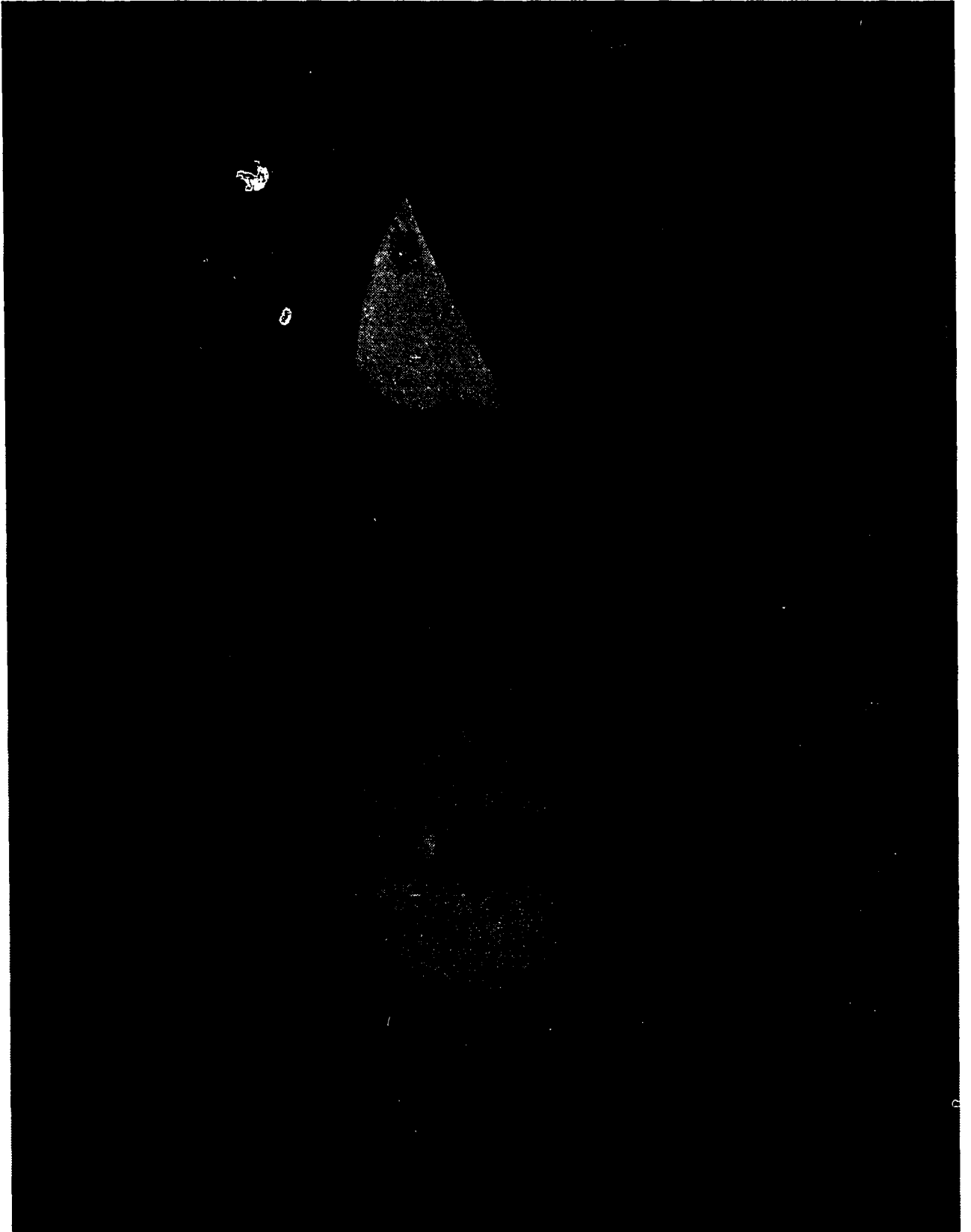


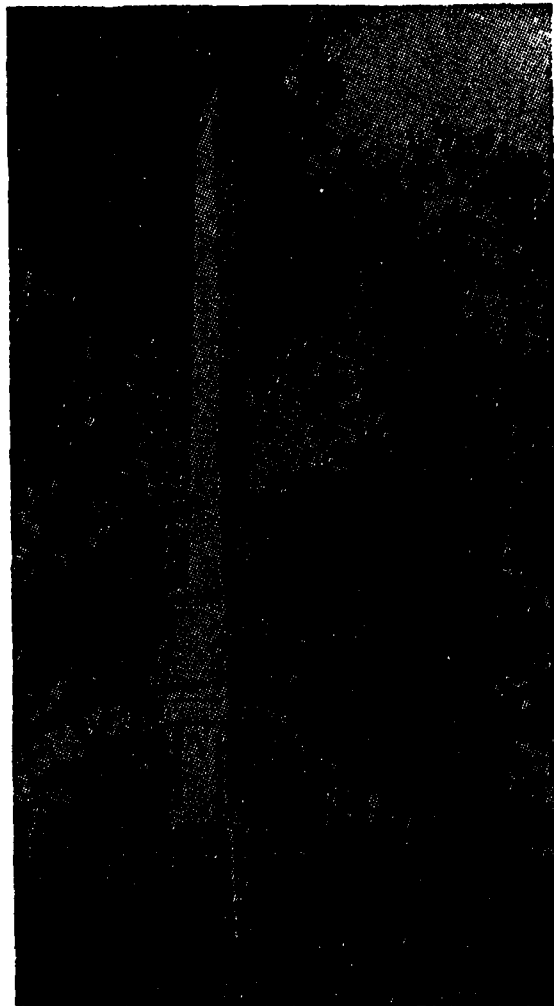
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WHARTON'S

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

By Clarence R. Wharton



The inscription on this monument was copied from that which the Grecian historian Herodotus relates was written on the monument of the Spartan heroes at Thermopylae.

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To the memory of

SPENCER C. RUSSELL

friend of my Richmond days

PREFACE

In the '90s when I lived in Richmond there were residents of the County who had come with Austin's Colonists and quite a number who were there at the time of the Revolution and the Runaway Scrape sixty years before. Only thirty odd years after the Civil War most of the adult population, white and colored, had recollections of that major disaster which had destroyed the pre-existing economic and social system. Only seven years after the upheaval which had resulted so disastrously for the Woodpecker population, the details of that unpleasantness were fresh in every memory. Anticipating that I would some day write a history of Texas and having an inclination for research, I gathered data and made notes. My professional work made me familiar with the County records which are a rich repository of historical information.

In later years my research took a wider range and I have written ten volumes pertaining to various phases of Texas history.

All the time I could spare from a busy professional life has been spent gathering data, making notes, assembling manuscripts and books and pamphlets relevant to our history. In these years I have kept an eye open for Fort Bend County items with the notion that some day I would write the story of the County, and here it is. If errors are found they may be explained by the fact that my historical research and writings have all been done under pressure during forty busy years in which I have attended to the exacting requirements of my professional work, the volume of which may be estimated by the fact that the briefs I have written in cases in the appellate courts fill seventy volumes.

The general plan of this book is full sketches of the first settlers where information can be had and as much detail as

PREFACE

possible of the early years. I have refrained from making it a catalogue of family trees. With the aid of Federal census records, 1850 and 1860, I have found the families living in the County in those years, and in Chapters 10 and 11 have undertaken to note the names of those who had a Colonial background, those who contributed to the development of the County and especially those who with their descendants remained long identified with the County.

In a bibliography at page 237 I discuss more in detail the sources of my information.

The several distinct phases of social, economic and political life through which our people went during the period 1822-1900 are full of dramatic interest.

CLARENCE R. WHARTON.

Houston, Texas, August 16th, 1939.

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CHAPTER I

THE TEXAS MAYFLOWER

November 25, 1821 was a busy day on the dingy waterfront at the foot of Canal Street in New Orleans. There were many boats of many kinds at the rickety wharves—flatboats from up the Missouri and Ohio piled high with meats and hides; others from the near-by rivers piled still higher with cotton and corn and other produce of the Western World here for market; there were coastwise boats from New England and New York; sailboats, steamboats, and more than a dozen from the remote seaports of the world flying strange foreign flags. All kinds of people were coming and going all day long, all night long, displaying strange garbs, speaking odd tongues.

Down at one of the wharves a little thirty-ton sailboat was being loaded and carpenters who had been busy for ten days were finishing an upper deck. All day long for several days dray loads of freight had been hauled down and packed away in its hold. Boxes of axes, shovels, hoes, spades, muskets, kegs of cheese, gun powder, and molasses, barrels of bread and nails, flour and bacon, coffee, sugar, sacks of seed corn and salt, and bales of tobacco.

The man in charge of these purchases and loadings was a tall, sharp faced fellow under forty, with black curly hair and stiff mustaches, but without beard. He moved and talked with the flavor of the frontier. In fact the whole Western World of those days was a frontier.

Often during the day a young, handsome, slender, clerical looking man under thirty, faultlessly dressed, and with no trace of the frontiersman, came down and had long earnest conversations with the tall man in charge.

A dozen men loafed about, some helped in the loading, while others looked on waiting for it to be finished.

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The boat was the schooner "Lively," the Texas Mayflower about to sail for San Bernardo with the first contingent of Austin's Colonists. The tall, stiff-mustached man with the curly hair was William Little, and the young man under thirty without frontier attributes, was Stephen Austin.

Although the loading had been completed the day before and the carpenters were finished for three days, there was some delay in sailing which visibly worried Little and Austin and even a casual observer could have seen that financial difficulties delayed the sailing. There were both laborers and tradesmen unpaid. The Captain and the crew were all ready. The cook and steward, James Beard, lately a saddler from St. Louis, was flourishing about. The passengers who were to occupy the cabins on the upper deck had all brought in their chattels the day before and there were more cabin passengers than cabins.

Austin came down this morning and talked with Little and with the Lovelace brothers who were among the passengers, and all four of them went uptown and were gone an hour. When they returned, Little gave word that all was ready and at noon the boat backed out into the muddy current. There were the usual good-bys, and waterfront onlookers gave a passing glance at the overladen schooner now beginning one of the most important voyages of modern times.

Austin and his young, handsome lawyer friend, Joseph H. Hawkins, stood on the wharf and waved the boat away. Two very young men named Borden, who stood with them, watched the boat disappear and turned silently away in evident disappointment.

An open avowed voyage from the States to Texas was something unheard of by any man then living. For more than a hundred years its frontiers had been closed to all the world except such Spaniards as came through Mexico. Only a few years before a party of horse hunters from Louisiana had been rounded up in Texas, taken down into Mexico by the King's soldiers, one of them shot as a common criminal and others kept in prison for years. Spanish soldiers had guarded the border at Rio Hondo for a century. It was all very strange to see men sailing for Texas in the open way the "Lively" had been outfitted, loaded and pushed off at high noon.

The Austins had opened the frontiers which had been closed for more than one hundred thirty years. Broken fortunes in Missouri had left them destitute. Stephen had found his way to New Orleans penniless, leaving thousands of unpaid debts in Missouri. By chance he became acquainted with a brilliant kindly young lawyer named Joseph H. Hawkins, who took

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Austin to his home, gave him lodging and loaned him money to buy groceries to send to his impoverished family in Herculianium, Missouri.¹ His father had left Missouri accompanied by a negro boy and gone all the way to San Antonio where by a mere chance he had gotten official permission to bring three hundred families of Colonists from Louisiana into Texas.²

The Spanish Governor Martinez had advised him that the authorities had decided to open a port of entry at the mouth of the river Colorado on the bay they called San Bernardo, and advised Moses Austin to settle there.

Full of hopeful schemes for his settlement he started home in January, 1821. On the Trinity he was deserted by a traveling companion who made way with the pack mule which carried their commissary, and Austin and the negro boy rode on for days living on roots and berries. One night while asleep wrapped in a buffalo robe, a panther pounced on him from a near-by tree, but was frightened away with no worse results to Austin than a torn robe.

All the way home he pondered his settlement at the mouth of the Colorado and wrote letters about it to members of his scattered family. Although he did not go down to the mouth of the Colorado, having crossed it going and coming at modern Bastrop, he was sure it was a heavenly place.

“On the bay of San Bernardo,” he wrote his son James, who was then in Kentucky in school, “the harbor is good twelve feet of water over the bar and twenty-five or thirty feet up the river for many miles. The Governor has granted me permission to locate a town there.”³

As soon as he got home he began making contracts with young men to join him in his enterprise at the mouth of the Colorado on the bay of San Bernardo.⁴ He saw William Little and James Beard and a dozen others who were ready for adventure.

1 Austin's letter to his mother January 20, 1821, *Austin Papers*, p. 373.

2 The accidental meeting with Bastrop after he had been ordered out of Texas by Governor Martinez changed his destiny and that of Texas.

3 *Austin Papers*, p. 386.

4 All this is strange. There was then and had been for centuries a raft of drift which filled the mouth of the Colorado and made it difficult, if not impossible, for boats to enter. DeLeon saw it and referred to it when he was there in 1690. It was there until removed by the people of Wharton and Matagorda Counties in 1925. Governor Martinez and the Spanish authorities seem not to have known this.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

Seeing the end near—dying from the exposure of his recent journey, he passed the enterprise to Stephen, who was in New Orleans penniless, an inmate by charity of the home of Hawkins. In one of his last letters to Stephen, May 1821, he urged him to get a boat ready without delay to take emigrants to the bay of San Bernardo.

So in the early summer of 1821 Stephen had borrowed enough money to go in search of the mythical San Bernardo.

James Beard, the saddle maker from St. Louis, along with William Little, met Stephen in Natchez with messages from his father. They conferred with the Lovelace brothers at Sicily Island, Louisiana, and it was decided that Stephen should go at once to Texas and get in touch with Governor Martinez at San Antonio and go down and see San Bernardo and learn first-hand its beauties and wonderful possibilities.

From Natchitoches Stephen wrote on July 1st: "I am on my way to Texas to take charge of the land granted my father. It lies on the Brazos and Colorado and includes a port of entry on the bay San Bernardo."⁵

As he rode down into Texas, three weeks from Nacogdoches to Bexar, William Little, James Beard, the saddle maker; Edmond and Jackson Lovelace, the bachelor planters from Sicily Island, and Stephen Holston, their nephew; Jos. H. Polley and a dozen others were with him.

After visiting San Antonio he went by Goliad down to the coast and crossed the Colorado fifteen or twenty miles above the bay. Hurried and tired, they did not go down to the port of entry which they had come to seek, but looking across the boundless Gulf prairie over which they had been riding for days they knew what San Bernardo looked like.

Austin was now (September, 1821) in great haste to get back to Louisiana and get his emigrants moving. They reached the Brazos somewhere below Columbia, and Austin selected as one of his locations the leagues afterwards granted Josiah H. Bell and Martin Varner, which include the present town of Columbia (and the great oil fields).⁶

From here the return was hurried and the party rode north to intercept the La Bahia-Nacogdoches road. They crossed the Brazos somewhere above Big Creek and below the Big Bend,

⁵ *Austin Papers*, p. 399.

⁶ Austin to Bell, December 4, 1823. *Austin Papers*, p. 714.



Joseph H. Polley, one of the men who rode with Austin on his first trip—afterwards one of the Three Hundred.

THE TEXAS MAYFLOWER

probably at the old ford just below the present highway bridge at Richmond.⁷

William Little and the Lovelace brothers saw this beautiful landscape in September and in late November while the schooner "Lively" was officially headed for San Bernardo, William Little and the Lovelaces were bound for the bend of the Brazos.

The open weather of the early southern autumn was passing and before the boat reached the Gulf, one hundred miles below New Orleans, it was met with a gale which blew for thirty-six hours. For four weeks the boat was buffeted about when on Christmas Day they sighted the mouth of the Brazos. On New Year's Day they anchored and made a landing and everybody made a rush to put foot on shore.

The first thing was to go fishing, and a seventy-five foot seine was cast and brought up so full of fish that it took all hands to pull it in.

When the "Lively" came by Bolivar opposite the north end of Galveston Island a week before it landed at the Brazos, Jane Long stood on the lonely, dismal December beach with a new-born babe in her arms, her little daughter Ann beside her, while the negro girl Kian frantically waved a white cloth to attract the attention of the passing boat. Captain Cannon paused long enough to send her a barrel of flour and offered to take her along, but she said she had promised her husband to remain at Bolivar until he returned from Mexico and would do so. If she could have pulled back the curtain of the future she could have told them she would meet them on the Brazos seven years later.

The four long weeks at sea had irked the twenty passengers and although it was a desolate outlook to land on a houseless shore in an inclement January, Little and the Lovelaces and their nephew; James Beard, the saddle maker, cook and steward—about fifteen persons in all—left the "Lively," taking most of its cargo, and Captain Cannon sailed on to the mysterious port San Bernardo.

In January, 1822, when these adventurers put ashore there

⁷ When I lived at Richmond we could wade across the river here in low water. Old people told me it was a ford in Colonial days before William Morton established his ferry in 1837, and that they had been told an Indian trail crossed here before the Old Three Hundred came. There was also an Indian and buffalo trail across at the "falls" in the Bend five miles above. Thompson's ferry was at this crossing 1830-1847.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

was no human habitation nearer than Goliad, one hundred fifty miles to the west. They were on foot without any transportation but a rowboat and had a ton of farm tools and what-not taken from the schooner.

Little and the Lovelaces believed they would meet Austin somewhere up the river and took the rowboat and made a six days journey going as far as the Big Bend, but returning with no news of Austin or the overland Colonists who were to come with him.⁸

Here they were marooned at the mouth of the river on a drear coast, their supplies gone, not even tents to shelter them from the winter rain. They depended for food on the game they could kill and lived on deer, bear, turkey and an occasional buffalo. They hoped the "Lively" would return after it had been to Bernardo and watched for it in vain. Unable to get away by sea, it was decided to go farther inland and settle down, but the one rowboat would not accommodate the party of fifteen persons, much less carry their ton of farm tools.

In the driftwood at the mouth of the river they found an old walnut log canoe that had defied decay for ages and it was put in shipshape, and they worked on another boat while hunters of the party scoured the hinterland for game.

One day a party in a forty-foot pirogue came into the mouth of the river—David Fitzgerald and his son, and Joseph Frazier, with two negroes. They were on their way to Austin's Colony and joined the forlorn castaways and together they all began the ascent of the river. The boats moved slowly, heavily against the current, while most of the emigrants struggled on foot along the winding river.

Early in March they reached a place where there was a vacancy in the timber on the west bank and heavy canebrakes on the east bank, near where a creek with deep steep banks ran into the river from the west—the site of Richmond of today.

Here Little and the Lovelaces insisted on stopping and they divided into groups and went into camp. Little at once began the construction of a log house on the west bank, all hands helping, and it was completed in ten days. It was a single room structure about twenty-five feet square and was covered with boards. By fiction it was called a fort and in later years "Old

⁸ It has long been told that Austin told them he would meet them there and that this is why they left the "Lively" and came up the river. In the first advertisement of Richmond in 1837 it is stated that Austin instructed Little to go there. °

THE TEXAS MAYFLOWER

Fort," and being just below the big bend in the river, became known in time as Fort Bend.

It was now the middle of March and no news of Austin. Nothing from the outside world. They had been swallowed by a wilderness.

It was decided to make one more effort to reach the world by sea. There was still a lingering hope that Captain Cannon would sail back by the mouth of the Brazos for a farewell message to the marooned Colonists. Two boatloads—the two Lovelaces, Holston, the nephew; Harrison and his negro boy; James Nelson, a New York engineer; Williams and Wilson; and W. S. Lewis, the historian of the expedition, set off down the river.

They reached the coast the second day—no vessel, nothing but the vasty deep. They decided to linger awhile with the faint hope that a sail would come by and in the meanwhile all went fishing.

A few days later a small yawl reached the river bringing William Morton of Mobile, his seventeen-year-old son John (afterwards the first sheriff of Fort Bend County), and a negro.

The Mortons brought the distressful news that the sailboat in which they had come from Mobile had been wrecked on Galveston Island just across the pass; that the family, wife and five daughters, were at the scene of the wreck while the father and son John had gone out in search of help.

Even a shipwreck was welcome news to these forlorn fellows, and they at once set out to aid the Mortons. In the effort to rescue the Mortons two of the late passengers on the "Lively," Williams and Thompson (carpenters) were drowned, but the Morton mother and five daughters were rescued, and the party augmented by these recent arrivals made its way back up the river to the "Fort." The old lady and the youngest girl were in one of the boats which was loaded with Morton's household chattels and the other daughters walked up the river bank until they reached a point just across from the log fort. Here William Morton, his son John, his negro boy, and his wife and five daughters went into camp. He hastened to clear away the canebrake and plant some corn on the east side.

CHAPTER II

THE OLD THREE HUNDRED

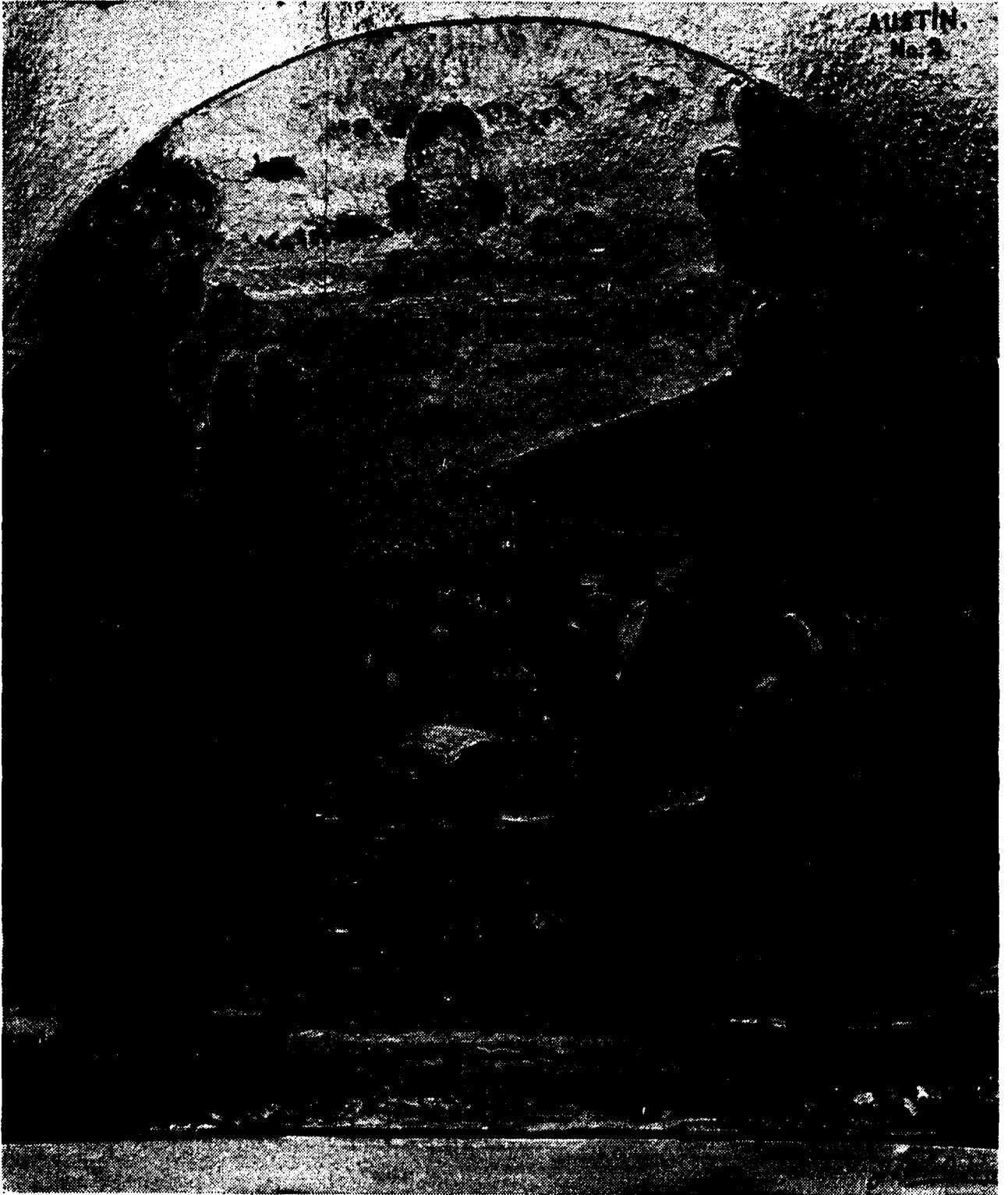
The first grant made Moses Austin on the 17th of January, 1821 was to locate three hundred families from Louisiana in Texas, and these first Colonists whose lands were titled in 1824 were called the Old Three Hundred to distinguish them from other hundreds who came afterwards.

News of the grant found its way to the States early in the year, even before Stephen Austin's visit to Texas in the mid-summer, and venturesome persons from Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana were on their way to Texas overland in small parties and sometimes lone families or a lone horseman were wending their way through the pathless woods or along the old dim Spanish trails.

As soon as the schooner "Lively" was on its way, Stephen Austin left New Orleans by boat for Natchitoches, Louisiana, the outpost on Red River where men on horseback waited him, and they rode on to Texas overtaking wagon parties which were coming down the old Spanish trail. They took the lower or La Bahia trail at the Trinity. On the last day of the year the advance parties with the young Empresario crossed the Brazos at the site of Old Washington, and went on into camp on a creek they called New Years Creek in now northern Washington County.¹ Two days later the schooner "Lively" landed its seasick emigrants at the mouth of the river.

Although Little and Lovelace knew that the boat was to unload at Bernardo on the Colorado and that Austin would

¹ They found the families of Andrew Robinson and the two Kuykendalls already there in camp.



Austin and Bastrop delivering titles to the Three Hundred.

THE OLD THREE HUNDRED

meet it there, for some strange reason never explained, they abandoned the boat on the Brazos and went up the river expecting to meet Austin. Austin probably knew that Little and Lovelace intended to go to the vicinity of the Big Bend to locate, yet he made no effort to contact them there, did not even ride by there on his way to Bernardo where he waited three months for the "Lively" which never came.

While he was waiting there on the winter beach the Littles and Lovelaces and their forlorn fifteen were crawling up the river in rowboats and on foot, living off the country as they went, growing more discouraged each day. When Austin gave up his vigil for the lost "Lively," he went on to Bexar to see Governor Martinez and report progress and learned from that worthy that he must go to the City of Mexico and get his father's grant confirmed by the new Mexican government that had succeeded the fallen Spanish sovereign. He left Josiah Bell in charge of his homeless Colonists, and Bell sent the word around and in June it reached Fort Bend.

All kinds of fears and surmises arose among the houseless, meat-eating adventurers. Some said the grant would not be confirmed and they would all be put out and most of them strayed away, some of them going back to Louisiana.

On June 26, 1822, Edmond Lovelace wrote Austin from the Brazos and the letter reached him six months later in the City of Mexico.

"Judge Austin: We arrived at the mouth of the Brazos December 23rd. . . . The drouth has been so prevalent we will make no corn . . . Galveston will be the seaport for this province. Don't fail, my dear sir, to petition for lands agreed on between us previous to our parting in New Orleans, etc."²

Soon after dispatching this letter the two Lovelaces and Stephen Holston went back to Sicily Island where they stayed.

It will be seen from Edmond Lovelace's letter that he had a proprietary interest in the Texas enterprise.

Edmond and Jackson Lovelace of Sicily Island, and their nephew Stephen Holston, had accompanied Austin and Little to Texas on their first trip in 1821 and were much pleased with the country. On their return to Louisiana Edmond loaned Austin \$100, for Austin was without means.

The day the "Lively" sailed (November 25, 1821) Austin and Jackson and Edmond made a written contract in New

² *Austin Papers*, p. 526.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

Orleans which recited that he, Austin, was to apply for all the land he could get about Galveston Bay, was to take the title in his name for the benefit of himself and the five Lovelace brothers who were named. On the strength of this contract they loaned him \$500. With this money Austin and Little paid the "Lively's" debts.

In December, 1835 when the Revolution was raging and Austin had just returned from the army in Bexar and was about to sail on his mission to the United States, he had a letter from George N. Lovelace, one of the five brothers still at Sicily Island calling his attention to the fact that the \$100 loan and note had not been paid. George N. Lovelace advised that his brothers were then all dead and added, "I presume you will not hesitate to pay interest on the note as you are satisfied that you never could have sent the "Lively" to the Brazos without this loan."³

In 1841, five years after Austin died, his executors paid Lovelace with a small tract of land in Washington County.

When Austin and Little were returning from Texas in September, 1821 they traveled on a Red River-Mississippi steamboat from Natchitoches, and one of the boat clerks was a consequential young man named W. S. Lewis, who by his own confession was a very conceited person, and if he may be believed, was insufferably rude to almost everyone with whom he came in contact. Austin was much impressed with Mr. Lewis, so Lewis says, and urged him to join the Texas enterprise, which he did after borrowing \$20 from poor Austin, for which Lewis graciously gave a due bill which was never paid.⁴

Lewis sailed on the "Lively" and was one of the forlorn fifteen who gathered at the Big Bend. He did not get along with his shipmates and spent most of his time with the Mortons who were now in camp, building a house across the river. In June, Lewis found a chance to go back to Louisiana and quit Texas forever. Sixty years later Lewis wrote a circumstantial account of the voyage of the schooner "Lively" and the doings of the forlorn fifteen up to the date he left the Brazos, to which we are much indebted for details.⁵

Out of all the "Lively" emigrants only three stayed long enough to get land grants: William Little who may be called the

³ *Austin Papers*, Vol. 3, p. 288.

⁴ *Austin Papers*, Vol. 2, p. 437.

⁵ *Texas Quarterly*, Vol. 1, p. 81.

THE OLD THREE HUNDRED

first settler and father of Fort Bend, and James Beard, the St. Louis saddle maker, cook and steward, both of whom settled in Fort Bend, and James Nelson, the New York engineer who located on the Colorado.

But as these went away others came in to take their places.

The long absence of Austin and the uncertainty of his mission weighed heavily on these folks camped in the woods waiting his return. The summer of 1822 wore away and autumn came.

The Fitzgeralds and Joseph Frazier, who came with them, fancied a location on the east margin of the river just below where the Mortons had camped and squatted there. William Little, who had endless time to make a choice, walked up and down the river for weeks and finally decided on a location on the east side about ten miles below the Big Bend.

There were restless groups of Colonists up the river where the New Years Creek settlers had lighted their first camp fires, over on the Colorado and along the San Jacinto and Buffalo Bayou. The Kinchloes had landed in Matagorda Bay early in the year and several parties had come into the lower Brazos between the Big Bend and the coast. These scattered groups began to visit with each other and speculate about what Austin could do in Mexico.

Among the midsummer arrivals in the Big Bend settlement was a young man named Thos. H. Borden, the first of a large family that arrived a few years later and which became one of the most illustrious in the annals of Texas.

He and his brother Gail, two years older, had come down to New Orleans from their home on the Ohio River about the time Austin reached the City on his return from Texas the previous year and were attracted by the Texas talk and met and advised with Austin and began a friendship which lasted through the years until Gail Borden with tears and great sorrow stood by the deathbed of Austin in Columbia fifteen years later.

The Bordens were to come on the "Lively" but Gail's health was bad—he was threatened with lung trouble—and was unable to make the voyage and Tom tarried with him.

Gail met some kindly folks from Southern Mississippi and went there for the winter and stayed nearly seven years after which he followed Tom to Texas.

Austin's long absence and the uncertainty of his mission had discouraged the emigrants generally and those on the Brazos near the Big Bend entered the second year of waiting with patience. They planted corn early, having raised little more than seed from the 1822 crop. The spring was favorable

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and the season good and what can be more glorious than an open seasonable spring along the lower Brazos! If the promises of May were followed by commensurate harvests in October it would be the most bountiful country on earth.

While Austin had assurances for many months that his grant would ultimately be confirmed by the new governments, this was not done until February 1823, and he was on his way home in May. He had found persons in Mexico from whom he could borrow enough money to enable him to stay on and get home.

Word reached the Fort Settlement in June through Josiah H. Bell from down the river that Austin had succeeded and would be home in a few weeks. Then one day in July a messenger came riding into the Fort Settlement and on down the river telling the people that it was the will of His Honor the Governor Don Felix Trespalacios at Bexar that the people of these Colonies should assemble at the house of Sylvanus Castleman on the Lower Colorado on the first Sunday in August, 1823, to hear a message from the Supreme Government of Mexico touching their well-being.

On the appointed day they came—the first gathering of the Colonists. Married men, who had wagons, brought their families and they camped all about Sylvanus' log house and waited the coming of the Governor's emissaries. On the appointed day there came a party headed by no less a person than Philip Neri, aged Baron de Bastrop of Bexar, seven feet or more tall, vastly bewhiskered. Mounted on a Spanish mule his feet barely missed the ground. With him was the same clerical looking young man faultlessly dressed, but somewhat threadbare, who had waved the "Lively" from the dock twenty months before.

The Colonists were told that they would be given leagues of land and labors, and that since many of them had already made locations it was but a matter of surveying and that Austin would cause each man's land to be surveyed and when this was done the Baron, who had been appointed to make and deliver grants—deeds, would be back among them for that purpose.

The surveying and clerical work and commissioner's fees for Bastrop all cost money and although the amount to each was small, the aggregate for 300 grants was a sizeable sum. Austin had borrowed money all the way from St. Louis to the City of Mexico and back and felt entitled to add a small sum to cover these two-year expenses, hence $12\frac{1}{2}c$ per acre or about \$400 per league was fixed as the fee. Since money was very scarce in the Fort Settlement, and elsewhere, it was advertised that in lieu

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thereof Spanish cattle or negroes would be taken as cash. A cow and calf were good for 100 acres.⁶

Surveying crews were out along the Colorado and the Brazos and there was little unemployment in the Colonies in the fall of 1823 and early 1824.

The Colonists who had come in, most of them during Austin's absence in Mexico, had drifted as chance or fancy dictated all the way from the San Jacinto on the east to the Guadalupe on the west and from the old Spanish trail to the sea. Austin was discouraged at these remote settlements and tried to talk them into getting closer together. He came over to the Brazos and up to the home of Achilles McFarland where he proposed to Bell, and had him propose to the people, that a series of contiguous labors be located upon which the settlers would live and have their leagues located elsewhere. But these people were rugged individuals, isolationists, and would have no such unseemly crowding.

A town site was to be chosen which Governor Felix had named San Felipe de Austin, and the much coveted location at San Bernardo was forgotten. Someone had evidently discovered the raft at the mouth of the river. Austin and the Baron scouted about for weeks and finally decided on the location thirty miles above the Big Bend which the people of those days called Austin and which we call San Felipe and here the Empresario opened his office and had his residence during the Colonial days.

In the spring of 1824 while the surveying was still in progress and before any of the titles had been made, it became necessary for the people in both Colonies to select or suggest someone to represent all Texas in a Convention which was soon to meet at Saltillo in Coahuila to form a constitution for Coahuila and Texas. All the people of the Fort Settlement joined in a petition and proxy to the Baron de Bastrop of Bexar naming him as their choice.

The names signed to this document show many of the people then, April 1824, living on the Brazos in what is now Fort Bend County.

In the preceding autumn (1823) before any steps had been taken to formally set up a state government Don Erasmus Seguin of San Antonio had been chosen to represent Texas in the national Congress at the City of Mexico. He would get no salary

⁶ Later the commodity list was enlarged to include furs, beeswax, home-made cloth, dressed deerskins, etc.

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and was without means to go and sustain himself without aid. Austin was asked to solicit assistance from the Colonists and knowing they had little money but had raised a good corn crop, he circulated a subscription list down the Brazos and each planter set down the number of bushels he would give to aid Don Erasmus on his long journey. The average subscription was ten bushels which the settlers all the way from the Bend delivered at the crib of Martin Varner.

This was nearly a year before they got title to their lands, but most of them had then made selections, built houses (huts) and opened corn fields.

