

## Texas and Houston, 1836-1846: Maps in the Houston Public Library's Collection

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Houston Public Library has collected historic Texas maps since its beginnings as an institution. Over the years, the collection has grown steadily, and the Texas and Local History Department now houses over 1,500 individual maps of Texas and Houston. Many are originals of historic or cartographic significance; a few are unique. The collection also encompasses uncounted sets of topographic maps, block maps, land grant maps, planning maps, fire insurance maps, flood plain maps, and others.

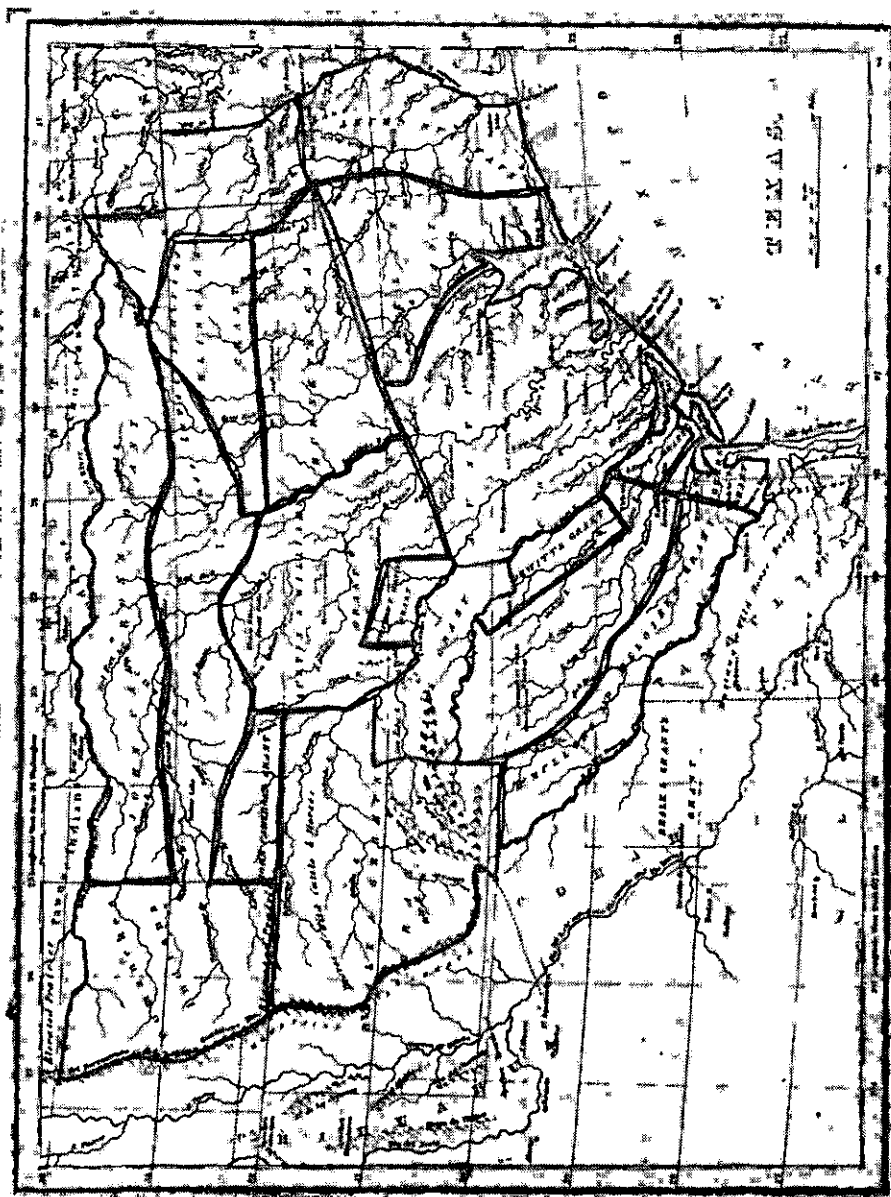
Taken together, the maps illustrate the evolution of Texas and Houston from their earliest representations to the present day. Researchers in the Houston Metropolitan Research Center using either of the two partner collections, the Texas and Local History Department or the Archives and Manuscripts Department, are able to add depth and texture to their findings by using the map collection in conjunction with other materials.

This article is the first of a projected series intended to offer an overview of the map collection. The maps discussed in this article represent both Texas and Houston during the time of the Texas Republic, 1836-1846.

