

The Fredonian Rebellion

The son of a US Senator from Kentucky, Haden Edwards was not a typical empresario. Although trained as a lawyer, Edwards was more interested in acquiring land than in practicing the law. In 1820, he moved with his wife and brother to Mississippi, where he bought a plantation. Eventually he moved to Texas with Stephen F. Austin and created his own colony near Nacogdoches.



Haden Edwards

Haden Edwards received his empresario contract from the Mexican government in 1825. The contract gave him permission to settle 800 families near Nacogdoches. When he arrived, Edwards found that a number of Mexican families, other American settlers, and Cherokee had lived on the land for years. Some families had been living on the land for more than 100 years. They had become known as "old settlers."

Edwards's contract required him to respect the property rights of all settlers who had legal titles to their land. In this case, the only legal titles were those issued by Spain or Mexico. Edwards, however, was not happy about this rule. He declared some of the old settlers' titles to be forgeries. He also demanded that people pay him additional fees for land they had already purchased.

Edwards's actions enraged many of the old settlers. Their rage increased the following year after a questionable election. Edwards's son-in-law was elected *alcade* (mayor) of the settlement, but many old settlers suspected fraud. They complained to the government, which sided with the old settlers. In October 1826 the Mexican government canceled Edward's contract, declaring that he was not fulfilling its terms.

A group of Edwards's supporters took action. They arrested the new *alcade* and tried to force him from office. The Mexican government sent troops to support the *alcade*. In response, Edwards, his brother Benjamin, and their supporters, including some Cherokee, declared themselves free from Mexican rule. They planned to establish the **Republic of Fredonia**. On December 21, 1826, they issued the Fredonian Declaration of Independence.

Most Texans, both Tejanos and Anglo settlers alike, opposed the **Fredonian Rebellion**. Stephen F. Austin, supported the Mexican government's decision and sent his militia to fight with the Mexican army against the Edwards brothers. In a letter written to Haden Edwards, Stephen F. Austin said, "It appears as though the people in your quarter have run mad or worse."

In January 1827, the Fredonians learned that Mexican troops and the militia were coming. The rebels, including Haden Edwards, fled. The republic collapsed.

The Fredonian Rebellion was short lived - but its impact was great. The Mexican government became alarmed that American colonists would rebel against its rule. It proved that the Americans were not loyal to the Mexican government. The Fredonian Rebellion becomes the first event leading to the Texas Revolution.

