-tech center with citizens connected to each other and to the wider world through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Visitors arriving in the Texas capital will not find lonely cowboys astride horses on the open plains; instead, they will encounter computer engineers and game programmers checking social networks on their smartphones while stuck in traffic.

**WINNERS AND LOSERS**

Certainly one of the most significant forces of change that has shaped Texas's past, present, and future is immigration. Texas is a state defined by its ever-changing and constant immigrant population. In understanding Texas's past and trying to prepare Texas for the future, no immigrant population is more integral to the state than the Hispanic population. As the historical overview in this chapter makes clear, Tejanos in early Texas were central to its development. As Anglos came to dominate the state, historical revisionists overlooked early cooperation between Anglos and Tejanos, emphasizing and often exaggerating the tensions between the two groups. Just as many Tejanos were driven out of Texas after the revolution against Mexico, their contributions to the war on both sides of the conflict were driven from the pages of Texas history. At some point the Mexican flag failed to appear in the Alamo's "Hall of Honor" that commemorates the country of birth of the Alamo's defenders, allowing Texans to forget that nine of the eleven defenders of the Alamo born in the Mexican territory of Texas had Hispanic origins. Juan Nepomuceno Seguín, who neither wrote nor spoke English, was a close friend of Stephen F. Austin and helped drive Mexican forces from San Antonio before slipping out of the Alamo to seek reinforcements. Later, Seguín joined Sam Houston’s army at the decisive battle of San Jacinto. As one historian put it, “Remember the Alamo’ became a formula for forgetfulness.”

A rapidly anglicizing Texas replaced the legend of heroic Tejanos with a legend that emphasized dictatorial Mexican rulers seeking the expulsion of the Anglos.

The Tejano population of Texas declined from the time of the revolution until a repressive regime in Mexico, coupled with decades of revolution within that country, created a new wave of immigrants. This tripled the Mexican population in Texas from 1900 to 1920. While these immigrants played an important role in cotton production, they were often not welcome and took their place somewhere between Anglos and African Americans, unaccepted in either community. Techniques such as "white

---

**TABLE 1.2** Gross Domestic Product, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Millions of Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>United States*</td>
<td>$18,624,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>$11,199,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>$4,940,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>$3,477,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>$2,647,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>California**</td>
<td>$2,622,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>$2,465,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>$2,263,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>$1,858,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>$1,796,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Texas**</td>
<td>$1,599,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>$1,529,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>New York**</td>
<td>$1,500,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>$1,283,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>$1,237,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>$1,204,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>$1,046,023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes all states.
**Calculated as if an independent country.

Source: Compiled from data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis and World Bank.
primaries,” which were used to exclude African Americans from voting, were eventually also employed against Tejanos. As the state continued to change and immigrants continued to move into Texas, Hispanics were marginalized in the political process as well as in the history books.

A comparison of Texas and Vermont illustrates the diversity of states within the United States. Vermont, a northeastern state, got its start when Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys rebelled against attempts by New York and New Hampshire to exert control over the region after the American Revolution. On January 15, 1777, the independent Republic of New Connecticut was declared; later, the name was changed to the Republic of Vermont. Vermont sent ambassadors to France, the Netherlands, and the United States. In 1791, Vermont entered the United States as the fourteenth state to balance the admission of slaveholding Kentucky as the fifteenth state.

While both Texas and Vermont share a history of independence before joining the United States, the similarity ends there. Geographically, Vermont is quite small, at 9,250 square miles. Vermont’s size is smaller than the combined area of the largest two Texas counties (Brewster and Pecos counties in West Texas, together totaling 10,957 square miles). Vermont’s landscape is dominated by the Green Mountains, abundant forests, and plentiful rivers and streams. As the second-largest state by area, Texas covers a vast territory that varies tremendously in land formations, water resources, and natural resources.

The demographics of the two states are also strikingly different. Settled by the English and some French colonists from nearby Quebec, Vermont remains among the most homogeneous states in the United States. In 2017, Vermont held the distinction of being one of the “whitest” states in the United States, with over 94 percent of its residents describing themselves as white and not of Hispanic origin; Texas, in contrast, was among the most racially and ethnically diverse states, with the largest group, Anglos, constituting only 42.6 percent of the population.

