

November 3, 2014

McGraw-Hill School Education
To the editors of McGraw-Hill's *Texas History*

Dear Sirs,

At the request of the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, I reviewed the 7th grade Texas history textbook you are submitting for adoption in Texas this year. I evaluated the sections of your product that are pertinent to my field of expertise – 19th century American history and U.S./Mexican relations during the early National period (i.e. Ch.7- Ch. 12). I also reviewed the sections related to Mexican-American history during the 20th century.

Enclosed with this letter is a detailed report of my observations, as well as suggested revisions to improve your materials.

Overall, I found coverage of these areas in your product to be largely acceptable, but there are some very important details that caused concern on my part. While my more detailed comments are included in the enclosed report, I wanted to call your attention particularly to the following issues:

- The section dealing with the Mexican Independence movement requires more depth and analysis. While the focus is upon Texas, the course of the Independence movement and its results lie at the core of understanding the issues that led to the Texas Revolution and do require greater weight and space in your text.
- The text does not fully address the aggressive nature of American foreign policy towards Mexico in terms of Texas and other Mexican lands the United States coveted. As I have always told my students, history is the good, the bad and the ugly, and we do a disservice to future citizens when we do not address or examine the less laudable parts of our history.
- The comment above holds true for your coverage of the Mexican-American War. This conflict was of great importance to both nations and to Texas and really deserved a more detailed treatment.
- There are some language biases evident in the manner that some events are presented. Specific occurrences of biased language are noted in the attached report.
- The treatment of Tejanos after the Texas independence movement should be presented in greater detail.
- Finally, I wanted to note that a good job was done concerning Mexican American civil rights in the 20th century. I reviewed your text for that specific element, and I found that you covered events and personalities that I did not find in the other texts I reviewed. I would point out that the deportation of Mexican legal residents and Mexican American citizens during the Great Depression should receive more text space. I also believe that at the very least a spotlight excerpt should be provided for Gus Garcia, the lead attorney in *Bastrop v. Delgado* and *Hernandez v. Texas*.

A word about my qualifications. I am currently an assistant professor of teacher education at the University of Texas at El Paso, specializing in social studies education. I previously taught the subject for eight years at Ball State University and the University of Houston- Downtown. I earned my PhD in history from Purdue University specializing in early 19th century American history and am considered an expert on US/ Mexican relations during Mexico's early National period (1821-1848). In addition I have ten years' experience as a Texas public school teacher, with nine of those years either teaching fourth or seventh grade (i.e. the two grades in which Texas History is taught).

The views expressed here and in the enclosed document are my own and reflect my own long experience conducting archival research in this period of history. I hope you find the observations valuable in your efforts to provide the best educational product for Texas school children.

Sincerely,

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Texas History

The chapters covering the late colonial through Mexican War era have many excellent points, but there are some notable elements that should be kept in mind by the editors:

1. The first is the subtle implication that continues advancing the idea of Mexican moral, intellectual and physical inferiority. I have to say that some of the writing/ editing decisions always seem to imply the great martial prowess of Anglos through their ability to hold off hordes of inferior Mexicans. While the Mexicans had overwhelming numbers in the Battle of the Alamo, this is not true for the other two large Battles, San Jacinto and Coleto Creek. The author needs to make clear that Urrea was leading at most 450 troops when he met Fannin's soldiers. The battle was not like the Alamo in that the relative troop strengths were more even, even after Urrea received reinforcements. In this battle Urrea simply out-generated Fannin. Your textbook implies that Urrea's triumph was more a function of Fannin's stupidity than Urrea's skill. While Fannin's stupidity is quite obvious as a causal factor, it is unfair to not recognize Urrea's martial skill who was highly regarded as a military commander by both sides. In addition, the implication of Mexican moral inferiority by their actions in the Goliad Massacre are not counter balanced by admitting that most of the Mexicans killed at San Jacinto were either shot in the back or after they surrendered, including the famous episode concerning the murder of General Manuel Castrillon.
2. While the book is well detailed in regards to the Battle of Coleto Creek, it should probably note the legal reasons by which the execution of the Texan soldiers by the Mexican authorities was justified. As stated in the notes, under recognized international law of the period, any person engaged in war against a power that had no legal standing to engage that power (unless they are either a soldier for their nation in a declared war, or as a LEGAL member of a nation in revolt against constituted authority) was essentially recognized as being a freebooter. As such the person was branded a criminal and was subject to execution. While there were Anglos and Tejanos that had every legal right to complain (and to expect their rights to be recognized as legal citizens or residents of Mexico) the vast majority of the so called "Texans" involved in the revolt had absolutely zero rights in the matter and could be properly classified as freebooters. A good example of what I am talking about is the members of the Alabama Red Rovers, who were among those massacred at Goliad.¹
3. In reference to the Alamo, the order of attack was the following: Col. Duque led one group directly towards the north wall, Cos led his troops towards the Northwest wall, Romero attacked from the East and Morales attacked from the southeast. All in all less than 1,300 men were involved in the initial assault.

