

Chapter 14

The New Order

In less than half a year after the Battle of San Jacinto and the signing of the Treaties of Velasco, the interim government chosen by the Convention of 1836 had been replaced by an elected government with Sam Houston as president and Mirabeau B Lamar as vice president. Stephen F Austin became secretary of state, and a new capital was established at Columbia, Texas.

Oh, yes, even we Tejanos now referred to Tejas as *Texas*. Out with the old and in with the new. Sometimes, it is amazing how fast things can change. San Antonio de Béxar was no longer called *Béxar*, but *San Antonio*. We even learned to address our *alcalde* as *Mr Mayor*. Distances would, henceforth, be measured in yards and miles, instead of *varas* and *cordeles*. English replaced Spanish as the official language.

Two days after Christmas, Secretary Austin died, and the entire nation mourned his passing. Tejanos and Texians, often at odds, found themselves united in grief. One newspaper headline read:

THE PATRIARCH HAS LEFT US!

Meanwhile, new towns were springing up all over Texas as settlers poured in from the United States. One such town, Seguin, was named in honor of *don Juan*.

On the Brazos River, more or less encircling old Fort Bend, which had been established long ago by William Barret Travis, the town of Richmond was chartered and named after a city in England. *Tío* Erastus moved his family there, as did Vice President Lamar and other prominent men. Richmond was, for a while, the most-stylish address in Texas.

Competing for that honor, however, was Houston City on Buffalo Bayou. This new township was named, of course, for Sam Houston, who was so flattered that he put into motion whatever political machinations were necessary to move the capital there from Columbia.

The rivalry between the townships of Richmond and Houston City was, it seemed to me, an extension of the political rivalry between Mirabeau Lamar and Sam Houston. I doubt that any two men ever despised each other more. Whatever position one embraced the other would surely oppose. Houston favored a peaceful coexistence with the indigenous tribes; Lamar preferred to see all Indians driven out of Texas or else eradicated. Houston hoped that Texas would eventually join the United States; Lamar violently opposed statehood. And there were a hundred other issues on which they differed. Sometimes, one prevailed; other times, the other would win out. Their struggle for supremacy was ongoing and defined the politics of the Republic of Texas.