

CASA NAVARRO

state historic site

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VISITORS GUIDE

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Welcome to the Casa Navarro State Historic Site. Visitors are encouraged to explore the timeless story behind José Antonio Navarro, a true Texas patriot who lived and worked in the heart of downtown San Antonio. A rancher, merchant, and signatory of the Texas Declaration of Independence, Navarro was a leading advocate for Tejano rights.

In addition to learning about Navarro and his family, visitors will gain a better understanding about the once-thriving Tejano Laredito neighborhood. This 1830s to 1850s adobe and limestone home is a historic oasis within its urban surroundings, providing an opportunity to discover the fascinating life of one of Texas' greatest statesmen.



Visitors in main house courtyard



Left: Mural depicts life in early San Antonio
Above: Navarro's home tells the real story of the Texas patriot and his family.

A GREAT STATESMAN

José Antonio Navarro was a prominent politician and statesman during the early years of Texas' independence and statehood. His leadership and passionate quest for liberty significantly influenced the course of Texas history. Born in San Antonio in 1795, he was one of only two native-born Texans to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence and served on the committee that wrote the first Texas constitution in 1836. Navarro was the sole Tejano delegate to the Convention of 1845, where he supported the United States' annexation of Texas. That same year he protected the legal and voting rights of Tejanos by contributing to the state constitution. Navarro was elected to serve two terms in the state Senate, and retired from the Legislature in 1849. He continued to advocate for Tejano rights through writing historical and political articles for the *San Antonio Ledger* and publicly opposing the anti-Catholic "Know Nothing Party," officially known as the American Party that came to power in the 1850s. Navarro died in his beloved San Antonio home on January 13, 1871.

José Antonio Navarro

A lifelong patriot, José Antonio Navarro supported many independence movements for Texas, including Mexico's independence from Spain and the Texas Revolution against Mexico. He served in Texas legislatures under Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the State of Texas. In 1841, Texas President Mirabeau B. Lamar convinced him to participate in the ill-fated Santa Fe Expedition that was intended to incorporate eastern New Mexico into the Republic of Texas. Navarro and the other members of the expedition were taken as prisoners by the Mexican authorities. Navarro underwent intense interrogations when imprisoned, but he steadfastly refused to betray his homeland or his allegiance to Texas. After spending 14 months at the infamous San Juan de Ulúa, the most dreaded prison in Mexico, Navarro managed to escape in early 1845.

Over the next 26 years until his death in 1871, Navarro remained an influential figure in Texas and San Antonio, serving in the state Legislature and on the San Antonio City Council. He continued to protect and advance the rights of Tejanos as a writer for the *San Antonio Ledger*. In 1846, the Texas Legislature named the newly established Navarro County in recognition of his contributions to Texas. The county seat was then designated Corsicana, in honor of his father's birthplace. Numerous schools and streets have also been named after the family.

José Antonio Navarro



Navarro Home

Although he was a well-known and influential leader, Navarro did not begin his professional life as a politician. As a young man he learned the merchant trade, the occupation of his father. Factories in the United States and Europe sent ships loaded with merchandise to New Orleans, where Navarro arranged to import books, cloth, clothing, wine, sugar, rice, and coffee. He also invested in real estate. During the 1830s, Navarro served as land commissioner for the Green DeWitt Colony and privately purchased more than 50,000 acres of ranch land at a price of pennies per acre. Because thousands of people were immigrating into Texas, the demand for land increased. Navarro sold portions of his land holdings for up to three dollars per acre and his San Antonio rental properties also produced income. His wife Margarita de la Garza was also a native of San Antonio. The couple had seven children: four sons and three daughters. Numerous descendants still live in and around San Antonio, with many more scattered throughout the country.

In addition to his rental properties, Navarro made his home in San Antonio. In 1832, Navarro bought this 1.5 acre property on the corner of Laredo and Nueva streets. The site already had a one-room adobe cottage, or *jacal*, that Navarro expanded in 1854 or 1855. At this time he also built the main house, a fine example of early-statehood domestic architecture, and the two-story commercial building on the corner. Navarro rented the first floor of this building to a local merchant and used the second floor as his office. Navarro's youngest daughter, Josefa Navarro de Tobin, inherited the site along with its furnishings after Navarro's death.



The Mercantile Building housed Navarro's office on the second floor.