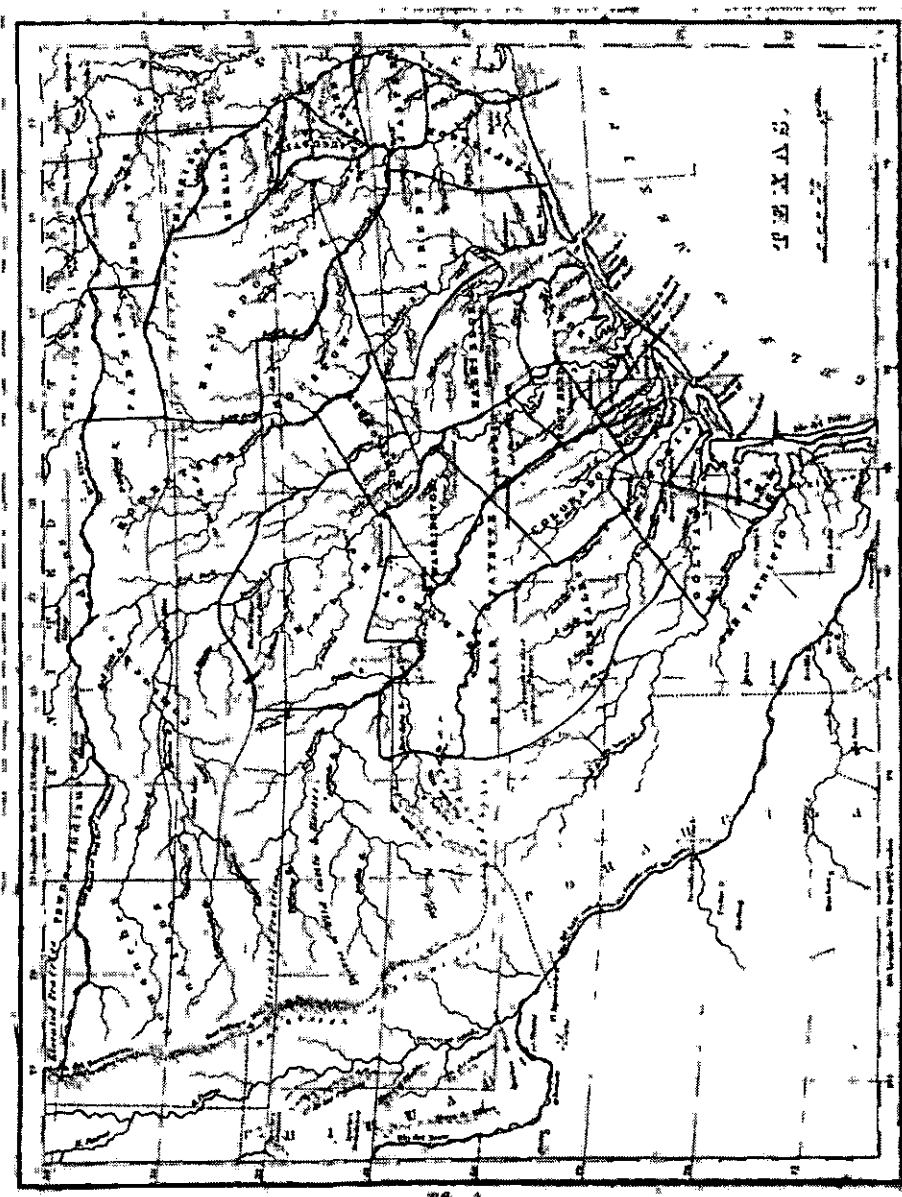
While Texas was shown as an uncharted region on maps of the Spanish colonies in North America as early as the sixteenth century, one of the first individuals to map the area in detail was Stephen F. Austin, in his capacity as empresario and colonizer. Throughout his years of travel in Texas and Mexico on behalf of his colony, Austin kept extensive and detailed geographical notes. As early as 1822 he drafted a map of Texas based on his observations to date. For several years thereafter, he continued to gather additional

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Thomas Gamaliel Bradford, "Texas," published in Thomas Gamaliel Bradford, *A Comprehensive Atlas, Geographical, Historical, and Commercial* (1836).



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information by interviewing other travelers and by surveying selected areas himself. In 1829, he completed work on a revised map. With a view to attracting American immigrants, he sent a copy to map publisher H. S. Tanner in Philadelphia to be printed and distributed. Reproductions of both manuscript and printed editions of this Austin map can be found in the Texas and Local History collection.

Although latter-day research has revealed the existence of earlier maps held by Mexican archives, Austin believed, and for many years it was generally accepted, that this was the first "complete and accurate" printed map of Texas. Indeed the geographic information compiled in his years of methodical observation is remarkably accurate with respect to landforms, villages, roads, and boundaries. In subsequent years, mapmakers in the United States and Europe produced their own maps by adding new information to his outline.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first to do so was Thomas Gamaliel Bradford of Boston. Although Bradford is not esteemed among the major cartographers or map publishers in the United States, he holds a place of distinction in the history of Texas maps, having published the first two maps to show Texas as a separate nation. Recognizing the emerging American interest in the area, Bradford inserted a separate Texas map in the 1836 second printing of his *Comprehensive Atlas, Geographical, Historical, and Commercial*.<sup>2</sup> Displaying landforms based on Austin's 1829 map, Bradford's 1836 version outlines the boundaries of the grants to the various empresarios and locates a number of towns and settlements. On this map Texas extends only to the Nueces River. In the 1842 version of this same atlas, the border has been moved to the Rio Grande and the divisions redrawn to show counties. Accompanying text describes the land and the climate ("mild and healthful"), names the Brazos de Dios as the principal river, and estimates a population of about 60,000. Illustrating the difficulty of maintaining current information in a changing political situation, this map places the capital at "the village of Houston, on the Buffalo Bayou," although the capital had been moved to Austin in 1839.

Bradford published *An Illustrated Atlas, Geographical, Statistical, and Historical, of the United States, and the Adjacent Countries*, in a larger format in 1838. The land divisions of Texas in this atlas are still the land grants and colonies of the Mexican era. The 1842 and 1844 editions add Austin as the new capital and superimpose county divisions over the earlier land grant boundaries,

<sup>1</sup>Carlos E. Castaneda and Early Martin, Jr., *Three Manuscript Maps of Texas by Stephen F. Austin with Biographical and Bibliographical Notes* (Austin, Texas, privately printed, 1930).

<sup>2</sup>James C. Martin and Robert Sidney Martin, *Maps of Texas and the Southwest 1513-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press for the Amon Carter Museum, 1984), 35-36, 125.

locating the seat of each county.

