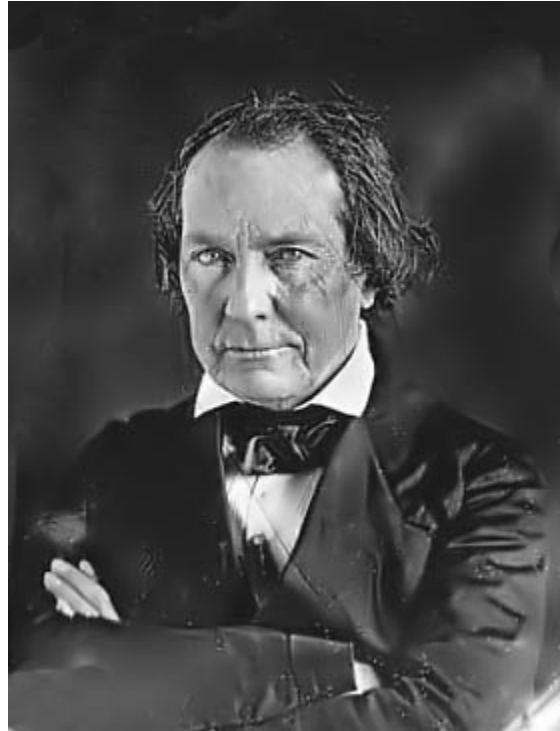


## ***Mirabeau B. Lamar, Texas Masonry, and Public Education***

To understand the impact that the Masonic Fraternity had on Public Education in Texas, one must be aware of the importance of Education to the Masonic Fraternity. The importance of a good liberal education is part of the teaching of our degrees, and is covered in detail in our second degree.

Texas was founded by men who were Masons. From the Father of Texas, Stephen F. Austin, to every single president of the Republic of Texas, and often over half of the elected and appointed officials of the Republic, Masons held offices in Texas government. It is only natural, then, that these men would work to establish a system of education that reflected their Masonic values.



Noted Texas historian (and non-Mason) Frederich Eby, said it best when he wrote:

“Education in Texas is indebted to the courageous assistance of the Masonic Brotherhood for their labors in championing the establishment of its public school system at the most critical moment in its history... The evidence leaves little doubt that Masons were using every means in their power, in government, in private associations, in religious bodies and with individuals, to bring about the creation of educational institutions.”

No Texas Mason did more for Public Education than Mirabeau B. Lamar.

Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar was born in Milledgeville, Georgia, on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1798, to a well-to-do family. He took advantage of every educational opportunity afforded him in the rural Georgia country where he was raised, and he loved to read and educated himself through books. But Lamar was no bookworm... as a boy, he became an expert horseman and an excellent fencer, and he won a gold medal as the Georgia State fencing champion. His skill on horseback and with a sword would serve him well during his military career. Lamar also was an excellent speaker, painted with oils, and was very good at writing poetry.

At age 25, Lamar secured a position as the private secretary to Georgia Governor. In this position, Lamar issued press releases and toured the state giving speeches on behalf of the governor. On one of his trips, he met Tabatha Jordan, whom he married in 1826. The couple had a daughter, and then a son.

Starting in about 1830, Lamar endured a series of tragedies. His father passed away, and then he lost two of his brothers. His wife Tabatha died of tuberculosis and a year and a day later, his son died.

Lamar was so devastated over the loss of his wife and son that in 1835 he closed his home, left his daughter Rebecca in the care of his mother, and boarded a stage in Columbus, Georgia, bound for Texas.

Soon after arriving in Texas in the spring of 1836, Lamar learned of the death of his friend and Masonic brother James Fannin at Goliad, and joined Masonic brother Sam Houston's army as a private.

### ***BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO and TEXAS INDEPENDENCE***

On the eve of the battle of San Jacinto, parts of the Mexican Army had surrounded Texas Secretary of War and Masonic brother Thomas Rusk's squad of Texans. Lamar mounted his horse, and with a sword in one hand and a pistol in the other, he led a small band of men on a daring charge directly into the Mexican lines. They created a gap in the line, which allowed Rusk and his men to escape. The Mexicans were so impressed with Lamar's courage and daring, that as the Texans were racing back to the Texas lines, the Mexican Army cheered for him. When he arrived back at the Texan camp, Houston immediately promoted him to the rank of Colonel, and put him in charge of the cavalry for the Battle of San Jacinto the next day.

After the battle of San Jacinto and Texas' independence, Lamar was elected vice-president of the Republic of Texas under Houston, and was the unanimous choice to replace Houston as president in 1838.

### ***THE SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS***

During his term as the President of The Republic of Texas, Lamar faced many challenges, ranging from Mexico's refusal to recognize the independent nation, to Indian uprisings, to lack of funding for all government functions... and he was not helped at all by Sam Houston and his supporters, who differed greatly with Lamar's plans and goals for Texas.

During Lamar's term, he appointed a commission to select a permanent site for the capital of the Republic. After two months of debate, they recommended the small town of Waterloo along the Colorado River. The town was renamed Austin, and the capital moved there. Lamar also established the Texas Homestead law, and founded the Texas State Library and Archives, which exists to this day.

## ***FATHER OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN TEXAS***

Mirabeau Lamar is widely recognized by historians as the Father of Texas Education. During his administration, he convinced the legislature to set aside 3 leagues of land for each county, for the benefit of the public schools in that county. An additional 50 leagues of land were set aside for the support of two universities. The founding of the Texas State Library, and the public school and university land set-asides laid the foundation for a Texas-wide public school system.

## ***LATER YEARS***

After his term as President of the Republic of Texas, Mirabeau Lamar retired to his home in Richmond, Texas. At the outbreak of the Mexican War, he joined Zachary Taylor's army as a lieutenant colonel, and fought with Taylor at the Battle of Monterrey. After the Mexican War, he again returned to Richmond, where he died on 19 December 1859 of a heart attack at the age of 61. Brother Lamar was buried with a Masonic funeral in the Masonic Cemetery in Richmond, Ft. Bend County, Texas. He was a member of Harmony Lodge #6 in Galveston.

Compiled and written by Dick Brown, Chairman of the Grand Lodge of Texas History Committee, [frbrown@grandlodgeoftexas.org](mailto:frbrown@grandlodgeoftexas.org) Information compiled from Wikipedia, Handbook of Texas On-Line, "Masonry in Texas" by James David Carter, the staff of the Grand Lodge of Texas Library and Museum, and other sources.