Vermont also consistently ranks as one of the smallest states in population. In 1850, the first census in which Texas participated, Vermont had a slightly larger population than Texas. Immigration over the following decade saw Texas surpass Vermont in population by the 1860 census, at which point Texas already had over 600,000 residents. It would take Vermont 140 years to reach that level of population. By the time it did, in 2000, Texas recorded over 22 million residents.

Large cities are found throughout Texas, three of the nation’s ten largest cities are located in Texas. Vermont’s largest city, Burlington (42,239 in 2017), is so small that it would rank seventy-fifth in city size in Texas. Even the images of the two states generate contrasts. Texas is the land of open plains, oil wells, cattle, gun-slinging cowboys, and big-time football. Vermont is the land of maple syrup, ice cream, fall foliage, and quaint towns.

### Texas versus Vermont: Ethnic Makeup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Group</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>Vermont</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White alone, not of Hispanic origin</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>94.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Obviously, to govern a diverse population spread over a vast geographic area with extensive mineral wealth, Texas requires a fundamentally different approach than Vermont. In many instances, Texas politics is vastly different in practice than Vermont’s political system. However, these differences may not be exactly what we expect.
One of the enduring legends of early Texas history is how Anglo order and hard work saved the state from Mexican chaos. According to this view, it was immigrants from the United States who, in the words of one public school textbook from the 1880s, “changed Texas from a wilderness into a civilized state: Mexico had nothing but fear and hatred.” Like other legacies, this historical “truth” ignores some aspects of history and exaggerates others. So far, Hispanics have been the losers in the formation of historical legend.

By 1930, the Tejano population of Texas had begun to rise with the rest of the population, reaching almost 684,000. Reflecting the return of Tejanos to Texas politics, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was formed in Corpus Christi in 1929. LULAC quickly became a major factor in Texas politics. In 1956, Henry B. González became the first Tejano in over half a century to hold a seat in the Texas Senate. During the 1957 legislative session, González set the record for a filibuster in the Texas Senate as he fought laws backing segregation in Texas public schools. In 1961, González broke ground again by winning a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. By that time, half a dozen Tejanos were serving in the Texas Legislature and a Tejano was serving as mayor of El Paso. Tejanos won their first statewide office when Dan Morales was elected attorney general in 1992. Hispanics are both the largest and fastest-growing group in the state and today hold a variety of offices. In 2009, Eva Guzman became the first Hispanic woman to serve on the Texas Supreme Court when Governor Perry appointed her to fill a vacancy on the court. Tejanos are increasingly successful in organizing and exerting political pressure in Texas. As the Hispanic population continues to increase and organize its interests within the state, Hispanics are in a position to be the winners in a future Texas.

Today, Texas is again dealing with immigrants whose numbers are increasing so rapidly that they form a majority in some parts of the state. The struggle to deal with this change is part of what defines Texas as a state. As we will see throughout this text, legends tend to be static and are often at odds with the changing nature of the state. The myth that Texas’s story is a primarily Anglo one ignores others’ contributions. What’s more, the myth of Anglo primacy remains the dominant legend in Texas’s history books. Throughout the rest of the book, we will continue to explore this tension between legend and change.

CONCLUSION

In August 2017, a major hurricane approached the Gulf Coast of Texas. Although the storm, dubbed Harvey, had temporarily weakened, it roared back to life and eventually swelled to Category 4 status. Its center made landfall at about 10 PM on August 25 near Rockport. With winds as high as 102 miles per hour, Harvey battered the coast there and in nearby Corpus Christi. After moving inland, it turned back out over the warm Gulf of Mexico waters, where it regained strength before heading toward Houston. Harvey crept slowly along southeast Texas and Louisiana from August 26 through 30, dropping massive amounts of rainfall that created catastrophic flooding in and around Harris County. While Houston would not see the hurricane-force winds that pounded areas including Port Aransas, historic levels of rainfall overwhelmed drainage systems. Nederland endured the largest rainfall total of 60.58 inches between August 24 and September 1, with Groves close
behind at 60.54 inches during that same period. Texans who thought their homes would never be flooded found their entire neighborhoods underwater. The National Hurricane Center declared that Harvey was “the most significant tropical cyclone rainfall event in United States history, both in scope and peak rainfall amounts, since reliable rainfall records began around the 1880s.”