Bastrop came again in July, 1824 to the house of Sylvanus Castleman, and to San Felipe, this time to sign the formal grants giving each man his land. Two hundred ninety-seven in all and forty-one of them in what is now Fort Bend County. These people, who under Austin's first grant got their titles in 1824, were the Old Three Hundred. They were William Pettus, William Hall, David Fitzgerald, Thos. Barnet, Moses Shipman, Elijah Roark, Elijah Allcorn, David Bright, William Little, William Stafford, Henry Jones, William Morton, John Rabb, Randal Jones, Samuel Kennedy, Knight and White, William Andrews, Randolph Foster, Samuel Isaacks, Randon and Pennington, Churchill Fulshear, Henry Scott, David Randon, Nancy Spencer, Abner Kuykendall, Joseph Kuykendall, Barrett and Harris, John Foster, James Beard, Horatio Chriesman, George Huff, James W. Jones, Simon Miller, William Neal, Joseph H. Polley, Noel F. Roberts, David Shelby, J. Frazier, J. M. McCormick, Thos. Westall, Joseph San Pierre.

Austin's second Colony of five hundred families was authorized in April, 1825 and all locations in Fort Bend County after 1824 are in his second or subsequent Colonial grants. Although many of these were here in 1824 or even sooner, yet they are not of the Three Hundred.

CHAPTER III

THE FORT SETTLEMENT

All during the Colonial days the neighborhood about the Big Bend was called the Fort Settlement and this was generally extended to include all the homesteads on the Brazos from Randolph Foster's down to Big Creek, and often this reference was loosely used to include the Oyster Creek, but it soon came to have an individuality of its own.

The "Fort" was the little log shanty the "Lively" emigrants built early in 1822. Yet no one settled at the Fort, no one ever lived but temporarily in the hut, for such it was.

William Morton built his first house across the river on his two league grant which extended back to Oyster Creek.

The newcomers soon learned of the dangers and disasters of overflows and they learned that the ground about the Fort, and especially that above it in the Bend, was higher than across the river in the alluvial bottoms.

At some remote age when the waves of the ocean covered this area a tremendous sand dune or bar was dumped here and when the river came down ages after its course was deflected around this heap of sand, ten miles around, but only two miles across the neck of the Bend.

Before the first titles were issued in 1824 several of the waiting families had built cabins and opened gardens and small fields in the Bend. It was a high beautiful prairie covered with fine heavy grass and free from the huisache which we see there now.

William Little and John Little, his father, located each a labor in the Bend and William Morton, Randal Jones, William Andrews, Knight and White, all of whom had headright grants across the river, each got a labor in the Bend.

Samuel Isaacks, whose league was across the river from the

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Bend, unable to find a labor there fronting on the river, had his labor located on the west side across from his league just above the Bend.

Here was indeed the most densely populated rural area in all Texas, seven families within a radius of three miles. This was the real Fort Settlement before the Revolution.

About 1828 Jesse Thompson, who was one of the Three Hundred and whose headright league was down in Brazoria, came up to the Fort Settlement and contracted for a plantation in the Knight and White League across the river. Thompson also contracted for the Knight labor in the Bend, but did not get title to it in his lifetime, which was short as we shall see. With him came trouble which led to the first killing in the Bend.

About the same time Thos. H. Borden, who had spent part of 1822 in this neighborhood and whose headright was located in Brazoria, came in to the Bend and bought land and contracted for another tract which Thompson wanted. This crowding of the population of seven to ten families in a circumference of ten miles brought on friction and led to the killing of Thompson by Thos. H. Borden.

The tradition in the Thompson family related by Dr. Feris' daughter who is a granddaughter of Jesse Thompson, is that Borden stepped from behind a tree and shot without warning; that only a colored man saw it and could not testify.

In an old bundle of letters that passed between Borden and Moses Lapham and which by mere chance I found in possession of a Lapham in Iowa (1936), there is one dated March 8, 1835 in which Borden tells in great detail his trouble with Thompson and from it I relate the following as his version of how he came to kill Jesse Thompson. It is a kind of *res gestae* after one hundred years.

"I have, since you left the country, done tolerable well, things seemed to prosper with me and I have made considerable property, but here of late I have had a pull-back which hurts my pecuniary affairs considerable.

"A man by the name of Jesse Thompson (who probably you have seen) did live on the opposite side of the river from my farm and my place is precisely in his way for he is compelled to come on my side of the river in a high tide of water. Ever since the great overflow (1833) he has been trying to get this place, I having purchased it before.

"This Thompson was cald a very rich man and is selebrated for his overbaring disposition. He has a large family of boys and girls grown. He fell out with me without any cause and said I should not live here for no such man should stay, etc.

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The neighbors are in general afraid of him for it always has been his maner of doing business by storm. He is a man of onusual size, very entemperent and to say the truth a man of a good deal of address, but of low bred, not even knowing how to write his name, and in fact a leader of the rabble throughout the country.

“The quarrel kep up for several months, Thompson finding that he was losing ground in the estimation of the people by frequent abuses he made on me, by setting his sons to annoy me (but they took care to keep their hands off me). Thompson at length agreed to leave the matter to a Board of Honor. This was what I always wanted but never would be first to propose it before this Board. I would have the right to lay the whole case before them and then the public would justly apreciate his character.

“I had always went well armed and they made so many threats that they were afraid of me for they well knew that I had them in my power and would be tolerable apt to shoot.

“I agreed to the proposals. The man that brought it then produced a paper as follows. ‘We agree that as our dispute is about to be left to gentlemen. We will close hostile movements toward each other as also the members of our respective families. J. Thompson. Thos. H. Borden. Signed in the presence of R. Jones.’

“Thompson delayed calling the Board on pretence of going below. I had business at one of my nabours and went past Thompson’s. On my way back one of his sons shot at me with a rifle. Thompson, the old man, was below (down the river). He came home in a day or so. He made no apology to me whatever. I started to go to San Felipe with a two horse wagon. Mr. James Cochran was with me, who Thompson had previous threatened. I had proceeded about two miles when we were surprised by Thompson and one Dr. Erwin, coming up to me with a large pistol in his hand and says, ‘I have got you d—m you.’ (I was on the ground in the act of getting in the wagon. I had got out to mind a trace.) I had a small pistol in a side pocket (the rest of my arms was in the wagon). I drew it and fired at the old hellion. He fired at the same time but missed me. He wheeled and pursued Cochran, fired his pistol at him. My horses ran off to the timber about three hundred yards. I went to it and got my big pistols and double barreled shotgun that I kep near me in case of an attack. Got on one of my best horses and went back to see what had become of my friend. When I first saw them they was in a scuffle or fight. I fired another pistol but C had hold of the muzel. I ran up and shot

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the old rascal, strange as it may appear to you in the land of steady habits. I am glad I gut shot him that he may have the pangs of as hard a death as possible. Thus the great maxim fell. He lived three hours. I went to town and gave myself up, produced my proof and am now bound to the Superior Court in a penalty of \$2500 only. David G. Burnet was the Judge. I will write more about it next."

I was hampered in my investigation of this unfortunate killing by the fact that I did not undertake it until after one hundred years and all the available evidence was the statement of Jesse Thompson's great-granddaughter and the letter of Thos. H. Borden, neither of which would be admissible in a court. But under the rule of necessity which must be satisfied with the best evidence available I have produced it.

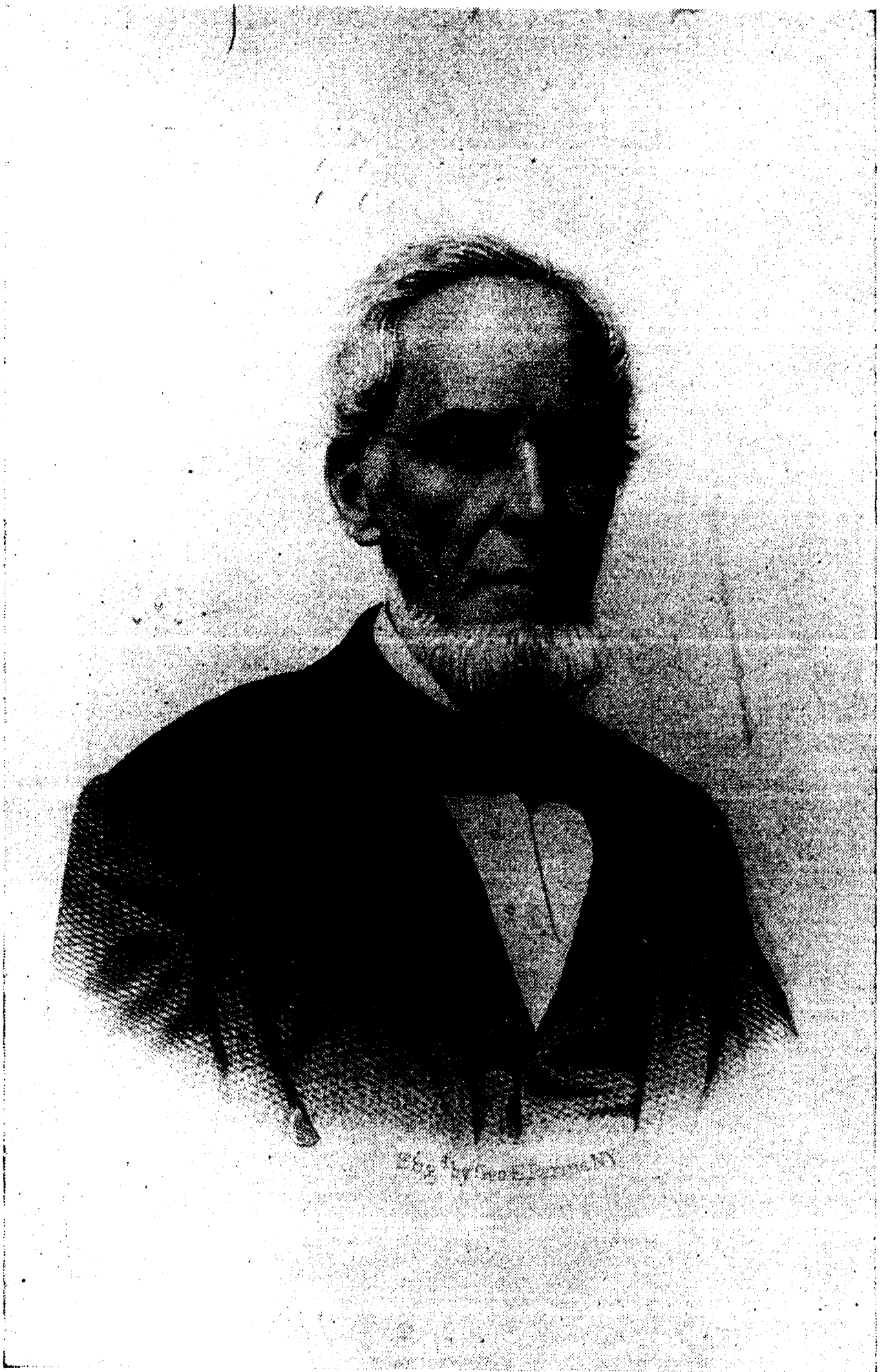
I also investigated the eye-witnesses to see what kind of company Thompson and Borden kept, a kind of remote circumstance, but a circumstance nevertheless. Dr. Erwin seems to have always been present when there was trouble, he thrived on it. In 1835 he was in Captain Dimmit's command at Goliad and in a letter which the Captain wrote General Austin he tells how his surgeon, Dr. Erwin, and others had deserted and tried to reach Bexar, and how Collingsworth, one of them, was killed by Indians, and how the others abandoned him and returned to the Fort. Of the Doctor he says, "He originated and headed the mutiny. The conduct of this man has been highly improper, unmilitary and rash."

Thos. R. Erwin, generally called Dr. Erwin, came to Texas from Louisiana in 1832 and married the widow of Dr. C. G. Cox of Brazoria. She was a daughter of Joseph Reese, who was one of the Three Hundred. After the Revolution he lived for a time on a Brazoria plantation and then wandered away, crossed the Continent to California in the '49s, was back in New Orleans in 1857 where he divested himself of his property by a deed which recites "wishing to absent himself from the United States and liquidate his business, he conveys, etc." This is the last we hear of the roving Doctor who went thence to South America, and ever afterwards absented himself from the country.

Cochran, who was with Borden, was long after a merchant at Columbia and San Felipe and a very worthy man.

The facts seem to be with Borden.

The Bordens were quite an addition to the Fort Settlement. Gail Borden, who had come into Texas from Mississippi in 1828 lived most of the time at San Felipe and two younger brothers, Paschal and John, lived part of the time there and



Gail Borden

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some time with Thos. H. in the Bend. They were all interested in the gin that Tom built there.

Tom saw visions of a city in the Bend which he named Louisville and in a letter to Lapham written from Brazoria in November 1833 he said, "I will move to my new place in a week so direct your letters to Louisville, the name I have given it."

The March 1835 letter, in which he tells of the killing of Jesse Thompson, is dated at "Louisville." After disposing of Jesse he writes (in this same March letter), "I built a large gin on my place. Last year raised 30 bales of cotton, some corn for sale, about 400 bushels of potatoes. Cotton is cash, 14 cents here, 16 to 18 at New Orleans John is now at San Antonio studying Spanish. It costs him \$22 per month board and tuition. Gail and John Baker will start a paper at San Felipe shortly I have a big trade on hand and think I will make 4 or 500 dollars out of it There will be 8,000 bales shipped from last year's crop \$70 a bale Money is plentiful, wages are high. Our friend Austin has been in prison in Mexico for 2 years but is out now on his way home. Steamboats take my cotton to Marion (West Columbia). There are two steamboats now on this river and upwards of 600 persons have come in the past month, etc."

There is much of historic interest in this March, 1835 letter which Thos. H. Borden wrote Moses Lapham.

Six months later Borden wrote Lapham again from "Louisville" and his letter was full of enthusiasm. He had forgotten his Thompson troubles or at least they were not mentioned in his July letter. He was enthusiastic about his farm prospects and wanted Moses to send him two hands whom he would pay \$200 per year, wanted brisk active men. "I want to raise 84 bales of cotton next year. I made \$3330 clear off my last year's cotton crop." He said he hired six hands most of them only part time. He urged Lapham to come on and join him and they would raise stock. He was enthusiastic about the prospect for cattle "for they will stay fat the year around without feed." Thought there was money in hogs which he fed on cottonseed. He advised Lapham not to bring a wife with him but to find one in Texas "for she will be already climated."

After this homely advice he talked of the political situation which he admitted was not promising, but he seemed sanguine it would all work out and the United States would buy Texas. Referred to Santa Anna way down in Mexico as wanting to be a dictator, but the references were vague and showed little interest.

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In less than four months Texas was at war and Thos. H. Borden was in it and eight months later this very Santa Anna's army was in the Bend and burned the Borden houses and gin and the Bordens and all others were refugees.

But they came back in April and planted corn and another bumper cotton crop and Santa Anna never molested them any more.

Some years before Tom Borden came into the Bend, Knight and White, who had located their labor there and their league across the river in 1824, opened a store, a trading post and ferry which they operated for several years. Their chief business was the purchase of peltries from hunters. They were the only merchants between San Felipe and Columbia.

Noah Smithwick, who traversed the country on foot in 1828, told of spending a day with these gentlemen at their trading post.

White had come to Texas with General Long in 1821 and in that year he and a single companion left Long's warriors and went up the Trinity into what is now Chambers County and planted a corn crop in the deep woods.

He was a merchant and trader until his death in 1837 when a eulogy of him was published in The Telegraph at Houston. Forty years later, October, 1887 an old man, who had been one of his clerks in the Colonial days at his store in the Bend and at Brazoria, caused this eulogy to be reprinted in the Galveston News and with it a beautiful tribute to the memory of Walter White whose virtues were duly registered with all the enthusiasm the old clerk could find words to relate.

James Knight lived a long life in the County and more will be said of him at a later page.

William Morton, who joined the "Lively" emigrants at the mouth of the river in January, 1822, lived in the Bend from 1822 to his death in 1833. John, his eldest son, lived on the Morton League on the east margin of the river. William's daughters, who were but children when he came in 1822, quickly grew to womanhood and married, one to Stephen Richardson, merchant at San Felipe, one to W. P. Huff, son of George Huff whose headright was on the Bernard, and one to William Little. The widow with remnants of the family was still living on the Morton headright in 1850, but their descendants have long ago disappeared from the County and little is now known of them.

When the disastrous flood or "overflow" of 1833 swept the Brazos Valley William Morton was on his plantation a mile

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from home on the east side and was carried away by its raging tide and no trace of him was ever found.

William Morton was a brickmaker and a man of much fine sentiment, as the following incident shows.

In 1825 a stranger, Robt. Gillespie, came to Texas from Alabama and stopped at Morton's house where he sickened and suddenly died. Morton gave him sepulcher and made a kiln of huge bricks out of which he erected a monument to his Masonic brother and upon which he inscribed lines of the finest sentiment. The syntax shows Morton to have been a man of refined feeling and some education, although his wife could not read or write. The work of preparing these bricks and building this monument must have consumed a month's time. When the Mexican Army was in the Bend in 1836 they partially wrecked the pile,¹ but it was restored during the Centennial year in 1936 and stands today an evidence of the character of William Morton, who eight years later died alone in the Brazos bottom and rests without a sepulcher.

The following letter found in the *Austin Papers* tells who the stranger was that William Morton so kindly buried with so much sentiment.

Franklin County, Ala.
August 14th, 1825.

Lt. Col. Stephen F. Austin,
Dear Colonel:

In a few weeks my friend Robt. Gillespie will set out on a journey to your State, he has been much pleased with the description he has received of Texas; and if his opinion on a view of it concurs with those who have described the country to him he will be induced to locate himself in Texas. He is a gentleman who possesses an extensive knowledge of mechanics, there is scarcely any species of machinery but what he is well acquainted with. I have been acquainted with Mr. Gillespie for ten or twelve years past. He is a gentleman of excellent sense and strict integrity, and in every respect will be a most useful

¹ Sowel in his *History of Fort Bend County*, p. 228, says that while the Mexican soldiers were wrecking it Almonte came by and seeing the Masonic inscriptions made them desist. Almonte was a York Mason. Mr. Sowel does not give the source of this interesting statement, but we do know that a few days later both Almonte and Santa Anna gave Masonic signals of distress.

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and valuable member of our Colony. I recommend him to your polite attention and trust you will afford him every information respecting the character of the country its constitution and laws. I know of no man who can be more extensively useful in Texas than he could be therefore you must fit him with a league of land rich in soil, well timbered, with a stream on which all kinds of water works may be erected. I have progressed this far on my way to Kentucky. After I left you I purchased a good many mules on the edge of Louisiana; and have been detained in selling them out. I shall certainly be with you by the last of October. Present my respects to Mrs. Gross, Mrs. Long and your brother.

(Signed) Moragan A. Heard.

Captain Randal Jones, who lived on his labor just above Morton's in the Bend, has a history that has been told and retold with interest for more than 100 years. He was a kind of first citizen of the Bend. His labor was just across from his headright and he narrowly escaped the fate of William Morton when the 1833 flood came overflowing down. He was the last man who saw William Morton alive. He crossed from his plantation to his home in the Bend just before the crest of a terrific wave broke over the low lands along Jones Creek.

He was born in Columbia County, Georgia in 1786 and was a private in the war of 1812 and after the close of the war remained in the regular army with the title of Captain. During this time he was in the wars with the Creek Indians in Alabama. He left the army in 1814 and outfitted a trading expedition to Comanche Indians in Western Texas. This was the wildest frontier in the world and one ran the risk of being scalped by the Comanches or Kiowas and if he escaped this, of being shot by the Spaniards as an intruder.

In 1816 he was back at Nacogdoches where he opened a store and flourished there for two years. When LaFitte established himself on Galveston Island in 1818-1820 he was in the slave business on a large scale. His system was to rob slave ships, which were pirates, and bring his black cargo into Galveston where he would sell to brokers who would smuggle them into Louisiana and sell them to the planters at a large profit. The Bowie brothers were making a fortune at this enterprise and Captain Jones decided to try it.

He went down to Galveston and spent some time with LaFitte and was about to embark on the enterprise when the

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so-called General Long with his Revolution and Republic showed up and Captain Randal Jones engaged in that quixotic venture with the odd title of "Brigade Major." (What that meant Captain Jones never seemed to know so he stuck to his Captaincy all his days.) General Long sent him to capture Galveston Island which he advised was at the mouth of the Brazos and the "Brigade Major" and twenty-one men marched all the way from Nacogdoches to the Brazos at the crossing of the old Nacogdoches-Goliad trail. Here they set to work to build a fleet out of logs for the descent on Galveston Island at the mouth of the Brazos.

Really there was no one on Galveston Island at that time for LaFitte had abandoned it and no one else had seen fit to occupy it. But the "Brigade Major" did not know this. While they were cutting and hewing logs a company of sixty Mexican soldiers from Bexar descended on them and the "Brigade Major" and his men scampered back to Nacogdoches. He remained attached to the Long expedition until its collapse, and after Dr. Long was assassinated in Mexico in 1822, Captain Jones assisted Mrs. Long as we shall see when we come to read the sketch of that remarkable woman which is also a part of the history of Fort Bend County.

Jones was criticized by Mrs. Long, and also by President Lamar in his "papers" for his dealing with the widow Long.

I have read all the available data about these transactions and here now after the lapse of one hundred and eighteen years fully acquit Captain Randal Jones of any dishonesty and write it in the history of the County where he and Mrs. Long lived and died, that his conduct was that of a gentleman.

The Long enterprise had blown up, the "Brigade Major" was without a brigade or anything else worth mention and was back in Nacogdoches where he had started.

When Jones heard of Austin's Colonial grant he decided to join the enterprise, leave off his roving life and settle down. Early in 1822 he and his younger brother James had gotten a few barrels of whiskey and some petty merchandise out to the Brazos at the same Goliad crossing, and here they found some of the hewn logs he had cut for his fleet four years before and made a very rude houseboat, and putting his liquor and other chattels on it floated down the river.

Austin's first Colonists had come in a few weeks before, but they saw none of them until they reached the Big Bend. Near here they heard someone call out and saw a man standing on the west bank and anchored their raft for a conversation. It was Henry Jones who had just arrived, driving overland from

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Arkansas. Henry, who had preceded them a few hours, invited Randal and James to stay in this hospitable neighborhood, and the Captain decided to do so. He tied up his houseboat near the log fort which had been finished only a few weeks, and lived in this neighborhood for more than fifty years. He was thirty-six years old when he floated down through the Bend in 1822 and tied up for his conference with Henry Jones.

Henry's wife and child and his brother John were with him, also Hetty Styles, sister of Henry's Red River wife. A few years later James Jones, brother of Randal, married Hetty Styles and they took up their residence out on the Guadalupe where they left surviving a large colony of Joneses.

A few weeks after Captain Randal Jones tied up, a man named William Andrews came driving his ox-teams all the way from Louisiana and his wagon was full of children, among them a daughter Mary (Martha) who was fourteen and pretty and healthy. In August, 1824 when Mary was sixteen she and Captain Jones were married. He wrote Austin up at San Felipe early in the month advising him of the approaching event and had no reply. So on August 22nd he wrote again that it was a "matter of considerable importance to an old batchelor" and urged Mr. Austin to "hasten his arrival."²

William Andrews could not allow his household to become depleted, so on the following January his wife bore him twin girls.

A few weeks later William Little writing Austin the news of the Fort Settlement related in addition to the Andrew twins, a son born to him, Little, and one to Henry Jones.³

Mary (Martha), wife of Captain Jones, died in 1861, but the little Captain lived on and on through the troubled years. In the last years of his life he was totally blind. He died at the home of his son-in-law, Judge Gustave Cook, in Houston on June 1, 1873 in his eighty-seventh year. He and his wife were buried on the Jones labor in the Bend but in 1934 the Legislature of Texas caused their dust to be removed to the State Cemetery at Austin.

It is said that Randolph Foster of the Three Hundred, whose league was above Randal Jones on the river, served in the same Company with Jones in the War of 1812. These men

² *Austin's Papers*, p. 879.

³ *Austin's Papers*, p.^o 879.

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lived neighbors on the Brazos for fifty years, Uncle Ran Foster surviving Ran Jones six years.

Captain Wyly Martin, who lived on his league below the Bend, was part of the Fort Settlement and intimate with those who lived in the Bend and died at the home of Randal Jones in April, 1842. He was one of the Three Hundred, but his first headright grant was in Brazoria, July, 1824. He was born in Georgia in 1776 and in his very early life clerked in a store and taught school. In 1805 he was on the Louisiana frontier and was one of those misguided fellows who was associated in the schemes of Aaron Burr. He was in the War of 1812 and after the war was for a time in the regular army and served under General Harrison. He served under General Jackson in the Indian Campaigns of 1814 and was at the Battle of Horse-shoe Bend where he, like young Sam Houston, was conspicuous for bravery. Shortly after he killed an antagonist in a duel and resigned his Captaincy and retired from military life and for the next ten years was a planter.

Although he came here first in 1824 he was required to return to Georgia in that year. On July 31, 1824 he wrote Austin from "Bend of the Brazos" that he had been forced by "circumstances beyond control" to be absent from the province for the last four months, and now found it necessary to return to the States at once. But he said he would return in October and wanted to live on the Brazos.

The Land Office records show that he was granted a league in Brazoria two days before he wrote this letter and that in 1830 he made application for the league adjoining Abner Kuykendall in Fort Bend, which was granted him in 1831.

When Captain Martin first came to T exas he brought a slave with him named Peter, then a man twenty-five years old who belonged to him since the negro was a boy. Peter was a very intelligent, very black, very dependable man, devoted to his master who had a great affection for Peter.

After Captain Martin's return to Texas in the autumn of 1824 he soon became part of the public affairs of the Colony and Peter looked after the plantation and cattle. After the custom of the times Peter was allowed to marry one of Henry Jones' slaves—Jones and Martin being neighbors.

Captain Martin was a delegate to the 1832 San Felipe Convention and the second one in 1833 which drew the proposed constitution and sent Austin on his ill-fated journey to Mexico. He was a member of the Revolutionary Convention of 1835 and of the General Council, which was the government of Texas from November 1835 until March, 1836. He left the

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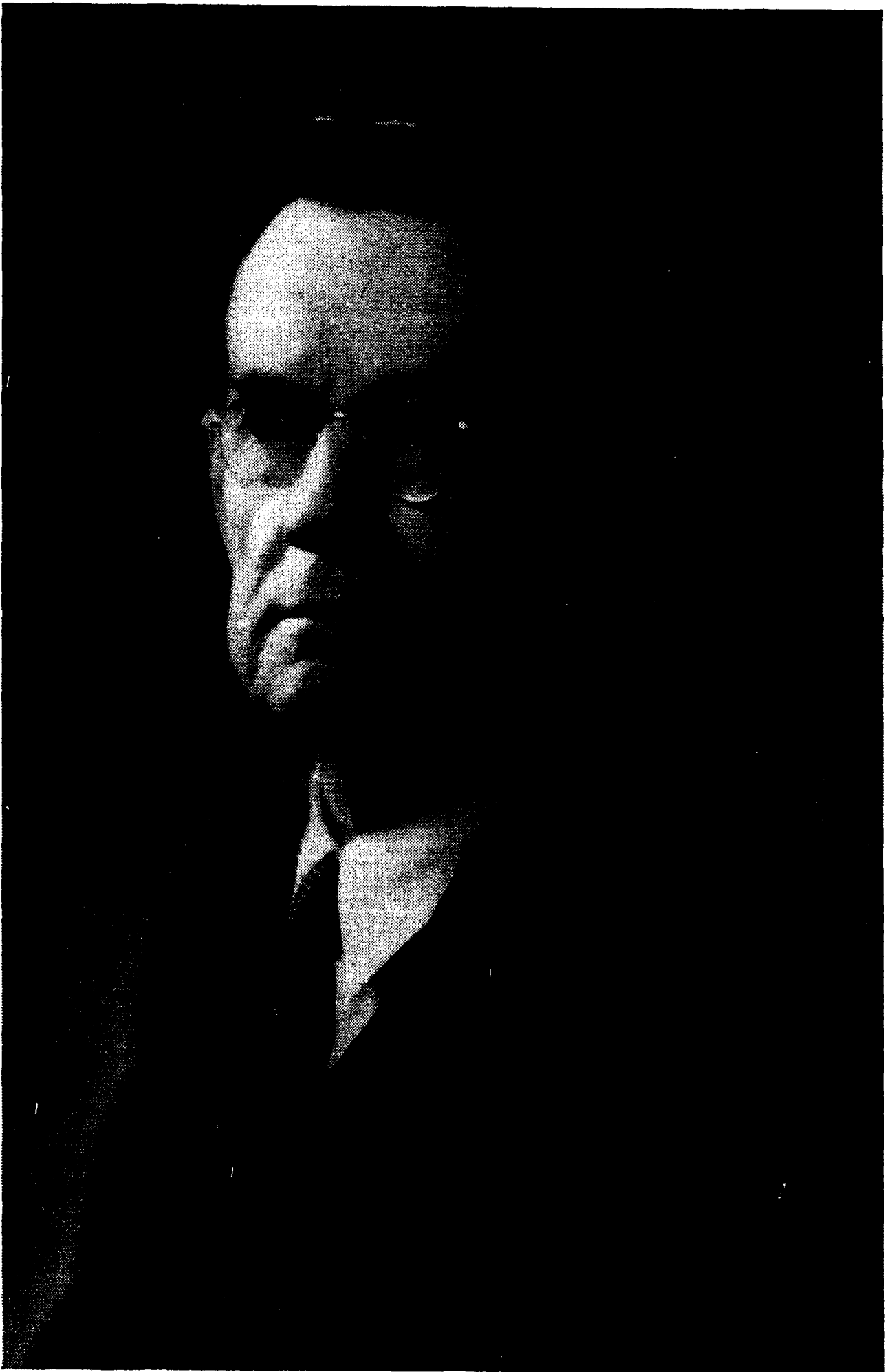
Council, however, serving only a few days and took service in the army where he remained until after the San Jacinto Campaign in April, 1836. Many of his public activities are told elsewhere in this volume for he was one of the outstanding men in the Colonies.

President Houston appointed him Chief Justice of Fort Bend County when it was created in December, 1837 and he was admitted to the Bar of the County at the first term of the District Court in 1838. He was elected to the Senate of the Republic and was in the Sixth Congress representing the Senatorial District composed of Austin, Colorado and Fort Bend. He died during this session in his sixty-seventh year and was buried below Richmond where the State of Texas erected a marker to his honored memory in 1936.

In 1839 he caused a bill to be offered in the Senate of the Republic to give Peter his freedom. Martin represented that he was now an old man, with no family, that Peter had been faithful and deserving and he desired to bestow on him his freedom with the privilege of remaining in the County, did not want to leave him like his chattel property to pass to other masters. The bill was violently opposed by Senator Everett of Jasper, by Barnet of Fort Bend and others who thought that free negroes were a menace to the social order. It was brought out in the hearing and debates that Peter had long been allowed his substantial freedom and to hold property and had amassed a modest fortune of \$16,000. This fact some of the Senators thought was dangerous. It would give the slaves false notions they said. It was also developed that Peter had rendered valuable services during the Revolution in aid of the Patriot cause, had hauled supplies to the army that was besieging Bexar for which he had never been paid. The debate in the Senate on the proposed manumission of Peter Martin was long and earnest. Good men like Senator Barnet of Fort Bend thought that there should not be such an anomaly as a free negro. It was finally passed by a majority of one vote cast by Anson Jones. Peter was still living in Richmond in 1860.

Peter and one other negro (Cary), a slave of McKinney, were the only negroes given their freedom during the days of the Republic, although many others applied for it, aided by influential white friends.

Israel Martin, who died in Richmond in 1937, was eighty-one years old and was the great-grandson of Peter Martin. Israel's father was named George, and Israel said when he was a baby his mother had risings of the breast and that he was nursed by



Judge Samuel Jackson Isaacks of El Paso, grandson of Samuel Isaacks of the Three Hundred.

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"his missus" who was Mary Barnet, wife of William Jones the oldest son of Henry Jones.

A careful inquiry made by Homer Darst among the descendants of Peter Martin, many of whom yet live in Fort Bend County, discloses that there are more than forty now living, and that there is no record that any of them has ever been accused or convicted of any crime during more than one hundred years.

A finer tribute to any man cannot be paid than this simple recital of the facts bear to the memory of Wyly Martin and Peter Martin.

One observing the map will see Samuel Isaacks and William Andrews League grants next above the Knight and White and will find little else in the records of Fort Bend County about these Colonial names. William Andrews sold his league before the Revolution and moved out on the Bernard. His son Walter seems to have changed his name to Andrus and he lived in the County for seventy years under that name. Samuel Isaacks who came with Andrews was only seventeen when he, with his father's family, crossed the Sabine in 1822. The family stopped in East Texas, but young Samuel came on with Andrews to the Brazos and made application for land. Somewhere in the wilderness he found a wife and in September, 1824 he married Nancy Allen which entitled him to a full league which had already been granted him in the preceding July. He sold his Fort Bend County land before the Revolution and was living in Jasper when he joined the Patriot Army. His first wife died and in 1831 he married Martha Richardson and they had twelve children. The oldest was a son Wesley and his son is Judge S. J. Isaacks of El Paso, formerly District Judge and who now (1939) represents that County in the 46th Legislature. After the Revolution Samuel Isaacks lived at Lynchburg where he operated a freight line to Cold Springs. In his old age he lived on a little farm on Taylors Bayou near Seabrook where he died in 1878. Here under a spreading liveoak he and Martha Richardson lie in the eternal sleep. The Isaacks were of Welch descent.

Next above the Isaacks League is the two and one-half league grant to John Foster, the largest single grant made in Fort Bend County. He was one of the Three Hundred and came with his son Randolph Foster, whose headright league was still farther up the river. He lived on this grant until his death in January, 1836 when his estate passed to his several children. After his father's death Randolph Foster's homestead was always on the John Foster grant.

The brothers Abner and Joseph Kuykendall, whose leagues

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lie on the west side below the Bend, were among the very first of the Three Hundred, and their kinspeople bearing their name and their descendants are very numerous even to this day.

These brothers with their families left Arkansas Territory for Texas in October, 1821 and at Nacogdoches they were joined by their brother Robert, who had been scouting about in East Texas for some time, and who now welcomed an opportunity to get a legal residence by joining Austin's Colonists.

The three families crossed the Brazos at the La Bahia road (near where old Washington was later located) on the 26th day of November, 1821. This was the very next day after the schooner "Lively" sailed and even now while the three Kuykendalls were crossing the Brazos the "Lively" was fighting its way down the Mississippi River in a storm.

But the Kuykendalls were not the first of the Three Hundred to cross the Brazos. Andrew Robinson was camped on the west bank, having preceded them three days. A few more families joined them and here they waited for the arrival of Austin who had left New Orleans the day the "Lively" sailed and was on his way to the Brazos via Nacogdoches. They moved their camps to a creek about four miles west of where Old Independence was later located and still later abandoned.

This was the last day of the old year and on January 1, 1822 they named the place New Years Creek.

All together they had two bushels of corn which they must save for spring planting and this left them without bread until a crop could be raised. Their diet for these first six months was buffalo, deer, turkey, sometimes a mustang. In lieu of sugar they had an abundance of honey which was found in the bee trees. They had a few cattle with them.

Amos Gates had joined them at New Years Creek and he and two of the Kuykendalls went over to the Colorado and down the river to Matagorda (Bernardo) Bay where they had heard a schooner from New Orleans was to land with a cargo. They had been without bread so long that they craved flour. Shortly after they reached the bay the schooner "Only Son," which had left New Orleans a month after the "Lively," landed a cargo and half dozen emigrants, and the Kuykendalls bought some flour for \$25 per barrel and loaded it on mule back and carried it all the way to New Years Creek. While they were on the way "home" with the flour they found a tribe of Indians pounding brier root for a flour out of which they made their bread.

During 1822 and 1823 they remained in some suspense in the lands they had chosen waiting for Austin's return, and when

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he came home in 1823 they were busy getting themselves located and intended to choose lands near where they had been camping for nearly two years.

They were often molested by the Carancahua Indians, who were quite active over on the Colorado but who rarely came to the Brazos. In the late summer of 1823 some of these Indians ventured as far north as New Years Creek and stole some horses and the settlers were up and after them. The Kuykendalls and a few others followed the marauders down the river as far as the fort (Fort Bend) where they learned that there was a camp of Carancahuas down on Big Creek fifteen miles below the Bend. At that time (autumn 1823) no one lived between the Bend and Bells Landing (Columbia), so the Kuykendalls decided to go back for reinforcements before rushing the Carancahua camp on Big Creek.