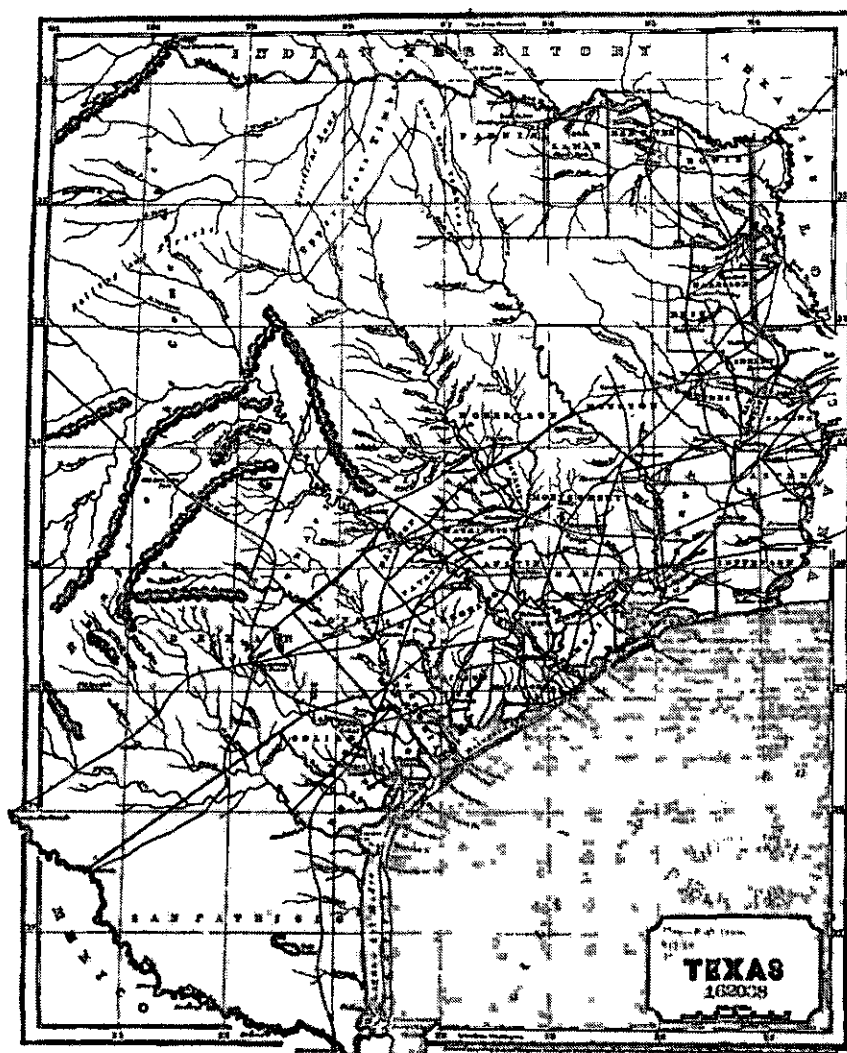
The Texas and Local History Department recently filled out a set of seven Texas maps by Bradford: from the 1835 edition, which represents Texas with minimal detail as a province of Mexico on the maps of North America and Mexico, to the 1844 map as it appeared in Tanner's *New Universal Atlas*. Placed side by side, this group illustrates Texas's separation from Mexico, the subsequent growth of new communities, the changing boundaries, and the developing knowledge of the area as the Republic established its importance to the outside world.

Map publishers Sidney Morse and Samuel Breese were related to Samuel Morse, who developed and patented the telegraph after he could not make a sufficient living as a painter of portraits and historical subjects. They shared his artistic bent; their 1844 map of Texas is both lovely and clear in detail. The notable emphasis of this map is transportation. The relative size of the rivers and streams is indicated by varying the boldness of those lines, and entry points from the United States are shown at the ferry crossings on the Sabine River border with Louisiana. Roads crisscross the settled portion of the Republic; Houston is shown at the hub of roads which form equal spokes in six directions.

Diplomatic developments prompted the interest of European map publishers. The United States moved first to recognize the Texas Republic. France was next, and England, Holland, and Belgium had all followed suit by 1840.

The Arrowsmith publishing firm of London included a Texas map for the first time in its *London Atlas*, published in 1841. Compiled from General Land Office and other official surveys, as well as one survey that has come to be recognized as apocryphal, this magnificent map and its 1843 revision have been called "the best and most useful for Texas of their time." It was certainly one of the maps most often imitated by later mapmakers.<sup>3</sup> Interesting features include delineation of 31 counties, recognition of the Rio Grande as the southern and western boundary, locations of Indian tribes, established wagon roads, military campaign routes, and an inset Plan of Galveston Bay indicating the best route to reach Buffalo Bayou to approach Houston. The Arrowsmith maps are valued for their accuracy in depicting settled areas of the Republic, based on the latest available information. Just as interesting are the misstatements labeling unsettled and largely unexplored areas of West Texas as "fertile well wooded, and with a fair proportion of water." The Houston Public

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Winthrop Streeter, *Bibliography of Texas 1795-1845* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), entry 1373A, part 3, vol. 2, p. 339.



Sidney E. Morse and Samuel Breese, "Texas" (1844).