¹ This was actually founded on accepted practice concerning piracy/ filibustering laws of the period. Most of these men were US volunteers, and thus they were engaged in what would correctly be classified as land piracy, since they had no formal legal standing to be in Texas and participating in an armed revolt (i.e. since their government had not declared war on Mexico, they could not expect clemency as soldiers of their nation and since almost all of them had not received legal permission to settle or live in Texas by the Mexican government, they had no legal standing to expect clemency for their actions). While certainly the choice of Santa Anna to apply the punishment proscribed by Congress was strategically and diplomatically unwise on his part, it was perfectly legal.

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4. The text implies that Bowie came from the outside (i.e. he wasn't a Texan). In fact, Bowie was one of those Anglo colonists who had legal standing, having lived in Texas since before passage of the Law of April 6, 1830 and also having married into Santa Anna's extended family. If there was one person inside the Alamo who had every right to identify as a Texan (and a Mexican citizen) it was James Bowie.
 5. Seguin gets short treatment considering the importance of his family in lending legitimacy to the revolt. In addition, what happened to Seguin after the conclusion of the Texas Revolution merits closer scrutiny.
 6. The short discussion on the Neutrality Act needs to invite discussion, especially since the US was violating its own laws. I am glad it is mentioned, but the way it is written essentially shuts off any potential for debate.
 7. The Mexican army was not destroyed at San Jacinto. Santa Anna was only leading a detachment of the troops he had available in Texas. The vast majority of his army was camped a day or so march to the southwest and the only reason they never engaged Houston's army after the battle was that the senior commander, Vicente Filisola, ordered a strategic withdrawal towards San Antonio (over the vehement protests of Jose Urrea who had linked up with these forces, but was only second in command). These forces unfortunately had a rough withdrawal over a mud filled alluvial plain, which unfortunately affected their supplies and military cohesion rendering them ineffective as a military force in the near future. By the editors choosing not to at least mention this reality, they continue to perpetuate the myth of Anglo martial superiority.
 8. The editors provide too little detail of Santa Anna's journey to Washington D.C. or to mention that he met Andrew Jackson. This is one of the big historical mysteries as no one knows exactly what was discussed, but if the United States was not actively aiding the Texas Revolution, what logical purpose would Houston of had for sending Santa Anna on this trip?
 9. It is important to acknowledge the evidence that clearly indicates that the United States colluded with certain groups to obtain Texas. The evidence, collected by not only myself but others, pretty much belies the idea that the United States had not been actively seeking to annex Texas. This goal was contained within the main instructions of the first two American plenipotentiaries sent to Mexico (Poinsett and Butler) and both men (Andrew Jackson stalwarts) labored incessantly to obtain Mexican through diplomatic and extra-diplomatic means. Poinsett, who would become a major South Carolina political figure in the 1830's, was well respected by Jackson and it is he who in 1825 wrote back from Mexico that American immigration into Texas would eventually land the province in the lap of the United States. Notably, the US did very little to enforce its borders with Texas. Southern state governments facilitated the sending of men, money and supplies to aid the revolution or at least did not enforce non-importation regulations. Finally, the New York City customs collector, Samuel Swartwout (this was the most profitable spoils job you could get in the period and it tells you how important a confederate he was to Jackson if he appointed him to the post) used the customs house to funnel money to the Texas Revolution. I could understand in fourth grade why this would not be explored with any depth, but by seventh grade, this should be part of the narrative.