San Felipe had been located by Austin and Bastrop only a month before and three or four shanties had been built there. It and the Fort Settlement in the Bend were the only semblance of town life in the Colonies.

So after discussing the Indian question with the Mortons and the Joneses, the Kuykendalls went back to San Felipe and reported the situation to Austin who gathered about eighteen men and started down the river. When they reached Fort Bend about that number of recruits joined them, and thirty strong they were on the warpath.

This formidable force soon located the Indian camp on Big Creek whereupon Carita, the Indian Chief who was well-known to the settlers, came out to parley and acknowledged that five of his braves had stolen the horses and as evidence of his good faith he restored the stock and brought the five braves (thieves the Colonists called them) in for such punishment as Mr. Austin should see fit to inflict. After a conference between Austin and Carita it was decided that they should each have thirty lashes, fifteen to be inflicted by Austin and fifteen by Carita, after which each should have half his head shaved.

Mr. Austin, whose delicate nature did not especially fit him for inflicting lashes, deputized Abner Kuykendall to lash for him. Whereupon Chief Carita proceeded to lash but did not seem to do so with any vigor. His heart was not in the enterprise. But the braves (thieves) fell and fainted under his blows. But when Uncle Abner got to the bat and began belaboring them they were revived from their swoons and yelled

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lustily and promised never again to molest the settlers' horses or cattle.⁴

The people of Fort Bend had less molestation from Indians than those elsewhere. They seem to have been out of the range of the Carancahuas and too far south and east to be bothered by the Comanches.

As far as I can find, no white man was ever killed by Indians in what is now Fort Bend County and this ludicrous episode, the Big Creek Campaign, led by no less a person than Stephen F. Austin, Empresario, is the whole Indian history of Fort Bend County.

A year later there was a battle with the Carancahuas on Jones Creek down in Brazoria in which Randal Jones and other Fort Bend people were engaged and W. S. Spencer was killed.

During the entire Colonial period the men of Fort Bend were in the militia or ranger service and were often called to pursue and chastise Indians on the Colorado, the Lavaca and farther north and west. The Kuykendalls were in many of these campaigns.

During the years 1822-1824 the Kuykendall brothers had occasion to travel all over the country from the Brazos to the Lavaca and down to the bay and when they came to select their headright leagues they chose the two on the west margin of the Brazos below the Bend which bear their honored names even to this day.

Abner Kuykendall was murdered in 1834 by a man named Joseph Clayton who was tried, convicted and hanged in July of that year. Amon Underwood notes in his diary that he had the pleasure of seeing this done.⁵

Joseph Kuykendall lived long on his league and in considerable affluence, dying at the age of ninety.

⁴ 7 *Texas Quarterly*, p. 29, et seq.

⁵ 32 *Texas Quarterly*, p. 127. This was probably the first and only legal execution in Austin's Colonies.

CHAPTER IV

OYSTER CREEK

In addition to the Fort or Fort Bend community, there were the Jones-Kuykendall-Big Creek neighborhood below the Bend and on the west side of the river; the Bernardo community, and Oyster Creek which included the territory from below Morton's to Francis Bigham's.

Oyster Creek has an ancient history which must not be overlooked. Three hundred years before Austin and the Old Three Hundred came to Oyster Creek the first white men who ever set foot on Texas soil landed at the mouth of the creek and over eighty of them miserably perished there. It was in the year of our Lord One Thousand Five Hundred and Twenty-seven when the Spanish gold hunters were abroad ransacking the newly discovered western world and a Spanish gentleman of high degree named Panfileo de Narvaez already famed as an explorer set sail from Spain to explore the north coast of the newly found Gulf of Mexico.

Spanish "gentlemen" of those days were always of a high degree, if you may believe their own estimate of themselves. They were men of "honor." But honor to these brigands did not mean virtue or honesty or kindness or any of those humble Christian attributes; it rather meant egotism and a desire to fight to show off their bravery.¹

But any way, Panfileo with his three ships with several hundred adventuresome impecunious persons on board was in due time off the West Florida coast looking eagerly towards the

¹ Panfileo had been with Cortez in the sack of Mexico and had lost an eye in that awful massacre called the Conquest.

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land where they hoped to find docile, easily robbed tribes of Indians heavy with gold like those who had but recently been plundered down in Mexico and Peru.

“While in slumbers of midnight these sailor boys lay,” dreaming of gold fields not far away, one of those ferocious hurricanes which we have seen rush out of the Gulf even in our day, fell on the fleet and destroyed it and washed the remnant of the crew ashore on the coast of Florida.

Panfileo de Narvaez, the famed explorer, went on that long voyage from which no navigator returns, and was, of course, never afterwards heard from.

The treasurer of the expedition, who had been carefully selected to have charge of the gold they were to find, was one Cabeza de Vaca of whom much has been heard for these four hundred years. He lived to get home and write a book in which he rescued his name from oblivion and fully and fairly narrated the great things he did. He took charge of the water-soaked crew and had them build rafts out of logs they found on the Florida beach and bade them paddle along the coast towards the west hoping to reach the nearest Spanish settlement at Tampico.

Now there was in those days and when the Old Three Hundred came three hundred years later and even to this day, a long low strip of land which lies at the mouth of Oyster Creek between the Gulf and a shallow body of water called on the map, Oyster Bay. All of this you can see if you will look at the map and observe West Bay and San Luis Pass and look beyond the pass to a peninsula called on this map “Stephen F. Austin Peninsula.” It joins the mainland (or leaves it) a few miles east of the mouth of Oyster Creek. In dry weather and low tides it is a peninsula, and the map must have been made in a dry season at low tide. But when storms blow from the sea and the tides are high and break over the very low land at the west end, the peninsula becomes an island and a dreary wet one at that.

If you are further interested after having mastered the map and care to drive down the beach in peninsula weather when the tides are out, you will see a low marsh, miles of stubborn salt grass, a treeless plain, and you will see Oyster Creek meandering its way to the Gulf as it did in the days of the Spanish gold hunters. All this you will see and nothing more.

After weeks of weary paddling their water-soaked rafts on their way to Tampico, which they thought must be close by, one of these miserable crews was driven ashore on the west end of this island peninsula near the mouth of Oyster Creek on November 5, 1528, and the very next day another crew, from

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whom they had been separated for weeks, was stranded on the other end ten miles away.

These seafaring men were all unhappy and hungry and cold for it was November and a norther was blowing and they were naked.

There were eighty odd men on this marsh land, which De Vaca named the Isle of Mal Hado (bad luck). Indeed it was bad luck for them, for all but seven used it for their last resting place.

It is recorded in the journal of De Vaca that he had Lope de Oviedo climb a tree and look down the coast for Tampico. There are no trees on the Austin Peninsula now, hence it may have been a bit higher ground in those days. But it must have been a small scrub tree, perhaps a salt cedar, for it was not tall enough to enable Lope de Oviedo to see Tampico. In fact he saw nothing at all but an angry sea and a bleak coast.

In those days a tribe of terrible looking Carancahua Indians, who wore no more garments than these shipwrecked Spaniards, lived on the island and roved up and down Oyster Creek as their fancy dictated. They lived on a root which they dug out of the shallow water and on fish and oysters. To ward off the mosquitoes, which abounded much of the year, they covered their bodies with heavy grease and mud which did not add any ornament to their hideousness.

These root-eating savages soon took charge of the miserable gold hunters and put them to work digging roots and oysters. To add to the calamity, cholera broke out among them and about sixty of the Spaniards died that first winter. The Indians, who had never heard of the disease, were disposed to make way with the white men as pests, but De Vaca, who was a good talker, managed to get a respite for the survivors.

In the spring a small party, including the negro Steven, went on down the coast, crossed the Brazos and on west looking for Tampico. But Lope de Oviedo would not go. He had fever and said he would stay and die on Mal Hado. He knew of no place, he said, that would more nearly reconcile a man to dying than Mal Hado. In fact, he said, a man would delight to die rather than live at Mal Hado. De Vaca would not leave Lope and stayed with him four years.

In the summer months when the south wind blew the mosquitoes away they were fairly comfortable, but in the winter when the north wind blew them back, the naked Spaniards suffered death.

The Indians would drink a brew made of Yupon leaves and dance on the beach in the light of the moon, but Cabeza and

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Lope did not dance. They sat by and thought of the moonlit hills of home. Besides they could not stomach the Yupon brew.

During these four years these two lonesome Spaniards roamed up and down Oyster Creek for weeks and months at a time. Some fine day when you drive down the great highway that spans Oyster Creek at Sugar Land you may, with a little imagination, fancy Lope and Cabeza paddling a rude canoe along its winding banks. Or, if you prefer that your imagination be a bit more modern, you may see the covered wagons of the Three Hundred who came three hundred years after these naked Spaniards left.

Finally De Vaca persuaded Lope to go on west with him and in the late summer of 1532 they started down the beach and after a week heard of their companions who had gone on to find Tampico four years before, but had gotten no farther than what we now call Corpus Christi Bay. Lope grumbled at Cabeza all day, every day, and when they reached what long after was called Pass Cavillo, Lope would turn back. He persuaded the Indian who had rowed them across the pass to row him back, and De Vaca stood on the far shore and saw the boat disappear into Matagorda Bay and turned west to join his comrades. This is the last word we have of Lope de Oviedo. We hope he reached Oyster Creek and Mal Hado in safety and died in peace.

Somewhere in the sand dunes of Mal Hado or along the low shores of Oyster Creek the bones of these Spanish gold hunters have mouldered for these four hundred years. It is interesting to note that the mouth of Oyster Creek was both the landing place and the sepulcher of the first white men who came to Texas.

When the Three Hundred came to Oyster Creek in the 1820s they saw no trace, heard no word of the Spanish gold hunters.

They found Mal Hado an island at high tide and a peninsula at low tide, and when the tide was out, Mr. Austin got a grant to it from the Mexican government. They found muddy greasy, naked Indians digging roots and oysters. They found the gold which the Spanish hunters overlooked in the rich, reddish alluvial soil of the Oyster Creek plantations, and like Lope de Oviedo they would not go away.

One of the first to locate his league on Oyster Creek was the interesting Irishman, Francis Bigham. The maps showing his league spell the name Bingham. Old Francis was not certain about it and in his letters to Austin which are preserved among the Austin papers, sometimes he signed "Biggam" and

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others "Bigham," but never "Bingham." He came from Mississippi to Texas in 1823, but had fled from Ireland after an Irish uprising in 1798.

When he left Mississippi he brought a very formal certificate of character bearing the signatures of the Clerk of the County Court, of practicing attorneys at the Perry County Bar, the Judge of the County and last but not least, the Governor of Mississippi. His Oyster Creek league which fronted on the Brazos was titled to him in July, 1824 so he was one of the Three Hundred.

The year after he returned to Monroe, Mississippi to wind up some unfinished affairs and was detained, and fearing his long absence would lead to a charge he had abandoned the country, he wrote Austin that he had some lawsuits pending in Perry County which required him to remain until after the next term of court.

One of them he wrote, was against "the killer of one of my negroes," and the other "against a villain for altering one of my hogs." He manifests more wrath against the villain who "altered" his hog than the killer of his negro. He tells Austin how anxious he is to be back on the "Brases" (Brazos) which he declares is the "most desirable part of the Continent."

In 1837 when Moses Lapham was riding the survey lines for Fort Bend County, the first survey called to cross the river at Alsbury's League at the mouth of Cow Creek which was to be the south line of the County west of the Brazos. This would have taken Bigham and several other Oyster Creek leaguers east of the river from Brazoria and included them in Fort Bend. Old Francis objected. He said he had lived in Brazoria ever since he came to Texas, that he liked the climate and the water and his neighbors, that he never did like the Fort Bend County climate—it was hotter in the summer, colder in the winter, wetter in the spring. He talked the locators into sticking to the old Harrisburg County line which made his upper line the south line of Fort Bend east of the Brazos and left him in old Brazoria.

William Pettus, who drew the league next above Bigham never lived on Oyster Creek except long enough to qualify a residence and perfect the requirements of the law that the grantee should occupy the land. He lived in San Felipe 1824-1836, but his activities were such that he was a kind of a citizen at large.

As soon as he came to Texas he began to scheme to get more land than the paltry league and labor which the Colonization Law of 1823 allowed the settler. One of the Three Hundred,

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his first or headright league was located on the Brazos in July, 1824, and the same year he got a league in what is now Wharton County and a labor up the river in now Waller County. In 1831 he got two leagues up the Brazos in now Caldwell County. In 1836 when Dr. Peebles and Frank W. Johnson came back from Coahuila with their bogus contract for four hundred leagues, Pettus was one of those favored with a ten league grant, but these surveys were invalidated. Pettus married Elizabeth Patrick, sister of Dr. Patrick. He was familiarly known throughout the Colonies as Buck Pettus and always took a conspicuous part in public affairs; was contractor for the army under the Provisional government in 1835; carried dispatches from that government to the army at Bexar; was in Mosely Baker's Company during the San Jacinto Campaign and was with the detail left at Harrisburg to guard the baggage during the battle of San Jacinto.

These Colonists were traders, and the scarcity of money made barter all the more essential. United States currency and Mexican silver dollars were the current medium.

In 1825 William Pettus gave half his league as security for the purchase of four negroes, but with the privilege of paying the debt with forty mules, "not wild mules caught on the range, but good work mules."

William Hall, who located and lived next above Pettus on Oyster Creek, came with his wife Susan and one child in 1823 and lived on the league during the pre-war days. When the Colonial Militia was organized in 1828 he was a Captain in Kuykendall's Company. On one of their expeditions against the Indians out on the Navidad, Captain Hall read in his instructions from Austin that he was authorized to press (take) horses and guns when necessary to equip his men. He seems to have been something of a blockhead and misused his authority to take from one man in his company and give to another, for which Austin read him the riot act.

Hall's widow and children were still living on their league in 1850, and in 1860 the youngest son, John, was the only member of the family left on the land and he owned only a small tract valued at \$200.

David Fitzgerald, who was Buck Pettus' neighbor on the north, was the seafaring man from Louisiana who came in an open boat in January, 1822 and joined the forlorn crew of the schooner "Lively" at the mouth of the Brazos. He seems to have sought an asylum here and did not care to tell the world where he was. He brought with him his son John and two negroes. His daughter had married Eli Fenn in Georgia, and in 1832 Eli



Francis Marion Otis Fenn (1881)

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came to Texas in search for his father-in-law, who had not communicated with his family for more than ten years.

When Fenn arrived on the Brazos he found John on the Fitzgerald League, David having died a few weeks before. Whereupon Eli settled on the Fitzgerald League and the Fenns became leading citizens for a century.

David Fitzgerald's clearest claim to fame is that he was the grandfather of Francis Marion Otis Fenn, the Nestor of the Richmond Bar.

Thomas Barnet, whose league lay above Fitzgerald's was next to Wyly Martin, the most outstanding citizen of Fort Bend in his day. He came to Texas from Kentucky in 1823 and drifted about the Big Bend neighborhood awaiting the location of leagues which was in progress. About the same time he arrived, a young couple named Spencer, recently married, came from Tennessee and applied for land.

In February, 1824 the surveyor Horatio Chriesman made the boundaries of Thomas Barnet's league on Oyster Creek and also the limits of the Spencer League on the west side of the river above the Bend, and the titles are dated Barnet's July 10th and *Nancy* Spencer August 19, 1824.

William S. Spencer, Nancy's husband, joined Randal Jones' Company of volunteers recruited in September, 1824 for an expedition against the Carancahua Indians down in Brazoria and he and two others were killed in the bay-prairie fight.

Just why the Spencer League was titled to Nancy in August as though she were a widow, a month before her husband was killed, has been a mystery to me.

Although she may have been prematurely widowed she did not remain one long, and the following year she married Thomas Barnet of Oyster Creek.

Although Thomas and Nancy had two leagues of land they craved more and in 1830 he was granted a league in Washington County.

He was President of the San Felipe Council in 1830, a member of the Convention of 1836 and signer of the Declaration of Independence and afterwards a member of the Congress of the Republic.

After the Revolution the Barnets lived on the Nancy Spencer League above Richmond where Thomas died in 1843. At his death he left among his surviving children a little daughter Sarah then eight years old who grew to womanhood and married Foster Dyer, son of C. C. Dyer and grandson of William Stafford. Their daughter, Lottie Dyer, married John M. Moore, and their family has for more than fifty years been outstanding.

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The children of John M. Moore and Lottie Dyer, who are great-grandchildren of Nancy Spencer, still own the Spencer League which was granted their great-grandmother, one of the Three Hundred.

The Shipmans, who lived next above Thomas Barnet on Oyster Creek, were typical frontier folks. Moses, the father of the tribe to whom the league was granted in 1824, was a native of North Carolina where he married in 1798, and he and his girl-wife began wandering and raising a family as they went. Their first son, Daniel, was born in North Carolina in 1801; the second son in Tennessee in 1803; a son and a daughter in North Carolina in 1805 and 1808; a daughter, in South Carolina in 1810; a son in South Carolina in 1813; a son in Tennessee in 1816; a daughter in Missouri in 1819; the baby Lucetta in Arkansas in 1821.

Daniel, who was twenty when Lucetta was born, accompanied his father to Texas. The family stopped for the winter in the Red River country, but Daniel came on to the Brazos and reached Robinson's ferry about April, 1822. As he came down from Nacogdoches he saw the wagon tracks made by Jared E. Groce, who with his one hundred negroes and his wagon train had come down only a few months before and settled on the river near Hempstead of today.

Daniel relates the trip from Missouri through Arkansas. "When we started from Missouri we had no idea of being all winter on the way. On Christmas Day, 1821, we crossed the Arkansas, rolling our wagons over on the ice and had to cut a road through the bottom. One evening my father seemed anxious about a camping place and next morning, December 28th, I had a beautiful little sister."

Moses Shipman died on his league on Oyster Creek in 1836, but some of his family lived there for many years. A son, John M., went with the Mier men in 1842 and never returned, and another son, James, the last of the Shipmans, was living on the league in 1860.

Daniel, over fifty years afterwards, felt constrained to write a doleful book, which few people have ever read. He describes life in those days: "When we got hand steel cornmills to grind our corn we were never happier in our lives. We could travel all over the country without money Would ride up to a house that we had never seen nor the people and would be invited in and the housewife would bring the cornmill and the traveler would help grind corn so they could have bread for dinner. After dinner the traveler would tell his business,

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if he had any, and would never be charged for his lodging, but would be pressed to come again."

Daniel tells of their first year on their league on Oyster Creek:

"We had a few cattle, horses and hogs, built a comfortable house and all of us went to work with hoes and axes and cleared our land and built fences. We planted corn in holes made with sharp sticks (hand spikes). Here on Oyster Creek for nearly twenty years we continued to make our thousands of bushels of corn, big crops of cotton and lived in good old Texas style. When we first came we found hundreds of wild cattle, horses and hogs. The wild hogs were different from our domestic hogs, the male was not eatable, only the female when young. These Mexican hogs would not cross with our stock. In the timber along Oyster Creek we found all kinds of wild game from the spotted leopard² to the cottontail rabbit."

Life with the Shipmans moved on smoothly and in 1828 Daniel married Margaret Kelley, an Oyster Creek girl. "We settled on the banks of the creek, built a comfortable house, took in 20 acres of the finest land in the world on which I could raise thousands of anything I would plant. We had plenty of everything we needed."

These wild cattle he tells about were the offspring of domestic cattle the priests and soldiers had brought into East Texas one hundred years before. They had become wilder than the deer and more dangerous to the hunter than the fiercest buffalo, and all efforts to domesticate them were futile. The settlers on the Brazos sent back to Louisiana for their cattle and the natives were so wild that they would not mix with the domestics. While the wild horses were caught and tamed, not so with the cattle. It was estimated that there were millions of these wild cattle in the coast country between the Sabine and the Rio Grande. In an early Congressional report of the frontier problems (1859) it was stated that at the time of the Texas Revolution in 1835 there were at least three million wild cattle between the Nueces and the Rio Grande.³

Nearly fifty years before the Frenchman De Mezieres, who traveled from Bexar to Louisiana by way of the lower Brazos

² He tells of killing leopards, panther and bear which came out of the woods and raided their hog pens.

³ Ex. documents No. 52 36th Congress.

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and Colorado, reported that he saw innumerable herds of Castilian cattle along these rivers.⁴

The original Oyster Creek leagues located for the Three Hundred were all surveyed by Horatio Chriesman in February and March 1824, and Dr. Samuel Kennedy and Charles Johnson were chain carriers, and David Bright, whose league is on Oyster Creek, was blazer—that is, he went ahead and cut the brush for the chainmen.

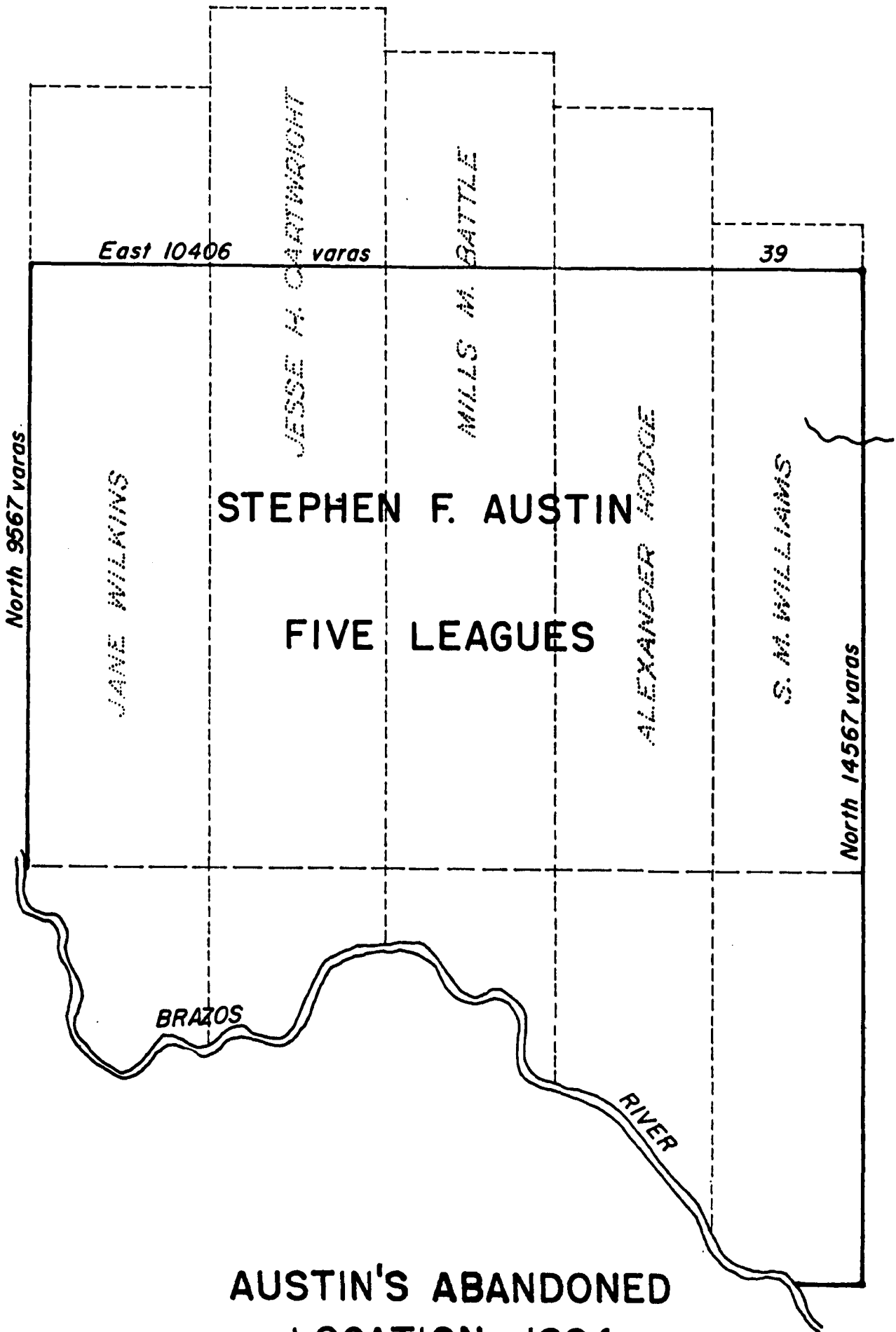
The leagues from below Bigham's to Elijah Allcorn were located in a solid tier, each fronting on the Brazos and running back across Oyster Creek. But the river and the creek grew farther apart above Barnet's, and the Shipman League which lay across Oyster Creek did not reach the river.

William Little, who first saw this country with Austin in 1821, had long before these locations were made, selected his site just where the river makes a turn to the west, and at his upper corner on the river Stephen F. Austin chose five leagues in a body which were to be his homestead site. He and Little had ridden across this beautiful landscape in August, 1821 and there was always a legend in Fort Bend that they then agreed on this site for their homesteads to be located on their return.

Three years later Austin, who had withheld these five locations in his first Colony, decided to release them for settlement and they were located for and granted to Jane Wilkins, Jesse H. Cartwright, Mills M. Battle, Alexander Hodge and S. M. Williams in 1827 and 1828. These leagues occupy the beautiful terrain from Sugar Land to the Morton League across from Richmond, traversed by the Southern Pacific Railway and the highways, and one traversing them after another hundred years will be impressed with the good taste of Austin and Little.

The citizen Elijah Roark, whose league lay next to Little's and to the Austin reservation, built his home on Oyster Creek, and he and his industrious sons had soon opened a fine plantation. In December, 1829 Elijah loaded a wagon with produce from his farm and drawn by six mules started on the long perilous journey to San Antonio two hundred miles away in search of a market for boxes of butter, cheese, lard, bacon, soap, candles, peltries, beeswax and all the useful things that industrious hands could make on Oyster Creek in those days. Leo, the eldest son, and a young man about Leo's age, were with

⁴ Bolton's *De Mez.*, Vol. 2, p. 187.



**AUSTIN'S ABANDONED
LOCATION 1824**

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him. After two weeks they had reached and crossed the Guadalupe and on the night before Christmas had camped under the December stars hoping to reach Bexar the next day. One of the three kept watch all through the night, Leo's watch beginning at 2 A. M. and while the boy paced up and down to keep awake he was suddenly surrounded by Indians who murdered Elijah and the young man, while Leo escaped into the near-by woods. He walked all night and the next day, and late Christmas night reached San Antonio where he was a stranger and unable to talk to anyone he met. But he was kindly received and when his troubles were known, persons went with him to the scene of the massacre and they buried the dead.

A month or so later some Mexican soldiers were going from San Antonio to Nacogdoches and they took Leo with them, and three months after he left Oyster Creek he was back home with the news of the disaster.

Leo Roark grew to manhood and was in the campaign at Bexar in 1835 and at the battle of San Jacinto in 1836 and lived nearly sixty years after this tragic event.

His brother Jackson, just younger, was in the Mier Expedition in 1843, and he and John Shipman, one of Moses' sons, drew white beans. Jackson came home, but Shipman died in prison in Mexico. Jackson was afterwards in the Mexican War and went to California in 1849.

Mrs. Roark, broken with care and grief, died during the Christmas season of 1836 and the Oyster Creek home was ended after twelve tragic years. The family seems to have disappeared from the County after Jackson went to California in 1849. In the 1860 census there is a Leo Roark, fifty, a railroad laborer whose place of birth is marked unknown.

One of the most aggressive of the fine citizenship of Oyster Creek in the Colonial days was Jesse H. Cartwright, who came in 1825 and got his headright league in Austin's abandoned reservation. He was one of a large colony who came from Woodville, Mississippi, among whom were the Huffs who settled on the Bernard. George Huff, who had much dealing with Austin, wrote him from Woodville in January, 1825, that Cartwright was on his way to Texas with fifty negroes.

He was the first Congressman from the Harrisburg District and sat in Congress, 1836-1837. At that time Harrisburg County extended west to the Brazos and included the Oyster Creek settlement.

About 1830 he bought land in the Isaacks League and built a home just at the head of Oyster Creek on the margin of the prairie where he was living when Santa Anna's army came

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through in 1836. Cartwright sold his holdings in Fort Bend and moved out on the Guadalupe in 1841.

In December, 1833 Dr. Pleasant W. Rose, who had recently come with his family from St. Louis to Harrisburg, decided to move out on the Brazos and farm and practice medicine. He rented land on the Jesse Cartwright League where he was to have the right to milk as many of Mr. Cartwright's cows as necessary for his family use. Dr. Rose expected, of course, to procure a land grant from the generous Mexican government as soon as the details could be arranged. But the generous government had for the time somewhat repented having invited so many North Americans into Texas and just then Austin was in prison down in Mexico.

So awaiting a time when the Land Office at San Felipe could do something for him, the good Doctor and his little family were to plant cotton and corn and milk Jesse Cartwright's cows and he would dispense medical aid up and down Oyster Creek.

On Christmas Day 1833 they started out on the long perilous journey from Harrisburg to Oyster Creek, probably fifteen miles. The wife and young children were piled in a two-wheeled ox-cart on top of their chattels. They reached the prairie three miles from Harrisburg to find it covered with water, Brays Bayou overflowing.

At sundown on the first day they had gone six miles and camped for the night on the wet prairie.

Three men on horseback accompanied them, millwrights who were on their way to the Stafford plantation to build a cotton gin for William Stafford.

While some of the party scouted about for firewood Dr. Rose went for game, for they were without bread or meat. He killed a convenient deer, which was prepared for the evening meal. The horsemen rode back to the timber three miles for fire wood, but it was so wet that they were unable to ignite it with their flints. After long effort the fire was lighted and the deer roasted.

At dark the wolves began howling and kept it up all night. The family was so frightened they could not sleep and the horses so frightened that the men folks had to stay up all night and hold them. To vary the monotonous howl of the wolves, there was a tree full of owls on the bank of Brays Bayou near by that made the night more hideous for the mother and little children.

On the second day they got as far as Stafford's Point where they got a fresh yoke of oxen and were hauled on to the Cart-

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wright plantation four miles beyond. The millwrights went down in the bottom two miles farther and began the construction of the Stafford gin.

The Brazos bottom and Oyster Creek were rather dismal in December, 1833. The great flood of June, 1833 had swept over the farms and through the log houses.⁵ People had no bread; they were saving their scanty supply of corn for planting.

Dr. Johnson Hunter, who lived up the creek five miles, sent Dr. Rose word that he would give him five bushels of corn, but warned him to plant only half of it for fear a freeze would kill the first planting and he should have seed in reserve for a second.

Dr. Rose, who had been a surgeon in the United States Army, knew little about farming, but went to work plowing and planting and was often called to attend the sick, white and black, and being without a horse walked miles up and down Oyster Creek from cabin to cabin.

His little ten-year-old daughter, Dilue, kept a child's diary of these days which in later years she expanded into a comprehensive narrative.

She tells an interesting story about Ben Fort Smith and his negroes. Major Fort Smith, who was then (1834) a planter down the river in Brazoria, had been a soldier in the war of 1812 and was two years later an officer at the battle of San Jacinto. He was the son of Obedience Smith upon whose land a large part of the City of Houston is located. He was an uncle of the Terry brothers—Frank, who commanded Terry's Rangers, and Clinton (father of Wharton Terry), who was killed at Shiloh, and David, who afterwards became famous in California.

Most all countries had at that time outlawed the slave traffic from Africa. While slavery still prevailed in the United States and was in a way tolerated in Texas under the laws of Coahuila and Texas, yet the importation of slaves from Africa was forbidden. But like the liquor laws of our own day, the anti-slave importation acts were flagrantly violated. Monroe Edwards of Chenango plantation, down in Brazoria, was a slave trader and brought in shiploads of these poor creatures whom he bought from other slave traders in Cuba who had bought them from African Chiefs along the African coast. These Chiefs made it a business to go inland and capture these

⁵ It is said that both the Brazos and Colorado Rivers overflowed and their waters met and that water from the Brazos reached Buffalo Bayou.

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wretches and sell them to slavers who would bring them to Cuba to be smuggled into the States where they were much in demand to work the Southern plantations.

Major Fort Smith, who needed more slaves on his Brazoria County cotton plantation, had gone out after some. Whether he had gone to Cuba for them or only to Edward's Point (now San Leon) on Galveston Bay, we do not know, but somehow, somewhere, he had acquired about fifty of these wretches, and was on his way home with them across the prairie when he became lost. Early one morning he and his miserable herd came up to Dr. Rose's house on Oyster Creek. Although the weather was cold and the negroes came from the tropics, they were naked, and had not eaten for three days. The Major, who was mounted, was driving them like cattle, and he was about as hungry as his negroes.

Dr. Rose summoned C. C. Dyer and some of the other neighbors and they killed and roasted some beef cattle, and the Major and his black men were fed.

The Major was lost within twenty miles of his plantation, which was down the river in Brazoria, and sent a runner to inform his folks of his plight, and his young nephew Frank Terry came posthaste to help Uncle Ben home with his naked, famished herd.⁶

When Dr. Rose moved to the Oyster Creek neighborhood in 1833, there were yet living on the land up and down the Creek many, if not all, of the original settlers. The Shipmans, Roarks, Staffords, Kuykendalls were near neighbors.

Mrs. Elijah Roark and her several children, among them twin daughters nine years old, lived on the Roark League.

The Staffords were more or less opulent, and C. C. Dyer, the son-in-law, was general manager of the Stafford properties which included plantations, cattle, and the new gin. Stafford was living with his second wife who had brought many of her slaves to Texas and was in constant fear that the Mexican authorities would make her free them, and much of her time was spent in moving them back and forth across the Sabine.

⁶ Over sixty years later when I lived at Richmond I knew some of the negroes Monroe Edwards brought in, and many of them had taken the name Edwards. One of them living near Thompson owned a plantation and had a bank account. He told me he remembered being caught by the slave-hunters in Africa while he was swimming with other children in a creek. In 1935 I saw some of his grandchildren at Thompson still bearing the Edwards name.



*W. B. Travis
By Wily Martin
Dec 1835*

An original pen sketch of this picture of W. B. Travis with the autograph of Wily Martin (spelled here Wily) was in the possession of Frank Templeton forty years ago, who said that Governor Lubbock gave it to him many years before.

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While Mrs. Stafford was moving her slaves back and forth across the border, old William did some border jumping on his own account. In June, 1835 he killed a man named Moore and without waiting to take advice from anyone, fled the County, leaving his plantation, his slaves and his family. Three years later he was still a fugitive although no one ever pursued him.

In that year a petition was filed with the Congress of the Republic signed by more than fifty of the most prominent men in Texas, including most of the Fort Bend County landowners, urging that an act be passed pardoning Stafford so he could come home. The petition recited that Moore, the deceased, was a man destitute of character, overbearing and much addicted to brawls and that he gave Mr. Stafford great provocation; that Stafford was an orderly, peaceable, honest, enterprising, patriotic, philanthropic citizen, an active defender of his country, one of the County's best citizens; that he had fled for fear of being unable to obtain justice; that he desired to return to his family and spend his declining years. Congress passed a resolution and sent it to President Lamar with a recommendation for executive clemency, which was granted, and Stafford came home.

In the spring of 1834 the Oyster Creek community was much upset when one of the citizens made a complaint that his neighbor had branded one of his calves. This led to the first lawsuit and the first homicide in that primitive neighborhood. The Alcalde of Harrisburg, John W. Moore, came with Judge David G. Burnet to hear the controversy about the calf. William B. Travis of San Felipe appeared as counsel for the accused and Robert M. Williamson was the opposing lawyer.

Court was assembled under a liveoak tree on the bank of the creek and all the neighbors far and near were present. Even Major Fort Smith from way down in Brazoria was on hand. The trial lasted all day and the Judges found the defendant guilty. But what should they do with him? Someone said he should be sent to Mexico to work in the mines. He had a young wife and five little daughters. All these things led to the granting of a new trial and just before sundown the court reversed itself and gave him a kind of suspended sentence.

Parson Woodruff, a Baptist preacher, who had come with Ben Fort Smith, seized on the occasion to preach a sermon to the assembly. Mrs. Stafford and Mrs. Rose sang "On Jordan's

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Stormy Banks I Stand." The occasion having taken on these legal, social and religious aspects was long remembered.⁷

After the day was over, the court and lawyers slept on the ground under the trees near Dr. Rose's house.

A few months later the accused and the accuser had a shooting scrape which left the young wife a widow and the five little girls fatherless.

