

# Guest Editorial



**Sam Houston**

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

**GUEST EDITORIAL: H.E. STRIEDEL, GENERAL MANAGER AND CEO, SAM HOUSTON ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

**F**or as long as I've been part of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, proponents of investor-owned utilities (IOUs) have attempted to make the argument that "co-ops are unregulated, and therefore, uncontrolled." They have insisted that a deregulated electric market would give IOU customers control over their choice of electric providers and ultimately drive down electric prices.

Frankly, comments about co-ops being unregulated portray a basic misunderstanding of how cooperatives operate. Cooperatives are governed by a Board of Directors elected from its membership through a democratic process. The directors are as responsive to the concerns of the membership as any elected official is to his or her constituents.

In fact, the Sam Houston EC Board of Directors ultimately turned to our members when considering whether or not to opt-in to the competitive market. You told us you believe that letting your co-op "do the bargaining" in a deregulated market would ultimately give the membership more negotiating power and lower prices. Based on our members' responses, the management team and Board of Directors decided to take a "wait and see" approach to the deregulated market.

Since then the Public Utility Commission has delayed electric deregulation in Southeast Texas, affecting almost all residents in the ten counties served by Sam Houston EC, until at least September.

Why? Because customers of the main IOU, Entergy, had no choices in providers. Virtually no one participated in the pilot program, indicating a widespread lack of interest in the program. Also, no regional transmission operator (RTO) has been established for Southeast Texas.

Add to that the results of a recent national survey conducted by Deloitte and Touche, which showed that only 38 percent of those consumers surveyed said they were even aware of restructuring in their state. And more than 55 percent of consumers expect electric rates to increase during deregulation. A spokesperson from Deloitte and Touche said that in general consumers are now less informed and more pessimistic about the benefits of electric deregulation.

At a time when many IOUs are closing down local offices, centralizing customer service in massive call centers and even dispatching repair crews from far off locations, isn't it great to know that when you call Sam Houston Electric, you'll be talking with someone in your hometown - possibly even a neighbor?

Since 1939, Sam Houston Electric has survived by adapting and innovating to meet the needs of our members - our owners. They set the direction for the Cooperative. It's been a successful formula from the beginning. In fact, being subject to the democratic control of our members does not make us "unregulated and uncontrolled"; it makes us a cooperative - and proud of it.



**"The Co-op Model:  
Tried and True"**

# Happy Birthday to you— Sam Houston and Texas!

**Sam Houston Electric Cooperative's namesake, Sam Houston, shares his March 2 birth date with Texas Independence Day. So it only seems fitting that this March issue of Texas Co-op Power magazine feature Sam Houston and the role he played in Texas gaining its independence from Mexico.**

**Sam Houston celebrated his 43rd birthday on March 2, 1836 by signing the Texas Declaration of Independence at Washington-on-the-Brazos. He then left to organize an army that won the battle for the state's independence from Mexico, and he ultimately served as the first President of the Republic of Texas.**

**The events that transpired in gaining Texas' independence from Mexico are some of the most interesting and significant tales of Texas history. While there were countless heroes and leaders that deserve credit for their brave and noteworthy efforts, Sam Houston is certainly one of the most revered figures of the time.**

Sam Houston was a free spirited young man who spent his early years in the hills of Tennessee. When he was 15 years old he ran away from home to live with the Cherokee Indians. His stay with the Indians had a critical impact on his life. In fact, it has been said that Sam Houston possessed the resourcefulness and cleverness of an Indian, especially in crucial situations.

His cunning skills first became evident in 1813, when Andrew Jackson recruited him to join the army and head to Alabama. There, he fought the Creek Indians in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend and quickly proved his leadership skills. During the battle, a bullet wounded his shoulder and an arrow entered his leg. According to Andrew Jackson, this didn't deter the new recruit. Instead, Houston grabbed and held a sword to