10. Mexico in the 1830's wasn't much of a united country; rather it was a collection of semi-autonomous states that were constantly on the verge of rebellion. Mexico's poisonous political factionalism would not be resolved until the Liberals triumphed during the War of Reform in the 1850's and the subsequent French Intervention, completely discredited the old Conservative faction in the country, At no point before the ascendancy of Porfirio Diaz to the presidency in the 1870's did any Mexican political leader, including Santa Anna, hold more than nominal control of the nation, so referring to him as a dictator (and by extension implying he had an iron grip on Mexico) is at best hyperbole. Santa Anna also tended to leave his vice president in charge of running the day to day political business of the country, usually retiring to his hacienda, Manga de Clavo, in Veracruz (i.e. he was not in Mexico City most of the time). In essence, Texas was not unique in rebelling; it was just unique in the fact that of all the areas that rebelled at the time, the major force was led by foreigners who, for the most part, had no legal standing in the country

11. You should mention that the majority of the delegates (54) came to Texas after the April 6, 1830 Law was passed and thus their legal standing was dubious at best. Keep in mind that other important Texan figures like Travis and Houston technically did not have legal standing to be in Texas.

12. The Cordova Rebellion was not merely about Tejanos remaining loyal to Mexico. It had as much to do with the behavior of Anglos towards Tejanos and the Cherokee as the first issue. While Mexico certainly encouraged armed revolt, the racist behavior of Anglos (and their refusal to honor the promises made to the Tejanos and Cherokee concerning land titles) motivated the majority of those who rebelled against the Texas government. Now, was the Homestead Act applied to everyone or only Anglos? It would seem that the law only protected and recognized the rights of Anglos, since Mexicans and Cherokee were routinely despoiled of their lands.

13. No, being forced out is not "to decide to move." The courts rarely upheld the property rights of Tejanos and the Texas government turned a blind eye to Anglo mobs killing or running Tejanos out of their lands. Just let us be honest about how post Revolution Anglo Texans behaved towards the other groups.

14. I am always concerned when the less laudable parts of a history are left to the end of the chapter and given a short treatment. If the treatment of Tejanos is a source of shame, the way free Blacks were treated in Texas was even more shameful.

15. You might mention that Tejano vaqueros essentially taught Anglos how to become cattle ranchers.

16. "Although the Mexican government had discouraged the practice of slavery in Texas, it did not prohibit it." No, it was illegal since 1829. It was momentarily tolerated in Texas with an aim of phasing out the practice. The passage of the anti-slavery law is one of the most important causal factors in provoking the Texas Revolution.

17. The following guiding question is absurd: “What steps did the United States take to avoid war with Mexico?” No serious scholar of the era would argue that the US honestly attempted or expected a peaceful resolution with Mexico. In point of fact the US had already sent Naval forces months before the war broke out with instructions to seize California. The basic fact was the US coveted the lands west of Texas all the way to California and they sent John Slidell to Mexico City with an offer to buy the lands. When Mexico refused, President Polk turned to Plan B and provoked a war with Mexico. To even suggest such an argument as genuine is as disingenuous as suggesting that Chamberlain could have successfully appeased Hitler in 1938.