The accuser was Sam Bell, and when the Courts of the Republic were created two years later, the widow had him indicted in the District Court of Harrisburg County, and Bell was tried for murder at Houston in 1837, the first homicide case on the docket of Harris County.

The jury acquitted Bell, holding the homicide was justifiable. The testimony showed that the deceased shot at Bell before Bell fired the fatal shot.

At that time (1837) Harrisburg County extended west to the Brazos River and included all of the eastern portion of what is now Fort Bend County.

One of the most interesting things disclosed by the Dilue Rose diary is the reliable dependence the people had on the cotton crop. Each fall it was gathered and ginned at Stafford's, and there was always a cash market for it at Harrisburg or Brazoria. Getting it to those remote places was a task which would have tried Ulysses.

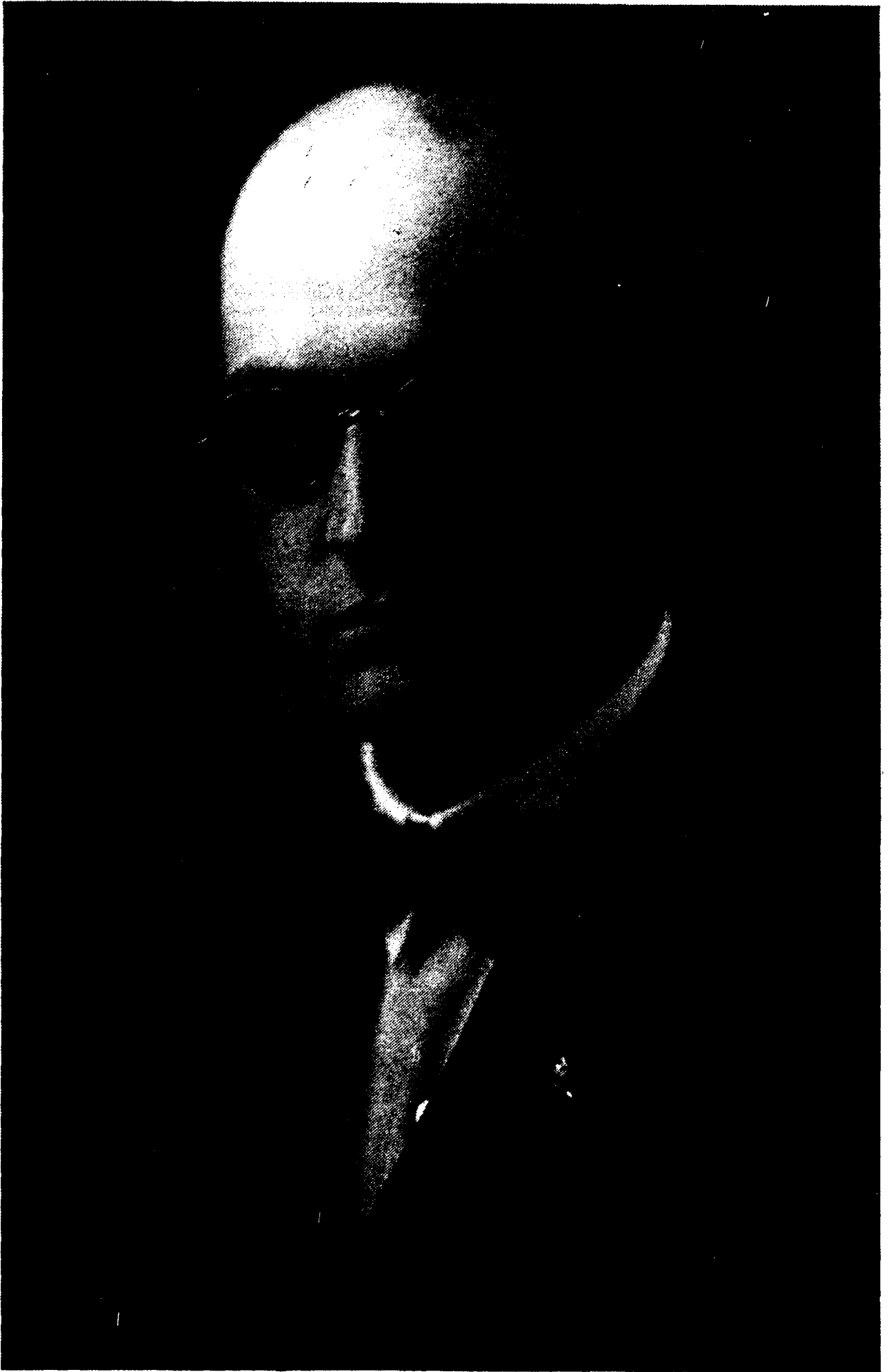
Dr. Rose said there were three classes of people on Oyster Creek: first, those who had wagons who were the upper class; those who had carts, the middle; and those who depended on sleds, the lower class. He was in the lowest class and in the fall took his cotton to Harrisburg on sleds down over the prairie by oxen. Once there it was sold for cash and he bought supplies for his family.

Dilue Rose tells how planters on both sides of the river assembled cotton at William Little's plantation where the steamboat "Yellowstone" would come for it—and how on other occasions it was taken on rafts down to Brazoria.

Hides and cheese were also cash crops.

In June, 1834 an Irish schoolmaster named Henson, "old, ugly and red headed," opened a school in an old blacksmith shop somewhere below Sugar Land of today. Among the children enrolled were William, Foster and Harvey Dyer, children

⁷ This was the first court and the first religious service ever held in Fort Bend County.



Judge Frank Williford, great-grandson of Dr. Johnson Hunter

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of C. C. Dyer; Dr. Rose's three children, two of the Roark boys, and two Staffords.

In the spring of 1836 just after news of the fall of the Alamo reached the Oyster Creek neighborhood, Dilue Rose tells that a vast herd of buffalo, three or four thousand, crossed the Brazos above Fort Bend and came into the open prairie at Stafford's Point going on towards the coast; that the land they traversed looked as if it had been plowed.⁸

Dr. Rose's family, along with all the Oyster Creek population, was in the Runaway Scrape in April, 1836, which is graphically described in Dilue's diary. The next year the good Doctor got a grant of land on Brays Bayou in what are now the southern suburbs of Houston, and his family was one of the first in Houston.

One of the most interesting persons on Oyster Creek in those days was Dr. Johnson Calhoun Hunter, whose plantation was in the Randal Jones grant near the head of the creek. Born in South Carolina and educated there, he had moved west to Ohio early in life and forsaken his profession for a mercantile venture which failed. He then took his little family to Missouri just in time to be in the New Madrid earthquake. Hearing of Texas he headed this way in a small sailboat which was wrecked off the Louisiana coast where he left his wife and children with the hired man while he came on to explore. He reached here just in time to enroll in Austin's immortal Three Hundred and his headright grant was on the bayshore at La Porte and Morgan's Point and far back into the bay prairie. Here in 1822 he built a house of cypress bark near Sylvan Beach in which they lived for two years.

But he wanted to be a planter and in 1829 he came over to Oyster Creek⁹ where he bought land from Randal Jones and opened a cotton farm. He and his sons hauled pine trees on ox-wagons from Buffalo Bayou to Oyster Creek and built the Hunter colonial mansion which for fifty years was a landmark.

Dr. Hunter's experience on Oyster Creek, and his quick progress from poverty to affluence tells a wonderful story of the possibilities of those fertile lands. He had lived seven years

⁸ Mrs. Looscan commenting on this says that it was the last great herd to cross the lower Brazos.

⁹ He was living here when the Mexican Army invaded Fort Bend in 1836 and left with the fugitives driving 600 head of cattle. They were left on the prairie near Buffalo Bayou and both the Mexican and Texan Armies used them for commissary purposes.

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on the Bay where he made a meager living. He sold his bay-shore land for 25c an acre and took thirty cows and calves in part payment, which he took to the Brazos. He raised cotton which he hauled to the river and shipped down the stream on a raft. He began buying negroes and enlarged his plantation. In 1836 he had an ostentatious home and lived in comfort, and his thirty cows and calves were now a herd of six hundred.

In 1835 a party of English emigrants landed at Anahuac and three of the families came out to Oyster Creek seeking homes. They were cultured people and had means, carried gold ample to buy all they needed but could find no place to spend the gold. Among them was a widow Adkins with a beautiful daughter.

The Stafford and Roark boys undertook to introduce her to Oyster Creek society and a ball was given in her honor. Harvey Stafford was to escort her and went on horseback, but she had never ridden a horse. Unable to get her on horseback Harvey had a negro hitch an ox to a cart and while he and his London lady sat within, the negro walked and urged the ox along.

The ballroom was lighted with candles made from hollow joints of cane stalks filled with tallow.

Unable to spend their money the English families started on to California, via Brazoria. But there both the widow Adkins and her daughter found husbands and gave up going to California.

After the Revolution, 1836, Oyster Creek was the heart of the Republic, and it and Caney in Wharton and Matagorda Counties were the most conspicuous plantation lands in Texas. The promoters of Houston in 1836 advertised the fact that it was to be located where it would induce the trade from the Brazos above and below the Bend.

When the great ball was given in Houston, celebrating the first anniversary of San Jacinto, 1837, it was considered impossible to properly hold this gala event without the ladies from Oyster Creek, who were specially invited. Their arrival was waited with much anticipation on the afternoon of April 21st and when four farm wagons arrived bringing them, it was announced up and down the town with enthusiasm, "the Oyster Creek girls are here."

CHAPTER V

THE BIG CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD

This name has been often applied to those who at various times between 1824 and the Revolution had Mexican grants on the Brazos and Big Creek below Henry Jones' league. Dr. Samuel Kennedy, who had one of these leagues, described it in a deed as "above Big Creek and below Henry Jones."

Henry Jones, whose league lay about midway between the Big Bend and Big Creek, was one of the very first of Austin's Three Hundred. Born in Virginia in 1798 he spent his early years in the wild west ventures of the age and was out in the Arkansas country with Martin Varner when they heard of Austin's proposed settlement. Down they came from the Washita to Red River where Henry found a pretty frontier girl named Nancy Styles and they were wed and joined the wagon-train for Texas where they found the Kuykendalls and Andy Robinson and Amos Gates and others in the New Years neighborhood (1822).

Here the first of their twelve children was born in 1822 and the same year the Jones family moved on down the river looking at the scenery and seeking a desirable location with all the world to choose from.

While camped just below the Bend, Randal Jones and his grotesque houseboat came floating down and they became acquainted and all voted to settle down and leave off the roving life.

Henry Jones, and his bachelor brother, John, chose their lands with great deliberation and had them located two years later. Here eleven other children were born to Henry and Nancy Styles.

The most remarkable of his children was the daughter, Mary Moore, who became the wife of Colonel William M. Ryon,

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both of whom were lifelong and worthwhile residents of the County.

In 1939 descendants of Henry Jones and Nancy Styles live on and own the Jones lands. Mrs. Mamie Davis George, daughter of J. H. P. Davis, granddaughter of Colonel and Mary Moore Ryon and great-granddaughter of Henry Jones, lives on the John Jones labor and owns much of the Henry Jones League.

Thomas R. Booth and his sister, Mrs. Mary D. Myers, live on the Henry Jones League and own the remainder of it. They are the children of F. I. Booth and Mildred Wheat Ryon, who married Booth after J. B. Wheat was murdered in 1885, and are great-grandchildren of Henry Jones.

J. H. Polley, whose headright lay between Big Creek and the Brazos, granted in 1824, lived on it only long enough to mature his title, and removed to near Columbia, later to San Felipe, and in 1847 to a ranch on Cibolo Creek about thirty miles southeast of San Antonio, where he lived the life of a great cattleman until he died in 1869. He was the son of Johnathan Polley who came to New York from Wales before the American Revolution and made his home at Whitehall on the Erie Canal where he operated a line of boats. His son Joseph Henry was born there in 1795 and at seventeen was in the War of 1812 where he performed the useful services of a teamster. In 1821 he was down on the Louisiana frontier scouting about and by accident fell in with Stephen F. Austin, who in July, 1821 was on his way to San Antonio to take up with the Spanish authorities his father's affairs, and accompanied him to Texas on his first trip. When Austin returned to Louisiana in September by way of the lower Brazos, Polley and the party returned to Louisiana with him. But he came in time to join the Three Hundred, and his headright league in Fort Bend was titled in 1824.

In 1826 he married Augusta, the daughter of James Britton (Brit) Bailey of Bailey's Prairie in Brazoria. They were first married by the Alcalde and later by a Presbyterian minister and in 1831 when Father Michael Muldoon was in the Colonies, the Polleys and twenty-nine other couples went together to San Felipe where there was a very large wedding ceremony, the greatest mass wedding celebration on record.

Polley was a successful cattleman while in Brazoria but he craved more range and located on the Cibolo where his cattle could run all the way to the Rio Grande. Near Sutherland Springs he built a stone mansion, which, after nearly a century, stands in excellent preservation. He was accredited at the time of his death (1869) as having the most extensive herds

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in Texas. Mexican bandits drove away over 16,000 of his cattle, but he still had more than 150,000 left.

His son, J. B. Polley, served with distinction during the Civil War in which he lost a foot. He was the author of that interesting and much read "Letters to Charming Nellie" written while he was in the Confederate Army. Later he wrote "The History of Hood's Texas Brigade."

Dr. Robert Peebles, whose league lay between Big Creek and the Brazos and just above Polley's, was not of the Three Hundred. He came from Louisiana in 1829. His headright league was titled in 1831 and although he was a medical man, he professed a desire to raise cattle, and applied for four more leagues and got one upon the Colorado in the same year. This thirst for land never left him as we shall see.

He did not live on his Big Creek league but a short time, removed to San Felipe to be nearer the Land Office which interested him more than therapeutics. However, he returned to Big Creek after the Revolution and was living on his league in 1839 when he sold half of it to Dr. James B. Miller.

In 1835 when the land frauds were in full flower and some of our best citizens were journeying down to Coahuila and conniving with Mexican officials of easy virtue to steal land in Texas, our worthy Doctor from Big Creek was there. He and Frank Johnson and Samuel M. Williams negotiated one of the clumsiest land steals in all history.

Under the guise of raising a company of militia to protect the Texas frontier from the incursions of wild Indians, these three worthies contracted with the sovereign state to enlist and equip a regiment of soldiers who would be paid for their services in land, and four hundred leagues of Texas land was granted them for this purpose. Armed with this contract they hastened home arriving in July (1835) at a time when things were at fever heat in Texas and the Revolution was eminent. They at once and on the same day (or night probably) issued certificates for the four hundred leagues to forty-one persons. To thirty-nine persons they gave ten leagues each, to one three and another seven.

Their voluntary army for the protection of the frontier was now organized. The forty-one grantees were all well-known citizens who lived at various places in the Colonies, and it developed afterwards that in most instances they never consulted any of these persons before granting them the land. Ten leagues each were issued to the three Borden brothers, and later John P. Borden, who was the first Commissioner of the General Land Office, testified before a Legislative Committee that he never

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knew of these transactions until long after they happened, and never claimed the land.

An effort was made a few weeks later to locate many of these ten league grants in deep East Texas, but they were outlawed by the Republic of Texas.

Just how they thought they could get away with this daylight robbery is a mystery to this day. The "army" of forty-one men who were "enlisted" to fight the Indians and paid in advance ten leagues each for their services was a joke. They were the "fence" to which the Empresarios Johnson, Williams and Dr. Peebles passed the leagues.

Dr. Peebles was a likeable young fellow and had the confidence of Austin, and when the latter left San Felipe for Gonzales to take command of the army the following October he left Peebles in charge of his office and archives and land records there. Austin did not then know of the four hundred leagues transaction, as he was in Mexico when it occurred and it is doubtful if he ever learned of it, for he died before the details were uncovered in 1837.

The Revolutionary Tribunal—the General Council—knowing of these and other land frauds, closed the Land Office in November and forbade the location of lands until further orders.

But Dr. Peebles, who had long been official commissioner to issue titles for Austin's and Williams' colony, kept open house in Austin's office and kept on issuing titles—the habit was too strong to overcome.

There is in the General Land Office at Austin a little worn volume of titles issued by Dr. Peebles as Commissioner and on the inside cover a notation in pencil probably written by John P. Borden, one hundred years ago, that they were all issued after the order that the Land Office be closed.

Like the boy who stood on the burning deck, Dr. Peebles stood in the San Felipe Land Office until all but him had fled, until Santa Anna had crossed the Guadalupe on his way to the Brazos, and until Houston had taken to the woods up at Groce's. Four days before Santa Anna reached San Felipe, Dr. Peebles managed to engage a wagon and team and loaded these precious land records, all of them, and made way with them to Nacogdoches, where he placed them in safe-keeping until after the Revolution. He did not destroy or suppress any of them, but kept the records of his own shady transactions.

He reported these facts to Austin and in October, 1836 brought the records to Columbia where he delivered them to Austin at Perry's plantation (Peach Point), and later they

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were delivered to Borden, the Land Commissioner. They are now in the Land Office intact and their value and historic interest are beyond measure. We may forget and forgive all of Dr. Peebles' land transactions out of gratitude for his having preserved these records.

After the Doctor had hidden the records at Nacogdoches, he hastened back to enlist in Houston's army and was the physician for Captain J. B. Chance's Company and was detailed to attend the sick at Harrisburg while the battle at San Jacinto was fought.

He lived an upright life for nearly sixty years after these hectic days, and died at Hempstead in 1893.

Williams left Texas until after the Revolution, and Frank Johnson ran away after his fiasco in the Matamoros campaign, but our young Doctor from Big Creek stayed, preserved the very records that show his land transactions and did his bit at San Jacinto.

Next above Dr. Peebles' league was the 1824 headright of John Rabb who, like Peebles and Polley, did not live long on his league. Like them and many others, he had land grants elsewhere.

The Rabbs—there was quite a tribe of them—settled on the Colorado in Fayette County where they rested from a drive from Red River in December, 1823. Forty years later Grandmother Rabb wrote her recollections for her children and grandchildren and related some interesting incidents of those far away days. She says:

“Yor pa got John Ingram to help him and bilt a hous in a weeak. The hous was made of logs tha made a chimney of logs and the dore shetter was made of slabs split out of peases of timber and we fasened the dore bored a hole in one of the logs in cide close to the shetter and had a pin or peg and then the Indians could not get in at nites. Andrew Rabb gave me a spinning wheel and I got to work to make clothing for the famely.”

She tells that the Indians, though unable to open the door, nevertheless stole their horses. “Then yore pa went off to hunt a place where the Indians would not be so bad for us to move to over on the Brases about 15 miles below Richmond where he got a legue of land, his hedright. He was gone ten days and I was left alone with my little babe. I could hear the Indians walking about the hous at night. I was lonely and after rising in the morning and making the meals for the day I kept my spinning wheel going all day and a good part of the night

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for while it was rowering it would keep me from hearing the Indians walking around."

She tells with homely detail of their removal from the Colorado to the "Brases" to get away from the Indians. They did not have a wagon, so:—"We put all our ramant (raiment) and things on an old horse. The most delicate part of the pack was put on first, then our pervishions, then our little kittle which was hardly large enough to cook a boild dinner for three persons, then the skillet and led (lid) was put on top then my spinning wheel was put on top. . . . Then we had ouer few cattle and ouer sow and pigs."

She tells how the family mounted on horses whose ages and names she gives with faithful detail and the procession started out for the "Brases." The Indians did not molest them but she was nervous and as they rode away she was sure "the Indians in the wood was looking at us start that day."

The procession moved on and in the evening "Pa killed a big brant and it maid our breckfasç next morning." As they went along "peasibly" one of the cattle stepped on one of the pigs and crippled the little fellow and they could not leave him, so, "your pa tyd it (the pig) on top of the pack on (the loaded horse) close under the wheel wrim. But the pig soon got tired and began to squeel and the horse got scared, run off and made a compleet stampede and kept piching and kicking untell he got everything off and the rezult was the pigs brains was smashed out and the dinnor pot broke all in bits."

They stopped for a few days at Indian Hill, the home of Grandmother Rabb's parents where "we had plenty of corn-bread and bair meet, venison and honey and milk and butter."

But they must go on to the "Brases" where the Indians were not so bad and where John Rabb had located his headright fifteen miles below the Bend, and on they went.

They were attacked with a terrible scourge of fleas and "muscatoes" which tormented them, so they would travel at night to better escape them.

Their next mishap was due to the restlessness of some chickens tied to the upper rim of the spinning wheel on top of the pack on the horse. But they allayed this without serious trouble and went on until it became evident that the "purps" could not follow farther through the high grass. There were three of these "purps" and it was decided to put the two little fellows in the ends of some leather leggins and tie them across the back of one of the horses. This was done but the horse resented being made to carry dogs and "run off and commenst to pich and jump untell the legons brook apart and one purp fell on

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one side and the other on the other." She then tells that the horse ran away and night came on and they could not find him, so they went into camp fearing he was lost. Toward dawn the little rooster tied to the spinning wheel "crabbled up on the wheel and gave a big crow and then we found the horse all rite eating grass nearby."

After these and many other tribulations the John Rabbs reached the "Brases" up in what is now Austin County, forty or more miles above Big Creek, and stayed a year before undertaking the remainder of the perilous journey to their headright. It was while camped here in June, 1824 that the Rev. Henry Stephenson, a Methodist Missionary, stealthily came to Rabb's camp and preached what has been said to be the first Protestant sermon ever delivered in Texas.¹ Here John Rabb was converted for he knew that the miraculous escape of his little family was the answer to prayer, and he became the first and greatest of the Lay Brethren of the Methodist Church in Texas in his day and died in the faith many years later.

After a year the Rabbs decided to make another attempt to reach "ouer plais, ouer leag of land, ouer headright that we got for coming to Textas, poor things how bad that was for us."

They had now improved their fortunes somewhat. "Pa sold his corn very well and bought a fine Emerican mair." They had also rigged up an ox-team and cart and when they started down the river to their headright ("leag") they were somewhat better equipped for travel.

"On the 10th of April I found some wripe dew barys and ouer oxen got so warm hot they run to a shaid and caught Pa betwixt the body of the cart and the tree. I took my babe under my arm and ran to Pa. John Ingram and me got him out and Pa took a little old pocket knife and bled his self and we went on to our plais."

Now after nearly two years the John Rabbs had gotten from Indian Hill in Fayette to Big Creek in Fort Bend and were settled down on their own "leag."

They lived out on the prairie and raised corn crops in the bottom three miles away. Here Malissa, the second child, was born in 1827. The Indians did not bother them here, but they had no near neighbors. J. H. Polley had moved to Columbia,

¹ I say stealthily because the good brother had to dodge the Indians, the Mexicans and Mr. Austin who had promised the Mexican authorities that all his Colonists would be Catholics. (*Phelan's History of Methodism*, p. 35.)

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and Dr. Peebles had not arrived, and when he did come, he was up at San Felipe meddling with land matters.

Dr. Samuel Kennedy, the next leaguer above the Rabbs, was never at home. He spent most of his time at San Felipe where he had access to a bar. Heavy drink and the melancholy of some past trouble hurried him to his grave.²

While the Rabbs were not molested by the Indians in this secluded place, they were afflicted with loneliness and longed for their kinspeople over on the Colorado. Grandmother Rabb tells an incident of her lonely life. "Now my little grandchildren, I am going to tell you a funny tale about some little pigs. Yore greatgranpa gave yore granpa a sow and she had nine little pigs. At night they slept under the hous and when I got tyard of spinning there was under the bottom log of the hous close to the corner of the chimney a little plais the pigs could crall threw so when I put the wheel away and got ready to go to bed I would shel some corn over the floor and open that little plais and by the time I got to bed all of them little pigs would be in the hous cracking corn until I would be asleep. In the morning I would get up and sweep out the hous and stop the pigs out and go to my wheel again."

She ends the story of their life on Big Creek: "We did not stay here long. I think in the fall of 1827 yore Pa took a nochien as we had no nabers neerer than 8 miles so in Sept we left our land and garden potatoes and all and went to egipt."

She relates that there were Rabbs and other neighbors at Egypt on the Colorado, but that the Indians molested them again, but "Pa sed that prairs kept them off."

John Rabb was a devout man and is reckoned as one of the founders of Methodism in Texas. He later returned to Fayette County and was President of the Board of Trustees of Rutgersville College.

In 1840 Bishop Waugh of Baltimore toured Texas and there was held at Rutgersville (Fayette County) the first conference of Methodist preachers ever assembled in Texas. It was the night before Christmas and the sermons had been delivered with much fervor. A collection was being taken—"A brother who had sat silently, though with deep emotion, observing every-

² Forty years ago I had occasion to examine the papers in Probate of the Estate of Dr. Kennedy at Brenham. The tavern keeper had filed an account for liquors sold the Doctor which disclosed he bought an average of a pint a day and often more during the last year of his life.

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thing that transpired, modestly arose and addressed himself as follows: 'Silver and gold have I none yet the Lord has greatly blessed me. I want to do something for his cause. Such as I have I will give unto you. I will give you a quarter of a league of my land on the Brazos.'"³ Evidencing this bounty he made a deed to one-quarter of the John Rabb League on Big Creek and this deed is now in the chain of title and an oil field has been discovered on the land, and it is worth millions.

Brother Rabb was ever a liberal entertainer at Camp Meetings, and when he died in 1861 it was said that he had pitched his tent at thirty-six annual Camp Meetings.

In 1860 he was operating a mill and it interfered with his religious duties and he advertised it for sale saying in the ad: "I cant get time to pray enough—too far from church. I want to quit such a pushing business."⁴

The inference from this odd advertisement has always been that Brother Rabb feared and shunned the temptations ever present with the miller to take excessive tolls, hence he wanted to get away from this environment and spend his closing years in prayer. He doubted the chances for a miller to enter the kingdom.

"Dr." Launcelot Smither was a free lance and it would be difficult to place him definitely in any one settlement. When he arrived at Henry Jones' in 1828 he found the welcome which the Three Hundred so generously extended to all comers, and made an application for his quarter league grant to be located "behind Henry Jones and below John Jones tract." He meant to say that the land he coveted would be south of Henry Jones' league—away from the river on which it fronted or faced—hence "behind."

The bachelor John Jones had located his quarter league "behind" his brother Henry's league in 1827 and L. Smither wanted to be neighbor to the Joneses.

He came from Alabama, was then (1828) only twenty-seven years old, and gave his vocation as "farmer." Since all the grants made under the colonization laws were for farming or stock raising, the applicants seem to have uniformly given these as their vocations. How and when Launcelot Smither became a Doctor must always remain in the unknown, and that he never

³ *Phelan's History of Methodism*, p. 151.

⁴ *Phelan's History of Methodism*, p. 478.

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farmed is well known; that he was not an educated man may be seen from reading his letters.

He floated around the Colonies for the next ten years living much of the time in San Antonio where he was "Dr. Smither."

When General Cos sent Captain Castañeda down to Gonzales with a company of soldiers to get the cannon in October, 1835, Dr. Launcelot rode with them. When they reached the Guadalupe at sunrise on October 2nd they faced the irate Colonists who had crossed the river and lined up in battle array. The patriots heard hoof beats through the fog, and before they saw the rider, heard the clear voice of Dr. Smither call to them, "don't shoot."

He arranged a parley between Captain Castañeda and Colonel Wallace.

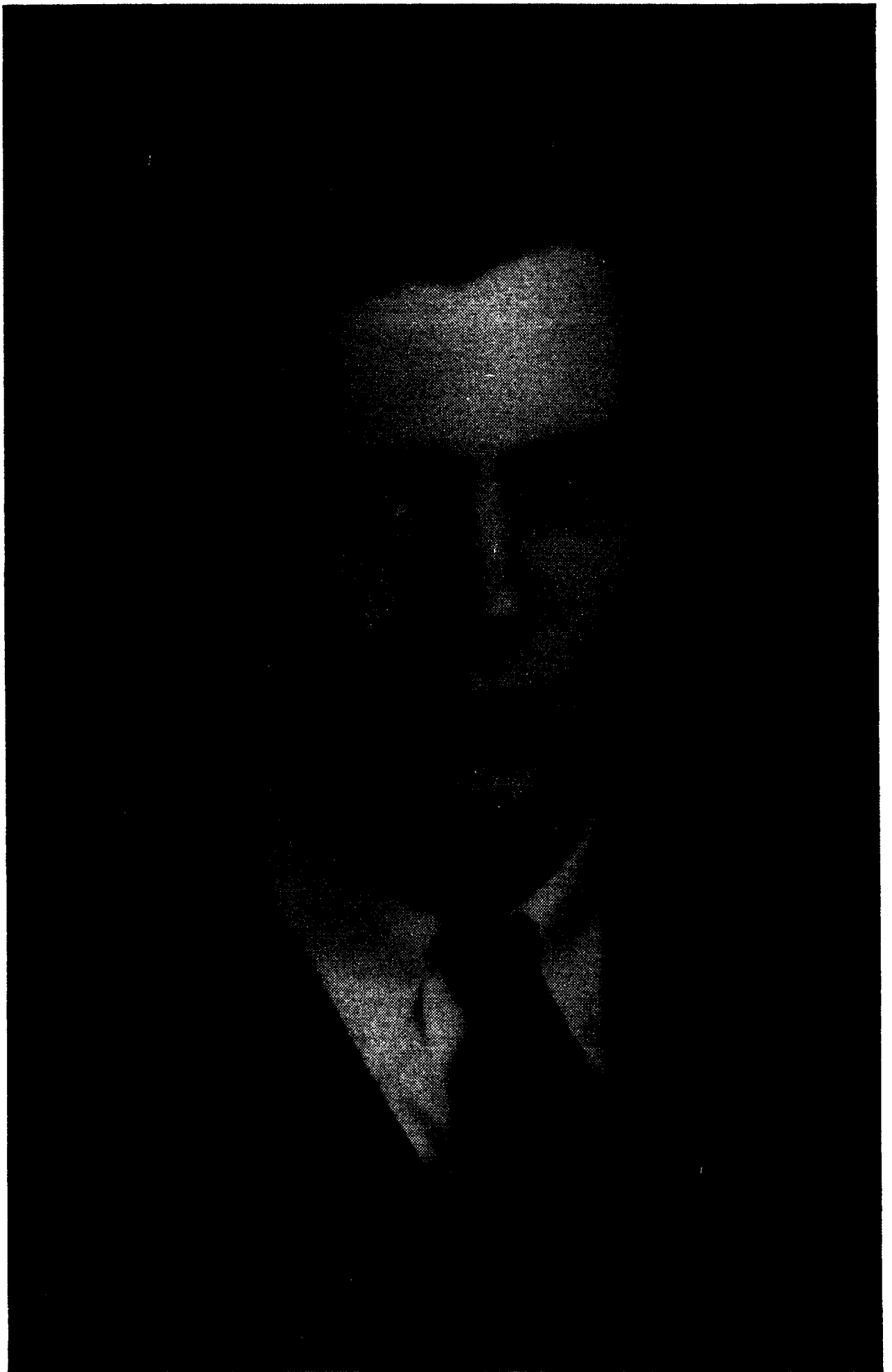
After the fiasco called the battle of Gonzales the Doctor managed to disengage himself from the Mexicans and "located" for the time being in Gonzales, where he aided the patriot cause with great fervor.

When Austin came to Gonzales a week later and took command of the army and marched it towards Bexar, he left Dr. Smither there on some kind of a special mission and he was there a month later helping to hurry the volunteers who were coming all the way from New Orleans on their way to join in the siege of Bexar.

One of these volunteer companies which came from Ayish Bayou near San Augustine, spent a day and night in Gonzales and came in contact with the Doctor, as we learn from a letter he wrote Austin as soon as he could recover from his shock. He told General Austin: "They broke every house in town, robbed all they could lay their hands on and such insults were never offered wimmin before. There is no tribe of savages or Mexicans that would be guilty of such conduct. After going to bed they entered my house bursting every door and window, dragged me in the streets and beat my head to a pulp and would have killed me in the most torturing manner for no cause on earth except they found me in the house, etc."

After finishing this letter he laid it aside for a few hours and added the following postscript before dispatching it: "The tale I wrote is true. I hardly know my head from my heels today."

After the Revolution he returned to Fort Bend and was one of the signers of the petition for the creation of the County in 1837, and a year later applied to and received from the Fort Bend County Land Board a certificate for one-twelfth of a league of land for his military services which seem to have been chiefly the beating he got at Gonzales.



Palmer Hutcheson, Jr., great-great-grandson of Horatio Chriesman

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He drifted back to Bexar and when the marauding Mexican forces of General Woll came there in 1842 the Doctor and two companions were down at Sutherland Springs on the Cibolo where they had gone for their health. When the apostate Seguin, who was in league with Woll, left Bexar to join his countrymen on the Rio Grande, he, with a squad of his followers, came upon Dr. Smithers and his friends at Sutherland Springs and foully murdered them.

Mrs. Maverick says in her diary that the chief purpose Seguin had in killing them was to get Smithers' fine horse which was hitched to the Seguin carriage and pulled the family on to the Rio Grande.

Horatio Chriesman, whose league lay "above Big Creek and below Henry Jones," was one of the Three Hundred and came with the Kinchloes to Matagorda in 1823. Born in Virginia in 1792 he drifted west with the human tide that flowed incessantly toward the Spanish lands west and south, and in 1818 was in Missouri, which was then Spanish. Then and there he married Miss Mary Kinchloe.

When Moses Austin returned from his Texas trip in 1821 the Kinchloes and Chriesmans were all for going at once to Texas. Kinchloe went ahead in the autumn of 1821 and made an effort to reach New Orleans in time to join Austin's first Colonists. He got to New Orleans after the "Lively" had sailed and chartered the schooner "Only Son" and sent it on with supplies and men who were to plant a corn crop on the Colorado.

In February, 1822 Chriesman and wife and others of the Kinchloe family left St. Louis on a flatboat bound for Texas. When they got to New Madrid on the Mississippi the boat was tied up. Everyone on board was ill from the exposure and hardship of the winter voyage. Mrs. Chriesman and other members of the emigrant party died there and the melancholy remnant moved on and reached Texas after Austin had gone on his first trip to Mexico.

Upon his return with permission to locate three hundred league grants Austin employed Chriesman, whom he had known in Missouri, to head his corps of surveyors, and they made a formal contract which has been preserved in the *Austin Papers*. By its terms Horatio was to make all surveys "using the Mexican *vara* as the standard and running by the true meridian." At the corner of each survey he must mark bearing trees with the initials of the owner cut on the trees, or if in the prairie, a mound of earth three feet high. For these services he was to be paid \$5 per mile.

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The next year, 1825, he married Miss Augusta Hope. While his headright league was in Fort Bend, he lived on it but a short time. He had other leagues and in 1832 was living on one of them above San Felipe. In that year he was elected Alcalde and he remained conspicuous in public affairs for many years.

When Chriesman reached Texas in 1823 he found the Colonists marking time waiting Austin's return and he joined a farmer in an effort to raise a corn crop and they had a fierce struggle with drouth and bears. His wardrobe had become so depleted that he had to wear his buckskin coat all summer in default of a shirt.

On one occasion he was traveling across the country and stopped for the night with a family who had neither bread nor meat nor any other eatable article. At dawn Horatio arose, donned his buckskin coat and his rifle and brought in a deer for breakfast.

After the Revolution he lived on one of his upper Brazos leagues and looked after his lands. A friend came to him and wanted to borrow a league for use in a trade he was about to make and Captain Chriesman, as he was now called, generously loaned it to him and it is said that it was never returned.

His home in his latter days was in Burleson County where he died in his eighty-seventh year in 1878. His daughter was the wife of Thomas C. Thompson and his great-granddaughter, Eleanor Thompson, is the wife of Palmer Hutcheson of Houston and their sons are the great-great-grandsons of Horatio Chriesman. The family owns a plantation in Fort Bend on Oyster Creek in the David Bright League.

On April 21, 1938 when a celebration was being held at the monument on the San Jacinto Battlefield the U. S. Cruiser "Wichita" passed up the bayou in sight of the assembled multitude. It was commanded by Admiral Thad Thompson, great-grandson of the old Alcalde Horatio Chriesman.

The Three Hundred stuck to the river and with the exception of a few surveys on Oyster Creek all the 1824 grants in Fort Bend County are on the Brazos or the Bernard.