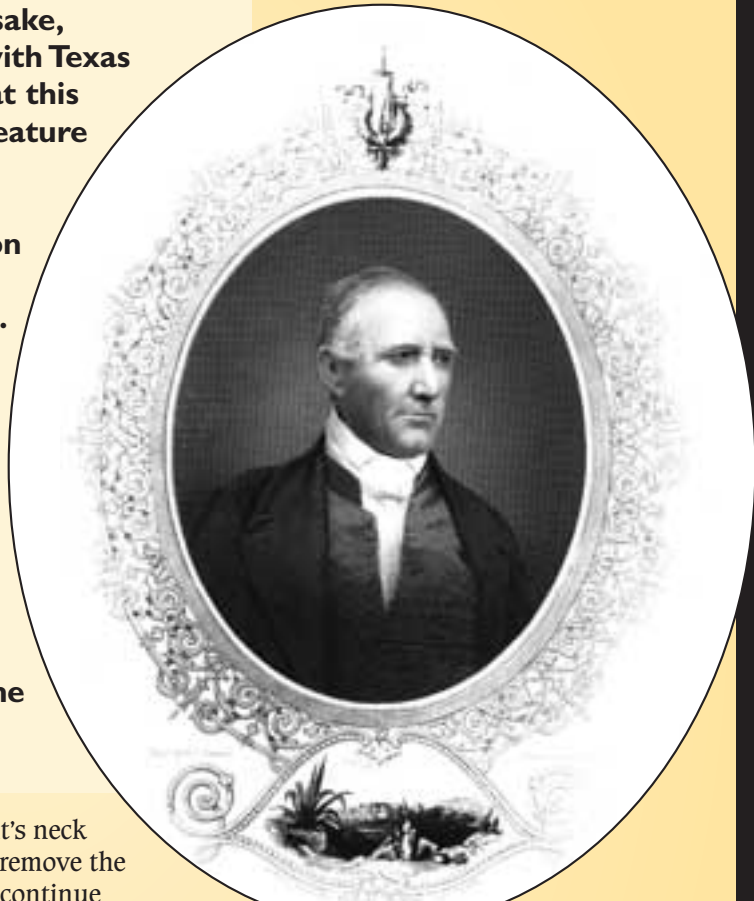
a scared lieutenant's neck and forced him to remove the arrow so he could continue fighting. From this incident, Sam Houston emerged a leader who had earned the respect and friendship of Andrew Jackson.

After serving in the army for five years, Sam Houston opened a law practice in Tennessee and officially entered the world of politics. For several years he worked as an advisor to Andrew Jackson, who was now President Jackson. In 1823 Houston was elected to the U.S. Congress. Four years later, he became the Governor of Tennessee.

A failed marriage, which remained unexplained publicly, prompted Houston to resign his governorship and return to the western wilderness to live with his old friends, the Cherokee Indians. Although he

immersed himself in Indian culture and proclaimed himself a "citizen" of the Cherokee nation, he couldn't fully segregate himself from the world of politics and policy he was attempting to leave behind.

It was only natural that Sam Houston ultimately became a Cherokee Ambassador to Washington, working to preserve the rights of the Cherokee Indians. (Imagine the impression this well-respected, 6-foot 6-inch tall politician made when he arrived in Washington, dressed in traditional Cherokee Indian clothing!!)



**Sam Houston**

March 2, 1793–July 26, 1863

In 1832, after living with the Cherokee Indians for many years, Sam Houston once again left the tribe. He traveled across the Red River into Texas. The state had been on his mind for some time, and he viewed it as a land of opportunity. However, the opportunity Texas afforded him wasn't exactly what he had envisioned.



**Sam Houston**

As it turned out, Sam Houston arrived in Texas just as the American settlers were beginning to resent the way the Mexican Government was ruling the state. This resentment continued to grow and resulted in Texas staging a revolution against the Mexican government. Of course, Sam Houston was at the helm of this revolt, and as they say, "The rest is history."

On March 1, 1836, Sam Houston and 58 other delegates convened in Washington, Texas (a settlement on the Brazos River) to declare Texas' independence from Mexico. On that day, a committee lead by George C. Childress wrote the Texas Declaration of Independence using the United States Declaration of Independence as a guide. The next day, March 2, a 6-page document was presented to the delegates for a vote. It was unanimously accepted.

The Texas Declaration of Independence listed Texas' complaints

against Santa Anna's government. It stated that Mexico had denied Texans freedom of religion; the right to trial by jury; a public school system and the right to petition the government. More importantly, it declared Texas to be a free and independent country. Although March 2 is recognized as Texas Independence Day, our state's actual independence wasn't recognized by Mexico until much later. The battle for independence had only just begun!

A day after Texas declared its independence, Sam Houston was named Commander-in-Chief of the Texas Armed Forces. Given his track record as a soldier and government authority, he was the perfect candidate for the job. He immediately left the convention

at Washington-on-the-Brazos and took command of the army. The remaining delegates stayed for 15 more days completing their work. Meanwhile, Sam Houston set to work gathering and organizing his army.

The significance of the convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos is undisputed but often overshadowed by what was going on elsewhere at the time. While the delegates continued their work at the convention, electing interim government officials for the Republic of Texas, a war was being fought at the Alamo. In fact, more than 6,000 Mexican troops, led by General Santa Anna, were laying siege to the small mission in San Antonio. Colonel William Barrett Travis led the Texans in a valiant and heroic effort that unfortunately ended in vain.

All two hundred men who fought for Texas during the 13-day battle died.

## SITES TO SEE—If you want a look at Texas History

It's spring! The flowers are in bloom. The air is warming up. It's the perfect time for a road trip! Take a weekend to get out and about, and make your destination one of these historical or educational sites. Learn more about the history of our state and have a little fun along the way.