18. The damage claims was an old maneuver used by more powerful countries to indebt less powerful ones. As long as they can convince other powerful countries that their claims are genuine, then this device can be used by a powerful nation to slowly impoverish the “offending” nation and place them in debt servitude. In essence any American merchant who got waylaid by Indians or bandits or claimed that they did would bring their claims to the US courts and then the US would bully that nation into either paying the debt or be indebted to them, strangling their commerce. Of course if the inverse happened (and it did many times, as the US, which was bound by treaty to control Comanche raids into Mexico, usually failed to do so) the US acted like they were not responsible or simply ignored the claims.

19. I am glad you mentioned the Santa Fe and California invasions but really needed to add more detail (especially since part of the Santa Fe invasion force included Alexander Doniphan and his men who broke off from Kearney and invaded Chihuahua through modern day El Paso (i.e. a part of Texas). The centrality of Texas to this event merits a more detailed view of this war, even if the motives of the US in this venture are difficult to present in a positive fashion. We should be willing to confront moments in history when the US behaved in a less than honorable fashion, not just gloss over them.

20. Unfortunately the Treaty Mexico agreed to was not the treaty the US finally accepted. In turn the US violated (or at least did nothing to stop its Anglo citizens from violating) its treaty obligations.

21. Note that the De Leon family had to flee because family members were murdered. Part of the reason that Tejanos lost their lands was because state and local authorities violated Treaty stipulations guaranteeing that Tejanos could not lose their lands due to debt or other considerations (i.e. akin to homestead laws). Local authorities used Tejano unfamiliarity with Anglo/ American legal systems to essentially “legally” cheat Tejanos out of their lands.

22. Mier y Teran continued to be an important figure in Texas history until his mysterious death in 1832. This period was important to later events in Texas history and merits some mention.

23. The James Long expedition included David G. Burnet, first president of the Texas Republic and Ben Milam, first martyr of the Texas Revolution and land speculator who represented the land interests (in Texas) of both Lorenzo de Zavala and Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first US plenipotentiary to Mexico. This is important for causality concerning the long term efforts by the US to seize Texas. Both of these men were rescued from a Mexican prison through the diplomatic intercession of Poinsett in 1822 (Ch. 7 Lesson 2). Like previously stated, Milam

became the representative land agent for important speculators like Zavala, Poinsett and Gen. Archibald Weavell and traveled even as far away as Great Britain representing the interests of these men. Burnet, like Milam had been involved in filibustering expeditions in Mexico since the Independence movement and was well connected politically in the US, since his brother was a federal congressman from Ohio. In addition, all these gentlemen were Masons, just like many of the leading figures of the Texas Revolution. Poinsett, a high degree York Rite Mason, founded the first York Rite lodge in Mexico in 1825 which included Zavala, Santa Anna, Vicente Guerrero (2nd president of Mexico) and countless other Mexican liberal politicians. This action helped Poinsett manipulate the political process in Mexico and was done to help him achieve his main diplomatic goal when he was sent as the US Plenipotentiary to Mexico in 1825: the acquisition of Texas. Mexico was reluctant to part with Texas in spite of Poinsett's efforts, but Poinsett informed Henry Clay, the US Secretary of State, in one of his diplomatic dispatches, that American immigration to Texas (both legal and illegal) would eventually provide the United States the opportunity to annex Texas. By the way, this particular issue is my specialty, and the diplomatic choices in the subsequent years since Poinsett sent his letter, would indicate that the US took Poinsett's advice. The students I believe, should know that the United States was actively attempting to acquire Texas during this period and as such did very little to control the flow of illegal immigration from the US into Mexican Texas, since they intended to take advantage of the situation for diplomatic gain.