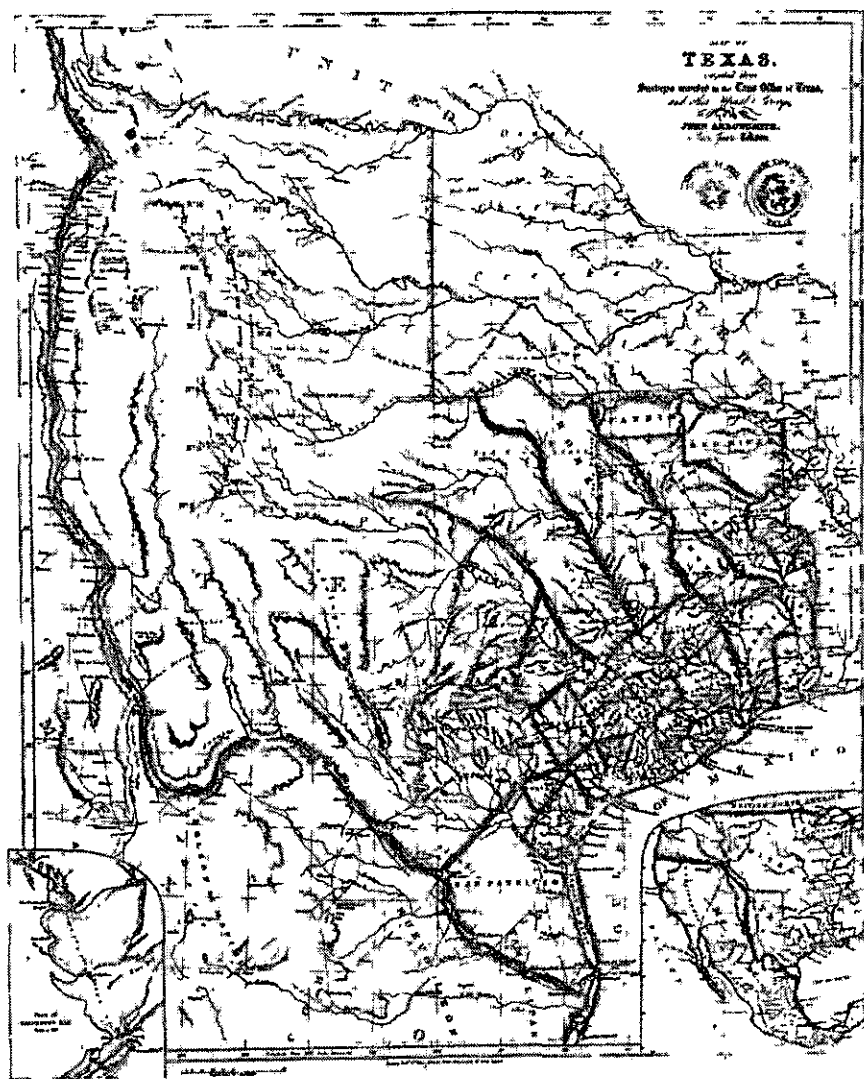
Library has recently acquired the 1843 Arrowsmith Texas map as its newest addition to the collection.

Europeans quickly developed an interest in participating in the development of the new Republic. Immigrants to Texas prior to the Revolution were primarily, but not exclusively, from America's southern states. The separation from Mexico opened the way to increasing numbers of immigrants from throughout the United States and Europe as well. The earliest European group to arrive was German, coming to Texas both while it was still under Mexican rule and during the era of the Republic. Over 7,000 German immigrants arrived under the auspices of the Adelsverein colonization enterprise of 1844-1847. With this degree of interest, it should be no surprise that German mapmakers both reflected and encouraged interest in the new Republic by including maps of Texas in their atlases. Carl Flemming was one such publisher. His 1846 map of Texas draws its outline from Arrowsmith; the similarities are striking. Place names on the Flemming map are labeled with an intriguing combination of German, English, and Spanish nomenclature. A town on Galveston Bay is called "Neu Washington"; the river to the east is labeled "Trinidad oder Trinity."

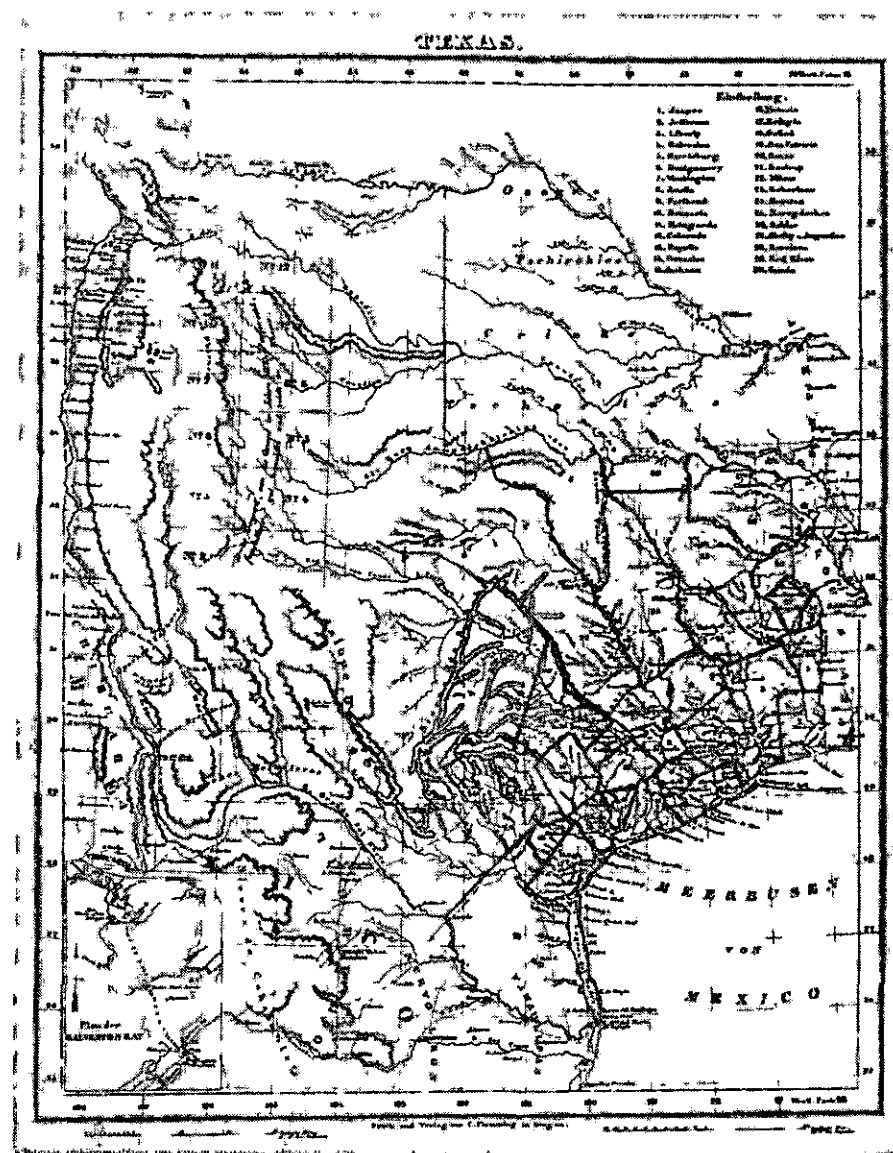
Yet another political development that inspired an important map of the Republic was the annexation issue, which arose even before Texas gained independence from Mexico. Complicated by the slavery question and fears of Mexican objections, the debate grew in importance to become a major campaign issue in the 1844 United States presidential election. The annexation treaty submitted to the U.S. Congress in early 1844 and accepted the following year was accompanied by a map compiled by First Lieutenant W. H. Emory using the best information available in the files of the U.S. War Department.<sup>4</sup> One legend on this map cites his authorities, which include the Arrowsmith atlas and accounts of noted explorers Zebulon Pike and J. C. Fremont.

