

CHAPTER II

Houston County, Its Creation and Organization

More than a century after the abandonment of the old Spanish Mission, which has been treated in Chapter I, that part of Nacogdoches County which afterwards became Houston County, began to be settled by colonists in Vehlin's Colony. Many of these obtained titles from the Mexican Government before the creation of Houston County, and quite a number of them fought in the Battle of San Jacinto and are entitled to be numbered with the heroes of that great decisive battle in the history of Texas. Many of their names appear in the following document, which was a prelude to the creation of the county. This is a historic document and deserves a place in the history of the county. Many of the men whose names appear on this document were prominent citizens in the later development of the county. It is as follows:

"Mustang Prairie, April 22nd, 1837.

"To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives when in Congress Assembled:

"We, the undersigned, your petitioners, citizens of said republic do most respectfully pray that your honorable body make for us a county on the East side of Trinity River, beginning at Robbins Ferry on said Trinity; Thence running fifteen miles each side of the old San Antonio Road and East far enough to make a constitutional county, and we do further pray that your honorable body appoint three disinterested commissioners out of the bounds of said county to locate the seat of justice for said county in granting the aforesaid petition, we, your petitioners as duty bound will ever pray, etc.

Iredell Reding
John B. Reding
Geo. W. Reding
James L. Gossett
Wm. L. Gossett
Elisha Clapp
John Wortham
John Hallmark
William Dillard
John V. D. Gossett
Jacob Masters
John Box

Stephen Crist
Reason Crist
William Anglin
Robin Brown
Richard Eaton
Thomas Denson
Nelson Box
P. O. Lumpkin
John C. Moore
John Allbright
Jacob Allbright
Barton Clark

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James L. Gossett
 E. Gossett
 John L. Hall
 Stephen White
 Alfred Buge
 Leon Pritchard
 Thomas G. Box
 Samuel C. Collison
 R. A. Walker
 Henry Masters
 John Erwin
 Chas. Erwin
 H. C. Johnson
 Williard Standley
 William Cheairs
 W. C. Standley
 John Cheairs
 John F. Cheairs
 Elijah Cheairs
 Frances Cheairs
 John Denson
 Joseph M. Masters
 William Leagon
 John H. Holder
 Enaske Lapus
 Albert Allbright
 Ira C. Shute
 Jas. Barns
 William Johnson

Ballin Snelles
 R. O. Lusk
 Joseph Masterson
 G. E. Dwight
 Samuel Clerlosky
 Stephen Bennett
 Elish Anglin
 Miles Bennett
 Joseph Jorden

Wm. H. Pate
 Peter Gallahery
 John C. Hayne
 John B. (illegible)
 James Neville
 Stephen Dunston
 Swanson Yarbrough
 Stillwell Box
 James M. Hallmark
 Alfred M. Hallmark
 George W. Hallmark
 John B. Hallmark
 George Hallmark
 Thos. R. Townsend
 Jowell Clapp
 John E. Clapp
 John Adams
 Samuel Phillips
 Joseph Cason
 George Allbright
 Joseph R. Yarbrough
 Frances Bettict
 Shedrick Denson
 Wm. Riley
 John Allbright
 Solomon Allbright
 Joseph Lapus
 W. M. White
 Martin Murchison.

Stephen Box	H. Barrett
Collin Aldrich	Peterson Tate
Henry P. Crowson	J. D. Parker
Isaac Parker	Geo. W. Robinson
Thos. Garner	A. E. Gossett
Dickerson Parker	Geo. Hallmark
J. Haley	Daniel Parker, Jr.
Benjamin Parker	H. P. Walker

"The above petition contains the following endorsement:

"Petition of Eredel Reding and others, for a new county,

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Presented by Mr. Arnold, May 16, 1837. Refd. to Com. on County Boundaries. County of Houston Co. No. 15, Box 38-H."

The Senate Journal of the First Congress of the Republic of Texas contains the following account of the proceedings on the above petition:

"Mr. Grimes, chairman of the Committee on County Boundaries, having obtained leave, introduced a bill to create a new county to be known as 'Houston'."

The rules being suspended, the bill passed a first and second reading and was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading.

On motion of Mr. Horton, the senate adjourned until "tomorrow morning, 10 o'clock."

