

# Non-Texans who influenced Texas for the better

## Tex Messages

Texas Culture

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Last week, I lit up Texas Monthly magazine for portraying non-Texans as native Texans. I hope y'all understood the satire for what it was. While it's true that one must be born here to be considered native, in no way do I dislike non-Texans. On the contrary, non-Texans are vital to the growth and progress of the Lone Star State. After all, non-Texans founded Texas.



David Crockett, one of the best-known "Texans" in history, was not a Texan. He was from Tennessee. Crockett, a defender of the Alamo, came to Texas in 1835 after losing an election to Congress. He told the Tennessee constituents, "... you may all go to Hell and I will go to Texas." Considering what happened to Crockett not long after his arrival, he probably felt like he went

to Hell.

The known defenders of the Alamo came from Virginia, Vermont, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Alabama, New Hampshire, Georgia, Ohio, Illinois, Mississippi, Louisiana and even New Jersey. Some weren't even Americans. Men from Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, Denmark and Germany also fought for Texas independence. The non-Texans outnumbered the native Texans, Juan Abamillo, Juan Badillo, Carlos Espalier, Gregorio Esparza, Antonio Fuentes, Jose Maria Guerrero, Damacio Jimenes, William Phillip King, Torribio Losoya, Andres Nava and Perry Richardson.

Samuel Houston, first and third president of the Republic of Texas and eventually the seventh governor of Texas, was born in Virginia and grew up in Tennessee (of which he also had been governor). He was not a Texan by birth, but he was part of the creation of Texas.

"Texas will again lift its head and stand among the nations," Houston said. "It ought to do so, for no country upon the globe can compare with it in natural advantages."

Stephen Fuller Austin, the father of Texas himself, grew up in Mis-

souri. That little nugget makes my Missouri-born mother grin. Her father-in-law always gave her a hard time for being a yankee. The question of Austin being a yankee must never have been raised to my grandfather and probably for safety reasons. It would have reduced him to a blithering mess, I'm sure.

Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar was from Georgia. He fought with Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto and served as the second president of the Republic of Texas. To Texans, he is the father of Texas education. Lamar is directly responsible for the two universities that eventually became Texas A&M University and the University of Texas. Houston, coincidentally, was on the original board of trustees of my alma mater, Austin College (named for Stephen F. Austin) in 1849 in Huntsville at what is now Sam Houston State University (Austin College has been in Sherman since 1876). Reverend Daniel Baker, a Princeton-educated Presbyterian missionary from Virginia, was its founder.

During the 1840s, President John Tyler, a Virginian, saw the political power of Texas and pushed for its annexation. His political party, the Democratic Republicans used the slogan, "Tyler and Texas!" and the



Photo by cliff1066  
David Crockett, 1834. Oil on canvas by Chester Harding.

president used the issue as the foundation of his re-election campaign. Tyler eventually dropped out of the race, but James Polk took up the cause and won.

Polk, a son of North Carolina, never came to Texas, but he loved it sight unseen. One of Polk's acts in his first year as president was to sign legislation making Texas the 28th state on Dec. 29, 1845.

There are many non-Texans whose blood, sweat and tears went into the making of Texas. All kidding aside, without them, there would be no Texas.

Truthfully, I like non-Texans. The folks with the bumper stickers that read: "I wasn't born in Texas but I got here as fast as I could" honestly give me hope in the survival and progress of our state.

Texas is more than soil and boundary lines. Texas is a living, breathing, growing, evolving entity. Like any living thing, Texas needs more than the basics to make it grow. Texas needs fresh perspectives. It needs passion. And it needs more than a single pair of eyes to really look at it, fix what's broken



Photo by Oldag07  
Samuel Houston was the 8th Governor of Tennessee, the 1st and 3rd President of the Republic of Texas, a United States Senator from Texas and the 7th Governor of Texas.

and leave alone that which works.

Many of the original non-Texans who figured so greatly into the genesis of the Lone Star State are remembered not by where they were born but where they lived and died. What eventually made them Texans had nothing to do with birthplace and everything to do with their parts in the struggle to create Texas.

It is important for Texans to remember that. Every new Texas resident moving here from someplace else shares a kinship with men like Davy Crockett, James Bowie, William Travis and James Bonham. They came from elsewhere with a dream or because of circumstances beyond their control. They didn't cower or quit. They stood up and fought for a new nation that eventually became a great state in the greatest nation in the world.

So the next time you get some ribbing about not being from Texas, just understand that we really mean no harm and that we will, in time, come to appreciate you. Consider the teasing just part of your initiation into becoming one of us.



Photo by Daniel Schwen

The chapel of the Alamo Mission is known as the "Shrine of Texas Liberty."



*Prepare for the unknown by studying how others in the past have coped with the unforeseeable and the unpredictable.*

- Gen. George Patton