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A Mexican army under General Cos which had marched into Texas to disarm the Texans was driven out, but early in 1836 Santa Anna with a larger army returned. On the 20th of March, 1836, the Mexicans captured the Texas General, Fannin, and his force of 371 men, and a week later shot them all except 20 that had escaped. General Sam Houston then assumed active command and retreated before Santa Anna until he reached the San Jacinto River where he turned and dealt the Mexicans a crushing blow which brought the war to an end. Santa Anna himself was captured.

The permanent settlement of Houston began soon after the decisive battle of San Jacinto (April 21, 1836) and it was named after General Sam Houston. It was the first capital of the Republic of Texas (1837-39) and was again the seat of government from 1842 to 1845. The city was incorporated in 1840 and the population of 2,396 in 1850 grew to 16,513 in 1880. The battlefield of San Jacinto 22 miles below Houston on the banks of the Ship Canal has been a state park since 1906.

