



Sam. Menston

SAM HOUSTON

AND

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE IN TEXAS

BY

ALFRED M. WILLIAMS

WITH PORTRAIT AND MAPS



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PREFACE

My purpose in writing the life of Sam Houston and a history of the War of Independence in Texas has been to give as accurate a picture as was in my power of a very remarkable and interesting personality, and a period of great importance in the growth and character of the nation. Houston possessed very strong and original qualities as well as very apparent weaknesses and limitations, and his character and conduct often deserved censure as well as discriminating approval. He had many devoted partisans, attracted by his achievements and personal magnetism, as well as bitter enemies, created by his sharp tongue and masterful temperament, and the written records and estimates of him vary from extravagant and often fulsome eulogy to the harshest depreciation and the most envenomed attack. In later years the detraction and animosity are dying away, and he is becoming a somewhat mythical hero, who represents the traditional pride of a community, and embodies the reverence of a heroic history. But the remembrance of his impressive and original personality is still strong among the contemporaries of his later years, and the anecdotes and reminiscences

which are orally current give the illustrative characteristics of the man, in spite of the exaggeration and invention which grow up about them. I believe that I have read all the books which relate to Houston's career, beside consulting a large number of the files of contemporary newspapers, letters, speeches, and pamphlets by himself and his associates. I have also conversed with many who knew him personally, and who have given me facts and anecdotes which have never been published. I have examined the archives of the Republic and State of Texas in the Capitol at Austin, and the records of the national Congress, while he was a member. The facts in regard to his life among the Cherokees in the Indian Territory were obtained from the lips of aged Indians who remembered him, and particularly from the late Judge Riley Keys, an intelligent Cherokee, who was familiar with him during his residence with the tribe. I have endeavored to be impartial as well as accurate, and to present the man as he was, with his faults as well as his virtues, and his failures and errors as well as his successes and achievements. I have used those anecdotes and incidents which, however apparently trivial, reveal the man as an individual and in his daily life as well as in his public career, and have not suppressed or modified those which would show the weaknesses which contrasted with his strong and admirable qualities. It is needless to say that there is no other course to be taken for the truth of history or for intelligent biography. Houston is strong enough to endure

an unflattering portrait, and the interest in his individuality, and as the type and product of his time and circumstances, depends upon the absolute accuracy of the resemblance.

The history of the War of Independence in Texas has been several times written. The most elaborate and valuable account is that of Henderson Yoakum, who had access to the original documents, and was familiar with many of the actors in the military and legislative history of the Republic of Texas. He is honest and accurate, and although later researches have corrected some errors, his volumes will remain the principal storehouse of information in regard to the events of the period. William Kennedy, a Scotchman and British consul at Galveston, preceded Yoakum, and his *History of the Republic of Texas* contains many original documents and much valuable information. Senator Henry G. Foote, of Mississippi, wrote his volumes on "Texas and the Texans" rather in the style of a controversial and oratorical pamphlet to favor annexation than a sober history, although they possess some value in the journals and accounts of participants in the events. Mr. H. H. Bancroft, with his customary industry and accuracy, has investigated the history of Texas in American and Mexican sources, and published the results in his "History of the North Mexican States and Texas." Rev. H. G. Thrall has given some useful statistical and other information in his "Pictorial History of Texas." There are a considerable number of personal memoirs

and sketches which give accounts of individual actions during the time, and the reminiscences of those who took part in the events. The series of the "Texas Almanac," published at Galveston, is especially valuable as giving the accounts of personal survivors of the war, although they are often colored by prejudice and sometimes contradictory in statement. The period was a heroic one in the achievement of personal vigor and daring. The defense of the Alamo will always be reckoned as one of the most striking examples of desperate and determined valor in all history, and the fight at San Jacinto conclusively demonstrated the superiority of the Anglo-American race over the Hispano-Mexican. There was much turbulence and lawlessness among the adventurers from the United States and the original settlers, and schemes for conquest which had no patriotic motive, and there was the uncertainty and irregularity of action inevitable to a people carrying on the war by volunteer levies rather than by disciplined armies. But the war for the independence of Texas was not in its governing character a filibuster enterprise, whatever may have been the motives and purposes of some of its leaders, but was the result of the oppression and jealousy of the Mexican authorities compelling resistance, and the conditions which inevitably brought the American colonists into conflict with those of an inferior calibre and alien institutions and habits. It was fought with courage and determination and on the whole with practical wis-

dom, and was creditable to the race as well as to the community.

I am indebted to ex-Senator John H. Reagan, to ex-Governors F. A. Lubbock and O. M. Roberts, of Austin, to Hon. Hamilton Stuart, of Galveston, to Hon. E. W. Cave and Judge Alexander McGowan, of Houston, and to many others in Texas, for anecdotes and reminiscences of Houston. I am much indebted to Judge C. W. Raines of the Agricultural and Statistical Department at Austin for assistance in examining the archives and newspaper files at the Capitol. I owe my earnest thanks to my friends James A. Hervey, of Medford, Mass., and James Jeffrey Roche, of Boston, for advice and assistance in the details of the book. A list of the books relating to Houston and the history of Texas will be found at the end of the volume.

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