Another legend offers population figures for the "chief towns." Galveston with 5,000 inhabitants was much the largest; Austin, by now firmly established as the capital of the Republic, still had only 200. Houston's population on the Library's otherwise fine copy of this map has been overwritten and is unreadable. A large area of disputed territory in West Texas is indicated by overlapping Texas and Mexico boundaries. Two alternate proposed routes for rail connections to San Francisco are shown. The format of this map

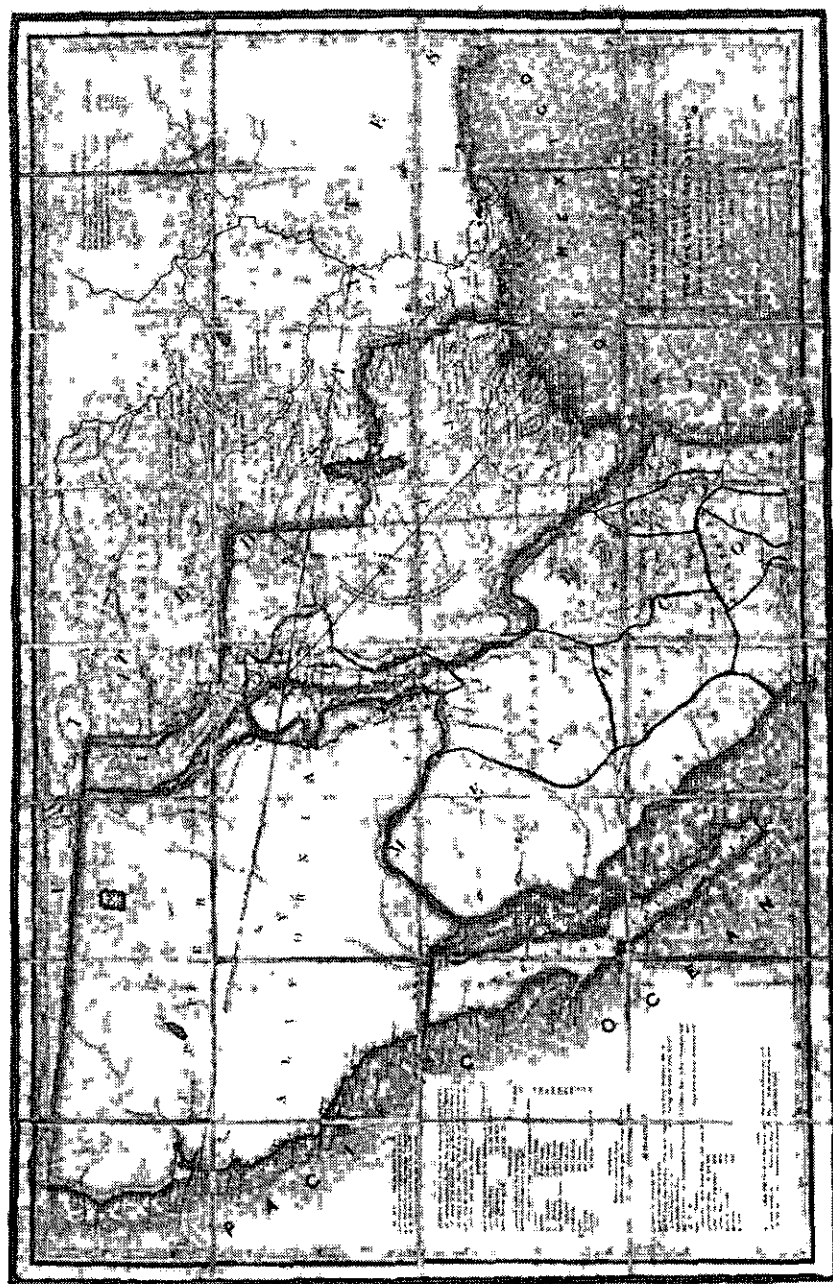
<sup>4</sup>Martin and Martin, *op. cit.*, 127; Robert Sidney Martin and James C. Martin, *Contours of Discovery: Printed Maps Delineating the Texas and Southwestern Chapters in the Cartographic History of North America, 1513-1930* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1982), 54.



