Background Information

Conflict with the Cherokees

Relations with the Cherokees quickly came to a boil. Public sentiment was against the Cherokee. The Houston Telegraph ran an editorial on June 19, 1839 urging action against the Cherokee Nation, describing them as "wily savages" and "spirits of darkness on the borders." Referring to an 1836 treaty, the editorial continued: "We have neither the time nor patience to discuss that treaty. It has never been ratified…to confirm it now would inflict irreparable injury on Texas…The Cherokee are, and always were, unwelcome intruders among us. If they will not return peaceably to their original tribe, it will become our duty – now that their stealthy machinations with Mexico have been fully discovered, to compel their retirement and perpetual alienation from the country."

The Peace Commission

To speak with the Cherokee, President Lamar sent a peace commission to negotiate with Chief Bowles and other Cherokee leaders. He also deployed about 900 army regulars, volunteers, and militia to East Texas.

On June 27th, 1839, President Lamar authorized the following individuals to act as Peace Commissioners to the Cherokees:

- **David B. Burnet** – Vice President of Republic of Texas
- **Sydney Johnston** – Secretary of War for the Republic of Texas
- **Thomas J. Rusk** – Chief Justice of the Republic of Texas Supreme Court
- **Isaac Watts Burton** – Close friend of President Lamar; Senator for the Republic of Texas
- **James S. Mayfield** – lawyer in Nacogdoches; later state representative and Secretary of State to President Lamar

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