At various dates between 1827 and 1832 a group of surveys were located up Big Creek. The Edward Robertson League lay on the Brazos at the very mouth of the creek and Barrett and Harris' just above it. Then came Pharr, Milburn, Philo Fairchild, Sayre, Elizabeth Lipincott and William T. Austin and above them the two Wicksons, Michael Young and A. J. James' little survey way out in the prairie.



Hallie Kelley Peareson
Great-granddaughter of Colonel Peareson and
great-great-granddaughter of David H. Milburn

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These people, all of whom became actual settlers, came after John Rabb in despair of neighbors had gone back to the Colorado to face the Indians.

David H. Milburn, one of the Three Hundred, had come into the country in 1823 and he and two other single men had gotten a grant in Austin's colony in 1824. In 1828 he married Betsy, the widow of L. G. (Gus) Pharr, who was a daughter of Brit Bailey of Brazoria and got an additional grant of one-fourth league on Big Creek. The wife and daughters of Philip Peareson of Richmond are descendants of David Milburn and Betsy Bailey. Many interesting legends have come down to us about Brit Bailey, among them that he had beautiful daughters.

Samuel Pharr, a single man, twenty-eight, came from Louisiana in 1823, but he did not get his land until 1831 when he was granted one-fourth league on Big Creek.

Philo Fairchild came from New York in 1825 and tried to get land in the Big Bend adjoining Morton's labor, but was unable to do so as these locations were in demand. His application filed March, 1825 recited he was single and twenty-eight years old. Five years later he filed again and this time said he was from Illinois, was thirty-four and had a wife and child, that he arrived in Texas in 1826 and wanted a league below and adjoining Elizabeth Lipincott on Big Creek and it was granted him.

The meager information we have of Elizabeth Lipincott is the ambiguous recital in Austin's archives that she was the widow of Charles Markle, that she came to the country early in 1826 with her father and mother and they both died that year. She was granted her league on Big Creek, May, 1827.

William T. Austin, whose league lay across Big Creek from Elizabeth Lipincott, received his grant in 1831. He was a brother of John Austin, who was well known during the Colonial days. They were very remote kin of Stephen. He lived rather figuratively on his Big Creek league. In 1873 he wrote his biography which is short but dramatic:

"I emigrated to Texas with my wife and one child in October, 1830 and located in Brazoria. Was engaged in the mercantile business until after the great overflow of 1833. My goods were damaged by water and remnant was taken to Washington and disposed of. Directly after the overflow the cholera made its appearance and scourged the whole lower Brazos country. My brother John Austin and all his family except his wife and

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all my family but one daughter who is now living (1873)⁵ were taken off by this scourge. I buried both families and our slaves, seventeen in all, in one week. My brother John had been in a serious controversy with the Whartons. John was a friend of Stephen F. Austin and they were his enemies. . . . Austin was in Mexico in 1833 and while he was there in prison the Whartons opened a crusade against him making public derogatory statements about him. Brother John defended Austin against these assaults and the excitement raged throughout the Colony. Parties were formed called Wharton and Austin parties. Austin was in a dungeon in Mexico and knew nothing of all this. After my brother John died of cholera, the animosities of the Whartons were directed to me in such a way as to lead to a meeting between me and John A. Wharton with pistols at ten steps which resulted favorably to myself.⁶ During all these excitements not one of the relatives of Austin united in his vindication or showed any sympathy for me or my brother."

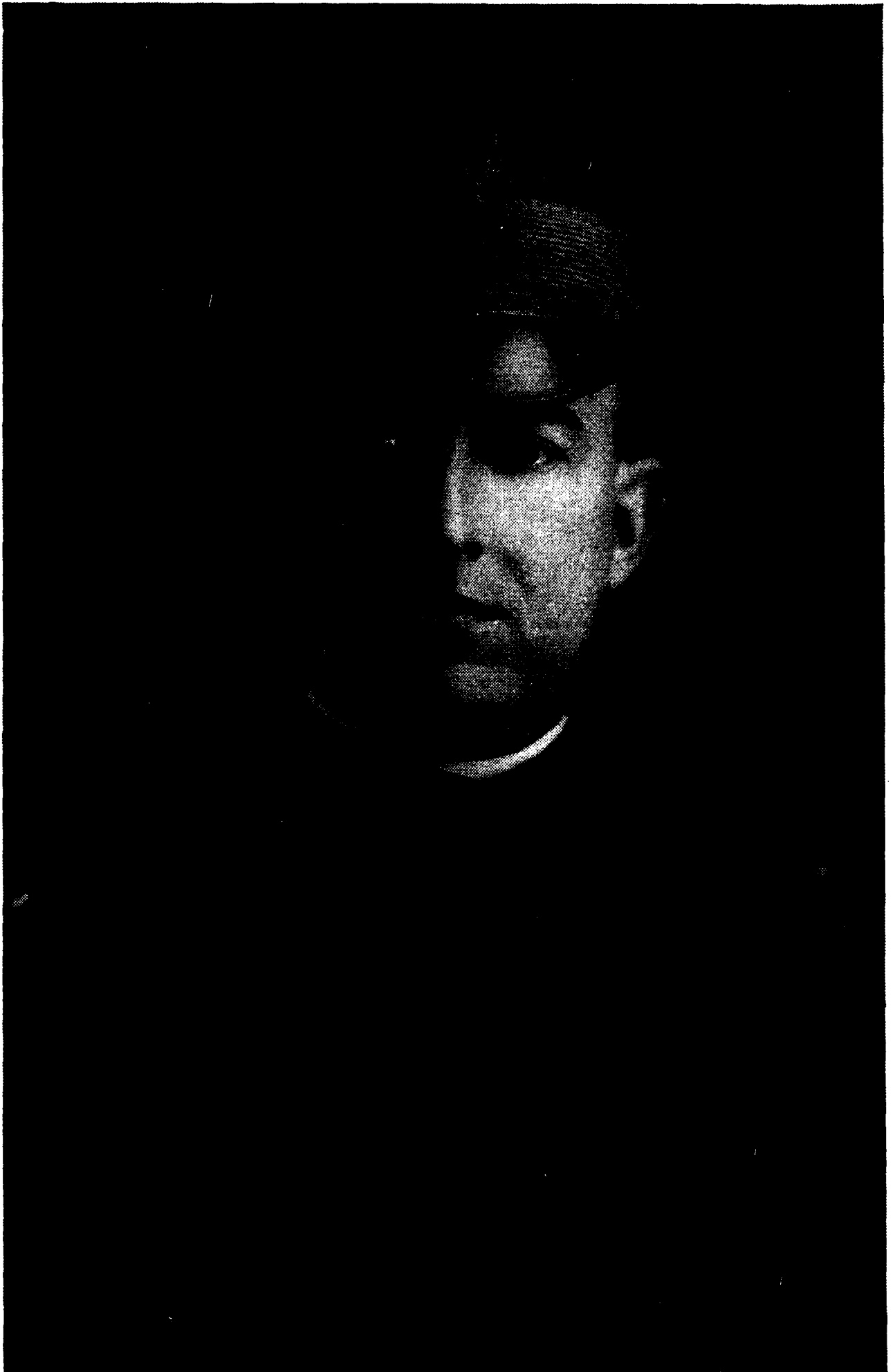
In a modest way the old man tells of his participation in the Revolution 1835-1836 in a few words.

Although he continued to live in Brazoria he had a place on his league at Big Creek which was called Austin's Point. After the Revolution he married a Bertrand and left a large family of children and his descendants have been and are worthy people for all these hundred years.

Michael Young, whose league lay just above Austin's on Big Creek, was born in Georgia in 1802 and came to Texas in 1829. He was in the battle of Anahuac in 1832. He was still living on his league in 1838 and was a member of the first jury assembled at Richmond in January, 1838. Some time later he sought the higher climate of the hills above Bastrop. In June, 1836 he joined Jesse Billingsly's Bastrop Company for service in the threatened invasion by Mexico. In 1842 he was living in Bastrop, and the Indians who were always fierce on the Bastrop frontier came to Young's plantation and encountered Young's little son who was driving up the calves. One of the bucks threw a lasso and caught the boy. The lad slipped through the loop and gave the alarm and Michael mustered fifteen of his neighbors and they were at once off after the Indians. They

⁵ This daughter was Caroline, who married Hudson Gaston and after his death, Jones, LL.D., of which mention is made in later pages.

⁶ John A. Wharton was wounded in this encounter but not seriously. He and Austin became friends and were thrown much together during the Revolution 1835-1836.



Dr. Edward P. Newton, grandson of Wm. T. Austin

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soon encountered five Indians who gave them a four hour fight in which all the Indians were killed and Michael Young had an arrow in his breast bone.⁷

He located his bounty land for military service in Bell County and moved there in his old age where he was still living in 1874.

⁷ *Wilbarger's Indian Wars*, p. 86.

CHAPTER VI

SETTLEMENTS ON THE BERNARD

Only two permanent locations were made by the Three Hundred on the Bernard in Fort Bend County—James Beard, the saddle maker, cook on the schooner “Lively,” and James Scott. The other Bernard locations from Gabriel Cole’s down to James Beard where the south line of the County leaves the Bernard for the Brazos came later.

At the time of the Revolution there was a solid tier of Mexican grants on both sides of the Bernard.

Gabriel Cole, whose survey lies in the Big Bend of the Bernard at the most north and westerly corner of the county, came from Maine in 1832 and got his grant that year. In 1835 he joined the patriot army at Gonzales and was at the siege of Bexar in December. In the following March when Santa Anna’s army was on its way to the Brazos Gabriel took his family and fled with the runaways. Later we shall see that his humble homestead on the Bernard was the camp site for the Mexican army on its way to the Jesse Thompson ferry on the Brazos in April. After the Revolution he continued to live on his land until his death in 1846.¹

Below Gabe Cole’s, Andrew Northington from Kentucky came with his family and his slaves and availed himself of the bounty of the generous Mexican nation to the extent of one league of land, which was granted him in 1831, and he forthwith built his house and opened a plantation and lived there and died there in 1854. He was born in North Carolina in 1792 and came by Kentucky on his way to Texas. In Kentucky he

¹ Cole probably lived on the Charles Baird Survey at this time. (See Act of Congress, 1839, Vol. 3, p. 40.)

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married a McKenzie, a relative of the McCormicks, who were his neighbors in Texas.

An interesting glimpse of this sturdy old Northington is found in the reminiscences of his first wife's kinsman, Judge A. P. McCormick, who was long a resident of the lower Bernard. He was born on the lower McCormick League in Brazoria and lived there until he became United States District Judge many years later. His father's headright was located next below Northington's on the Bernard, but Joseph Manson McCormick made his home with his Uncle David down the river and inherited his uncle's lands, and there Judge McCormick was born in a little log cabin Uncle David had built in a clearing.

In 1843 little Andrew McCormick had been sent to school with the pioneer teacher, Thos. J. Pilgrim, who in that year removed from Columbia on the Brazos to Gonzales and a few months later Pilgrim's wife having died he sent Andrew home with Chas. D. Sayre of Big Creek who was returning from San Antonio. The trip on horseback all the way from the Guadalupe to the Bernard was an odyssey to the little fellow and the memory of it was green sixty years later when he wrote of it in his memoirs.

Sayre and the boy found it necessary to ride by night to avoid terrible flies which annoyed them and their horses all day, and when the little boy would become too sleepy to stick on his horse they would camp. After they left Alley's house on the Colorado (Alleyton), there was no other settlement until they came to the East Bernard. They rode in the "trace" (trail) single file and the boy was ahead so he would not go to sleep and fall off his horse in the deep grass. But the boy's pony got refractory and would not lead. They dismounted and led their horses, but this would not work long. They camped five or six miles from the Bernard, and when day came their horses were loose and Mr. Sayre spent all day chasing them, threw himself into a fever and camped again in the prairie not able to make the six miles in one day. Next morning a turn in the bend brought them in full view of Andrew Northington's house. Of him Judge McCormick says: "He kept open house, had a fine voice, a quick warm imagination and was a brilliant talker. I have seen and heard Forrest, Booth Barret, Jo Jefferson and Mansfield, but none of them impressed me as Major Northington in his hospitable address and conversation that summer morning fifty years ago."

In October, 1836 Amon Underwood, who went from Columbia to San Felipe along the road which passed Damons Mound,

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Mrs. Powell's and Andrew Northington's, tells of reaching this hospitable house for his breakfast.

But he was not always as affluent as this sounds for the records at Richmond show a judgment against him and a levy on his wagon and six oxen in 1839. This, however, must have been only a temporary embarrassment for he left a substantial estate when he died in the '50s. His son Andrew married a daughter of Captain Heard, who led a company at San Jacinto, and they lived on the Heard plantation at Egypt on the Colorado. Their son Andrew, who succeeded them, died there at nearly ninety years of age in 1938.

Joseph Manson McCormick, who located his headright on the Bernard just below his Cousin Northington, never lived on it, but lived and died down on the David McCormick League where the tides of the Gulf would ebb and flow to the veranda of the plantation home which was on the very margin of the stream.

Judge McCormick gives from his ample memory a picture of a home on the Bernard in those far-away days (1840). "The dwelling was 200 yards from the road. Near-by cribs of corn and stables for the horses and the negro quarters, blacksmith shop, smokehouse and kitchen. Under a huge liveoak was a small single room called the office. The dwelling was a double log house, two big rooms with an opening (hall) between fifteen feet wide. All kinds of rooms were annexed and built about the house. The hall between was the dining room, sitting room, reception hall. Just back was a fig orchard and a space where all kinds of native fruit trees had been planted and had grown in profusion and all kinds of native flowering shrubs. Vegetable gardens, orchards. All about were the domestic animals, horses, cattle, hogs, fowls. And the near-by woods were filled with bear, deer, squirrels, turkeys, wild geese, ducks, quail, prairie chicken. The barnyard was alive with strutting peacocks, pigeons, domestic turkey, chickens, puddle ducks, guinea fowls."

Such was life along the lower Brazos and the Bernard at the homes of those who were thrifty one hundred years ago. While the plantations were often worked by the slaves, yet Judge McCormick tells us his father worked in the fields, and the last week before Andrew went away to college he went into the cotton field with the negroes and used a hoe all day each day.

George Huff, whose league and one-half below Northington's lay on both sides of the Bernard, came from Woodville, Mississippi in 1826. There was quite a colony from that place

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which came in a body. Peter Conrad was one of them, also Jesse H. Cartwright of Oyster Creek and Fayetteville.

Huff's family consisted of wife and five children. One of his sons, W. P. Huff, married a daughter of William Morton of the Brazos, and was identified with the County for many years as we shall see.

Elizabeth Powell with her family, two boys and two girls, arrived from Louisiana in 1828, so she said in her application for land. She also said she was thirty and a farmer.

Austin's first grant was for families to be brought from Louisiana, hence it often happened that persons from elsewhere who came through Louisiana on the way to Texas, as most of them did, recited they were from there and this was at least half way correct.

In 1831 when her headright league on the Bernard at the mouth of Turkey Creek was granted her, she stated she had three children so the record shows. Seventy-five years later (1915) W. L. Davidson, who came to Richmond in 1837 (so he said) and was a lawyer there until his death in 1920, made an affidavit as to the family of Mrs. Powell as he knew it when he first came, and said she had three daughters, Elizabeth, Julia and Ellen, and a son, Samuel G. Major Davidson also said that her house was known in the days of the Republic as the half-way house between Columbia and San Felipe.

Frank R. Lubbock, who in 1838, was an Auditor in the employ of the Republic at Houston and years later Governor of Texas, tells in his memoirs of a visit he and his wife made to the Powells on Turkey Creek in 1838.

Mrs. Lubbock and Mrs. Welchmeyer, who accompanied them, rode in a two-wheeled vehicle called a gig, while Lubbock rode on horseback.

They made incredible speed and at noon the first day were at Hodges Bend on the Brazos where Lubbock admits having eaten a heavy meal and drunk seven large glasses of buttermilk. In the afternoon as they proceeded and his horse trotted to keep up with the gig, he developed a severe case of belly-ache, all of which he relates in his memoirs as an event worth recording.

At nightfall the procession, bellyache and all, reached Mrs. Long's plantation near Richmond and he tells of the generous hospitality with which they were received by Mrs. Long and how the next day after a fine country breakfast they were off to Mrs. Powell's where they arrived at noon.

One reading Governor Lubbock's memoirs is impressed with the notion that he was in a chronic state of delight in those

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days. Everything was in the superlative. The welcome they received at the Powells, who were their old friends in Louisiana, was a very generous one; they had a beautiful home, etc.

He tells that at that time Mrs. Powell had living with her a widowed daughter, Mrs. Kelsey, a single daughter and two sons. He says that Mrs. Powell told them of the April days in 1836 when the Mexican armies were camped at her house and how Filisola, Urrea and Gaona stayed at her house and how she saw Santa Anna and Almonte pass on their way to Harrisburg.

Other inquiries lead to the conclusion that Mrs. Powell was off with the runaways when the Mexican armies came by and that her house was destroyed; that she never saw any of the things which Governor Lubbock says she related to him. He was often free with facts and after sixty years, when he wrote his memoirs, he may have imagined that the widow Powell told him these things.²

Thomas Gay, whose one-fourth league survey was on the Bernard joining Huff and Elisha Moore, was born in 1805 and arrived in Texas from Georgia in May, 1830. He received a league of land in Austin's second colony. He was issued a headright certificate for one labor of land by the Washington County Board, January 15, 1838.

He was a member of Captain Mosely Baker's Company at San Jacinto and on January 19, 1839, was issued Donation Certificate No. 759 for 640 acres of land for having participated in the battle. He enlisted July 14, 1836 for six months in Captain Orson Shaw's Company.

In the Court of Claims files in the General Land Office it is shown that Gay in 1839 was a member of Captain William G. Evans' Company, stationed at the Falls of the Brazos. He and three of his companions while serving under Captain John Bird were killed in an engagement with Indians on Bird Creek near where the city of Temple, Bell County, now stands, on May 26, 1839. Horatio Chriesman was appointed administrator of his estate in Washington County, March 1, 1842. He was survived by his widow, Mrs. Eleanor Gay. He lived his last years in Washington County and Gay Hill bears his name.

² *Lubbock's Memoirs*, p. 78.

CHAPTER VII

THE REVOLUTION

The Fort Settlement, Oyster Creek, and the other social centers of Fort Bend, had settled down to an even tenor of existence and had little or no complaint against Mexican authority. Most of the original landowners, the Three Hundred, and those who had come in from time to time and gotten Mexican grants, were still living on their lands. One and all had opened cotton plantations, most of them small farms and they managed to get their cotton to Velasco where it was shipped to New Orleans and it was a cash crop. Hides and beeswax were marketed the same way.

Knight and White's trading post in the Bend would handle both cotton and skins, and boats or rafts would carry loads down to Columbia, Brazoria and Velasco where they could be sold, and flour, dress goods, coffee and other necessaries brought from New Orleans could be purchased.

The farming development depended largely on the presence of slaves and most of the first settlers brought a few and were eternally scrambling for more. Slave runners like Monroe Edwards and James W. Fannin were bootlegging negroes into the province and the planters were straining every credit to buy them.

Mexican authority did little to aid or interfere with the daily life of the people on the Brazos. They paid no taxes, no import duties and rarely saw a public official. The Fort Bend people were never bothered with the Indians like those on the Colorado and upper Brazos. Prior to 1828 all their problems of every kind were taken up with Austin, who, with understanding patience, heard and adjudicated their disputes.

Dr. James B. Miller of Fort Bend was the political chief of the Department of the Brazos in 1835, when the first troubles

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which led to the Revolution were brewed. The long incarceration of Austin in Mexico 1834-5 had greatly incensed everyone, but news came early in 1835 that he was about to be released and it was hoped he would be able to make peace with Santa Anna who had lately been hailed by the Texans as a champion of liberty. When early in 1835 Travis, Williamson and others were loudly denouncing Mexico and talking war, they got little encouragement from the Fort Bend folks; when later in the year the land frauds were being talked and their neighbor, Dr. Peebles, was reputed to have gotten a hundred leagues of land down at Monclova by some trick or pull, there was no patience with the land grabbers; when Frank Johnson, Mosely Baker and others known to have been mixed up in these land transactions started war talk in the early summer of 1835 no one in Fort Bend was interested.

Word came that General Cos had issued warrants for Travis for having defied Mexican authority at Anahuac and Williamson for his loud war talk and for others who had made treasonable utterances. Dr. Miller, the political chief, was directed to issue the warrants. He left San Felipe with nervous prostration and came down to his plantation in Fort Bend where he took advice from Wyly Martin, who was a member of the Council. Martin advised him to obey the law and issue the warrants, but Dr. Miller dared neither to do so nor refuse. He must have a rest from the official strain—the great tension of long lonely silence when he would sit all day in San Felipe and not see a soul, and would hear from chance passers at intervals the wildest rumors of what was to be done to the Colonists. This overwork required a vacation, so he prevailed on Captain Wyly Martin to act in his stead for a month and the Doctor went out in the hill country above Bastrop, the wild Indian frontier where men were almost daily being scalped. He must have a rest.

Captain Martin and Peter packed up their chattels, camping outfit and hunting equipment, and moved up to San Felipe where they made camp, and Peter kept the table supplied while Captain Wyly performed the arduous functions of De Facto Jefe Politico. It was not long until business became brisk. Unsigned warrants for the arrest of Frank Johnson and Mosely Baker, Williamson and Travis were on Dr. Miller's desk, when he left, but these gents were not in sight and Captain Wyly saw no reason to sign them just yet and he pondered what he would do if any of the culprits should appear. Besides he had no officer willing to go out and hunt them even if he signed the warrants for their arrest. So he bided his time. Dr. Peebles

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was there in charge of Austin's office and urged Martin to refuse to obey the requisition of General Cos—in fact, all Wyly's friends in San Felipe were of the war party and in sympathy with the wanted men.

On the night of August 19, 1835, Frank Johnson and Mosely Baker rode into town coming from a two-weeks trip through East Texas where they had addressed mass meetings and sown much sedition urging the people to arms against Mexican tyranny.

Captain Wyly Martin well knew that Johnson and Baker had pockets full of bogus land certificates issued by the crooked Monclova land office and that they were more interested in protecting the loot than they were in the "eternal principles" and his sense of duty overcome his hesitation and early next morning he signed warrants for their arrest which meant they would be taken forthwith to Bexar and thence down into Mexico and would probably be shot for high treason. News of this spread and San Felipe was soon full of excited people who demanded that the writs be recalled.

The sympathy for the accused was so great that Travis and Williamson who were in hiding up near Viesca came down to San Felipe and were received with open arms. Runners were sent posthaste for Dr. Miller's camp up on the Colorado and his nerves had so improved that he felt able to return and assume his duties and Captain Martin was relieved of his responsibilities and he and Peter returned to their plantation at Fort Bend.

The writs were quashed and the culprits assumed the halos of martyrdom.

It was reported that Austin would be home in a few weeks and everybody in the Fort Settlement decided to await his return and be governed by his advice. He landed at Velasco on the first day in September and on the 8th he was tendered a dinner at Mrs. Long's in Brazoria where he made the keynote speech which was accepted as the last word by the Colonists—viz. that the people of Texas must fight if necessary to protect the Constitution.

Wyly Martin and the two Bordens were present at this meeting and Captain Martin accepted it as final and gave his aid to the war which followed.

When the war began in October and Austin issued his call for volunteers the Fort Bend settlements responded very well. John P. Borden joined Collingsworth's Company, was at the capture of Goliad, and he and his brother Paschal, and George

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W. Pleasants were at the siege of Bexar when it was captured in December.

When the spring campaign—the San Jacinto campaign—began, Wyly Martin with a small company made ready to join Houston's army at Groce's, but hearing that Urrea was coming up the coast, they remained under arms or subject to call at the Fort Settlement.

When news of the Alamo and Goliad came to the Bernard and the Brazos there came with it a stream of fugitives all the way from the Guadalupe and the entire population of Fort Bend joined the Runaway Scrape. Many of them went into the woods and canebrakes and hid out, but most of them with their slaves and cattle took the Harrisburg-Lynchburg road crossing Buffalo Bayou and the San Jacinto at Lynch's ferry and on east toward Louisiana.

Dilue Rose tells that there were five thousand people at the ferry when Dr. Rose and his family reached there about April 10th and among them she saw most of her Oyster Creek neighbors.

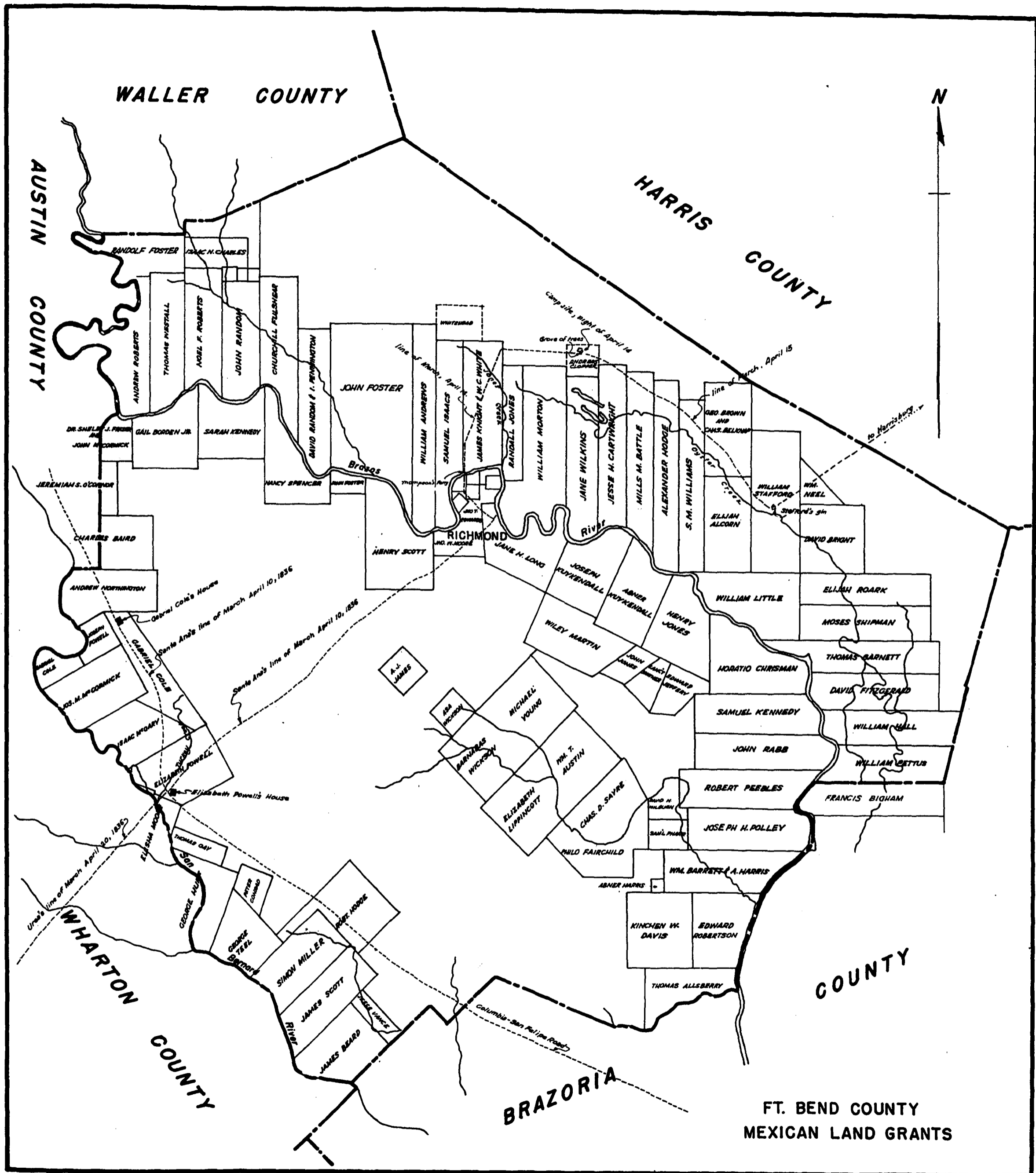
In those days the road from Columbia to San Felipe did not follow the meanders of the Brazos but passed Damons Mound and Mrs. Powell's place on Turkey Creek about a mile from the Bernard, thence up by Gabriel Cole's across the prairie and on to San Felipe.

Mrs. Powell had gone with the fugitives of the Runaway Scrape when Santa Anna, Almonte, Urrea, Filisola, Sesma, Gaona and other military dignitaries visited her place in April.

On April 9th Santa Anna left San Felipe taking the road towards Columbia—Marion as Almonte called it in his diary. The entries in his diary for the few days he was in Fort Bend are part of its history.

"Saturday, April 9 (1836). At 5 A. M. we left San Felipe with the choice companies of Guerro, Matamoros, Mexico and Toluca with fifty cavalry of the Tampico regiment. At half past 12 we arrived at Coll's (Cole's) farm six and one-half leagues (from San Felipe). Three Americans were seen who took the road to Marion or Orizimbo (Old Fort) and leading to Thompson's ferry. We found at the farm a family from *Lavaca* who came by way of the *Brazos*. Various articles were also found. The husband of the woman was a mulatto, the woman was white. We sent Wilson, the husband, to reconnoiter at Marion, that is the ferry. He did not return. It rained at night and the wind blew from the north."

It is readily seen that Colonel Almonte confused Marion



Showing Route of Mexican Armies in Fort Bend

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(West Columbia) with Thompson's ferry in the Bend, and Old Fort. He seemed to think all these were the same place.

Of the incidents at Gabriel Cole's, Caro, Santa Anna's secretary, says: "Colonel Travenio, who had gone ahead of us, found a negro and his wife in one of the houses and took them to General Santa Anna to whom they declared they had come from Thompson's crossing where there were a few Americans. His Excellency offered the mulatto 100 pesos to return to Thompson's to tell the Americans he had seen us but that we had taken a different route. The mulatto fulfilled his mission, going to Thompson's and returning immediately to serve us as a guide. It was thus we captured the crossing, but the mulatto never got his 100 pesos."

Almonte says: "Sunday April 10th. We remained at Coll's farm waiting for our scout. The farm is on the west bank of the river San Bernardo. At a house seven leagues from the farm on the road leading to the Colorado there were 500 *fenegas* of corn and 20 barrels of sugar. In the afternoon the scout returned and confirmed the reports we had of the position of the enemy. At a quarter before 4 P. M. we took up our march for Marion or Old Fort on the road from Brazoria. At half past 5 o'clock we made a short stop at the farm of the widow Powell or rather at a stream called Guajolota (turkey); from thence leaving the road from Brazoria on our right we took the left following the wagon tracks to Marion. We marched until half past nine at night and made another short halt, night dark. At two in the A. M. we commenced to march on foot from the President down to the soldier, leaving the baggage and cavalry, for the purpose of surprising the enemy who defended the crossing place before daylight. We did not succeed as we found the distance double what we supposed it to be. Day broke upon us at a quarter of a league from the ferry and frustrated our plan. We then placed the men in ambush. The stream Guajolota is seven and a half leagues from Marion with some miry places."

Almonte still thought they were approaching Marion. This march from Mrs. Powell's on Turkey Creek to "Marion" as he calls it took most all of Sunday night and at dawn Monday morning (the 11th) they were in ambush a quarter of a league from the ferry.

"Monday, April 11th. Still in ambush. A negro passed at a short distance and was taken. He conducted us to the place he had crossed and having obtained a canoe we crossed without being perceived a little below the principal crossing place. In the meantime the cavalry arrived at Marion and took possession of

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the houses, the enemy retired on the other side and kept up a fire for a long time until the Cozadores under command of Bringas crossed at the lower ford and ascending the river were about to take them in the rear when they abandoned Marion and we remained in possession of the ferry, one canoe and a flatboat. A courier was dispatched to General Sesma with orders that he should come up with his whole division. The Cozadores slept on the other side of the river. Rain during the night."

Almonte's reference to the cavalry taking possession of the houses in Marion, means the houses in the Bend. They had captured the Jesse Thompson ferry boat and Captain Martin and his men had gone to Fulshear.

Sowel in his *History of Fort Bend County* gives some interesting and ludicrous incidents of this day, most of which he got from Otis Fenn, who had them from his father who was present and took part in these events.

A number of people living on both sides of the river had congregated at the house of John Morton on the east bank of the river very near where the railway bridge now spans the stream. The Kuykendall families were among them, the Fenns and families of some of the men who were with Captain Martin up at Thompson's ferry three miles away. John Morton was among these volunteer soldiers.

In the very early morning while the people at Morton's were eating breakfast by candlelight, Cain, one of Morton's negroes, became involved in a fight with John, a Fitzgerald negro. One of the Kuykendalls meddled in the affair and hit old Cain over the head with the butt of a gun, much to Cain's disgust and he left forthwith to go up to the ferry and tell his master, John Morton, about it. He took the Morton rowboat which had been secured to the east side and when he had rowed across, hid it in the bushes on the west bank and set off across the Bend. Suddenly out of ambush old Cain was pounced upon by no less persons than Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, President of Mexico, and his aide, Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, the most august persons Cain had ever beheld in all his days. From him the Mexicans learned of the rowboat and knowing the location of Martin's men up the river began to cross and in half an hour forty had been rowed over.

The presence of these invaders brought great consternation to the people assembled at Morton's who took to the woods and canebrakes.

Almonte's brief note in his diary of the 11th tells the whole story of the "battle" at Thompson's ferry which both General

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Santa Anna and Captain Wyly Martin tried to magnify into a major engagement as ambitious commanders so often do.

Early in the morning Martin had sent John Shipman and Gil Kuykendall out to reconnoiter and report the approach of the Mexicans which was hourly expected and they sighted the Mexican cavalry and hastened back with the news that a "large body" was very near. These were the fifty who took possession of the houses in the Bend.

General Santa Anna in his official report says, "After three days marches and countermarches during one of which I walked five leagues, I took possession of Thompson's crossing in spite of the efforts of the enemy that tried to defend it, but who succeeded only in wounding one of our grenadiers and our bugler. As a result of these unexpected operations I succeeded in capturing from the enemy a fine flatboat and two canoes. The staff, the officers and the troops conducted themselves with great bravery and courage. Fortune was still on our side."

Almonte's entry of Monday the 11th says that on the night of that day "the Cozadores slept on the other side of the river."

When Captain Martin was faced with the cavalry in the Bend and about to be flanked by the "Cozadores" who had crossed at Morton's and were coming up the east side after him, he fled.

Captain Wyly Martin camped on the night of the 12th at Churchill Fulshear's and on the early morning of the 13th dispatched a long circumstantial report to General Houston up at Groce's thirty miles away.

There is a discrepancy of a day between Almonte's diary and Wyly Martin's dispatch. Almonte said they reached within a quarter of a league of the ferry on the very early morning, Monday, April 11th, and told how they crossed the river that day and routed the defenders of the ferry.

Captain Wyly Martin reported to General Houston on the 13th, "On yesterday (which would have been the 12th) shortly after sunrise the enemy fired on a party of my men who had crossed the river for corn. They effected their retreat without loss. Shortly afterwards the enemy appeared in great force opposite us at Thompson's ferry. We completely succeeded in repulsing them at this point. Having heard the firing I sent Lieutenant Jones to their assistance with ten men, my whole force being 46 men with four crossings to defend. He discovered *at least 150 had crossed*. As soon as I learned this I left Lieutenants Moore and Stone with eight men to amuse the enemy. They were soon joined by Captain Walker with twelve men from the prairie and they proceeded to give the enemy battle.

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I learned they had taken Morton's houses, that 300¹ *had crossed* and returned to Thompson's where my men were defending the pass. The day being far spent and the enemy across in great numbers below, I retreated to the prairie where I threw myself in the rear of the retiring families until I reached this place in the night where I will remain until further orders. The reinforcements from Columbia did not join me and the aid from Captain Walker was less than one-fourth of what I expected. You will see that with 46 men joined by 12 after the action began I could not defend four crossings."

This doleful message reached Houston about noon on the 13th while the army at Groce's was being taken across on the steamboat "Yellowstone."

Houston wrote the following order to Captain Martin and sent it back by the messenger who brought Martin's report:

Headquarters of the Army,
Camp on Brazos, April 13, 1836
Army Order.

Major Wyly Martin with his command will take up his line of march and proceed as expeditiously as possible after the receipt of this order and encamp at the house of Donaho on the road from this place (Groce's) to San Felipe and remain until further orders.

Sam Houston, Com. in Chief.