The following action in the House of Representatives of the First Congress of the Republic, is taken from the House Journal:

" Wednesday, May 17, 1837

"On motion of Mr. Branch the house took up the bill creating the County of Houston; and

"On motion of Mr. Arnold, the bill was referred to the Committee on County Boundaries."

* * * * *

"Tuesday, June 6, 1837

"On motion of Mr. Arnold it was

"Resolved, that the bill establishing the County of Houston, with the accompanying petition, referred to the committee on County Boundaries, be withdrawn from that committee and referred to a special committee of three, with instructions to report tomorrow morning.

"The speaker appointed Messrs. Arnold, Wharton and White the committee, and on motion, Mr. Gant was added to it."

"Wednesday, June 7, 1837.

"Mr. Arnold, from the select committee to which the subject had been referred, reported a bill establishing the County of Houston, which being read, on motion of Mr. Arnold the 51st rule was suspended and the bill read a second time. Mr. Gant offered an amendment in relation to the County of Washington, which was rejected.

"The rule was then further suspended, the bill read a third time and passed."

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HISTORY OF HOUSTON COUNTY

“June 7, 1837.

“A message was received from the house covering ‘an Act to create the County of Houston.’

“On motion of Mr. Irion, the ‘Act creating the County of Houston was called up, and the senate concurred in the amendments made by the house.’”

The following represents the action of the Committee on Counties and County Boundaries:

“The Committee, to whom was referred the petition of sundry inhabitants of the County of Nacogdoches praying a division of said county and to form a new county of a part thereof, have had the same under consideration, and believe that the Western portion of said county is so remote from the seat of justice as to render it all together inconvenient for the citizens thereof to attend the seat of justice on business of a public nature.

“We therefore recommend the passage of the following bill.

“H. ARNOLD, Chm.

“Section I—

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Texas in Congress assembled.

“That all that portion of the County of Nacogdoches within the following limits, to-wit: Beginning on the East bank of Trinity River at a point two leagues above the mouth of Kickapoo Creek, from Thence in a Northwesterly direction to the Neches at the mouth of Big Pine Creek; Thence up the Neches to the 32nd degree of North latitude; Thence due West to the Trinity River; Thence down the said river to the place of beginning, form a county to be called and known by the name of Houston County.

“Section II—

“Be it further enacted that the citizens of said county be and are hereby authorized and required to elect seven commissioners who, a majority of them concurring, shall select a site for the seat of justice of said county.

“Section III—

“Be it further enacted that the President be and he is hereby authorized to order an election for one representative, and all the officers of the county to take place on the first Monday of

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September next and also to appoint commissioners to hold said election.

"B. T. Archer,
"Speaker of the House of Representatives.

JESSE GRIMES.
"President Pro. Tem. of the Senate.

"APPROVED: June 12, 1837.

"SAM HOUSTON."

A careful examination of the foregoing Act of Congress of the Republic of Texas creating Houston County will show that it was, at the beginning, a very large county, and covered all of the territory now embraced within the bounds together with all of Trinity County and all of Anderson County and a large portion of Henderson County. The reader should refer to a map of the State of Texas as it existed in 1836, for a clearer understanding of the territory embraced within the original limits of the county. It might be a matter of interest to the people of Houston County to think of the extent of the jurisdiction exercised by the first officers of Houston County. The chief justices of the county courts of Houston County from 1838 when they were first chosen, to the creation of Anderson County in 1846, exercised jurisdiction over all that territory now embraced in Anderson County and the Southern part of Henderson County and in Trinity County. On March 24, 1846, Anderson County was created out of Houston County and it will be interesting to observe the boundaries as set out in the Acts of Congress creating that county which are as follows:

"Beginning at a place in the County of Houston, known as Houston Mound, about one mile North of Murchison's Prairie; Thence Westwardly by a direct line running through the old Ionie village, on the North Elkhart Creek to the Trinity River; Thence, beginning again at Houston's Mound, continuing said direct line Eastwardly to the Neches River; Thence, up said river with the meanders thereof to the Northeast corner of John Ferguson's League of land; Thence, by direct line parallel to the first above-named line, to the Trinity River; Thence down said river with the meanders thereof, to the intersection of said first named line with the Trinity River."

It will be noticed that one of the landmarks which must