**Sam Houston Memorial Museum, Huntsville**—The museum complex sits on 15 acres of Sam Houston's land, just blocks from the historic downtown area of Huntsville. The Sam Houston Library and Museum hosts historic documents, photos and a variety of other historical artifacts. The grounds are also home to a historical village, which includes two of Sam Houston's homes. Adjacent to the complex stands a 77-foot tall statue of Houston, the tallest statue of an American hero in the world. The Sam Houston Memorial Museum Complex is located at the corner of 19th St. and Avenue N in Huntsville, Texas. It is open 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; 12 noon–4:30 p.m. Sunday. For further information call 936-294-1832 or visit the museum web site at [www.shsu.edu](http://www.shsu.edu).

**The San Jacinto Monument, La Porte**—This towering monument stands 570 feet tall and commemorates the Battle of San Jacinto, where Sam Houston and his Army defeated the Mexican Army and captured Santa Anna on April 12, 1836. Visit this historic battleground and take a ride to the observation floor at the top of the monument. The grounds also house a museum with exhibits that cover four centuries of the area's history. The San Jacinto Battleground State Historical Park is 20 miles east of Downtown Houston in La Porte off of Texas Highway 225 at One Monument Circle. The museum and monument open daily at 9 a.m. For more information call 281-479-2431 or visit [www.sanjacinto-museum.org](http://www.sanjacinto-museum.org).

**The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin**—Opened in April of 2001, the 165th anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto, the Texas State History Museum is a grand structure inside and out. Exhibits use sight and sound to tell "The Story of Texas." In addition to traditional exhibits, the museum houses the "Texas Spirit Theater" a multimedia special effects theater and an IMAX Theatre. The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum is located at 1800 N. Congress Avenue at the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. in Downtown Austin, Texas. The museum is open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m.–6 p.m. and Sunday, 12 noon–6 p.m. For more information, call 512-936-8746 or visit the museum web site at [www.thehistoryoftexas.com](http://www.thehistoryoftexas.com).



The fact we lost all our men at the Alamo may explain why many of the details of the long battle seem to be missing from historical accounts. However, one fact is certain: the Alamo fell on March 6, 1836, just four days after the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed.

Despite Texas' losses, the battle at the Alamo was a major turning point along the road to Texas independence. After 13 days of battle, Santa Anna's troops were exhausted and badly battered. Sam Houston knew this and took it into account as he developed his cunning plan to defeat Santa Anna's troops with his small Texas army.

By March 28, Sam Houston had recruited about 1,400 men who were camping on the Brazos River. On April 20, Houston strategically "let his forces get trapped" by Santa Anna's men near the ferry crossing at the San


Jacinto River. After a brief skirmish, the Texan force returned to its camp. That night, Santa Anna kept his men under arms all night, expecting an attack. Nothing happened. Instead, Santa Anna's camp was attacked in broad daylight the next afternoon while his soldiers were in the midst of their afternoon siesta.

As Sam Houston led the front line of the battle that afternoon, he inspired his men with the famous words, "Remember the Alamo!" The Battle of San Jacinto is considered "Texas' most decisive battle." The next day Santa Anna was captured and agreed to recognize Texas' independence, ordering all Mexican forces to evacuate Texas.

Sam Houston was elected President of the Republic of Texas and served two terms during the ten years the state was independent. Texas was

admitted into the Union in 1845, and Sam Houston served as Senator from 1846-1859. He then ran for Governor of Texas on the platform that was opposed to Texas' seceding from the Union. However in 1861, Texas voted to secede. In an effort to keep Houston in the Governor's office, President Abraham Lincoln offered Texas federal support. Wanting to avoid violence, Sam Houston refused the support. He ultimately refused to take an oath of allegiance to the new Confederacy and was removed as Governor. And so, at the age of sixty-eight, Sam Houston retired from public life.

He and his wife, Margaret, retired to Huntsville. He said the hills of Huntsville reminded him of his childhood in Tennessee. He died there in 1863 while the Civil War raged. His wife at his side, he spoke his last words, "Texas-Texas Margaret!"



**Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park, Washington**—In early March 1836, the unlikely town of Washington next to the Brazos River became the "Birthplace of Texas." A visit to Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park offers expansive park grounds along the Brazos River that provide a great setting for picnicking, sightseeing and bird watching. The Star of the Republic Museum, Independence Hall and Barrington, the home of Texas' last president, also offer visitors insight into the lives and times of the men who fought and won Texas' independence from Mexico. Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park lies just off Texas 105 between Brenham and Navasota. The park facilities and grounds are open daily, year-round, from 8 a.m. until sundown. For more information, contact the park staff at 936-878-2214 or visit [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/washingt](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/washingt).