I have reason for wanting dispatch. H.

Donaho's house was in what is now Waller County about five miles south of Hempstead and about ten miles from Ful-shear. Houston, whose army finished crossing over on the 15th, moved on to Donaho's where it found Captain Martin and Mosely Baker waiting.

Before Santa Anna left the Brazos he sent old Moses, one of the Jesse Thompson negroes with a message to General Houston that as soon as he had caught the land thieves he would come up and smoke Houston out. Moses arrived with this impudent message at Donaho's on the morning of April 16th.

Houston now knew that some Mexicans had crossed the

¹ Captain Martin's conflicting statement of the number of men who had crossed reminds one of Falstaff's men in buckram whose numbers increased every time he related the incident.



Col. Almonte, son of the Patriot Priest Morelas

This gallant Mexican was a son of the Patriot Priest Morelas. He was captured at San Jacinto and shared confinement with Santa Anna. He went to Washington with him when President Houston paroled them in November after San Jacinto. In later years he was one of those who invited Maximilian to Mexico, and when the Second Empire failed Almonte was driven into exile, where he spent his latter days.

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Brazos but nothing more, nor at this hour did he know where he was going.

While Houston's men were crossing the river at Groce's Santa Anna was taking five hundred of his infantry and his fifty cavalry across at Thompson's ferry, although he had not made up his mind where he was going. He did not know Houston was crossing nor did he seem to care anything about the Filibusterer, as he called the Texas Commander.

The rain had ceased for a time and it was glorious April weather while he stayed in the Big Bend. Almonte, who made his last circumstantial entries in his diary here noted: "Tuesday April 12th. Day clear and fine. Was occupied in procuring the canoes and going up in the flatboat to Thompson's ferry. A Mexican and a Prussian came in. The Mexican is the son of Delgado. In the afternoon the boat was injured. A courier came from Guadalupe and from General Sesma. We wrote Urrea at Matagorda."

"Wednesday, April 13: The boat was repaired. General Sesma arrived with his division. Many articles were found. Urrea and Fernandez were written to. Dispatches arrived from Urrea and Filisola."

"Thursday, April 14th: We crossed the river early with our beds only and provisions for the road. At three in the afternoon we started from Thompson's ferry."

Thus ends Almonte's journal. In the hectic days which followed he had little time for journal entries.

They ransacked every house in the Bend and burned them when they left.

The entry of the 12th tells that young Delgado had arrived. He was Colonel Pedro Delgado of Santa Anna's staff, a fine fellow and like every other man in the Mexican army who could read and write he kept a diary and began at once. His entry of Thursday, April 14th reads:

"On the 14th his Excellency the President ordered his staff to prepare to march with only one skiff and leaving his own and his officers baggage with General Sesma, who was instructed to remain at the crossing of the Brazos whither we expected to return in three days. The day before the flank companies of the battalions of Matamoros, Aldama, Guerro, Toluca, Mexico and Guadalajara had commenced crossing the river with a six-pounder commanded by Lieutenant Ignacio Arrenal and fifty mounted men of Tampico and Guanajuato who formed his Excellency's escort. The whole force amounted to 600 men or less. About 4 P. M. we started for Harrisburg. The bottom of the Brazos is a dense and lofty timber over three leagues wide.

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On reaching the prairie we found a small creek which offered only one crossing. The infantry passed over comfortably on a tree which had fallen in such a manner as to form a convenient bridge. The ammunition was passed over by hand. His Excellency to avoid delay ordered the baggage and the commissary to stores to remain packed on the mules. However the water was soon over the pack saddles and the opposite bank was steep and slippery. Several mules fell down interfering with each other and resulted in jamming of officers dragoon, pack mules and horses. This together with shouts and curses completed a scene of wild confusion which his Excellency witnessed with hearty laughter. Several men fell in the water, two mules were drowned, the stores were damaged. The sun had set when we finished crossing and resumed the march over a muddy prairie. The night was dark, many men straggled off and our piece of artillery bogged at every turn of the wheel. At 9 o'clock his Excellency ordered a halt at a small grove where we passed the night without water.

“On the 15th at 8 A. M. most of the stragglers having joined us we started again. At about noon we reached a plantation abundantly supplied with corn, meal, sheep, hogs, a good garden and a fine gin. Here we stopped to rest and at 3 P. M. resumed our march. His Excellency rode ahead with his escort leaving General Castrillion in command of the infantry At 11 o'clock at night we reached Harrisburg.”

There has long been a mistaken belief and repeated mis-statements in all of our Texas histories to the effect that Santa Anna crossed the Brazos at Richmond or where Richmond was later located and went direct to Harrisburg, crossing Oyster Creek near Sugar Land of our day. The entries in Almonte's and Delgado's diaries of the 14th enable us to accurately reconstruct the line of march for that day.

Almonte tells us in his journal entry of the 11th that there was firing between their men and Morton's men across the river at Thompson's all day the 11th; that Captain Bringas crossed the river with his Cozadores at the *lower ford*, and were ascending on the east side and about to attack the Texans in the rear when “they abandoned Marion and we remained in possession of the *ferry*.” These Cozadores are those whom Captain Martin mentioned in his dispatch to General Houston dated the morning of the 13th, the 150 and the 300 who were after his rear.

Martin's men left the ferry on the afternoon of the 11th, Almonte says; on the afternoon of the 12th, Captain Martin

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says; but the discrepancy in the dates does not change the relevant facts.

Almonte says the Cozadores slept across the river (at the ferry) on the night of the 11th; that the 12th was consumed in procuring canoes and going up in the flatboat to the ferry.

This indicates that the army was concentrating its camp in the Bend at Thompson's.

On the 14th Santa Anna and Almonte and Delgado with the troop named in Delgado's diary crossed and at three in the afternoon started from *Thompson's ferry*.

One familiar with these places will have little difficulty in tracing them on the ground.²

Thompson's ferry was at the Jesse Thompson homestead which was in the upper quarter of the Knight and White League. Here old Jesse was living on the east bank of the river when he was killed by Borden a few years before and here his family were living in 1836 and continued to live until the place was sold to Swenson after the Revolution.

The creek which Delgado tells about at the edge of the prairie where the men crossed on a log and the mules were drowned, was Jones Creek in the Knight and White League and not Oyster Creek as we have so long supposed. It was near this prairie crossing that Jesse Cartwright, who then owned the north half of the Isaacks and all of the Whitehead Survey, lived and had planned the town of Fayetteville which he began to advertise a few months later.

The direction they had traveled from the ferry to the prairie was nearly north. When the army had crossed on the log and was free from the "lofty timber" which Delgado mentions, it was nearly due west from Harrisburg and the course was changed to the east. We can readily locate the "small grove" which is on the Andreas Clopper Survey. The plantation where Delgado says they rested on the 15th was Stafford's.

There was a road or trail through these tall woods which had long been used by persons going from Thompson's ferry in the Bend to the prairie to the north.³

² On March 18, 1939 D. R. Peareson, Homer Darst and I located the old road leading down the river banks to Thompson's ferry. It was near the east line of the Knight and White labor and near where the lower line of the Isaacks League reaches the river.

³ Boyd McCreary, who has lived on these lands all his life, says that there was from earliest times an old trail along here and an old crossing on Jones Creek as shown on the map, facing p. 72.

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In 1838, two years after the Revolution, the Commissioners Court of Fort Bend County made an order re-establishing the "old road" from Thompson's ferry to Fayetteville. There is still a trace of the crossing on Jones Creek between the McCreary and Hunter houses. This was where the Mexicans crossed and since it was then dark they did not discover either of these houses. The Hunters and Cartwrights were all gone.

Mosely Baker's Company passed this way two weeks later when on the trail of the retreating Mexicans, and did considerable damage to Dr. Hunter's perishable goods.⁴

What happened during the next week is well known and is not part of the local history of Fort Bend County.

Santa Anna was off after the land thieves, as he called the officers of the Texas Provisional government who were then at and below Harrisburg, after which he had told Moses to tell General Houston he would give him attention.

While the Mexicans were straggling into Harrisburg on the night of the 15th and early morning of the 16th Houston's army was camped at Donaho's and here Rusk, Secretary of War, persuaded Houston against his judgment to abandon his march across the Trinity and go to Harrisburg. It has been said that Houston crossed at Groce's for the very purpose of going to Harrisburg after Santa Anna and his advance guard. This is all nonsense. He did not know that Santa Anna had left the Brazos or where he was until on the 19th when the Texans reached the north side of the bayou and captured a courier with dispatches for Santa Anna, who was then below Harrisburg.

After his Excellency and his fewer than 600 men left Thompson's ferry on the afternoon of the 14th the Mexican army on the Brazos settled down in the Bend to await his return in three days.

Filisola's division arrived on the 15th and went into camp up in the Big Bend.

No diarist tells us any detail about the week the Mexican Army remained our guests up in the Bend and down the river to where the abandoned walls of the old log "Fort" still stood a silent sentinel. The inhabitants of these parts were away—most of them beyond the Trinity. William Little and his family were in a canebrake near where the oil derricks now stand on the DeWalt dome. Randal Jones, the Andrews and Mortons

⁴ See narrative Robert Hancock Hunter, son of the Doctor, who returned and found his countrymen foraging his father's commissary.

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and their families were in the woods near Fulshear. The Kuykendall men and women were scattered all over the bottom. John Fenn had escaped from the Mexicans and joined his father's family and they had gone downstream. The Borden families had gone the week before and were now on Galveston Island where about half the Fort Bend folks were gathered in fear and misery.

There were several thousand of these little brown soldiers all dumbly waiting orders and the Generals were waiting word from the mad Commander who had so suddenly ridden away leaving the curt word he would be back in three days. He intended, so he says, to dash down to Harrisburg and capture President Burnet and his Cabinet. But he has given so many explanations of what he intended to do that it leads to the suspicion that his plans at that time were about as uncertain as General Houston's.

On the 15th, the day after the President left the Brazos, the steamboat "Yellowstone" which had been up the river after Groce's cotton and which had been used by General Houston to transport his men across, came down and ran the gauntlet. It was the most exciting episode that had ever happened at Fort Bend, more dramatic than the battle of Thompson's ferry a few days before.

The river was more than half bank full and Captain Ross with his cargo of cotton and a concealed crew came downstream with a full head of steam, keeping to the center and rounding the curves with a bump and a bounce. It was the first time most of these Mexican soldiers had ever seen a steamboat and they stood in awe. Some of the more venturesome shot at the monster and since no one on the boat returned the fire, a few of the still more venturesome ran along the banks after it. A very bold horseman waved his lariat and tried to rope the smokestack. On it went like a phantom ship and as it passed out of view it sounded long loud blasts of its coarse whistle.⁵

Ten days after Santa Anna and Almonte left Mrs. Powell's, Urrea who had crossed the Colorado at Cayce's about two miles above the present town of Bay City, came across the Bernard following the Caney-San Felipe trail and camped at Mrs.

⁵ It has been told that Walter C. White of Brazoria, who was on the "Yellowstone" when it bumped into the banks, became alarmed at the fate of the boat and tried to jump off, thinking he would be safer with the Mexicans. (Sowel's *History of Fort Bend County*, p. 111.)

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Powell's on the night of the 20th. Urrea, who wrote a highly circumstantial diary and who tells about reaching Mrs. Powell's and staying there and leaving for Columbia the next day, makes no mention of having known that Santa Anna had been there a few days before. Evidently there was no one at Mrs. Powell's to tell him anything.

On he went to Columbia and Brazoria and while he marched along in great triumph the battle of San Jacinto was being fought forty miles away.

When Santa Anna left the battlefield at 4:30 P. M. on April 21st well mounted as he was, he could have ridden directly across the prairie southwest, headed Vince's Bayou at what is now South Houston, and reached his army on the Brazos by midnight. But he was scared and confused as to directions and distance.

As he and his horsemen fled they were followed by Colonel Karnes' men who were shooting them at every jump, and they took the road towards Harrisburg which they had come down a few days before. When they reached a place near where the Shell Refinery now stands three Mexican horsemen were seen by their pursuers to confer as they went and one of them pointed across the prairie towards the Brazos. Suddenly the three who were in the rear detached themselves and turned to the left and dashed away across the prairie. They were followed and Wash Secrest, one of the pursuers, killed one of them.

After midnight on the morning of the 22nd in the brilliant light of a full moon, Colonel Barragan reached Thompson's ferry with the awful news of San Jacinto. Filisola at once began preparations for a retreat and sent a dispatch down the Brazos for Urrea to join him at Mrs. Powell's. Filisola wrote in his diary: "Four days after the defeat of the President, Generals Woll, Folsa, Gaona, Sesma, Urrea and I with the whole army were concentrated at Mrs. Powell's. Here a messenger came with a order from Santa Anna, now a prisoner, to retire to Bexar and await further orders." They remained camped here two days.

The widow Powell's place was the gateway through which the invading armies came and went into and from Fort Bend. They must have burned her house, for Amon Underwood, who journeyed from Columbia to San Felipe in the following October, wrote in his diary: "Left Columbia on 26th with Cochran, arrived at Mrs. Powell's old place where we found the whole family crowded into a small tent, cold and rainy. Got some beef cooked and ate it and lay down on our blankets in the

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rain. At daylight left and rode to Northington's, ten miles for breakfast."

The war was over. Santa Anna, who left Thompson's ferry on the balmy afternoon of April 14th to return in three days, did not do so. The Fort Bend people who had hidden in the canebrakes and those who had gone towards the Sabine, and to Galveston came back in the latter days of April and resumed their normal lives.

CHAPTER VIII

RICHMOND AND FORT BEND COUNTY

The territory which in December, 1837 became Fort Bend County was in Colonial times chiefly within the municipality of Austin which on the west side of the river came down to Brazoria. On the east side Harrisburg County extended to the Brazos, between the upper line of Bigham's league and the upper line of Isaacks, embracing the entire Oyster Creek community.

There were great expectations of boom development at the close of the war and ambitious promoters laid off and advertised towns far and wide. As early as June, 1836 the enterprising citizen Jesse H. Cartwright began advertising the town of Fayetteville to be located, so he said, "On the border of the prairie on the east bank of Round Lake about six miles from Fort Bend on the east side of the Brazos about half a mile from the residence of the subscriber."¹

The Bordens dreamed of a city of Louisville in the Big Bend about a mile below Thompson's ferry which was at the "Falls." Tom Borden wrote Moses Lapham about this in 1833 and for several years his letters to Lapham were date lined "Louisville."

In November, 1836 when the first Congress was selecting a site for the temporary Capital and the promoters of Houston, which had been begun the preceding August, were lobbying for it at Columbia, Tom Borden who was there editing the

¹ I have seen a circular containing this advertisement dated June 24, 1836. It was in the Houston Telegraph of February 3, 1837. The proposed town was to be on the Whitehead Survey.

PRIVATE SALE OF LOTS

IN THE

CITY OF RICHMOND.

ct "THERE must be towns, little and big;" and those who have the sagacity to look into the natural advantages of those offered for sale, and can see which the strong plans are will reap a great harvest; and under the increasing emigration, it will be gathered sooner than the wildest enthusiast ever dreamed of."

ic, The proprietors now for the first time, offer to the public lots in the city of Richmond, which they will sell on *accommodating* terms to those who may wish to improve them. Many of the most desirable lots remain unsold, as the proprietors have refused to sell, in every instance up to this time, except under the express condition that purchasers should improve them forthwith. Five large commercial houses will be established at this place within six months, viz. Walter C. White, Martin & Clow, Handy & Lusk, Texas, Masterson & Fisher, Nashville, Tenn. and James Brown & Co., New York. Various mechanical branches of business are also about being established, and 'tis said' that one or two banks will be located at the city of Richmond.

and The city of Richmond is situated on the west bank of the Brazos, at the foot of the great bend, a short distance below the Fort Bend rapids, about 130 miles from the Gulf by water, and 65 miles by land; and is at the head of steam boat navigation, at a low stage of water. The site is on a beautiful high prairie reaching boldly up to the river, and which was *six feet* above the highest water, during the great flood of 1833. The country from Richmond to San Antonio is connected by a chain of beautiful undulating prairies, broken only by the waters of the San Bernard, Colorado, Navidad, La Bacca and Guadalupe. On the south west, the country is open to the Gulf, and although sixty miles distant, the sea breeze is felt in all its freshness.

ex- The best commentary upon the health of Richmond and the surrounding country is, that although by far the most densely settled portion of the republic, it never has given support to one physician. Of the quality of land, it is enough to say that the whole "Fort Bend" was taken up by "the first three hundred." When our lamented fellow-citizen, S. F. Austin first came to this country, he requested one of his companions, Mr. Wm. Little, who now resides near Richmond, to take a party of men, and to ascend the Brazos river until he reached the best point at the head of navigation for a town. Mr. Little and his party selected the spot on which the city of Richmond is laid off; and the first settlers having fortified themselves for many years at this point, gave it the well known name of "Fort Bend," or "Fort settlement."

ie A line of steamboats will commence running from the city of Richmond to Quintana and Velasco early in autumn, to be connected with the New Orleans and Texas line of steam packets.

ROBERT EDEN HANDY,
President. and Acting Treasurer.

Proprietors of the City of Richmond.

HANDY & LUSK,	M'KINNEY & WILLIAMS,
MARTIN & CLOW,	WALTER C. WHITE,
BRANCH T. ARCHER,	JAMES COLLINSWORTH,
JOHN A. WHARTON,	WM. H. WHARTON.

Richmond, Aug. 1, 1837.

RICHMOND AND FORT BEND COUNTY

Borden paper entered Fort Bend as a contender but it never mustered but one vote.

The Alsburys who owned the two league grant on and below Cow Creek, the southern boundary of Fort Bend County, planned the town of Monticello at the mouth of Cow Creek and advertised it as the ideal site for health and happiness. They said there was sufficient timber there with which to build a city.

The dashing and gallant Robert Eden Handy was the founder of Richmond, and now after the passing of a century the citizen of Richmond who has civic spirit may feel pride in the illustrious founder. He was born in Philadelphia in 1807 and came from a family well known in the annals of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. He came to San Augustine, Texas in 1834 and was there when the Revolution began. He was with the Patriot Army at Gonzales and distinguished himself for gallantry in spy service during the retreat to the Brazos. He was aide de camp to General Houston at San Jacinto.

After the war he and William Lusk opened a mercantile establishment at Brazoria which they advertised widely. They soon became infected with the town promotion fever and in the April 11, 1837 issue of the Telegraph and Register, the last issue of the paper at Columbia, Handy and Lusk advertised that they had gone up to *Richmond* at Fort Bend.²

Tom Borden, who lived on his farm in the Bend, seemed to have given up his hope for a city there and joined in booming Richmond. He and his brothers had acquired about 1,700 acres in the Edwards Survey which extends from the heart of the Bend down to the west of the Richmond town tract and they subdivided it into ten acre outlots to Richmond and advertised them for sale with the generous offer of a lot free to anyone who would build on it at once.

In the August 1, 1837 issue of the Telegraph, which was now at Houston, the first advertisement of the new town of Richmond appears. While there are a number of well known persons signed as proprietors, only Handy and Lusk had any interest in the enterprise, the land purchased for the townsite being wholly in their names. It is said that Lusk was from Richmond, Virginia and hence gave the town that name. The other nominal proprietors may be aptly called Godfathers of Richmond.

² This was the first mention of Richmond I have seen.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

During the second session of the Congress of the Republic at Houston in May, 1837 Mr. Arnold, a member from Nacogdoches, offered a bill to incorporate that town which provided for a board of eight trustees and conferred general municipal powers. Some member had a clause added which required every citizen to keep a bucket, hook and ladder for use in case of fire.

Other members impressed with Mr. Arnold's bill added towns until the act when finally passed actually incorporated nineteen towns, among them, "the city of Houston and the town of Richmond," added by the Honorable Mosely Baker.

And the Honorable Mosely Baker in order to give the act real municipal flavor had the word "trustees" changed to "aldermen."

So it happened in May, 1837 "the city of Houston and the town of Richmond" were incorporated in the same act, in the same sentence, and at the motion of the same member of Congress and were off down the ages equipped with aldermen, hook and ladders and buckets. Richmond was therefore incorporated before it was begun.

The beginning was auspicious—promoted by Colonel Robert Eden Handy, the handsomest man in Texas, with Dr. Archer, Walter C. White, James Collingsworth and the two Whartons for its Godfathers and incorporated at the motion of Captain Mosely Baker. It was surveyed by that intrepid hero of San Jacinto, Moses Lapham.

For some reason not apparent now, another act of incorporation was passed creating Richmond a body corporate at the next session of Congress, November 18, 1837. Under it the Chief Justice of the County was to call an election for the first Monday in January at which city officials would be chosen. Possibly the question of boundaries caused the second act since none were named in the May statute.

In the November act the boundaries of Richmond were fixed in the following words: "All that tract of country known as the city of Richmond shall be known as the limits and boundaries of said city." In other words its limits shall be its boundaries. No one could misunderstand this. In order to know its boundaries one need only know its limits.

We assume the Chief Justice of the new county called an election in January, 1838 and that city officials were chosen, but no record of this has come down to us and there is only a thin tradition as to who was the first Mayor. We do know that

RICHMOND AND FORT BEND COUNTY

three years later the "citizens of the city" (all seventeen³ of them) petitioned the Congress to repeal the acts of incorporation, which was done and for many years it remained unincorporated.

These enterprising promoters now needed a county and a few months later a petition was circulated and signed asking the Congress then in session at Houston to create the County of Fort Bend. There were 128 signers. The first name was the respected citizen Randal Jones. Thirteen of the original grantees of Mexican grants appear on the list.⁴ There were a few others of the original settlers living who did not sign, but very few, probably fewer than one-third of them, were living after thirteen years.

The act creating the County and fixing its boundaries was passed December 29, 1837.

On the next day after the act was signed and the County born, Deaf Smith, who had become a resident of the new town, died at the residence of Randal Jones and was buried on a vacant block in what is now the heart of Richmond, at or near the site where the State has recently placed a tablet to his memory.

On the east side of the Brazos the County line began at Bigham's upper line and followed the old line between Harrisburg and Brazoria for three leagues, when it took a tangent to the north to a low elm at the head of Brays Bayou. By various turns the upper lines returned to the Brazos along the south line of Churchill Fulshear's league leaving the old sailor outside the County boundaries. Crossing the river here it went up the west bank ten or more miles to the mouth of Sixteen Mile Creek and thence over to the Bernard at Gabriel Cole's corner. The Bernard formed the west boundary down to the southeast corner of league 8 and from there in a direct line to the south prong of Cow Creek which it followed to the Brazos, reaching the river ten or more miles farther down than the starting point at Bigham's. It would be hard to find a more grotesque misfit for boundaries.

³ Among the seventeen, who were probably the entire voting strength of the town, appear the names of Lusk, Wyly Martin, Swenson, Mills Battle, Dr. Barnard and the entire Richmond Bar, Herndon, Parkerson and Bassett and T. H. McMahan, the merchant.

⁴ Randal Jones, Launcelot Smither, John and William Little, Philo Fairchild, John and Henry Jones, Thos. Barnet, Joseph Kuykendall, Wyly Martin, John and Randolph Foster, Andrew Northington.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

Although these lines have been often changed by subsequent legislation in an effort to straighten them out, they are still irregular and the County extends ten miles farther south on the west side of the river than on the east, all because old Bigham did not want to be "moved" out of Brazoria. At that time the north line of Brazoria west of the Brazos ran from a point across from Bigham's to the mouth of Turkey Creek on the Bernard.

So it appears that the new County was carved from Austin, Harrisburg and Brazoria, taking a large slice of each.

It is said that Moses Lapham wrote these field notes for the Congressional Committee which drew the bill for the creation of the County. There is no evidence of a survey except the call for the low elm on Brays Bayou. All the other calls could have been made from a map.

In 1846 Congress made a third attempt to straighten out these crab-shaped boundaries, extending the upper line east of the Brazos from Fulshear's to the lower line of Cooper's survey (the north line of Randolph Foster's league). On the south the line was moved up the Bernard from league No. 8, to the lower line of the league granted James Beard, the saddle maker. The east line was left unchanged.

President Houston signed the act incorporating the County December 29th and the same day appointed his old comrade of the battle of Horseshoe Bend, Wyly Martin, Chief Justice (County Judge).

The Honorable Wyly Martin, mindful of his duties, at once issued an election proclamation that all qualified voters of the new County should meet at Richmond on January 13, 1838 for the purpose of choosing a county seat, and the election of County and District Clerks and Sheriff. They came one hundred and seventy strong and one of the hottest elections in the history of the County was held. The great contest was over the County site.

There had been much resentment by many of the "old" settlers against the intrusion of Handy and Lusk and their new town of Richmond. But the old settlers were divided. One group wanted the County seat up in the Bend at a site they now called Fort Bend, about half way between the falls and William Morton's house, probably on the Randal Jones labor. But Jesse Cartwright was bent on pushing his Fayetteville and he was aided by William Walker and the upper Oyster Creek folks. This division enabled Handy and Lusk to carry the elec-

RICHMOND AND FORT BEND COUNTY

tion by a mere plurality. Richmond had 83 votes, Fort Bend 67 and Fayetteville 20.

The race for Sheriff was a very exciting one. James Perry had 19 votes, James Hughes 45 votes, Adam Stafford 9, while John V. Morton, son of William Morton, polled 95. It was charged that Morton and Handy had made a trade and William Walker from across the river, a strong advocate of Fort Bend and supporter of James Hughes for Sheriff, openly denounced Handy as a "dandy."

Morton Street was the main street of the new town and Handy and Lusk built a storehouse on the river bank, and Colonel Handy erected a modest residence adjoining the store. These were completed and occupied in the summer of 1837.

In the autumn an interesting looking Englishman who gave his name as James Riddell, a stocky fellow with greying hair, one of those men whose looks did not disclose his age, built a small combination of a dwelling and shop next to Handy's house. In it he displayed a rare collection of guns and knives and over the door he posted a sign, "James Riddell, Gunsmith." Two persons observing him might guess his age at forty or sixty. He was an educated man, a free talker, and his shop was soon a gathering place for those who had leisure for gossip.

Although he was a close friend of Colonel Handy who had induced him to locate here, so he said, he kept on good terms with the Walker faction to whom he sold guns and with whom he exchanged gossip.

Often he would close his shop for a week, or leave it with some of his friends who loafed there, and go to Houston, or Brazoria, and sometimes he ventured as far as Nacogdoches or Bexar. Then he would write long letters to somebody somewhere which he would post to a house in London. According to his own modest admissions, he had been everywhere and seen everything and his tall tales of adventure were the wonder and admiration of his group. Dr. Feris still recalled many of them after sixty years.

It was later learned or surmised that he was in the employ of the British Bondholders Committee which hoped to see Mexico reconquer Texas.⁵

⁵ In the October 14th and later issues of the Telegraph his card announced "gunsmith and cutler at Richmond . . . long experience in Europe and elsewhere . . ." His acquaintance with Millard, the English "historian" of Texas who came to Richmond a few years later, gives color to his "mission" and was no doubt the foundation of the rumor of his employment.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

Colonel Handy and Lamar were great friends. At the close of the Revolution in 1836 he had become attached to and associated with Lamar, who, like Handy, had won distinction at San Jacinto.

When Lamar came to Texas in March, 1836 he brought with him a substantial sum of money entrusted to him by persons in Georgia for investment in Texas lands, and during the San Jacinto campaign he left it with DeZavala for safekeeping. Immediately after the war he and Colonel Handy bought soldier's land warrants and they were gotten at a bargain.

When President Burnet named Lamar Major-General of the Army in July, and he rode down to Victoria to take command, he was accompanied by Major Handy whom he had chosen for his aide and when he was rejected by the Army he and Handy came back to Brazoria where Lamar made plans to run for Vice President and Handy and Lusk became merchants in Brazoria.

Houston's term as President would expire in September, 1838 and the opposition to him began booming Lamar to succeed him as early as the autumn of 1837. Handy, who was at Richmond where Lamar had purchased land and was opening a plantation, was Lamar's enthusiastic supporter and wrote him the most affectionate letters.

Handy's domestic affairs were not on a very satisfactory basis, at least not satisfactory to the first Grand Jury which met at Richmond in February and indicted the dashing Colonel for living in adultery with a Mrs. D.⁶ It was long afterwards said that this indictment was spite work incited by William Walker, who was foreman of the Jury because of ill-will engendered in the County seat and Sheriff's election a month before. But Walker's high standing and the names of the Grand Jurors rather refute this. Among those who served with Walker were William Little, Henry Jones, Eli Fenn and Barney Wickson. The case was never disposed of as far as the records show and is technically still pending.

In July following, Lamar was at his plantation a mile below Richmond and Handy wrote him a note and sent it by "Boy Bill" (probably a negro servant). "The stage will leave here tomorrow at 7 o'clock A. M. Be here at that hour if possible. It shall not leave you. I am as usual badly off for money but send you \$50 and regret it is not so many thousand. I have

⁶ Mrs. Danforth was Colonel Handy's common-law wife, a perfectly legal relation in those days, and the indictment was, to say the least, unjust.

RICHMOND AND FORT BEND COUNTY

settled your stage fare. I spoke to Mrs. D in regard to Caroline. She is unwilling to take her—for reason I will explain at another time to you—I am very sorry but could not urge it. Robt. Eden Handy.”

This terse note shows that the indictment had not broken off all relations between Handy and Mrs. D., that Lamar, who was going away, wanted to find someone who would take Caroline (whoever she was), that Mrs. D. would not and Handy could not help the situation, but would explain.⁷

The stage left Houston every Monday morning and for the return trip left Richmond every Saturday morning. The fare each way was \$7.00, all baggage over 25 pounds 5c per pound.

Lamar never practiced law. He was a soldier, statesman, poet and orator, planter and all around good fellow.

The Presidential Campaign was on in the summer of 1838 and Lamar was touring the country and was a much sought man. Colonel Handy was bestirring himself for his chief. In April Handy caused a meeting of Lamar's friends at Richmond, which gave him a flattering endorsement, and he was overwhelmingly elected in September.

About December 1st Handy became suddenly very ill and on the 4th John Levering, who was associated with Handy and Lusk, wrote Lamar, who had remained in Houston since the election, that Colonel Handy was dangerously ill, that only faint hopes were entertained for his recovery.⁸ Handy died that same day and Lusk died mysteriously four years later and his body was found floating in the Navidad.

That Handy was gallant and brave we know from his military record; that he was handsome is obvious from his picture; that he was something of a dandy is shown by the inventory of his personal estate which was made immediately after his death.⁹ He left no will and Chief Justice Wyly Martin appointed Levering Administrator. The estate showed assets of over \$150,000, chiefly land.

Some time in December President Lamar received a strange letter written from Charleston, S. C. by one C. C. Sebring, dated December 20th. The writer seemed impressed that all civilized countries should pass statutes forbidding the interment of

⁷ *Lamar Papers*, Vol. 5, p. 191.

⁸ *Lamar Papers*, Vol. 5, p. 219.

⁹ His personal chattels included 7 dress coats, 1 cloak, \$100; 1 overcoat, \$100; 12 vests; 8 pair pantaloons and 10 pair pants; 3 linen coats; 10 handkerchiefs, \$8; 1 diamond pin, \$100 (*Probate Records A*, p. 700).

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

human bodies within the City Limits and he sought to arouse the President to the urgency of such legislation in Texas. In the body of the letter is the following incoherent sentence: "Some of our young and thriving cities contain already in their very center, places set apart for sepulcher and in that of our gallant friend the King of Richmond an interment has been made within eyeshot of its citizens." Near the conclusion of the letter the writer says he has learned of the serious illness of "my good friend Colonel Handy" to whom he pays a high tribute.¹⁰

On January 17th Handy's Aunt Catherine Eden of Philadelphia wrote Lamar that she had heard from Lusk that Robert had been ill three weeks before his death, but she said Lusk had not given them the details which relatives wanted on such occasions, and she asked Lamar, to whom she said her nephew was deeply devoted, to write them.

Having no answer to this letter Mrs. Eden, who supposed it had not reached Lamar, wrote him again on May 8th that they had commissioned Mr. Cyrus Joy (sometimes Texas Consul at Philadelphia), who was on his way to Texas, to arrange for the removal of Robert's remains to Philadelphia. She gave Joy the letter to deliver to Lamar and asked the President to aid Mr. Joy.

On the same day Handy's only sister, Mrs. Brown, wrote Lamar a most heart-rending letter telling of her affliction and of Robert's great love for Lamar. There was much she wanted to know. Among other things she asked of the President was that he advise her about the status of Jim, Handy's negro servant who had gone to Texas with Handy under indenture and who was now entitled to his freedom. She referred to the fact, which was widely known, that Jim had fought with Colonel Handy at San Jacinto. "A word from the President," she said, "would assure Jim his freedom and his right to return to Philadelphia."

Lamar never answered this letter.

Lusk arranged the details and the mortal remains of the young and gallant Handy were returned to his native State in June, 1839.

In the following December Handy's sister, Mrs. Brown, again apologetically, wrote the President that they were deeply wounded at his neglect; that her poor brother's remains were now reinterred in his native soil; that Texas had given him so little and he had given it his life.

¹⁰ *Lamar Papers*, Vol. 2, p. 339.

RICHMOND AND FORT BEND COUNTY

Lamar never answered this letter.

A year later Mrs. Brown, unable to get news about Jim or to get her brother's personal effects, his watch and diamond pin, wrote Lamar her last letter imploring him as a personal favor to see that these matters were attended to.

Though Lamar is reported to have said that he lost his best friend when Handy died, there has never been an explanation of his unpardonable neglect in failing to answer the letters from Handy's family in Philadelphia. Lamar, though an honest and well meaning man, was full of egotism and personal vanity and one is led to suspect from his conduct in this matter that he was not interested in Handy when Handy was no longer useful to him. Anyone who has read the various letters from Mrs. Brown and Miss Eden to Lamar, preserved in the *Lamar Papers*, will regret that a man who was as highly honored in Texas as Lamar could have been guilty of such unpardonable rudeness.

We do not know what became of Jim nor of the diamond pin Mrs. Brown was so anxious to have returned to her. Handy's watch engraved in 1828 is now in the possession of his great-grandson down near Goliad.

A son named James Hutchins Handy was born to Mrs. D. a few months after Handy died, and a year later she married the immortal Dr. Joseph H. Barnard. Surely she was an unusual woman to have had the admiration and held the interest of two such men as Handy and Barnard.

There is a romantic interest which centers about the handsome, brave and brilliant Handy. It was rumored that he was poisoned, but no one ever ventured to say by whom or why. "Major" Davidson had vague hints about a deep, dark tragedy, but the Major had an Oriental imagination and a tendency to exaggeration.

Dr. Feris said he had heard it but knew no foundation for the rumor.

Lamar was interested and instrumental in the first newspaper of Richmond which bore the enormous name of Richmond Telescope and Literary Register. Vol. 1, No. 1, was issued April 27, 1839 and had the prestige of being patronized by the President of the Republic, who was then at the crest of his greatness, which rapidly declined. It was a very small one sheet affair not much larger than one of Colonel Handy's fancy handkerchiefs. Its literary contents were mediocre and news items rare. It was edited by a man named Wood, who for a time, had the aid of the Englishman Millard. In May, 1830 it folded up forever. From its meager columns we get very faint glimpses of community activities.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

In December, 1839 a tall bewhiskered young man unloaded from the Houston stage and introduced himself as Dr. George A. Feris and related that he had come from Kentucky and would practice his profession at Richmond. At that time George W. Long, the only doctor in Richmond, was dying of consumption. Young Dr. Feris was a man of keen intellect, pleasant address and good appearance. After a few drinks he repaired to the office of the Richmond Telescope and Literary Register and inserted the following advertisement: "To All Whom It May Concern: I want money, must have it, will get it. Geo. A. Feris. Dec. 21, 1839."

When the census taker came around in 1860 the Doctor had made this ominous threat good and admitted owning a modest fortune.

CHAPTER IX

FORT BEND IN THE FORTIES

Fort Bend County never had Indian troubles and its people now settled down to the unmolested routine of plantation and ranch life.

Slavery was the cornerstone of plantation life.

During the ten years of the Republic the people were reasonably prosperous and satisfied with life. The most interesting thing one can find in the annals of the County for the first decade is in the list of unusual people who foregathered there at the close of the Revolution. The lives of these people form an integral part of the history of the County.