John Arrowsmith, "Map of Texas . . .," published in John Arrowsmith, *London Atlas* (1843).



Carl Flemming, "Texas" (1846).



W. H. Emory, "Texas and the Countries Adjacent . . ." (1844).

reflects the utilitarianism of the War Department. The paper map is cut into rectangular sections which have been mounted onto a linen backing  $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch apart, a common practice with maps that had to withstand repeated folding.

The independent status of the Republic came to an end in 1846 with the achievement of statehood. Samuel Augustus Mitchell of Philadelphia published one of the first maps showing the new state in relation to adjoining territories in the western United States. The map shows the continuing Texas claim to lands along the upper Rio Grande. The United States-Mexico border as drawn reflects related territorial disputes which would be resolved by the treaty ending the Mexican American war in 1848. This "New Map of Texas, Oregon, and California with the Regions Adjoining..." illustrates the degree of development and the accumulation of knowledge of Texas during its years as a Republic.

Not all the Texas Republic maps in the collection are antiques. A limited edition map published in 1972 by Sam Long illustrates the boundaries of the Republic of Texas as enacted by its congress in 1836. Superimposed present-day state boundaries show that the Republic claimed lands that now comprise parts of New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and Wyoming. Indian trails and villages and the routes of various explorers and military expeditions add interest to this depiction of conditions in the Texas Republic.

While the maps described above are a sample of a fine collection of representative Texas historic maps, the Houston area maps are a unique resource for study of the development of the nation's fourth largest city, which was conceived and established by the brothers John and Augustus Allen from empty prairie purchased only a few months after the Texas victory at San Jacinto.

The most highly prized items in this portion of the collection are three maps representing the earliest surveys commissioned by the Allen brothers to lay out the new town. These maps were located and acquired for the public library from a private owner in 1937.<sup>5</sup> The first two were drawn according to the original surveys by Gail and Thomas Borden. The hand-drawn "Original Plan of Houston" dated 1836 provided the basis for sales of lots to newcomers responding to the Allens' initial announcement of the proposed town. Original streets and plats extend six blocks south from Buffalo Bayou and six blocks to either side of Main Street opposite the conjunction of White Oak Bayou with Buffalo Bayou. This plan shows a courthouse square, a Congress

<sup>5</sup>Jesse A. Ziegler, "Poetic Names of Streets Didn't Last Long," *Houston Post*, April 4, 1937.



Samuel Augustus Mitchell, "A New Map of Texas, Oregon and California with the Regions Adjoining . . ." (1846).

Square intended to be used as the seat of government should Houston win designation as the capital of the new Republic, and blocks reserved for school and church.

The second Borden map, "Plan of the City of Houston," was clearly intended for publication to promote the new community to potential immigrants from the United States. Dated 1837, this map extends the earlier survey by adding streets around the perimeter and includes an inset sketch from Austin's map locating the town in relation to the settled areas of coastal Texas. A block of text describes the beauty of the location and its abundance of resources and prophesies a future as "the great interior commercial emporium of Texas."

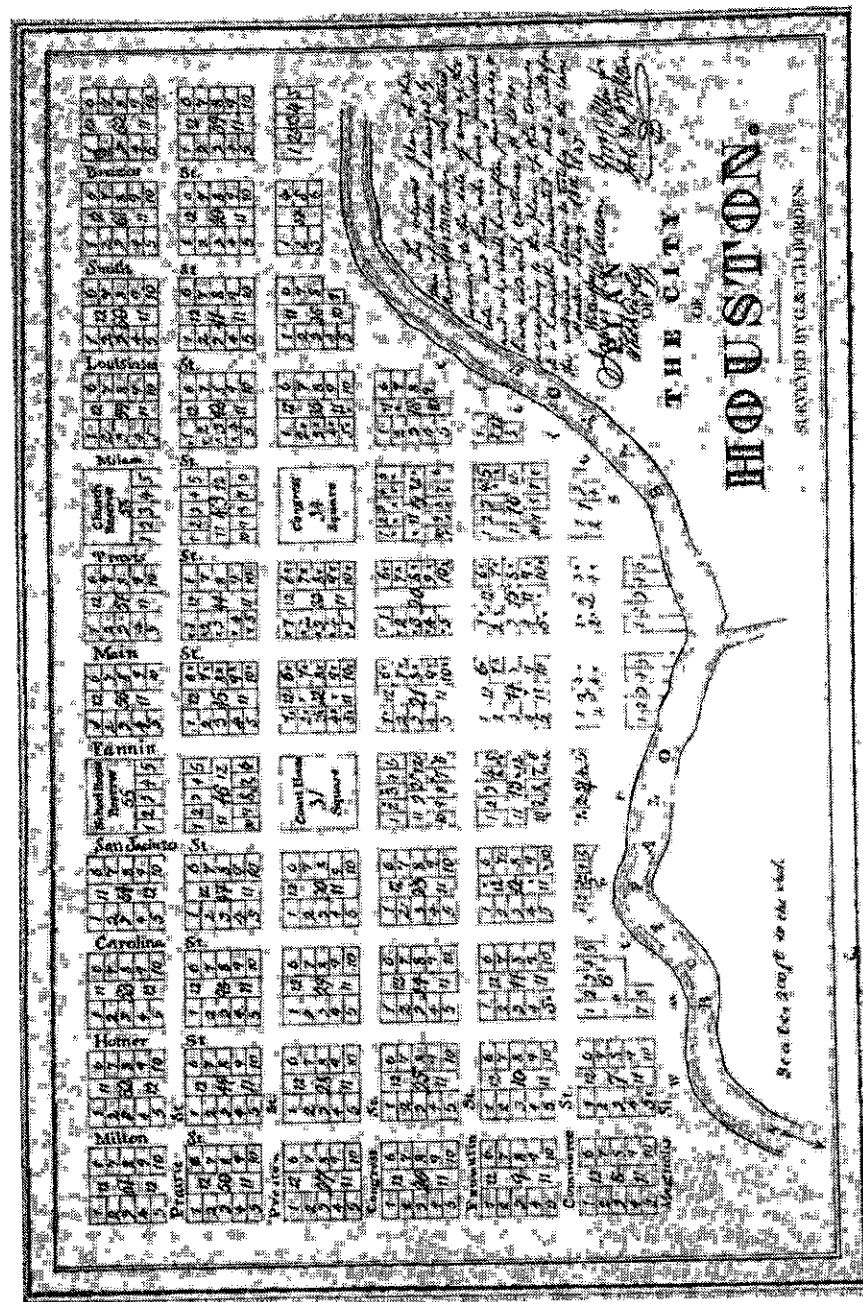
The final member of this trio of early Houston maps is dated 1839 and was signed by "A. Girard, late chief engineer of the Texas army." Girard surveyed new plats as far south as Clay Street and to Live Oak and Brazos streets on the east and west. The earlier designation of Congress Square has been replaced by Market Square. This site housed the city's marketplace alongside the municipal government; four successive city halls occupied the block from 1841 until 1939.

