

# TEXAS ON THE EVE OF WAR

By 1917, the nations of Europe and their empires had been at war for nearly three years. World War I would encircle the globe. Nations still address its changes and its consequences today.

The United States would initially declare its neutrality in the war. President Woodrow Wilson hoped to use diplomatic efforts to attain peace.

As the war progressed, Texans became increasingly concerned about the hostilities and were beginning to take a stand.

Texas on the eve of World War I was primarily a rural state with a population of four million people, ranking it fifth among the 48 states. It was then the largest state in the Union, and its largest city was San Antonio.

Agriculture dominated the state's economy. Texas was the largest grower of cotton in the nation and ranked first in the number of cattle on its ranches. Two-thirds of its population lived in the country. The state's primary industries were lumber, oil, and railroads.

The state government was solidly in the column of the Democratic Party which, like much of the South, legally preserved the rigidly segregated social order that existed at the time. Women were expected to marry and take care of their homes and family life. They did not have the right to vote. Citizens received their news from local newspapers.

Texas gained important national influence inside Washington, DC, during this era with three cabinet members as well as with Colonel Edward M. House, a key confidant of President Wilson's inner circle.

The state was already directly dealing with international issues tied to the war prior to America's entry into the conflict in 1917. It all started south of the border.

A) *Two Men on Horses Near the Rio Grande River, 1916.* Texas Military Forces Museum/University of North Texas Libraries—The Portal to Texas History

C) *US troops advance toward Rio Grande.* Public Domain

D) *Clifford Berryman, editorial cartoon, portrays US as Mexico's policeman.* Public Domain

B) *Corpus Christi Caller, Jan. 27, 1916, p. 1*