DR. JOSEPH H. BARNARD

Dr. Joseph H. Barnard came up from Brazoria with Robert Eden Handy in April, 1837 and always said he officiated at the birth of Richmond.

As long as the story of Goliad is told, the conspicuous part he played in that grim tragedy will be known to the world.

A year before he and Dr. Shackelford riding from San Antonio where they had been liberated in June after the massacre, had gone down to Velasco where Dr. Shackelford took a boat and went back to his home in Alabama. He urged the younger man to go with him but Barnard said that fate had brought him to Texas and here he would stay. He spent the fall and winter of 1836 at Columbia and Brazoria.

Dr. Barnard was a Canadian and in 1835 had begun the practice of his profession in the little town of Chicago. He heard of the impending revolution in Texas and to use his own words, "thought it the duty of all men to aid in upholding Democratic institutions against tyranny." He was soon on his

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

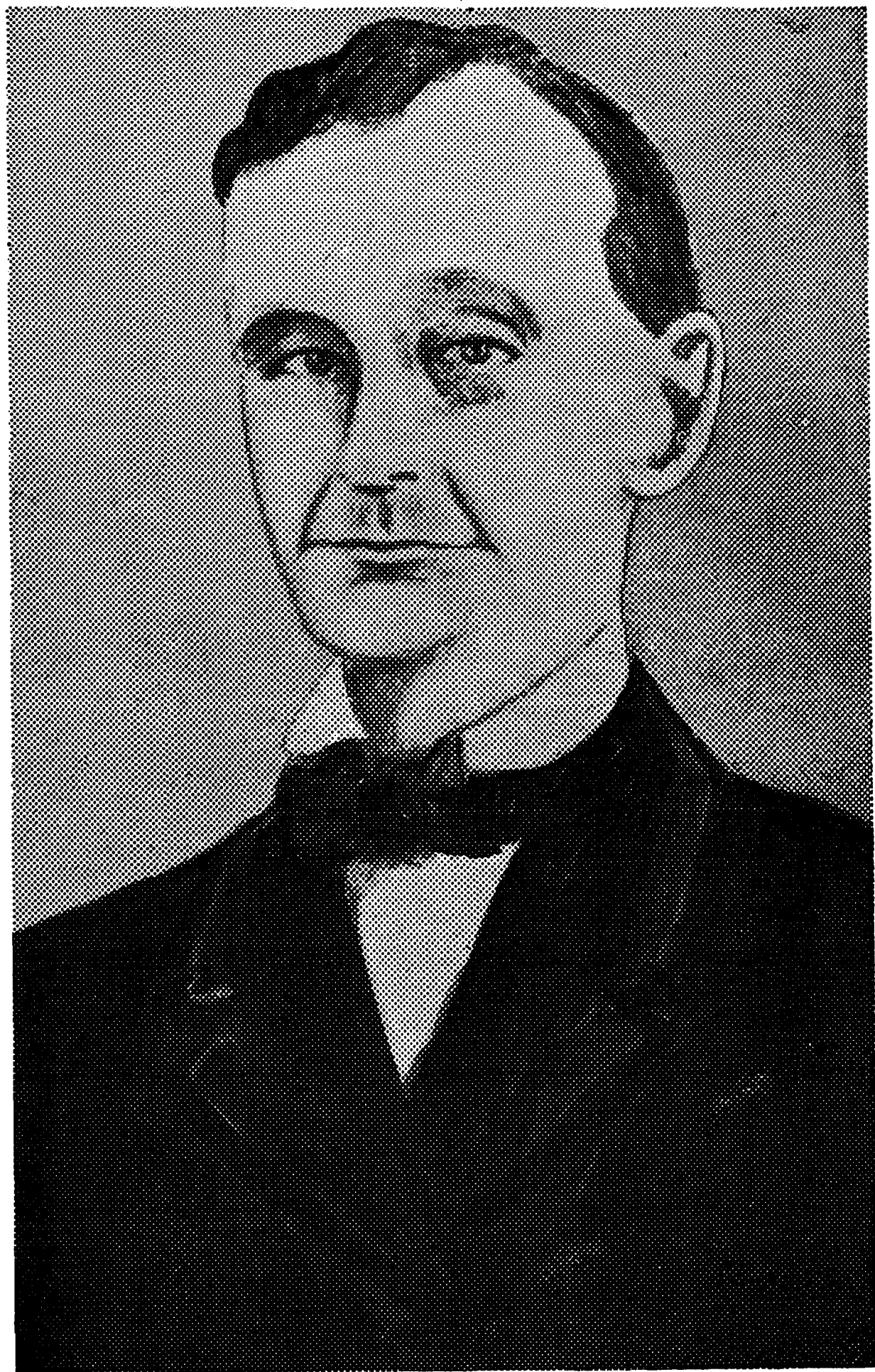
way south and with a few companions reached Lavaca Bay just about the time Dr. Shackelford and his company of Red Rovers coming from Alabama landed on their way to Goliad. He joined Shackelford's company and was with it when Fannin surrendered and when he and his men were massacred. All the American Doctors who were captured with Fannin were spared and put to work treating the Mexicans who were wounded in the fight with Fannin's men. Dr. Barnard had a chest of surgical instruments that he had carried all through his sailings and marches and was using them in the old Mission hospital where he was attending wounded Mexican soldiers, when they were stolen. After a few days he and Dr. Shackelford were sent up to San Antonio where they were kept nearly a month treating Mexicans who had been wounded the previous month at the siege of the Alamo.

He and Dr. Shackelford were in San Antonio when the battle of San Jacinto was fought in April, but news of it did not reach them until the first week in May. They were going their daily rounds treating Mexicans when they observed considerable commotion among the Mexican population. All night long there was excitement and the whole population of the town was moving restlessly. The Mexican soldiers were especially agitated. The town was full of runaway negroes from the Brazos and Colorado plantations and Dr. Barnard asked one of them what all the excitement was about. The darky told him the rumor that Houston's army had routed the Mexicans and taken Santa Anna prisoner. Dr. Barnard went back to his room and noted in his diary the dramatic lines from Byron:

*"It was whispered in Heaven,
It was muttered in Hell,
And an angel caught softly
The sound as it fell."*

When Colonel Handy died in 1838 he left a spouse who had been Mrs. Danforth. Dr. Barnard married the widow and reared the son of Robert Eden Handy.

In 1842 Dr. Barnard moved to Goliad and acquired property and lived there until 1860. In that year he paid a long deferred visit to his boyhood home in Canada and was there when the Civil War began in 1861. He died in that year and was buried in the land of snows. The last years of his life were spent on a ranch five miles from the Fannin battlefield and there his daughter and her children still live (1939). During his five year residence in Richmond he was contemporary and boon companion with Dr. Feris, S. M. Swenson, Randal Jones and



Dr. Joseph H. Barnard

Was in Dr. Shackelford's company at Goliad and was spared the massacre. He afterwards made the first list of the men who fought and fell with Fannin. The exact number of men with Fannin will never be known, but from Dr. Barnard's list, and later checks, it is certain that at least 390 men were in the massacre; about 60 were spared or escaped.

FORT BEND IN THE FORTIES

Wyly Martin, Gail Borden and Moses Lapham, a goodly and illustrious fellowship.

JANE WILKINSON LONG

The story of Mrs. Long, the mother of Texas, has been told as often in Texas as that of Wallace in Scotland, but a history of Fort Bend County would be incomplete without it. Here her headright league was located in 1827, and here she lived for nearly fifty years of peace and comfort after one of the most stormy careers that ever came to a woman.

Born in Maryland in 1798 she became the wife of young Dr. James H. Long when she was only seventeen. They lived near Natchez when the Mexican war for independence was raging, 1818-1820, and adventurers called filibusterers were passing across the border under the pretense of aiding the Mexican patriots.

Dr. Long, who had a young wife and infant daughter, a plantation and a medical practice and every incentive to stay at home and attend to his own business, conceived the quixotic notion that he should come to Texas and aid the oppressed population in throwing off the galling yoke of Spanish tyranny. Now the population of Texas at that time, except the Indians who were not counted, consisted of some five hundred people at Nacogdoches, a thousand at Goliad and two or three thousand at Bexar, and they were indifferent about the yoke of Spanish sovereignty. But regardless of their apathy Dr. Long enrolled a rabble and came to Nacogdoches where he announced himself a liberator, raised a flag of freedom and issued a decree that Texas was henceforth an independent Republic.

The "army" he brought with him was a mob and plundered the people of Nacogdoches until they took to the woods to escape the new freedom. When Austin came through there two years later they had not yet come out of the woods and only twenty people were found in Nacogdoches, and he noted in his diary that it had been destroyed by the Revolution.

Having thus liberated the downtrodden people of Nacogdoches, the Doctor who now called himself "General Long," went back home and recruited another expedition and started it up the dreary uninhabited Gulf coast reaching that gloomy marshland called Bolivar across the channel from the northeast end of Galveston Island. For some strange reason he brought his young wife and infant daughter to this desolate land's end. There being no enemy in sight and no more Texans to liberate nearer than Goliad two hundred miles away, the General de-

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cided to fortify Bolivar Point and built a fort and placed a cannon and raised a flag and renewed his proclamation that Texas was still a Republic and very free.

The pirate LaFitte, who had been doing a thrifty business over on Galveston Island, was about to move out in disgust at the petty competition of these filibusterers. Pretty Mrs. Long took a rowboat and paddled across the channel and called on the pirate who entertained at dinner. He could not be persuaded to join forces with this army of freedom. Their methods "cramped his style" and a few days later he sailed out of Galveston never to return.

All Texas east of the San Antonio River was now free, wild and uninhabited, and the General planned to move on to Goliad and Bexar and extend to the oppressed people there the blessings of freedom he had so generously bestowed at Nacogdoches and Bolivar (where no one lived). He left his wife and child and a few camp followers at Bolivar and went down the coast and up to Goliad. What he did there is quaintly told in the account written by Don Tomas Buentello, the second Alcalde who made an official report after Long had gone.

"The so-called General Long approached the town at day-break with much bustle and uproar, whereupon the people fled from their homes. The first Alcalde directed me to remain and wait events while he went to gather up the scattered people (took to the woods). When I got to the square, Long and his fifty-one Americans and one Spaniard were taking possession of the artillery. When I addressed him through an interpreter he grasped my hand and asked if independence had been sworn to. I told him so, and he ordered one cannon to be fired twice. In doing so one gunner fell fainting, another had his face burned and a pistol hanging from a third man's belt went off and shot him through the leg, all of which made a sad impression on General Long."

There is much more of this narrative, but it is suffice to say that the General and his army were finally rounded up by the Spanish authorities and he was taken down to the City of Mexico. The Revolution succeeded about the time he arrived there and he expected to be received with open arms by the Mexican patriots. Instead they had him assassinated as a nuisance.

All this took time, and while these things were going on Jane Long and her baby girl and the negro girl Kian (Ki), held the fort at bleak Bolivar. True, nobody appeared to dispute their tenure. Winter came, the bay froze over and a bear crossed on the ice (so she related, and she was a truthful woman).

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There were a few wandering Indians on the mainland and at night she could see their fires. So at dawn each day she would fire the cannon to let them know there was artillery at the fort.

General Long had taken the flag of his Republic with him and Mrs. Long in her extremity raised her red flannel petticoat on a flagpole where it floated in the Gulf breeze in sight of the wondering Carancahuas on the mainland. Awed by these emblems of power and authority the Indians let her alone.

In the midwinter when the snow fell so heavily that it broke her tent (so she says, and she was a truthful woman), she gave birth to a child, and the same day she had to go in search of food.

Here alone with Kian and little Ann and the new-born babe she remained during the winter of 1820-21, and when the schooner "Lively" with the first Colonists on their way to the Big Bend of the Brazos passed by in December, 1821, she was standing on the beach with her babe in arms and waved them welcome to Long's Republic. They gave her a barrel of flour, the first she had for many months.

She remained at Bolivar until she had news of the death of General Long, after which she removed to the mainland and in the summer of 1822 she was living upon the San Jacinto River in what is now Harris County.

In 1824 when a controversy arose between her and Randal Jones over a gun she had given or loaned Jones, he wrote Austin the following account of his dealings with her.

Fort Settlement, Feby. 26, 1824.

In the month of July 1822 my brother and I found Mrs. Jane Long low down on the St. Hyacinth (San Jacinto) in a Palmeto Camp (Palmetto leaves) exposed to the rains and sun and nothing to support herself and family except a small quantity of milk which she got from a family near by and we took pity on her and built her a cabin near where we were camped and would hunt and support her as best we could and we gave her cornmeal and pork and venison until August when she proposed to go to San Antonio to see the Governor and asked us to go with her. We furnished her horses for herself and children and we walked all the way."¹

¹ *Austin's Papers*, p. 747.

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She was under the impression that the new Mexican Governor Don Felix Trespacios would do something for her out of gratitude for the great service General Long had contributed to the cause of liberty. He gave her his blessing and she and her children rode back to the Brazos.

When San Felipe was located in 1824 and became the Capital of Austin's Colonies she began a boarding house there and was quite an asset to the social life of the Capital.

J. C. Clopper, who visited there in 1828, gave a social write-up of the town in which he says: "The society of San Felipe consists of two or three married ladies, young and old, and three or four widows, young and old, and two or three young ladies. . . . Among them and at the head I would name Mrs. Long. In person she is tall, forming a beautiful figure, presenting the conformation of a delicate female indeed with the energies of masculine vigor, yet moving with a grace that is truly and wholly feminine. Her countenance though not expressive of the fire of genius nor the striking energies of more than ordinary effective talents, yet is highly interesting. Her eyes are sparkling, her features regular, her aspect smiling, her tongue not too pliant for a female, being kept in admirable subjection to her excellent understanding She will fascinate her auditor by her ease and fluency, etc."²

We forbear further quotation from Mr. Clopper's long character sketch with the observation that Mrs. Long must have made quite an impression on him.

It was reported that she would marry Ben Milam who was with Dr. Long in Mexico when he was killed and who brought her Long's dying message. Milam was a handsome bachelor. Later it was reported she would marry General Houston. A woman of the type Mr. Clopper describes did not remain a widow by necessity in Texas in those days.

In 1835 she had a hotel and boarding house in Brazoria and there the New Orleans Grays were entertained in the autumn of that year on their way to Bexar. Here Austin was tendered the dinner on his return from Mexico in September, 1835 at which he made the keynote speech which brought on the war with Mexico.

Lamar, who had a way with the ladies, boarded at her hotel in Brazoria while he was Vice-President in 1837, and made it his headquarters while he was a candidate for President in 1838.

² 13 *Texas Quarterly*, p. 59.

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He was then a widower and must have been impressed with Mrs. Long's charms as was Mr. Clopper. In 1838 he wrote a poem dedicated to "Bonnie Jane."

*"The moon, the cold, chaste moon, my love,
Is riding in the sky;
And like a bridal veil, my love,
The clouds are floating by.
Oh, brighter than that planet, love,
Thy face appears to me;
But when shall I behold its light,
Through bridal drapery?"*

*We owe our gratitude, my love,
To Sol's enlivening ray;
And yet I prize the moonlight, love,
Above the glare of day.
O bonnie Jane, thou art to me
Whate'er in both is best—
Thou art the moonbeam to mine eye,
The sunbeam to my breast."*

Later Lamar and his second wife lived with Mrs. Long on the plantation on her league near Richmond and he wrote a very credible sketch of her life which was found in manuscript in his papers. He bought his Richmond homestead from her. They quarreled and later he rewrote the poem, erased Bonnie Jane and inscribed it to Miss Anna Truesdell whom he met in Brooklyn.

Austin had confirmed her title to her headright league in 1827 and the upper line of this league calls for the log fort which was then standing, and from this call in her grant we are able to locate the site of the fort today.

She did not take up her residence on the league until 1837 when she came to the new town of Richmond which was on its borders.

She still had her slave, Kian, and had made enough money to buy another negro, and when she came to Richmond she began a plantation and established a hotel, which she continued to operate until her plantation yielded sufficient revenue for her needs.

The baby born at Bolivar died at four years, but little Ann was now a fine young lady and married Edward Winston. Their son, James Edward Winston, was the father of the distinguished Richmond family of Winstons of our day. Ann's husband, Edward Winston, died a few years after their marriage and she

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married Joseph S. Sullivan, who for many years was a leading lawyer at Richmond.

Jane Wilkinson Long died in December, 1880 at the ripe age of eighty-two and is affectionately called the Mother of Texas.³

MOSES LAPHAM

When Houston's army was retreating from Gonzales, and Sesma, the Mexican General, was following with six hundred men, there was an intrepid spy company which Houston had hover behind and report the movements of the enemy. A young handsome fellow lately from Ohio named Moses Lapham was one of this company. They captured two of Sesma's out-riders and brought them in hogtied.

When Sesma camped on the hill across the Colorado from Houston at Beeson's, Lapham was on picket duty the night the Texas army beat its hasty retreat, and the general forgot his pickets and poor Lapham was near famished when he learned he had been deserted by the whole army.

When the two armies were facing each other at San Jacinto and Deaf Smith was sent to destroy Vince's bridge, this same Moses Lapham, brandishing his ax, went on that dramatic enterprise.

Moses Lapham, son of Amos, was born on a farm near Mechanicsburg, Ohio in 1808 and came to Texas in 1831 and became attached to the Bordens with whom he lived until his death in 1838. He was, like Gail and Tom Borden, a land surveyor. After the war he helped the Bordens lay out Houston and later surveyed Richmond and Bordentown addition to Richmond. In 1837 when Fort Bend County was created, Moses Lapham furnished the descriptions for its boundaries. The surveyor and land locator was a busy man in those days, locating the million acres of land that had been granted to soldiers of the Revolution and the heirs of those who fell.

In April Moses Lapham wrote his father from Fort Bend that he had just returned from San Antonio, but he had not completed his business and would soon return there. He declared that nature had been bountiful to Bexar and he would rather live there than any other place he had seen.

In November John P. Borden, writing from Bordentown, told Amos Lapham, "Your son Moses was killed near Bexar

³ When I lived at *Richmond forty years ago children and grandchildren of Kian were there and one of them, Ki Jackson, was a respected citizen.

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on October 20th by the Comanches, being at that time on a surveying expedition in which he had been engaged for six months." He was killed three miles from town on the Presidio-Rio Grande road. Almost in the heart of modern San Antonio they buried this fine young citizen of old Fort Bend and he lies in the eternal sleep with such good company as Ben Milam and those who fell at the Alamo.

N. DORAN MILLARD, ESQUIRE

One day in early February, 1840 a sprightly looking young man, probably forty, tall, angular and shaven clean, got off the Houston stage at Richmond and inquired for a hotel and was shown to the Long boarding house on the Courthouse square where he negotiated for room and board for an indefinite time.

News of his arrival and surmises as to who he was and what he wanted soon filled the town.

He stayed in his room the first day or so, and rumors got out through the colored woman who was de facto chambermaid at the Long house, that he had brought with him books and papers. The quantity of these increased in current gossip from day to day until it was talked about town that he had smuggled in his rather scant luggage an enormous library.

He gave the name Millard and that he was an Englishman who had been lured to Texas by its genial climate and glorious history, and that he intended to become a citizen. He said that he was a barrister in London, also a literary man and that probably he would buy a plantation, settle down, practice law and write a book.

These several statements as to his origin and vocation reasonably satisfied the local gentry and was all even Dr. Feris could get out of him.

An immediate intimate acquaintance sprung up between him and James Riddell, the gunsmith and cutler in whose shop the London barrister spent hours each day, and it was soon known about town that the barrister and gunsmith had known each other elsewhere.

When Millard was not down at Riddell's shop in deep earnest conversation with the gunsmith, he was up at his room in the Long house writing hours each day, and the light of his candle could be seen late into the night.

The mystery of Riddell's coming three years before and of the long letters or essays he would write and send away to London by the Houston stage had settled down to the common-

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place. No one had ever learned what they were about and no one seemed to care.

But it was all reopened. Here was a tall, prosperous looking Londoner, a barrister who must have some connection with Riddell's industrious schemes, whatever they were. A man could not write all day and all night in Richmond in 1840 and give the necessary evidence of visible means of support. Riddell had chosen the gunsmith alibi and Millard selected two. First, he sought out the proprietor of the Richmond Telescope and Literary Register and bought a small interest in that puny periodical, and on March 17, 1840 it carried the formal announcement that Nicholas Millard, "a gentleman of talent," had become associated in the Editorial Department. Second, he sought admission to the Richmond Bar.

At the April, 1840 term of the district court Judge William Jefferson Jones presiding, Nicholas D. P. Millard "having satisfied the court of his qualifications, talent, integrity and good morals, and having taken the oath of allegiance, etc." was granted a license to practice law in the courts of the Republic. Even the most incredulous must admit that the lanky Englishman was now a bona fide Texan.

His activities with the Editorial Department of the Richmond Telescope and Literary Register were very light, occupying only an hour a week, and his law practice was still lighter, for he never had a case. Nevertheless, he was a busy man, talking for hours with the gunsmith and writing in his room at the Long house all day and late at night.

Riddell told curious persons who would question him about Millard's writings, that he was writing a Texas novel for a London publishing house, and Millard would say he was taking notes from *Blackstone* or *Chitty on Pleading*, or whatever ancient author came in mind. He could have copied the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in the long days and nights he scribbled away.

He made several trips to Houston in May and June and one to Austin, where he remained a week.

Late in July he told that he had been called back to London by the death of a relative, and it was hinted he had inherited a fortune or a title or both.

There was a farewell dinner at which young Dr. Feris presided and among the guests were the whole Richmond Bar, Herndon, Bassett and Parkerson, also Riddell, the gunsmith, McMahan, the merchant, and others whom Dr. Feris could not recall after nearly sixty years. He did remember, however, that Millard assured them one and all he appreciated the hospitality

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and would always remember the Richmond folks with deep affection.

The next day the Saturday stage to Houston carried Millard, Esquire, and his baggage, and Richmond saw him no more. Dr. Feris, Riddell and the whole Richmond Bar bade him good-bye.

Eighteen months later the English publishing house of Smith, Elder & Cornhill printed a scurrilous libel which was entitled *Millard's History of the Republic of Texas*. Two years later Dr. Ashbel Smith got a copy of the book in London and sent it to Dr. Feris in Richmond, and it was read by the entire population with explosions of wrath. But Millard never returned. Riddell, the gunsmith and cutler, had been gone a year and the incident was closed.

I make no doubt that the copy of the book which Dr. Feris gave me in 1897 was the only one which ever reached Richmond and one of not more than a dozen that ever came to Texas.

Question: Why did the oily Englishman so abuse the hospitality of the good people of Richmond?

Answer: When Texas assumed sovereignty after the Revolution of 1835-1836 it fixed its western boundaries by a decree of its Congress in December, 1836 to begin at the mouth of the Rio Grande and go up that river to its source and thence to the 42° longitude fixed by the Adams de Onis treaty of 1819 as the line between Spain and the United States. This new dividing line took nearly 400,000 square miles of Mexican territory. Mexico, torn by internal dissension, was unable to renew the war to recover what had been lost at San Jacinto, and was short of cash, and unable to pay its foreign debts which were pressing.

In April, 1837, a year after San Jacinto, the Mexican Congress proposed to its British bondholders (the bonds were then long in default), that these obligations should be refunded by a new series payable in 1866 and secured by land warrants on the vacant lands in the departments of Texas, New Mexico, California at the rate of four acres for each pound sterling. These warrants were to be delivered with the new bonds and upon default of interest payments the holder of the warrant could go to Texas and locate his four acres for each pound sterling.

This proposal which was presented to the British bondholders by de Yturbide, the Mexican agent in London, was duly considered by them and counter-proposals were made and negotiations continued for two years before the deal was finally closed and the new bonds and land warrants issued.

In the meantime while all this was going on, trade rivalries be-

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tween the United States and England and the desire of England to carry the cotton from Texas plantations and of course sell them goods, led the Palmerston ministry to recognize the independence of Texas. This, of course, was an awful shock to the bondholders committee and to the bondholders. What could they do with land warrants issued by the Mexican nation upon Texas lands after San Jacinto unless they had the backing of the British government to force the Republic of Texas to recognize these warrants? And how could the British government do this after it had recognized the independence of Texas?

There were ten million pounds sterling of these bonds and the land warrants would cover forty million acres. In their desperate plight they conceived the childlike plan of sending Millard to Texas to gather material and write a series of articles for publication which would so turn public opinion in England as to cause the ministry to reverse itself at least far enough to require Texas to accept the land warrants.

Riddell, who had been in Mexico during the Revolution, was probably an employee of this same bondholders committee and during his entire stay in Richmond a kind of spy for them. Just what he saw or heard in Fort Bend that would help them, God only knows, but an Englishman has some queer notions.

When Millard returned to London in the autumn of 1840 bringing his bulky manuscripts, it was decided not to publish the series of articles but to write a brief or argument which could be used in a discussion of the Mexican bond question in Parliament and with the foreign office. This was done and later Millard expanded it into what he called a history.

A glimpse of it will show what he was so industriously writing at the Long boarding house in the summer nights when his candle flickered in the night wind long after Richmond was in deep sleep. It will also give us an idea of how we appeared to a London barrister of the 1840s.

He tells Lord Palmerston in particular, and the world in general, that "Texas is and has been a land of murder, in which over 650 bloody deeds have been committed in recent years, most of them the massacre of Indians." Among them he includes the killing of Jesse Thompson by Thos. H. Borden in the Bend in 1834 as an example of depravity. He refers to the massacre of the harmless peace loving Comanche chiefs at a peace powwow in San Antonio in 1840. He says that Texans, descendants of English stock in the United States, are really grandchildren of England, but he says—"it is painful to note the singular deformities and rapid degradation in civilization and morality."

"Texas," he says, "is a country filled with habitual liars,

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drunkards, blasphemers and slanderers, sanguinary gamesters and cold-blooded assassins. The people are divided into four classes—despotic landowners, usefuls, contemptibles and loafers.”

In the second class he puts overseers, storekeepers, a kind of white collar group. The contemptibles are the poor white people who work. The most evident class he found was the loafers who annoyed him very much. He could not go into a dram shop without a swarm of them following him to the bar willing to drink at his expense.

Having thus divided them into classes and noted their distinctive features he proceeds to throw them back into the aggregate and take a perspective of them in which he finds:

“They exhibit all the features of a ruffianized European mob to which, however, they are greatly inferior in social refinement.”

He says the slaves are generally owned by New Orleans cotton brokers, who keep agents constantly traveling in the State to take the cotton for the installments due on the mortgaged slaves.

There was probably some truth in this last statement.

Having disposed of the population in general he then pays his respects to the ladies. Of them he says: “The Texan ladies seldom show themselves to strangers. When they do they appear like those of the States with either pipe or swab in mouth. They have little neatness or cleanliness of person to attract the eye.”

He is sure, and says so, that from such a people must come a more and more degenerate race.

Dr. Feris had marked these passages and when he read them to me he said, “What do you think would have happened to N. Doran Millard if that manuscript had fallen into our hands in the summer of 1840?” I made no reply thinking he would tell me. He assumed I knew and turned to another marked page.

He tells of some of the odd expressions he heard on the streets. A Texan meets a friend or acquaintance after a long absence and desirous to know about his health and well being asks, “How does your copperosity sagaciate this mawning?” If a Texan desires to make a commonplace weather observation he says, “A pretty considerable jug full of sun,” or “A tarnation up-street sort of day this I calculate.”

Their propensities to whittle interested him as it did his countryman Charles Dickens on his visit to the States a few years later. Millard says he saw a Richmond citizen whittle away the very legs of the chair in which he was sitting.

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He went to church and heard Rev. Taylor preach. "On entering the room I found all the ladies sitting on one side busily engaged with their fans. On the other side the gentlemen chewing tobacco."

But he keeps his crowning insult for the hotels and boarding houses he has seen in Texas, "Conducted in a miserable filthy way filled with vermin and wretched food." The beds did not at all suit him. He did not find a single feather bed in the Republic.

He tells much of the cruelty to the negroes; that in March he was riding near the Thompson plantation three miles above town when Thompson was selling the mother of three children and how they wept at parting; of seeing negroes sold at the Courthouse door at Richmond; and he deplores that the enlightened example of Mexico in abolishing slavery had not been followed in Texas.

The efforts of the unfortunate British holders of Mexican bonds to enlist the aid of Her Majesty's government to validate their Mexican certificates for 40,000,000 acres of Texas land failed and N. Doran Millard's stay in Richmond and his history passed to oblivion. Sixty years later old Dr. Feris said of him, "He certainly knew how to mix some good drinks."

THE DR. LONGS AND SWENSON

Those who first advertised Richmond in 1837 advised the world that though it was in the most densely populated portion of the Republic there was no physician in the County. The inference was that none was needed. Maybe this advertisement brought the several doctors who came in 1837-1840. One of the first was George W. Long who came in October, 1837. He was a fine young man in his thirties, handsome in his long Prince Albert coat which he wore the year around, and his young wife, Jeanette, was beautiful. Out of college a few years before, the young doctor had married this accomplished daughter of a Tennessee planter and she had inherited plantation and slaves. Ill health induced the doctor to sell the Tennessee farms and round up the Tennessee negroes and come to Texas, and they opened a Brazos plantation on part of the Knight and White League just across from the Big Bend. Doctor Long made a show of practicing his profession, brought a stock of drugs with him and kept a kind of apothecary shop.

But his health was no better in the Brazos bottom than it had been in East Tennessee and he soon gave up not only the little medical practice he had aspired to do, but the active

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management of the plantation and its large slave population of forty negroes which was entrusted to an overseer.

The year after the Longs came to Fort Bend, a young Swede named Swenson M. Swenson—Swen Swenson he called himself—landed from a stranded emigrant boat on Galveston Island and found his way up to Columbia on the Brazos where he procured employment with the great John Adriance, who, like Dr. Long, had recently come out from New York for his health and began a mercantile venture in which he prospered for over sixty years.

Swenson conceived the idea of extending the business by carrying goods to the customer and outfitted a wagon loaded with such things as would sell on the plantations, and drove up and down the Brazos, a kind of dignified peddler. His rounds took him to Richmond where he became a familiar figure, and he would cross the river in the bend at the Thompson ferry and visit the Long plantation where he also became a familiar figure.

Dr. Long was conscious of the precarious state of his health and deeply concerned about what would become of his girl-wife and the plantation and the forty slaves in case of his death. He had no confidence in his overseer and conceived the idea that he could interest the handsome young Swede in the management of the plantation.

Swenson for the time gave up his mercantile venture and became a large scale cotton farmer.

The next year Dr. Long died of consumption and a year later Swenson married the beautiful Jeanette Long and purchased an adjoining plantation from the estate of the late Jesse Thompson and enlarged his cotton crop. Mrs. Swenson had, however, contracted tuberculosis and died. Two years later Swenson married her cousin.

While he was on the plantation he induced his brother and sister to join him, and his sister married Dyer, grandson of William Stafford.

After him came also from Sweden the Fosgards and Palms who became in later years well known names in Texas.

Swenson sold his plantations and slaves in the middle '40s and removed to Austin where he became a banker and dealt in lands and made a fortune and was an outstanding figure in the business world. When the war came in 1861 he was known to be against secession, and one of those vile mobs, who were called vigilance committees, arranged to hang him. He

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left by the back door while they were parleying for admission in front, and escaped on a mule which carried him to the Rio Grande. Safe in Mexico he engaged in the export cotton business, handling Texas cotton hauled to Matamoros to be delivered to foreign boats, and doubled his fortune. After the war he went to New York where he became a prominent banker and where his sons have carried on for generations after he passed away.

They tell a story that when he was in business at Columbia with Adriance, he carefully hoarded \$1,000 in gold which was produced in an emergency when their store was burned. And when he built his home in Austin he used the trowel and manipulated the brick and mortar in the chimney so as to hide this time \$20,000 in gold. It remained concealed there during the troubled days of the Civil War. After the war he had his banker friend, B. A. Shepherd of Houston, go to Austin and lift the family hearthstone and get the treasure for him.

The marriage records at Richmond show that Swenson and Mrs. Jeanette Long were married December 12, 1843. Sir Swanthe Palm was one of the wedding guests and there was a great dinner which Dr. Feris talked about fifty-four years later.

* * * * *

Fort Bend of the '40s was not essentially different in its community life from the Colonial days. Protestant preachers, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, who had been banned before the Revolution, were in evidence now.

The Methodist Church has preserved the details of its origin and celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in Richmond in 1939. On January 22, 1839 Reverend Jesse Hord, a Methodist missionary from Tennessee, gathered half a dozen of the faithful at the home of Dr. Bryant, who was proprietor of the town hotel and they launched the Richmond First Methodist Church for all time.

A correspondent from Richmond writing for the Galveston News in 1851 boasted of a new academy, two stores and a Methodist Church. I infer from this that there was no other church organized until after 1851.

In 1841 "We, the people of Richmond," signed a petition to Congress to abolish the town corporation.

The Richmond Bar at this time included H. J. Parkerson, J. H. Herndon and C. N. Bassett.

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A lawyer with the poetic name of Colin de Bland, who was in 1840 practicing at Brazoria, came to Richmond in 1842. He was a progressive person and in 1844 was at Columbus.

In 1842 the County purchased a house from the estate of Lusk situated at the river end of Morton Street for \$600 which was the Courthouse until 1849. The site has long ago fallen into the river. The Courthouse of 1849 was a two-story brick building which cost over \$6,000 and was the pride of the County. A correspondent of the Galveston Journal in July, 1850 who visited Richmond said it was large and handsome and reflected great credit on the County.

During the ten years after San Jacinto, Mexico still claimed Texas, but did little to assert the claim other than a few marauding expeditions across the Rio Grande, two of which came as far as San Antonio.

In retaliation for the second of these Mexican raids led by a General Woll, there was a call to arms in September, 1842 and volunteer companies from all over Texas were on the march to Bexar and the border and one of these recruited in Fort Bend County was led by William Ryon, a young man who had come from Kentucky in 1837 and married Mary Moore Jones, daughter of Henry Jones.

Long before the Texans got to the border the invaders were safe across in the hills.

The Texas army led by General Somerville disbanded, but a fragment of several companies formed a short "regiment" led by Colonel William Fisher (307 men) and one of the companies in this so-called regiment was led by William Ryon. There were 61 men in Captain Ryon's company and most of them were recruited in Fort Bend County. A number of them were old residents, some of them recent arrivals who had come in September to join Ryon's Company.

They crossed the Rio Grande in December and laid siege to the town of Mier and after a two days battle surrendered to General Ampudia.

Under orders from President Santa Anna they were marched first to Matamoros and then to the City of Mexico.

The so-called Mier expedition was not a matter of any great moment, it decided nothing and at most was one of those minor military episodes which are usually soon forgotten. But the dramatic incident of the "death lottery" at Salado in March, 1843 clothed it with an interest which has made it immortal, and it is one of the chapters in Texas history, and

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since many men in Captain Ryon's Company came from Fort Bend it is a chapter in our local history as well.

A number of Captain Ryon's Fort Bend County men were killed or wounded at Mier. Among them—Malcolm McCauley, a Scotchman who was able to get as far as Matamoros where he died July 14, 1843. He was an adventurer who had left a wife and children in New York and had found his way to Richmond in time to enlist. Hank Kuykendall, son of Joseph of the Three Hundred, was killed. Samuel McDade died at Reynosa on the way to Matamoros.

George B. Pilant was wounded and placed in a hospital at Matamoros, but in some way effected his escape and got home six months later. He was living on Big Creek in 1860 with his wife and daughters. He gave his age then forty-eight and his nativity, Alabama.

Edwin Brown was left as a river guard on the night before Christmas when his fellows crossed to attack Mier, and on the next day he left for home. On the way out he was joined by Wm. E. Dressler, Ralph Gilpin, Z. Lucas and James Buchanan and they came home together.

On Saturday, the last day of the year, the prisoners were started on their long march all the way from Mier to Matamoros in order to show them off, and great crowds gathered in each village to see them pass.

At Reynosa a triumphal arch had been raised and the miserable men were paraded through the lousy village for the edification of the people.

