



## LUMBER INDUSTRY

Save this entry to MyTSHA » (<https://mytsha.com/handbook-article/save/DRL02>)

*Robert S. Maxwell*

**LUMBER INDUSTRY.** Lumber has been manufactured in Texas since the early nineteenth century. Records exist of a number of sawmills, both near the Gulf coast and inland, during the two decades before the [Texas Revolution \(/handbook/online/articles/qdt01\)](#). These were sash mills consisting of a single blade held in a frame and powered by water, animals, or eventually steam, laboriously producing crude lumber one board at a time at a rate of 500 to 1,200 board feet a day. In 1829 [John Richardson Harris \(/handbook/online/articles/fha85\)](#) planned what was perhaps the first steam sawmill in Texas, but he died before completing the project. His brothers [William Plunket Harris \(/handbook/online/articles/fha98\)](#) and [David Harris \(/handbook/online/articles/fha80\)](#), with [Robert Wilson \(/handbook/online/articles/fwi56\)](#), completed the mill, which operated with success at least until 1833. [Antonio López de Santa Anna \(/handbook/online/articles/fsa29\)](#)'s troops destroyed it in 1836. After the revolution the increasing demand for lumber encouraged the development of sawmills along the Gulf Coast at Houston, Galveston, Beaumont, and Orange. In the interior of the state a number of mills served local needs in Bastrop, Cherokee, Nacogdoches, Rusk, and San Augustine counties. The 1860 census reported some 200 sawmills in Texas with about 1,200 employees, which manufactured lumber valued at \$1.75 million annually.