

Samuel Gaas

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HIST 226-503

Title

Mirabeau Lamar Statue

Location

Richmond, Texas

29.582234, -95.764094

Overview

In the small, historic town of Richmond, Texas is a statue of the first vice president, and second president of Texas, Mirabeau B. Lamar. The statue sits in front of the Richmond courthouse, after crossing the Brazos River. Lamar was an extremely important individual from the Texas Revolution and the Republic of Texas.

Background

Mirabeau Lamar is one of the most recognizable and important men of Texas history. Since Lamar lived in Richmond, Texas later in his life and is such an important figure in Texas History the town decided to honor him with a statue. Lamar was born in Georgia on August 16, 1798 in a town outside Louisville. He was able to attend public school growing up, however was not able to attend college because he did not have the money. Lamar decided to move to Alabama and made investment in a friend's store and the local newspaper. Once they failed he decided to move back to Georgia, and took a job that would change his life. He decided to take a position under Georgia Governor George Troup as a secretary and this would eventually lead to his interest in politics. Six years later in 1829 Lamar ran and won a seat in the Georgia senate, however a year later his wife passed away and he and he did not go back to the senate. He came back to Georgia in 1830 and ran for Congress, but was not elected. When his brother committed suicide, he was stricken with grief and decided to travel to Texas.

When Lamar made it to Texas in July of 1835 after staying with his good friend James Fannin, he decided to join the fight for Texas Independence. Even though it was not his original intent, he joined the Texas Army under Sam Houston. Showing immense courage before the Battle of

San Jacinto by rescuing two Texan soldiers surrounded by Mexican soldiers, he was promoted to colonel by Sam Houston and given command of the Texan Cavalry. Once the battle of San Jacinto was over, Houston would write in his battle report that "Our cavalry, sixty-one in number, commanded by Mirabeau B. Lamar, Houston would comment on Lamar, saying that (whose gallant and daring conduct on the previous day, had attracted the admiration of his comrades and called him to that station,) placed on our right, completed our line..."¹

After the Battle of San Jacinto and the newly formed Republic of Texas was created, Mirabeau Lamar was appointed the first Secretary of War for the provisional government. Once the government had been set up he was elected as the first vice president and worked under Sam Houston. Two years later Lamar was elected the second president of Texas after both of the other candidates committed suicide before election day.

In Lamar's inauguration speech he, "declared the purposes of his administration to be promoting the wealth, talent, and enterprises of the country and laying the foundations of higher institutions for moral and mental culture". Once Lamar was in office there were many issues that he had to face. The republic of Texas was immensely in debt from the war and Mexico was threatening to take Texas back by force. It was well known that Lamar did not like the Native Americans and in 1839 he moved the Cherokee of their land toward Arkansas and in 1840 created a project to remove the Comanche. Lamar sought relations with both the United States and Great Britain, however Lamar sent the Texas Navy south toward Mexican waters, and created the Texan Sante Fe expedition which was a disaster that killed many Texans. Lamar did come up with the proposal to create the new Texas capitol in Austin, and set aside land for educational purposes which set aside land for public schools and two universities, which would later become Texas A&M University and The University of Texas. Lamar would later earn the title the, "Father of Education"². By the end of his term Lamar had very low popularity and Texas was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Once Lamar left office he retired to his Plantation in Richmond, Texas, however with the death of his daughter he became depressed and decided to travel. Though Lamar opposed annexation of Texas to the United States he believed that slavery was vital, therefore he chose to support annexation so that Texas could be protected as a slave state. After Texas was annexed and war broke out between the United States and Mexico, Lamar reenlisted under General Zachary Taylor and commanded Texas Mounted Cavalry in several battles. After the war was over Lamar started working as the United States Minister to Nicaragua and Costa Rica in 1857 and worked there for one year and eight months. He went home to his plantation in Richmond and died suddenly of a heart attack on December 19, 1859 at the age of sixty-one just two months after

¹ "Mirabeau B. Lamar." Mirabeau B. Lamar. Aug. & sept., 2016. Accessed March 09, 2018.

² Normand, Pete. "Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar - "Father of Education in Texas"." The Grand Lodge of Texas. October 30, 2012. Accessed March 09, 2018.

leaving his position. The statue of Mirabeau Lamar would be unveiled in front of the Richmond courthouse in 1936 to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the independence of Texas. Though the statue would depict Lamar as a mean, cold, and full of power, he was just a quiet man who did what he thought was right.

Handbook of Texas Online, Herbert Gambrell, "Lamar, Mirabeau Buonaparte," accessed March 09, 2018, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fla15>.

"Mirabeau B. Lamar." Mirabeau B. Lamar. Aug., 2016. Accessed March 09, 2018. http://ourtexashistory.com/post_16.html.

Summerlin, Donnie. "Mirabeau B. Lamar (1798-1859)." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. 29 August 2013. Web. 08 March 2018. <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/mirabeau-b-lamar-1798-1859>

Normand, Pete. "Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar - "Father of Education in Texas"." *The Grand Lodge of Texas*. October 30, 2012. Accessed March 09, 2018. <https://grandlodgeoftexas.org/mirabeau-buonaparte-lamar-father-education-texas/>.