**The Alamo, San Antonio**—Visit the historic mission where Texans held out for 13 days against Santa Anna's army before falling on March 6, 1836. Located on Alamo Plaza in Downtown San Antonio, the three buildings that house the Shrine, Long Barrack Museum and Gift Museum represent nearly 300 years of history. Take a walk through the beautiful Alamo Gardens and soak up the history. The Alamo is located at 300 Alamo Plaza in Downtown San Antonio at the intersection of Houston and Alamo Plaza. It is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. and 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. on Sundays. For more information call 210-225-1391 or visit [www.thealamo.org](http://www.thealamo.org).

**The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston—Texas Flags: 1836-1945-Houston**

—This exhibit is showing through April 28 at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH). It reunites all but one of the existing flags of the Texas Revolution for the first time since the Battle of San Jacinto. Since 1835 the Lone Star has adorned almost every flag made and flown by Texans.

The exhibit includes more than 30 flags documenting the history of our state. MFAH is located at 1001 Bissonnet at Main Street in the heart of Houston's Museum District. The exhibit halls are closed Mondays; open 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday; 10 a.m. – 9 p.m. on Thursday; 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and 12:15 p.m. – 7 p.m. Sunday. Call 713-639-7300 or visit [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org) for details on this and other exhibits.





## Warn Children about the Dangers of Substations

Sam Houston EC has placed signs, “Danger – Keep Out” and “Warning – High Voltage,” on the fences around all of our 28 electric substations for everyone’s protection. Sam Houston EC technicians and maintenance crews are trained to work in high-voltage situations and inspect all of our substations regularly to recognize and avoid potential hazards. However, we depend on our members to make sure their children understand the danger and never use them as playgrounds. A simple explanation may help get the message across and encourage your child to respect substation fences – and the power of electricity.

An electric substation changes the extremely high voltage carried by the long distance transmission lines into the lower distribution voltage that serves homes and businesses. In order to perform this task, the substation needs a direct feed from the transmission line into the substation structure. The equipment within the substation is always under high-voltage electrical load. Just how high is the voltage? Some of the pieces of equipment in the substation could be energized at more than 100,000 volts – which will kill you instantly if you come in contact with it.

So remember: Substation fences mark the danger zone for you. You are only safe if you stay away from them.



## Co-op Services Can Simplify Your Monthly Bill Payment

To make paying your monthly electric bill more convenient, Sam Houston EC offers a variety of financial services. Take advantage of one or more of the following services:

### Automatic Bank Drafting

When you sign up for this free, convenient service, your bank account will be drafted automatically each month for the amount of your electric bill. All you have to do is record the amount drafted in your checkbook ledger when you receive your bill. Leave the rest to us!

### Credit Card Payments

You can pay your electric bill with your MasterCard or Visa. And for even more convenience, your monthly Sam Houston EC bill can be automatically charged to your credit card.

### Even Monthly Payment Program

Members who would prefer to pay a set amount each month rather than cope with the rise and fall of seasonal electric bills can sign up for the Even Monthly Payment Program. Find out if your account is eligible – your bankbook will thank you!

### Senior Citizen’s Cycle

If you’re a senior citizen at least 62 years old and on Social Security, you can request your billing cycle to be changed so your electric bill arrives conveniently with the arrival of your Social Security check.

For more information or to sign up for any of these services, contact a Member Services Representative at **1-800-458-0381** or log on to **www.samhouston.net**.

We’re always glad to help.

# Customer Service is Priority One

Our service team goes to great lengths to ensure the cooperative's electric service is reliable and our members are satisfied. We not only react as quickly as possible to our members' service needs, but we also take proactive measures to minimize problems, so they don't have to be inconvenienced unnecessarily. Customer service is more than a department at Sam Houston EC; it's a philosophy. It's a philosophy Scott Ferguson practices daily.



**W**hen the power goes out, people are quick to blame Sam Houston Electric. They don't understand that most of the time, in fact almost all the time, power outages have nothing to do with the cooperative. It's usually Mother Nature at work; animals or bad weather. Squirrels are the most common culprits, but we've had everything from bird nests and snakes to raccoons cause problems. One time a 'coon short-circuited an entire substation system. It was a mess...it burned up the transformer and melted the breaker.

When a problem like that occurs at a substation, it affects a lot more people than if, say, a storm takes a feeder line down. One substation can serve as many as 4,000 people. So, my job is to spot any would-be trouble like animal nests or faulty equipment and get it taken care of before it causes a problem. I travel around to each of our 28 substations and make sure things are in good shape....There was nothing we could have done about that poor 'coon, but most of the time we catch things like that before they become a problem. It's proactive customer service."

Scott Ferguson, Lineman



**Sam Houston**

ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

Energizing Communities Since 1939

[www.samhouston.net](http://www.samhouston.net)

1-800-458-0381