The original Borden survey and the Girard map have not only historic but also legal significance, since both were used to establish property titles. Small discrepancies between the two maps, especially along the south bank of Buffalo Bayou, occasioned debates among title abstractors and city engineers well into the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup>

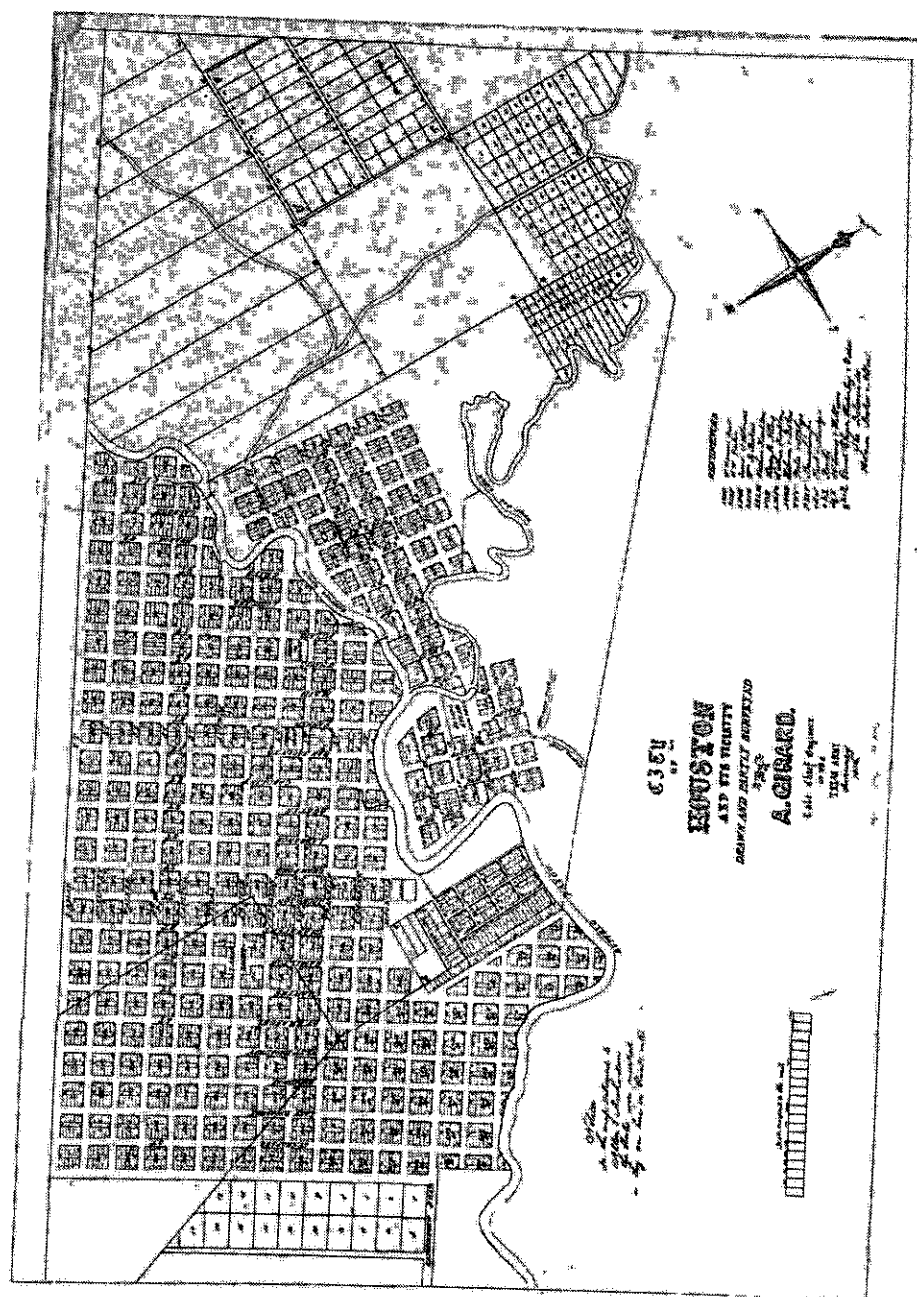
An interesting comparison to these early Houston maps is one drawn about 1840 of Harrisburg and Hamilton. Harrisburg, established in 1825 at the point where Brays Bayou enters Buffalo Bayou, predated Houston by 11 years. The settlement was a center of transport and served as a local government seat under Mexican rule. Burned to the ground during the Revolution, the town was reestablished in 1837. Hamilton, directly across Buffalo Bayou from Harrisburg, was laid out a year later and consolidated with Harrisburg in 1839. Although Houston's growth surrounded this area, which was annexed to the larger city in 1926, the neighborhood retains its identity as Harrisburg to the present day.

