Anson Jones (1789–1858) was best known as the last president of the Republic of Texas. His opposition to Texas annexation was so strong that it cost him most of his political support by the end of his career.

Born in Massachusetts on January 20, 1789, Anson Jones started out his career as a doctor. He made several attempts to set up medical practices, but all ended in failure. In October 1832, Jones gave up medicine and became a merchant in New Orleans, Louisiana, a career in which he also failed.

Entering Texas Politics Jones moved to Texas in October 1833 and began a successful medical practice in Brazoria. As tensions rose between Mexico and Texas, he supported Texas independence. When the war broke out, he enlisted as a soldier and later became apothecary general of the Texas army. After the Revolution, Jones returned to his practice.

During the First Congress of Texas, Jones maintained his interest in politics and became critical of some early policies. He was elected to the Second Congress and expressed his opposition to annexation to the United States. He contributed to legislation that regulated medical practices and supported a fair system of university funding and education.

Fighting Texas Annexation At the close of his congressional term, Jones planned to wed Mary McCrory and return to his medical office in Brazoria. Before the wedding could take place, Jones was appointed minister to the United States by President Sam Houston and went to Washington, D.C., to serve. The position gave Jones the power to withdraw Texas’s proposal for annexation by the states, so Jones began working to get recognition from European governments. He wanted to establish trade and good relations with Europe to either make the United States want annexation or make Texas strong enough to stand as an independent country.

In 1839 Jones was called back to Texas and again vowed to quit politics. When he arrived, however, he discovered that he had been elected to finish William H. Wharton’s term in the Senate. After finishing his service, Jones finally married Mary McCrory in Austin on May 17, 1840. He returned to his practice in Brazoria and declined candidacy for the vice presidency in 1841. Sam Houston was reelected as president, and he appointed Jones as secretary of state.

The Texas Presidency Jones was elected president of Texas in 1844. He had kept his opinions to himself while the United States discussed the annexation of Texas. In the meantime, he sought foreign support of Texas as an independent country. Finally, members of the Texas Congress decided they were in favor of joining the Union, and Texans became impatient with Jones for not pushing the resolution through. Unrest grew, and Texans became resentful of Jones. During this time, Charles Elliot returned from Mexico with the treaty of recognition. Jones finally broke his silence and offered the people of Texas an option other than annexation—the status of an independent country. The Texas Congress rejected the treaty with Mexico. As a result, Jones was censured, which means that he was given an official scolding by Congress. Although he retained his presidential title, he was permitted to carry out only minor duties.

Jones retired to his plantation, Barrington, near Washington-on-the-Brazos. Jones became resentful about the events that had occurred, and his hatred for Sam Houston grew. He was passed over for several elections and appointments, and Jones became more and more unhappy. He took his own life in Houston, Texas, on January 9, 1858.

Review Questions

1. What position did Jones hold that allowed him to withdraw Texas’s proposal for annexation?
2. What caused Jones to lose his presidency?

Critical Thinking

3. Analyzing Why were foreign political allies important to Jones?
4. Forming a Hypothesis What do you think might have happened if Jones had gotten Mexico’s support sooner?
5. Drawing Conclusions Why do you think that Jones felt he had been treated unfairly?