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Tales of Texas NEWSLETTER

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This issue of Tales of Texas concerns "The Second Great Awakening" (1790-1850)

Above illustration is of a Tent Meeting during the religious revival period.

Revival tents, Scottish grit, and the roar of revolution—these unlikely forces came together on the Texas frontier. The Second Great Awakening didn't just save souls; it helped give birth to a republic.

Comments? Go to website listed below.

Faith, Freedom and the Birth of Texas

The Republic of Texas was not born by muskets alone. Behind the gun smoke and the cries of revolution lay another fire—the fire of faith. The Second Great Awakening, a wave of revival sweeping across America in the early 1800s, taught ordinary people that God spoke to them directly. No priestly gatekeeper. No distant authority. Just a sinner, a Savior, and the freedom to choose. That message struck a chord with the men and women heading west. And when they crossed into Texas, it came with them.

Revival in Appalachia

Picture the frontier: cabins scattered through thickets, dirt roads cut through endless woods, families scraping survival out of stubborn soil. On Sunday, there was often no church, no pulpit, no choir. But there might be a revival under an open sky.

Camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening weren't quiet services. They were days-long gatherings filled with preaching, singing, shouting, and kneeling. Neighbors came from miles away, wagon wheels creaking, children trailing behind. People felt God not as a doctrine in a book but as a presence alive in the moment.

The revival's main message was simple and radical: every person could stand before God, make their own choice, and live free in faith. That same spirit of independence soon found a political home in Texas.

Tales of Texas

John Knox
Scottish Reformer

The Scots Who Came to Texas

Many of the men who helped shape the Republic carried Scottish blood. (Stephen Austin, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and Sam Houston, to name a few.) Their ancestors had once resisted kings and bishops in the old country, insisting no earthly ruler had the right to control a man's conscience. That stubborn streak came across the ocean, settled in the Appalachian backcountry, and blazed into the American frontier.

By the time their children and grandchildren made their way to Texas, they had absorbed not only the old Scottish suspicion of authority but also the revivalist fervor of the Awakening. Put the two together and you get a people convinced that freedom—both spiritual and political—was worth fighting for.

Liberty as a Sacred Calling

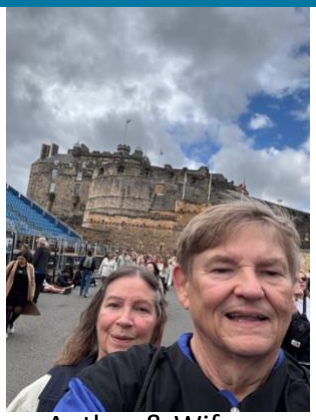
When Santa Anna demanded obedience, many Texans heard more than political commands. They heard the echo of old struggles—bishops telling Scottish farmers how to worship, kings dictating their prayers. For these frontier descendants, the Mexican general's central authority felt not only unjust but unholy.

Take Sam Houston, whose roots ran deep into Scots-Irish soil.

Though far from saintly, Houston was steeped in that culture of resistance and revival. Later in life he made a dramatic public confession of faith, tying his personal story to the idea that Texas itself was a work of Providence.

Or think of Davy Crockett, another son of the Scots-Irish frontier. His plainspoken independence, sharpened on revival preaching, made him an unlikely United States congressman and hero at the Alamo.

The language of faith and freedom blended easily. Just as a man must choose Christ for himself, so a people must choose liberty.



Author & Wife – Edinburgh Castle

Scottish Sentiment
No one assails me with impunity

Faith Behind the Lone Star

After San Jacinto, Texas set up not only a government but a spiritual experiment. The Republic had no official church. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and countless others preached side by side. Circuit riders galloped across prairies, Bibles in their saddlebags. Services broke out in cabins, fields, and under oak trees. The oldest secondary school operating in Texas is Baylor University, a Baptist institution.

The Second Great Awakening had prepared Texans to expect nothing less. Faith was personal, voluntary, and free—just like their politics.

So, when we think of Texas independence, it's worth remembering more than the cannon at Gonzales or the charge at San Jacinto. The Revolution was carried on the shoulders of farmers, soldiers, and our mothers who believed God had given them both faith and freedom. It was prayed into existence, sung into campfires, and preached from wagons and horses.

Its founders carried a heritage of Scottish resistance and revival conviction that shaped the nation as surely as any battlefield victory.

The Republic of Texas was thus not only a political creation but a spiritual one, born out of sermons and psalms as surely as out of gunpowder and steel. To understand its founders, one must see how deeply they drank from the twin wells of Scottish heritage and the Great Awakening's call to an individual walk with God.

Although Americans separate "church and state", they do not do so in their private lives. Texans have never walked two separate walks. They walked from Tennessee to the Alamo and Goliad believing in something much larger than themselves. They were children of Revolution, both in America and the British Isles. They carried both Bible and rifle, hymn and banner, not as contradictions but as companions on the same path. That path still stretches before us today.