24. It is important to at least provide an explanation of the caste system in New Spain, especially as an important point of comparison for how Spanish colonial society was structured in a vastly different way to that of the former 13 colonies. If part of the goal is for students to understand the social and political chaos of post-Independence Mexico (especially since it is an important causal factor in the Texas Revolution), the chapter should do a better job of detailing the social complexity of this system and how its tiered social structure played a crucial role in the Mexican Independence movement

25. You need to note that Napoleon's invasion of Spain and the abdication of the Spanish King, set in motion the breakup of the Spanish Empire in the Americas, by weakening the ability of the Spanish authorities to enforce their rule in the colonies and by providing a legal/religious excuse for conspirators to foment a revolt against the vice-royal authorities since their continued service under an illegitimate ruler (Joseph Bonaparte) invalidated their authority to rule the King's lands. (Ch. 7 Lesson 2)

26. The forces in Mexico that once opposed independence from Spain, joined the rebels because they thought the new Spanish government was too liberal and would threaten their privileges. In effect, the culmination of the Mexican Independence movement was more of a conservative reaction than a true revolution. The accommodation between these two opposing forces (the true revolutionaries and those former loyal Spaniards who decided Independence was to their greater advantage) left a very toxic post-independence mix of political leaders that would make building an effective nation very difficult.

27. You should really explore how Andrew Jackson's invasion of Florida forced the hand of the Spanish and drove the Adams Onis Treaty. It is important to recognize that the United States predicted that the Spanish would eventually fail in their efforts to hold on to Mexico (in the midst of the Mexican Independence movement) and had no intention of upholding their treaty

obligations concerning Texas by the simple technicality that ownership would pass to Mexico. The United States negotiated in bad faith and maintained the attitude that since Spain no longer held Texas the borders they had agreed upon as part of the Adams Onis Treaty (as well as their promise to not continue to press claims for parts Texas) were no longer valid and required renegotiation with the Mexican government. This attitude by the United States poisoned relationships with Mexico, whose politicians were always conscious that the territorial ambitions of the US played a role in all diplomatic interactions. This bred a suspicion that all dealings with the US carried this persistent hidden agenda and developed into a significant causal factor that contributed to the Texas Revolution and the Mexican War.

The following contains notes pertinent to Hispanic Civil Rights Issues in the 20th century.

1. Chapter 22: Has no mention of the Founding of LULAC in Corpus Christi in the 1920's. Considering that LULAC was in essence the NAACP for Mexican Americans, its omission is unforgivable. In effect it continues the trend of ignoring the agency of Mexican Americans in the long Civil Rights Movement. This eventually is addressed in Chapter 23, but the issues that prompted its creation were rooted in the 1920's and it should have properly been noted in that chapter.
2. Chapter 23: Pretty weak mention concerning the deportation of Mexican and Mexican Americans during the Great Depression. Dr. Christine Valenciana, professor of Bilingual Education at Cal State Fullerton and expert on the issue estimates that between 1-2 million people of Mexican descent were deported during the Great Depression and that 60% of those were either US Citizens or legal residents. Many of these people continued to be deported by state authorities even after FDR ended federal support for the practice. These findings are supported by Dr. Steven Mintz, historian at UT Austin, who goes on to explain that the New Deal offered very little to most Mexican Americans. The book makes no mention of that reality.
3. Chapter 23: Kudos for having included Emma Tenayuca
4. Chapter 24: Many times, minorities were denied recommendation for the highest military honors as a result of racial prejudice by mostly Anglo military commanders.
5. Chapter 25: On the Brown decision they make it seem like that was the only case on the docket concerning the matter when in fact it was an amalgamation of several cases, and if I am not mistaken, Brown was alphabetically listed first on the brief.
6. Chapter 25: Although they mention the Hernandez case, they should have spotlighted the lead attorney, Gus Garcia who was also the victor in the Mexican American version of the Brown decision, Delgado v. Bastrop (1948) and was the lead attorney in the Felix Longoria case (which is spotlighted in the chapter). In many ways, Garcia was the Thurgood Marshall of the Tejano Mexican American community. An exceedingly brilliant lawyer, he had a tragic decline in fortunes after the Hernandez case (a chronic alcoholic, he also suffered from Mental Illness and died of liver failure in 1964).
7. Chapter 25: I am impressed that they included MAYO and La Raza Unida, although they should have mentioned a few prominent figures by name, especially the founder of RUP, Jose Angel Gutierrez.