The Story Matters...

Witness to the bravery and bloodshed at the Alamo, Susanna Dickinson was one of the two people who carried the news of the garrison's fate to other Texans.

Carrying a letter of warning written by General Santa Anna, Dickinson reached Gonzales less than a week after the Alamo's fall. The news that Santa Anna would soon be leading his army into the heart of Anglo American settlements stirred fear among Texans. People began to flee, and Dickinson—just some 22 years old, widowed, and with an infant daughter—joined in their flight. In the spring of 1836, the promise of Texas independence seemed very much in doubt.

After her ordeal at the Alamo, Susanna Dickinson remained in Texas for the rest of her life, dying in Austin in 1883.
By the early spring of 1836, the Texas Revolution was struggling. The government was on the run, and civilians were fleeing in fear. It fell to Sam Houston to build an army out of volunteers. At the same time, General Santa Anna, convinced that victory was near, continued his march through Texas. The two sides would meet near the San Jacinto River in a final battle that would decide the outcome of the war and the fate of Texas.

Soon after he was named commander of the Texan forces in early March, 1836, Sam Houston learned of the Texan losses at the Alamo and Coleto. Houston knew he had to gather and train more forces before he could do battle with the Mexican army. His decision, while not popular at the time, helped lead to final victory for the Texans.

Step Into the Place

MAP FOCUS From the fall of the Alamo on March 6 and the Goliad Massacre on March 27, General Santa Anna drove his two armies deep into the Texas settlements. At San Jacinto, he was stopped.

1 LOCATION Following the Mexican victory at the Alamo in San Antonio, where were Santa Anna’s troops headed? Why was this destination significant?

2 MOVEMENT In what direction were the Texans moving during the Runaway Scrape?

3 CRITICAL THINKING Drawing Inferences Based on the events that led up to the Runaway Scrape, and the actions the map shows, how do you think the event got its name?

Step Into the Time

TIME LINE What important advancement in agriculture was introduced in the United States during this time period?

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<th>Texas</th>
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February 25, 1836 Samuel Colt receives patent for “revolving gun”

March 4, 1836 Sam Houston named commander in chief of the Texas army

March 13, 1836 Houston’s army begins retreat to Colorado River
The Road to Victory, Spring 1836

April 18, 1836: Texas army reaches Buffalo Bayou
April 21, 1836: Texans defeat Santa Anna at Battle of San Jacinto
June 15, 1836: Arkansas becomes a state
1837: Charles Dickens begins to write *Oliver Twist*
1837: John Deere introduces a plow with a steel blade
It Matters Because

After the Alamo and Goliad, Mexican troops moved further into Texas while Texan forces retreated in disarray.

The Texans Retreat

GUIDING QUESTION How did the Texan army and civilian Texans react to Santa Anna’s continued invasion?

By March 1836, Santa Anna was confident that his army had crushed the Texas rebellion. The Texan army appeared to be destroyed, and the Texans’ defeat seemed inevitable. So confident was Santa Anna that he considered returning to Mexico, although his officers talked him out of it. The Mexican leader was determined to punish the Anglo American settlers of Texas. He ordered his soldiers to burn every town, farm, and house. The Mexican army divided into five separate columns as it advanced to cover more ground and do more damage.

Sam Houston and the Texas Army

Many Texans believed that their cause was hopeless. Others, however, refused to give up the fight for independence. Among those who still had faith in the Texan cause was Sam Houston.

The Convention meeting at Washington-on-the-Brazos named Houston commander-in-chief of the Texas army on March 4, two days after adopting the Texas Declaration of Independence. When Houston joined his troops at Gonzales late in March, he found...
an army of fewer than 400 men. Many had come in response to
appeals sent from the Alamo by William B. Travis. The men included
longtime Tejano and Anglo residents of Texas and about 50 Kentucky
volunteers brought by Sidney Sherman, who had paid their way.

The ragtag group had no food, and some had no guns or
ammunition. But all were there to fight. Houston assembled the
group into a regiment, making Edward Burleson a colonel and
Sherman a lieutenant colonel.

A Difficult Decision
A week after Houston’s arrival in Gonzales, Susanna Dickinson
and Travis’s servant Joe, two of the survivors of the Alamo,
arrived. They relayed the news of battle—and of Santa Anna’s
plans to move east to Gonzales.

The new commander faced a difficult choice. His army,
a small group of untrained, undisciplined, and hungry
volunteers, was no match for the Mexican forces.

Edward Burleson had taken
command of the Army of the
People outside San Antonio de
Béxar in November 1835, after
Stephen F. Austin left the army
for other duties. In March 1836,
he was the colonel in command
of the First Regiment of the
Texas army.

> CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Inferences What do
you think other Texans’ thought
of Burleson’s leadership skills?
Why do you think so?

Academic Vocabulary

inevitable unavoidable
News that Santa Anna’s army was heading east from San Antonio frightened Texans and convinced men, women, and children to flee east for safety.

CRITICAL THINKING
Analyzing: What factors contributed to the difficulties of the settlers during the Runaway Scrape?

Recognizing that a fight would be impossible at this stage, Houston ordered a retreat. His decision was met with disbelief and grumbling.

Although many questioned his decision, Houston stood firm. He hoped to draw Santa Anna and his men further into Anglo Texas. During the withdrawal, he would have more time to plan a strategy, gather more men, and train his army.

Houston also sent an order to James Fannin, who was still alive in Goliad at this point. He told Fannin to blow up the fortress and fall back east with his few hundred men to join Houston. After Houston’s men burned Gonzales on his order, they headed to the northeast.

“The Runaway Scrape”

As news spread of Houston’s retreat and the advancing Mexican army, hundreds of settlers living between the Colorado and Brazos Rivers fled. By this time, many of the most able-bodied men and young boys had left to join Houston. The settlers who remained were old men, women, and children. In a few short days, Stephen F. Austin’s colony disappeared, as many settlers packed what belongings they could and quickly left. The event became known as “The Runaway Scrape.”
Spring rains made the retreat difficult. Settlers traveled by wagon, by horse, and on foot, only to be halted by the high waters of swollen rivers. At these rivers, they hurriedly built rafts to carry people across. Along the route, men, women, and children fell ill and died, as hunger and fever broke out. Kate Scurry Terrell recalled what she saw on the journey:

> "The cry of 'Mexicans,' though of daily occurrence, always created a panic. Bedding, provisions, any and everything, would be thrown off to lighten the wagons. . . . The prairie at times was white with feathers emptied from beds, and the road lined for miles with household goods. Mrs. Anson Jones, wife of the last President of the republic, tells of camps suddenly abandoned, where trunks were left open from a hasty rummage for some needed article, and mirrors were left hanging on the trees."

—Kate Scurry Terrell, quoted in Dudley G. Wooten, *A Comprehensive History of Texas*

**Content Vocabulary**

- **plantation** a large farm used to grow cash crops for sale

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**READING PROGRESS CHECK**

**Identifying** What were three reasons that Houston decided to retreat?

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**The Road to San Jacinto**

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did Houston's retreat help the Texas army?*

As the eastward flow of Texans continued in the Runaway Scrape, the Texas government moved to Harrisburg. Houston also continued his retreat. He hoped to have his army take advantage of any mistake Santa Anna might make.

**Building an Army**

On March 25, at San Felipe de Austin, the Texan soldiers saw streams of women and children fleeing east. The sight made Moseley Baker weep. When Houston prepared to move east again, Baker and some other Texans refused to go. Houston told them to stay at the Brazos and protect the ferry.

Houston grew increasingly worried about not having heard from Fannin. He sent scouts to try to make contact with the Goliad commander. On March 25, Houston learned of the capture of Fannin and his men—and that the Mexicans were moving toward the Colorado River. By this time, Houston's force had grown to about 1,200 men, but many now left to be with their families. On March 30, Houston and his men made camp at the plantation of Jared Groce on the Brazos River near present-day Hempstead.
General Antonio López de Santa Anna gained fame in Mexico by defeating a Spanish army trying to reconquer the country. He also became involved in Mexican politics and was president of Mexico at the time of the Texas Revolution.

**CRITICAL THINKING**

*Identifying Point of View*  What was Santa Anna’s attitude toward the Anglo settlers of Texas?

For about two weeks Houston worked to create an army. With the exception of Houston and a few officers, most of the troops had no formal military experience. After weeks of retreating, however, they were frustrated because they wanted to fight, not train—especially the Texans who had joined the army to defend their homes and families.

The government, too, was unhappy with Houston. President David G. Burnet was angry about the general’s apparent reluctance to fight. In early April, Burnet sent Secretary of War Thomas Rusk to the Texan camp to evaluate the situation and deliver a stinging letter to Houston. Burnet wrote,

**PRIMARY SOURCE**

“The enemy are laughing you to scorn. . . . You must retreat no farther. The country expects you to fight. The salvation of the country depends on your doing so.”

—President David G. Burnet, quoted in James L. Haley, *Sam Houston*

Burnet instructed Rusk to take command of Houston’s army if Houston did not respond satisfactorily. Rusk allowed Houston to explain his plans. Satisfied, the Secretary of War supported Houston and blocked any further criticism of the general from others in the government.