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1st edition

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Author: YuShan Chang

Editors: Linda Weinerman and Emily Horowitz

Proofreading: Linda Weinerman and Emily Horowitz

Design and production: Masha Shubin

Maps: Jim Miller/fennana design

Cover Photos © 2006: SoleilC (neighborhood), Valkeus (Texas flag), Cathleen Clapper (mother/daughter), Marilyn Nieves (father/son), Kris Hanke (man/dog), Tom Wald (couple/sunset)

ISBN-10: 0-912301-70-8

ISBN-13: 978-0-912301-70-9

Printed in the USA

Published by First Books, 6750 SW Franklin Street, Portland, OR 97223-2542, USA

tel 503 968 6777, www.firstbooks.com.

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## INTRODUCTION

Texas is the second largest state in the United States, covering a diverse geographic area of mountains, beaches, hills, piney woods, prairies, lakes, deserts, brush, rivers, valleys, and swamps. Texas’ name is derived from the Caddo Indian tribe word, “tejas,” which means “friend.” Indeed, the state motto is friendship, which is reflected in the amiable character of its residents.

Six flags have flown over the state of Texas (French, Spanish, Mexican, Texas, Confederate, and American), resulting in the blending of Spanish, Mexican, French, Southern, American, and frontier West cultures that have shaped the traditions and culture of Texas. Early French explorers established an unsuccessful post, Fort St. Louis, which was eventually taken over by the Spanish, who claimed Texas as a colony of Spain, known as New Spain. After Mexico’s independence from Spain in 1821, Texas became the northern section of the Coahuila y Tejas state of Mexico. Unsatisfied with Mexican rule, the “Texians” fought for independence from Mexico and triumphed in 1826 against Mexican General Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. For nine years, Texas remained an independent country until it was admitted into the Union as the 28<sup>th</sup> state in 1845. However, the state seceded from the Union during the Civil War and joined the Confederate States of America. It was readmitted into the Union in 1870.

Texas is also known as the Lone Star State because of the single star on the Texas state flag. It is the second most populous state in the Union. Six Texas cities are in the top 25 most populous cities in the U.S. (Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, and El Paso). Because of its size, Texas covers part of the American South and part of the American Southwest. The state shares characteristics of both these regions, but different cities may be more heavily influenced by one region, depending on their location. The state is in the central time zone, except for the far western tip where El Paso is located, which is in the mountain time zone.

Though there has been a growing interest in living inside the city, the majority of residents in the state’s major cities live in suburbs, which are the fastest growing areas of the state. This can largely be attributed to the price of housing and quality of the school districts in the suburbs. Many of the new suburban communities are major developments in once-rural, unincorporated areas outside of municipalities. Suburbs in unincorporated areas receive their utilities through municipal utility districts (“MUD”), governmental entities specially formed to provide utilities to residents. MUDs are funded by a MUD tax, one of several