

Antonio López de Santa Anna

In 1810, the same year that [Miguel Hidalgo](#) started Mexico's war to gain independence from Spain, Santa Anna joined the Spanish Army under Joaquín de Arredondo, who taught him much about dealing with rebels. In 1813, he served in [Texas](#) against the [Gutiérrez/Magee Expedition](#). In the aftermath of the Gutiérrez/Magee rebellion the young Santa Anna witnessed Arredondo's policy of executing rebels and historians have speculated that Santa Anna modeled his policy in the [Texas Revolution](#) on his experience under Arredondo.

In 1821, Santa Anna declared his loyalty for "El Libertador": the future [Emperor of Mexico](#), [Agustín de Iturbide](#). He rose to fame by quickly driving the Spanish forces out of the port city of Veracruz that same year. Iturbide rewarded him with the rank of general.

Santa Anna didn't like Iturbide so after the War for Independence he declared himself retired, "unless my country needs me".

In 1822 Santa Anna joined with a group of military leaders supporting the plan to overthrow Iturbide. In December 1822 Santa Anna and the general Guadalupe Victoria overthrew Iturbide and made Mexico into a republic.

In 1828, Santa Anna and Vicente Guerrero and other politicians staged a coup against the elected President Manuel Gómez Pedraza. In December of 1828 the election results were overturned and Guerrero took over as president.

In 1829, Spain made an attempt to retake Mexico with an invading force of 2,600 soldiers. Santa Anna marched against the Spanish with a much smaller force and defeated the Spaniards. The defeat of the Spanish army increased Santa Anna's popularity. Santa Anna was declared a [hero](#), and "The Savior of the Motherland". He started calling himself "The Napoleon of the West".

In December 1829 Vice-President [Anastasio Bustamante](#) rebelled against President Guerrero, had him executed, and on January 1, 1830 took the presidency. In 1832 a rebellion started against Bustamante with the idea of installing Manuel Gomez Pedraza, whose election in 1828 had been overthrown. The rebels offered the command to Gen. Santa Anna.

Bustamante left the capital to fight the rebels. After losing some battles, Bustamante, Santa Anna, and Gómez Pedraza, signed the conventions of [Zavaleta](#), which made Gómez Pedraza the president and made him hold new elections for President.

Congress soon elected Santa Anna as President on April 1 1833. President Santa Anna appointed as Vice-President, [Valentín Gómez Farías](#), and largely left the governing of the nation to him.

Eventually Santa Anna denounced the Presidency of Vice-President Farias, and forced him and his main supporters to flee to the United States, and formed a new Catholic, conservative government which replaced the 1824 constitution with the new constitutional document, entitled "The Seven Laws" know as the Constitution of 1836. Santa Anna dissolved the Congress and took power all to himself, becoming a dictator.

Like other states unhappy with the Santa Anna dictatorship, Texas went into rebellion in late 1835 and declared itself independent on March 2, 1836. Santa Anna marched north to bring Texas back under Mexican control. On March 6, 1836, at the [Battle of the Alamo](#), Santa Anna's forces killed 187 Texian defenders and later executed over 350 Texan prisoners at the [Goliad Massacre](#).

Following the defeat, the Texian Army was reorganized under [Sam Houston](#). Santa Anna was soon defeated by Houston's soldiers at the [Battle of San Jacinto](#) on April 21, 1836, capturing Santa Anna the day after the battle on April 22, 1836. This ended Santa Anna's first Presidency. He spent the next year in the United States as a semi-prisoner and eventually was returned to Mexico. He would become President of Mexico 6 separate times over the course of the next 20 years.