The response of the flooded neighborhoods highlighted some of the best aspects of the state’s identity and culture. Whatever political differences had divided Texans during the 2016 election evaporated as Texans found ways to help each other. Hundreds of people from Texas and Louisiana came together in a small makeshift navy of flat-bottomed fishing boats that proved perfect for rescuing stranded residents along submerged streets. Stranded for two days by floodwaters inside El Bolillo’s bakery, four bakers spent that time turning the 4,400 pounds of flour they had on hand into almost 4,000 pieces of bread that would be distributed to those in need. Houston’s football star J.J. Watt turned his millions of social media followers into an army of contributors that gave more than $37 million in private donations. In a remarkable number of ways, private citizens found ways to come together to help the community that is Texas.

While some of the damage could be mended by everyday Texans, Harvey presented challenges that went beyond the ability of individuals to solve. Despite our individualistic nature and our historical roots in the frontier, Texans sometimes need government to prevent future floods. Fixing drainage systems in the areas hit by Harvey is as expensive as it is complex, and asking local residents to plan and pay for the changes as so many struggle to recover is impossible. This leaves cities and the state with the daunting challenge of protecting Texans against similar floods in the future.

An effect of Houston’s growth and prosperity has been that its rapid development has put thousands of homes in the path of flooding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) inspected about 575,000 homes affected by the storm and estimated the total damages wrought by Harvey to be $125 billion. As more people move to Texas, they find themselves living in areas like floodplains—areas for which Mother Nature may have other plans. Protecting residents from threats—both natural and man-made—will remain a challenge that state leaders must face.

The story of Harvey reflects both the resilience of individual Texans and the challenges of governing a rapidly growing state. While Texas’s traditions, built upon the history of the Alamo and years as the western frontier, created a hardy community whose spirit will continue to overcome ordeals, the twenty-first century demands a Texas government ready and able to face the challenges that come from being a rapidly transforming state.
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### KEY TERMS

- empresario (p. 8)
- individualistic political culture (p. 22)
- moralistic political culture (p. 24)
- political culture (p. 22)
- presidential republicanism (p. 22)
- traditionalistic political culture (p. 22)
- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (p. 13)

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### ACTIVE LEARNING

- Create a short brochure that introduces someone who’s never been to Texas to the cultural and historical ideas that define the state. Think of the brochure as something that might be distributed at a visitors center at the state border. **Communication**

- Either as an entire class or in smaller groups, generate a list of characteristics that define Texas and that also distinguish Texans from other Americans. **Teamwork**

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### CHAPTER REVIEW

1. The state’s geographic size has ____.
   - a. helped protect it from the kinds of party machines that corrupted politics in some cities and states
   - b. made it easier to govern the state by making it more diverse
   - c. made it harder for charismatic politicians to win statewide office
   - d. made the state’s history less important

2. During the period when the Republic of Texas was an independent nation, ____.
   - a. the U.S. Congress vigorously pursued Texas’s admission to the United States
   - b. Texans resisted aligning with the United States or any other nation
   - c. most Texans favored joining the United States
   - d. Texas remained at peace with the American Indian tribes in the area
3. “Juneteenth” is the celebration of ____.
   a. the end of the Texas Revolution
   b. Texas’s formal admission to the United States
   c. Texas’s joining the Confederacy
   d. the day slaves in Texas were freed

4. Sam Houston ____.
   a. led an exemplary life without controversy
   b. spoke out against slavery and opposed joining the Confederacy
   c. led Texas forces during the Civil War
   d. led Texas forces in raids against American Indian tribes

5. The “Redeemers” were a political force in the 1870s as they led a movement to ____.
   a. end Reconstruction and Republican rule in the state
   b. bring Christianity to farmers in remote parts of the state
   c. push civil rights laws that would remove the last remnants of slavery
   d. reduce the influence of the Democratic party in Texas cities

6. The ____ political culture asserts that individuals are best left free of government interference and that government should take on only those functions demanded by the people.
   a. traditionalistic
   b. individualistic
   c. moralistic

7. The ____ political culture holds that government has a limited role related to preservation of the existing social order.
   a. traditionalistic
   b. individualistic
   c. moralistic

8. Over its history, Texas has seen ____ population growth.
   a. rapid
   b. slow
   c. virtually no

9. Today, Texas is a “majority-minority” state, meaning that ____.
   a. the state’s demographics have stopped changing
   b. Anglos still make up over half of the Texas population
   c. no one racial group makes up a majority of the state

10. The Texas economy today is ____.
    a. dominated by oil and gas
    b. dominated by farming and ranching
    c. a diverse mixture of different types of businesses
    d. dominated by transportation companies