A modern representation of Houston in these earliest years was drawn by Houstonian James L. Glass, who collected descriptions of the town in available records, diaries, and other accounts. Glass's "Developmental Drawing" shows Houston as of December 1837, at the end of its first year of

<sup>6</sup>"Borden Map Was Allen Reference," *Houston Post*, undated clipping, in Patricia Howell Campbell Scrapbook, vol. 1, p. 222, Texas and Local History Department, Houston Public Library.

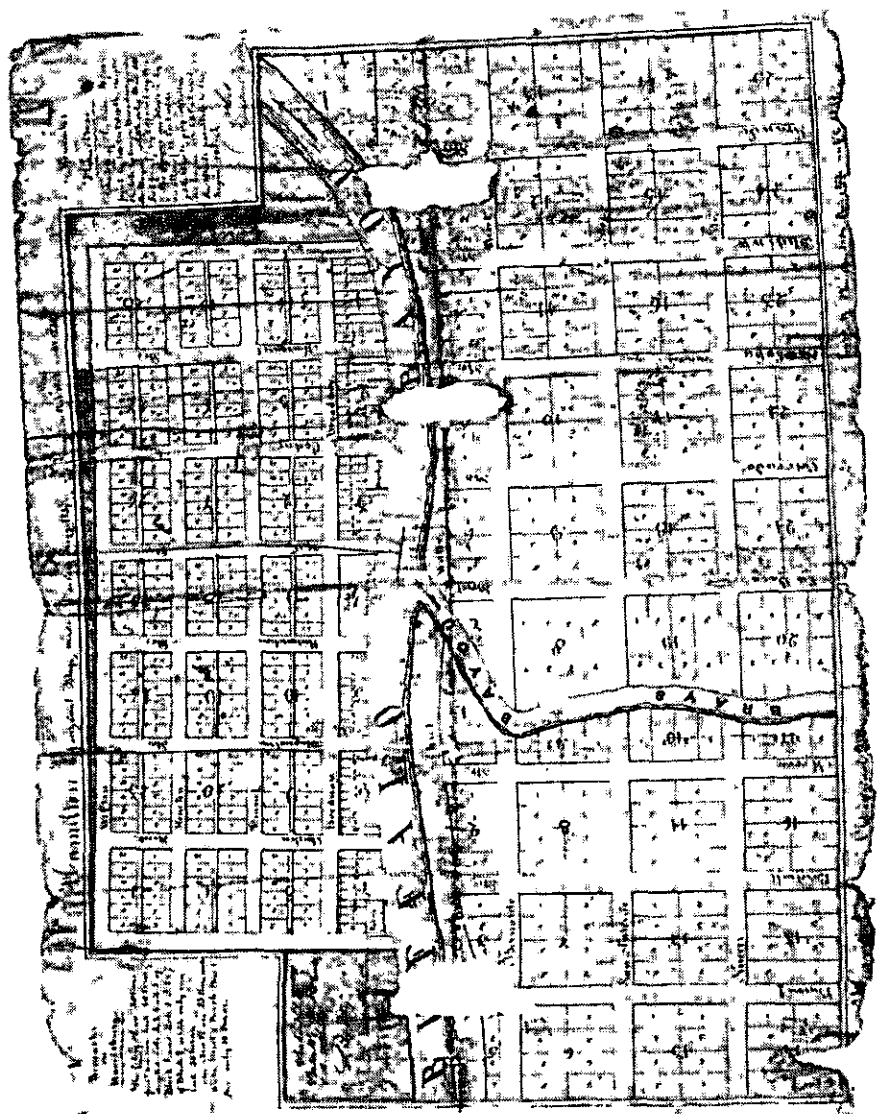


Detail, Gail and Thomas Borden, "Plan of the City of Houston" (1837).



A. Girard, "City of Houston and Its Vicinity . . ." (1839).





"Hamilton and Harrisburg" (ca. 1840), drawn from earlier maps: Darius Gregg, "Hamilton" (1837) and Francis W. Johnston, "Harrisburg" (n.d.).

construction, sketching streets, topography, buildings, and encampments. Enlivened by bits of whimsy, captions and drawings depict construction, shipping, and commercial activities in progress. The map also features a history of the official city seal accompanied by drawings of three different versions.

While this 10-year period of the Texas Republic is rich in interest for aficionados of historic maps, the map collection as a whole spans the entire history of Texas and Houston. This extraordinary resource is open to view by the public and is used heavily by scholars in varying disciplines at all age levels. Handling of the more fragile items may be restricted in order to preserve them, but in most of these cases a reproduction is available for research use. Articles highlighting other portions of the collection are planned to appear in future issues of *The Houston Review*.