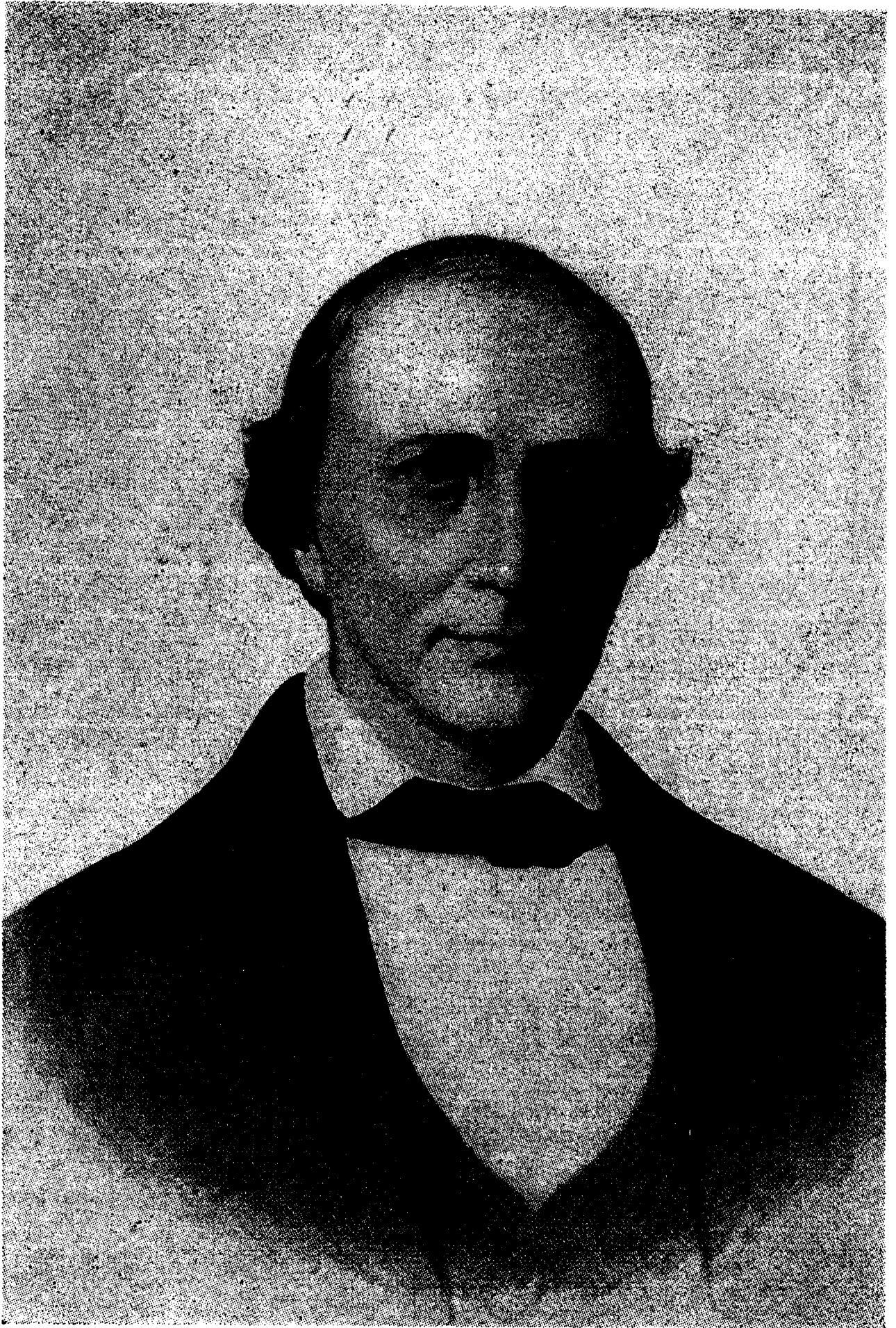
At Matamoros the performance was repeated and on January 14th those able to walk were put on the road to Monterrey where they arrived on January 29th.

After three days rest they were off up the mountain to Saltillo. Their fare was a bit of lean beef and a piece of bread, and when they reached Saltillo they were nearly famished. Here Barney Bryan, of Richmond, died of pneumonia on March 9th.

At the hacienda Salado seventy-three miles below Saltillo, the men executed a long planned plot to rush the guards and escape on the early morning of February 11th, killing several of their guards. They took to the mountains and made a desperate effort to reach the Rio Grande. But after many days the most of them were recaptured; a number died in the mountains.

Among Ryon's men who died in the mountains were William H. Cody and Stanford Rice.

They were returned to Salado and on March 25th, by orders of President Santa Anna, the 170 survivors were made to draw



Colonel Wm. Ryon

FORT BEND IN THE FORTIES

beans from a jar which contained 170, one in ten black, and the men who drew black beans were summarily executed. Four of Colonel Ryon's men drew black beans, but only one was from Fort Bend. He was William H. Roan, a young man from Appalachicola, Florida who had come to Fort Bend in 1840. Roan left a mother and brother in Florida but no relations or near friends in Texas.⁴

After this decimation the remnant were marched on to the City of Mexico. On the way down Robert S. Beard died of exposure at San Luis Potosi on April 8, 1843, and William H., his brother, died in prison at Santiago three months later. When these brothers came to draw at Salado, Robert was ill and knew he would never live to get home and he proposed to William that if he, William, drew a black bean and Robert drew a white one, they would exchange. They both drew white beans but neither got home. Their brother Andrew Beard was a soldier at San Jacinto and died in Fort Bend in 1866.⁵

It was reported and recorded that Robert Harper Beal, who had been wounded at Mier, died in Santiago with William Beard, but this was an exaggeration as we shall see.

While the prisoners were in the City of Mexico they were made to work the streets, and one day Patrick K. Daugherty walked away and has never been seen or heard of to this day.

John Fitzgerald, who walked away shortly after Pat, got home six months later.

After several weeks in the City of Mexico the remainder of the Mier men, including Ryon's remnant, were marched over the mountains 150 miles to the Dungeon of Perote. O. R. Willis died on the way.

A fellow prisoner of Willis, A. S. Thurmond, wrote Willis' wife in Tennessee the mournful details of his death, that he had been reduced to a skeleton. Some years later Captain Ryon administered on Willis' estate in Fort Bend County and the original of Thurmond's letter from Perote is among the papers in probate.

The Mier men were merged with Santa Fe prisoners and others who had been carried away from San Antonio in raids by Vasquez and Woll and kept in Perote for more than a year. Many of them died there. Those from Fort Bend who died in

⁴ See Probate Records Fort Bend County, 1853 where Colonel Ryon administered his estate.

⁵ There are many descendants of A. J. Beard living in Fort Bend County today.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

Perote were John M. Shipman, son of Moses Shipman of Oyster Creek, James Burk, Samuel P. Bennett (died of yellow fever), A. T. Burrus, John C. Grosjean, Isaam Zed and William Morris. This young man and his half brother, Alexander Armstrong, came to the Oyster Creek neighborhood in 1834. They were then orphans, eight and eleven years old, and found homes with the Shipmans and the Staffords. They drew white beans at Salado, but William Morris was left in an unmarked grave outside the grim walls of Perote.

Alexander Armstrong, the half brother, got home with the remnant in September, 1844.

After Alexander's return to Fort Bend he married a German girl and the 1850 census taker found him living back on Oyster Creek with his wife and an infant son, William L. Armstrong. In 1860 he and his German wife and three small children still lived on Oyster Creek.

Andrew Jackson Roark, son of Elijah Roark of Oyster Creek, came home from Perote.

Two years later when the war between the United States and Mexico was on, Andrew Jackson Roark went back to Mexico at the head of a company of Texas troops and joined General Taylor's army, and was at the capture of Mexico City. He took occasion to re-visit Perote and other familiar places under more favorable circumstances. When he got home in 1849 he heard of the discovery of gold in California and was off to the Pacific and never came back.

Frederick Whitehurst came home with Roark and the others, and in 1849 just before Roark went to California he sold his land in the Roark League to Whitehurst who stayed on the farm.

Robert G. Waters was a nephew of J. D. Waters, the Fort Bend County planter, who had just come out from South Carolina to visit Uncle Johnathan when Captain Ryon was mustering his company for the march on Mexico. Waters went all the way to Perote from where he was released by the intervention of friends in the United States in February, 1844. He stayed in Mexico until 1846 when he reached Matamoros on his leisurely way out. There he found General Taylor's army which he joined, intending, like Jack Roark and Gilbert Brush, to see Mexico at another angle. He, however, sickened and died in Matamoros before the march into Mexico began.⁶

⁶ See Probate Papers Fort Bend County where J. D. Waters administered his estate.



Mier Prisoners

FORT BEND IN THE FORTIES

Other Fort Bend men released in the general order September 16, 1844 were Stephen A. Barney, Francis Riley, Henry Woodard and William K. H. Frensley. Frensley had escaped with sixteen men who dug out in March 1844, but was recaptured and held until September. Copeland Willis escaped with Frensley and was retaken and released with him.

Charles S. Kelley and E. H. Pitts, released with the others, returned with them by boat as far as New Orleans and vanished.

H. V. Morrel, son of the pioneer preacher, came home via New Orleans and took up his residence in Harris County.

Robert Michael Pilley was an Englishman temporarily in Richmond when he joined Ryon's Company and after going all the way to Perote, returned to Texas, and took a trip back to old England. He returned from England and took up his residence in Austin County where he married Miss Bradbury. His descendants live in Austin County and in Harris County to this day.

Gilbert R. Brush was a lad of fourteen. He and the boy John C. C. Hill of Fayette County and Billie Reese of Brazoria, were the "Boy Captives" about which Mrs. Iglehart wrote her book years ago. These boys were left at Matamoros with the wounded men and did not go on with those who made the break at Salado. But a week or so later they, with George B. Crittenden and several others, were marched out via Tampico and all the way to Mexico, and little Brush was in Perote Prison with his Fort Bend County friends.

Gilbert Russell Brush was the son of Elkana Brush, who with his wife, Sarah, was living in Fort Bend in 1850, had come to Texas from New York before the Revolution. She was a native of Massachusetts, and both were then fifty-four. Elkana was with Dimmit's Company at Goliad in the autumn of 1835 and one of the signers of the Goliad Declaration of Independence, but did not stay with Fannin's ill-fated men. In 1836 Elkana was elected at Refugio to the first Congress of the Republic and served a term, after which he came to Fort Bend. In 1850 the family consisted of the father and mother and one daughter Sarah, fourteen. Their son Bradford Brush, twenty-four, unmarried, was then Constable at Richmond.

In 1878 Buddie Brush won the prize for the best exhibit of white mice at the Fort Bend County Fair.

There was another family of Brush, also from New York, which was in Fort Bend County in 1860. R. F. and Elizabeth and their two children, Sarah and Matt M., the latter an infant.

Gilbert went back into Mexico with Taylor's army in 1847

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

and was wounded at the battle of Monterrey. After the Mexican War he went to California where he was killed in 1859.

William Kinch Davis, son of the Colonist Wm. K. Davis, and father of our J. H. P. Davis, went all the way, drew a white bean and stayed in Perote until September, 1844 and came home just in time to claim his sweetheart who was about to marry another fellow. He lived for fifty years to tell and retell of his adventures.

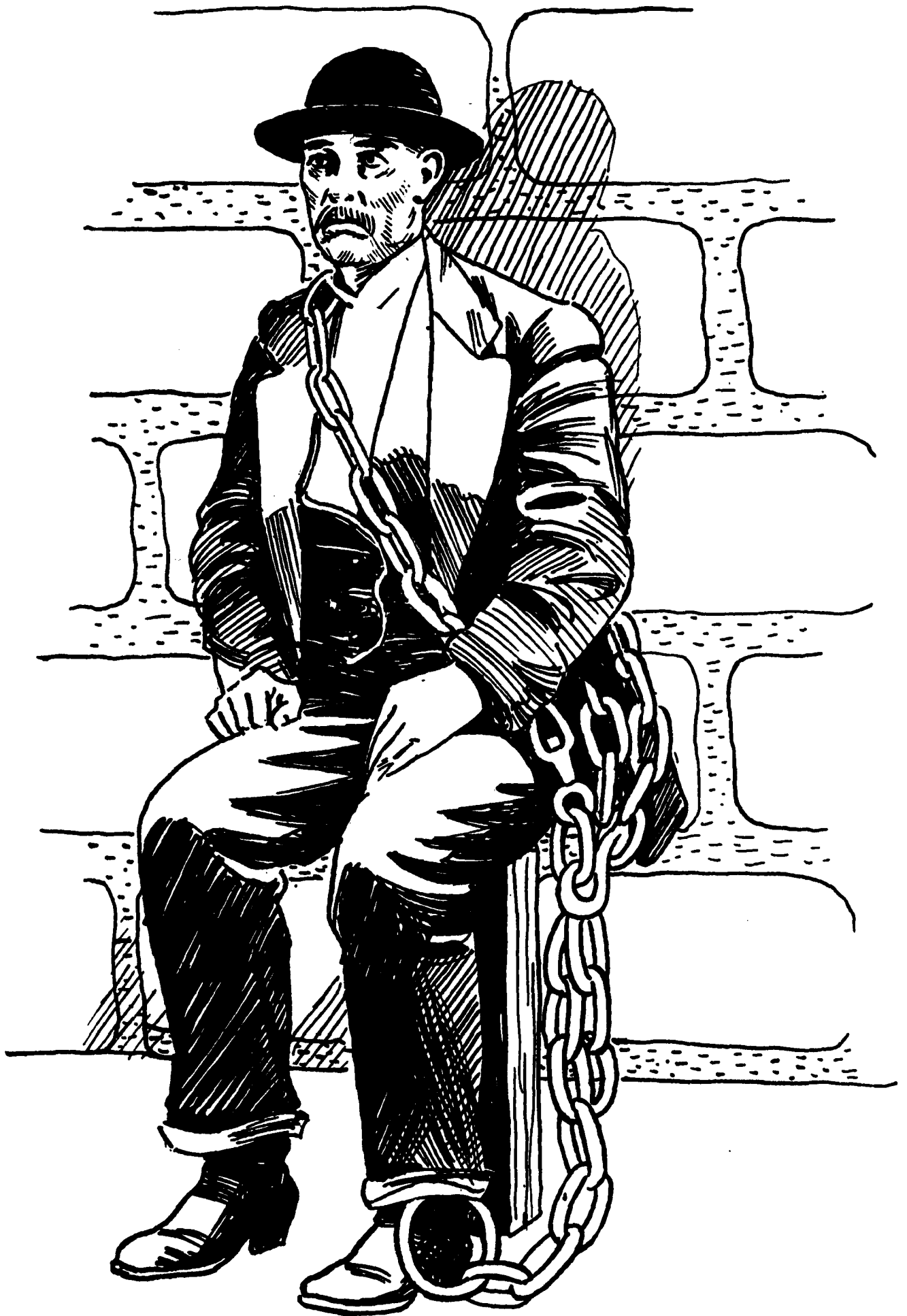
Judge Fenton M. Gibson, who had been first Chief Justice of Galveston County, had married Anna Corban Beal, daughter of Captain Thomas K. Beal and sister of Robert Harper Beal. The Beals came to Fort Bend soon after the Revolution (1836) and Judge Gibson came later and joined Captain Ryon's Company there. He went all the way from Mier to Perote and came home with the remnant in September, 1844. Judge Gibson practiced law in Richmond for many years after his return, and in 1852-4 edited a weekly newspaper called the Richmond Recorder.

Another daughter, Julia Lee Beal, married C. N. Bassett and they were the parents of Clem Bassett, whose name will be often found on the succeeding pages.

Elizabeth Beal, the mother of Mrs. Gibson, Mrs. Bassett, and Robert H. Beal, died in Richmond July 24, 1843. The Beals were from Virginia and were related to the Lees.

Several months before Judge Gibson got home, Robert Harper Beal walked into Richmond more like a ghost than a man. Sowel, in his *History of Fort Bend County* written in 1904 (p. 216), says that he was told that Robert H. Beal was shot through the lung, that he walked all the way from Mexico to Richmond and stumbled into the village more dead than alive; that Thompson McMahan, the merchant, recognized him and embraced him with so much fervor that it caused his wound to break and he came near bleeding to death. This may be legendary, but the facts are that Beal was in Richmond on December 27, 1843, for on that day he signed a petition to the Texas Congress for the relief of the Mier prisoners who had not yet returned from Mexico. He was Sheriff in Fort Bend County in 1850 and was then only twenty-eight years old and had a wife, Martha, who was twenty.

There was a John S. Stansbury with Ryon's men who had his eye shot out at the rush on the guards at Salado and was not able to follow his comrades. He was reported dead, but came home in September, 1844 and made his home with his father, Thomas Stansbury in Fort Bend County. The last mention of him is in Thomas' will, written 1856, in which the father says,



William Kinch Davis in Perote Prison

FORT BEND IN THE FORTIES

"My son John has been more expense to me than the balance of my children" and on this reason he disinherits John.

Lieutenant George C. Crittenden, who came to the County about 1840, was from Kentucky where he had known Captain Ryon. He was wounded at Mier and left at Matamoros with the three boys, Hill, Reese and Gilbert Brush. Later they were sent on to Mexico by way of Tampico where through some influence Crittenden was released and allowed to go on to Mexico City.

Captain William M. Ryon, Colonel Ryon, as he was called in later life, was born in Kentucky in 1808 and came to Texas in 1837. After the battle of Mier when the Texans were being marched through Matamoros Captain Ryon met a Kentucky friend of his father's and got a draft cashed for money which did him and his friends great good in the long two years imprisonment. He drew a white bean at Salado but saw four of his men draw black ones. He died in Fort Bend in 1875 and his wife, Aunt Polly, survived him twenty-one years.

There were at least two Fort Bend County men in other companies at Mier. Wyly Martin Jones, son of Randal Jones, was among those who escaped from Perote in March, 1843 and made his way home. He joined the overland gold rush to California in 1849. Benjamin Z. Boone, grandson of Daniel Boone, went all the way from Mier to Perote and was released with the last remnant and came home with them.

Houston Wade, the historian of the Mier men, says of Uncle Benjamin—"After reaching home he made a trip up into Fayette County with the last message to the family of the Trimble boys, one of whom had died with Dawson, the other in Perote. He met the widow of Edward Trimble and consoled her and married her and took her home with him."

Freeman W. Douglas, long after a resident of the County, whose picture is shown on extreme right of group (at page 114) lived on the Bernard.

There were so many men from Fort Bend in this unfortunate expedition that a kind of mass meeting was held in December, 1843 and a petition was presented to the Congress asking that a law be passed to stay all action for debt against these men pending their return. A bill was offered to that effect, which was referred to a Committee of which Dr. Joseph H. Barnard, then a member of Congress, was chairman. The act was passed in January, 1844.

The survivors were home again a few months later.

The greatest question that came before the people in the mid-forties was annexation to the United States. At the close of

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

the Revolution in 1836 Texas had voted all but unanimously for annexation, but the anti-slavery influences in the States had defeated the project for ten years. President Houston had now opened negotiations with England for the purpose of forcing the States to offer annexation to keep England out of Texas. Our people had been warned that it was good politics to seem indifferent to the proposal which was (1845) being made by the United States Senate.

There was a mass meeting at Richmond on January 15th over which the lawyer-planter R. C. Campbell presided and a committee was appointed to report resolutions which would express the sentiment of the people. It was C. C. Dyer, J. S. Sullivan, T. H. Dryden, J. H. Herndon, Dr. Feris and Dr. Barnard. The minutes of the meeting recite that they deliberated an hour after which they reported a very dignified and somewhat indifferent resolution which said in substance—We have heretofore offered to become incorporated in the United States without success and now if the hand of fellowship should be extended to us by the States it would be accepted. But our dignity as a nation requires that we do no more than to say that while acceptable to us we will not beg for it.

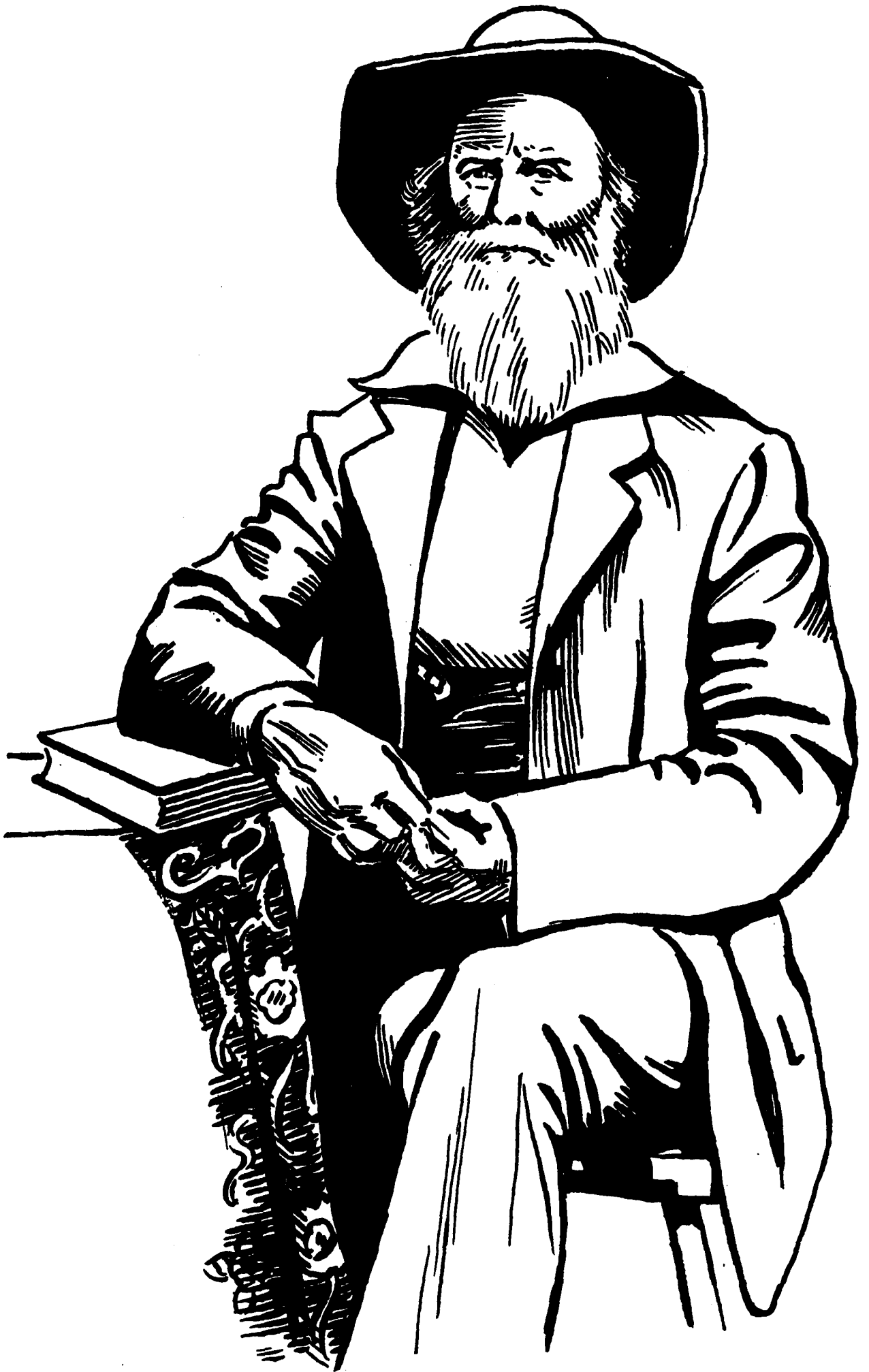
There was speaking and after the "indifferent" resolution had been adopted with poorly concealed anxiety and enthusiasm, they adjourned to the barbecue prepared for the occasion.

But the issue rose to fever heat all over Texas and in the United States as well in the early months of 1845, and English intrigues were manifest. This indifference wore threadbare in Fort Bend and early in April there was another "mass meeting" which seems to have been spontaneous.

They came from all over the County, "Men of the Old Three Hundred, Pilgrims who had come with Austin, survivors of Goliad, and men just home from Mier and Perote." Someone unfurled the stars and stripes, and indifference was cast to the winds. "There were shouts from gray-haired men who wept with joy to see the flag of their native land planted on the soil they had won from tyranny."

In order to make these sentiments official a countywide meeting was called and held on April 21st and the beloved Dr. J. B. Miller presided. Lawyer Campbell spoke again. He and Judge Fenton M. Gibson and Dr. Barnard wrote the resolutions which were adopted with a yell.

The beautiful sentiment of these simple resolutions became a slogan in Texas during the next few months when annexation was being debated with feverish anxiety. "Be it therefore



B. Z. Boone of San Bernard, grandson of Daniel Boone

FORT BEND IN THE FORTIES

resolved," they read, "that like the prodigal son who had sojourned long in foreign lands, we will return with pleasure to our father's house."

These were the sentiments of Dr. Barnard, who had faced death at Goliad, and of Fenton Gibson, still limping from the wounds of the Mier, and of everyone in the County.

Dr. Miller was sent as our delegate to the July, 1845 Convention which wrote the Constitution for the State of Texas.

When the question of Annexation and the adoption of the new Constitution was put to the people formally in October, every vote cast in the County was for them.

Thus by unanimous vote, Fort Bend entered the "Father's House" in October, 1845 and by the same vote it left it in February, 1861 as shall be seen in a later sadder chapter.

Hopes were high and the burdens of government light in the '40s. The total taxes assessed in the County for all purposes in 1845 were \$2,289.07, including 182 poll taxes.

In those days a self-reliant citizenship fought hardships and supported the government and did not, as in our degenerate days, howl for the government to support the citizen.

In December, 1845 after Annexation had been accepted and was an accomplished fact, thirty citizens of the County, all well known and representative, issued an open letter to General Houston telling him that they were mindful of his great services during the last ten years and inviting him to a public dinner to be held in his honor.

A few weeks later he was chosen United States Senator from Texas, which high office he held until 1858 when his views against secession drove him from the Senate and for the time lost him his friends in Fort Bend.

CHAPTER X

FORT BEND IN THE FIFTIES

When the County was created in 1837 there were not more than five hundred white residents and not so many negroes. One hundred twenty-eight men signed the petition for the creation of the County and at the first election in January, 1838 there were one hundred seventy votes cast. Many of these voters were men without families who had lately arrived.

At the Presidential election in 1838 Lamar received two hundred and twenty votes and Robert Wilson, twenty-five; total: two hundred and forty-five. And in the election six years later Anson Jones had one hundred and thirty-two votes and General Burleson one hundred fifty-one; total: two hundred and eighty-three.

The colored population, however, increased faster than the white for every planter was using all his efforts to get more slaves and in 1850 when the white population was about one thousand there were more than fifteen hundred colored people.

There are some interesting facts apparent from an examination of the census sheets for 1850, the first one taken by the Federal government after Texas became a State.

The census taker was John Barnet, son of Thomas, and Tax Assessor of the County. He found one hundred and sixty-seven white people living in Richmond.

In the town of Richmond he found twenty-seven residences occupied by white people. There were several large families, among them the McMahons—G. W. McMahan and wife; Lucinda McMahan, widow and five small children; T. H. McMahan, wife Eliza and seven children. The McMahons were the merchants of the town. They came from Alabama and Georgia about 1840 and their name was associated with the County history for forty years. T. H. McMahan was District

FORT BEND IN THE FIFTIES

Clerk in the '40s and after the war was associated with the Republican regime, 1869-89.

In 1848 a correspondent of the Telegraph of Houston was shown the sugar plantation of William W. McMahan near Richmond and reported that the crop would yield over a hog-head per acre and that McMahan was the pioneer sugar planter of the County.

G. P. Foster had lately come from Mississippi with a wife and six children. Foster was a brickmaker and was Chief Justice of the County in 1860. Herman Tracey, baker from New York, wife and seven children; Samuel Johnson, clerk in store, Tennessee, wife and five children; T. N. Massey from Virginia, commission merchant, wife and seven children; Basil Wheat, Louisiana, brickmaker, wife and four children. Wheat had come into the County in 1845. In 1860 brickmaker Wheat's widow had married one Cathey with whom she lived with her four Wheat children, one of whom was James B. Wheat, who in later years married Mildred, a daughter of Colonel Ryon, and met a mysterious death.¹

A. B. Autrey, brickmaker from Georgia, forty-two, and wife, Elizabeth, came to Richmond in 1849 and in 1850 they had ten children, the oldest nineteen and the youngest, one, and beyond this they had no visible means of support. Ten years later brickmaker Autrey had become a farmer south of town five miles, six of the ten children were still at home, but Autrey had prospered and at fifty-two he reported his worldly goods were worth \$40,000. One of the Autrey boys (Addie) was killed at Shiloh.

These eight families comprised more than one-third of the population of Richmond of 1850.

A semi-private school was kept by a young teacher named John Wood, twenty-two, recently arrived from New York, who made his home with McMahan, the merchant.

Noticeable among the residents of Richmond were some of the Old Three Hundred and others who had received Mexican grants before the Revolution. There were Mills M. Battle and Theresa, his wife, who came in 1827. Mills was County Clerk in 1850.

Randal Jones, who came in 1822, and his wife, and their

¹ On a night in November, 1885 Wheat and family were at dinner at their ranch four miles below town when an assassin shot him through an open window. No trace of the murderer was ever found.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

several children, J. A. Jones, twenty-one; Eliza S., seventeen; Susan, fifteen; Polly, thirteen; Samuel H., nine; Joseph B., four; Sallie C., one.² These were only the children left at home at that time, the older boys had gone away. Randal gave his age as sixty-four, and his wife, forty-two.

Dr. James B. Miller, planter, who had been very conspicuous before the Revolution, lived his later days in Fort Bend. He was a native of Kentucky and his wife was from Louisiana. They had no children. He represented his District in Congress in 1840-41, was Secretary of Treasury of the Republic 1843 and in the same year was elected Chief Justice of Fort Bend County.

In 1845 when the first Governor was to be chosen for Texas and J. Pinckney Henderson was being urged by East Texas and the "New Comers," the people of Fort Bend nominated Dr. Miller. On Saturday, November 22, 1845 there was a "mass meeting" of a dozen planters at the home of Hudson Gaston at Round Lake. The old patriarch Colonist David Randon was Chairman and J. M. Briscoe was Secretary.

After an ample plantation dinner they launched the campaign for Dr. Miller and told the world in a well-worded resolution that he was entirely worthy of high office.

He was badly beaten by Henderson in the 1845 election, ran again against Wood in 1847 and was beaten again but received a very credible vote.

The Doctor died of yellow fever in Richmond in December, 1853.

There were a number of the children and grandchildren of big Jesse Thompson living at Richmond and up the river in 1850. Mary Thompson, his widow, who was then sixty-three,³ and a daughter Eliza Jane, twenty; Henry Thompson and wife and one child, James M.; Jesse, Jr., then thirty-three, and his wife, Susan, a native of Louisiana, and one child, George Ann; Hiram M., thirty-eight, and wife Mary Ann, thirty-two, and their daughter Sara, nine. Dr. George A. Feris, who had come to Richmond in 1839, married Lavinia, daughter of Jesse in 1843, and when the 1850 census taker came around, the Doctor was able to report that he was thirty-three years old, his wife, Lavinia, twenty-seven, and

² She is living in Houston (1939).

³ She died in 1856 and the Richmond correspondent of the Galveston Weekly News wrote an elaborate notice of the death of one of Austin's Three Hundred.

FORT BEND IN THE FIFTIES

four children, Achilles (Archie), seven; Yandel, three; Gertrude, two, and Irene, nine.⁴

Thomas Smith, who operated a hotel in Richmond and gave his age at forty, was a survivor of the Goliad Campaign. He was in Captain Bullock's Company of Georgia volunteers and was with Ward's men at Goliad. He was spared the massacre for his services as a gunsmith. His wife, Mary, and three children are enumerated, Mary and Thomas, four (twins); William H., two. Thirty-nine years later Thomas, who was then Deputy Sheriff, figured conspicuously in the Jay-bird-Woodpecker war. Thomas Smith's wife, Mary, died in 1850.

Lawyer Bassett of the first Richmond Bar had died of yellow fever and his widow, Julia, survived with their four children, Washington, ten; Clement, eight; Robert, six; and Edwin, one. Mrs. Bassett married Thomas Smith, and they raised a new family of children with two sets of twins.⁵

In 1850 Smith's Hotel was the only one in town and the census taker found nine boarders lodged there, among them six mechanics who had recently arrived, three from the Carolinas and three from Germany. The beginning of sugar planting and the building of gins and sugar mills were attracting quite a number of mechanics at that time to Brazoria and Fort Bend.

There were Dyers in great number. William Dyer, twenty-four and Anna C., his wife, and Janette, an infant daughter. And C. C. Dyer, fifty; Sarah Stafford, his wife, thirty-six; and nine children, Foster, twenty-two; Harvey, twenty; Eli, seventeen; Sarah, fourteen; Julia Ann, ten; Josephine, eight; Martha Ann, six; Penbrook, four; Clemence, two.

Jane Long and her grandson, James E. Winston, eighteen, son of Ann, lived on the Long plantation in the "suburbs" of Richmond. After the death of Winston, her first husband, Ann, now thirty-four, married James S. Sullivan, a Richmond lawyer, and they had a daughter, Ann, who was four in 1850. J. B.

⁴ In 1939 a daughter, Sue Feris, 88, lived in the old homestead at Richmond and owned the farm in the Bend above town which Jesse Thompson, her grandfather, bought from Knight and White before the Revolution. Achilles (Archie) grew to manhood and killed his uncle in a family feud.

⁵ In 1858 the veteran, Thomas Smith, filed a petition with the Legislature of Texas for relief in which he recited that he was a survivor of the Goliad massacre, was getting old, was blind and had ten children, three sets of twins.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

Weaver, a young doctor, twenty-six, who had lately come from South Carolina, lived with them. Edward Winston and his sons, and the children and grandchildren of S. J. Winston, and Mrs. J. R. Farmer, who was a Winston, all descendants of Ann, the daughter of Jane Long, still live in the County.

John H. Herndon, who came from Kentucky during the Revolution, and who was a member of the first Bar of Richmond, 1838, gave his age thirty-six, and his wife, Mackal, twenty-seven. Their children, Joseph, seven; Boswell, six; Alexander (A. C., called Sandy), four; Robert, three; and an infant. Not only had lawyer Herndon been diligent in rearing a family but in accumulating property. He told the census taker he was worth \$100,000 and it was so recorded. If this was true he was the richest man in the County. Mrs. Thos. B. Peareson of Richmond is a granddaughter of Herndon.

Other members of the County Bar were B. F. Atkins from North Carolina; Hiram B. Waller, twenty-three, Virginia; B. G. Marshall, thirty-six, from Tennessee, who lived on a plantation; R. C. Campbell, forty, lawyer and planter, was from Maryland; his wife, Celeste, thirty-six, was from New Orleans, and they had three small children, including an infant daughter Elizabeth, three.

Lawyer Campbell did not let his professional duties interfere with his plantation activities. In 1844 he carried a "law card" in the Houston paper and in the Richmond press, when it had one, which advised that he had moved his residence and office to his plantation three miles below town on the east bank of the river; that if anyone wanted to consult him about affairs legal they could leave word with John Shackelford or S. M. Swenson in Richmond.

On a moss-covered headstone in the old cemetery on West Dallas (San Felipe Road) in Houston one may read today that "here lies Celeste Ophelia, wife of Robert C. Campbell, a native of New Orleans, and her little daughter Elizabeth"; that they died in 1852. These were the dread years of yellow fever.

Lawyer Campbell was still active in Fort Bend County affairs in 1857 when he attended the Democratic Convention and with Colonel Ryon, Freeman W. Douglas and others, was chosen delegates to the State Convention at Waco, and instructed to support Guy M. Bryan of Brazoria for Congress. They were also pledged to oppose General Houston for Senator or for Governor, because he had become hostile to secession which seemed inevitable.

George Huff was one of the Three Hundred and his league,

FORT BEND IN THE FIFTIES

as we have seen, was on the Bernard. He had died prior to 1850 and his son, W. P. Huff, married Mary, the daughter of William Morton.

In 1850 Mary Huff, who gave her age at sixty, and Ellen, fifteen; George, ten; Mary, thirteen; Lucinda, nine; William, five; Martha Ann, one, (all these children born in Texas), were living together in Richmond in reduced circumstances.

William P. Huff was then in California. In 1849 the gold rush was on and a party had been organized from Fort Bend. It included Andrew Jackson Roark, Gilbert R. Brush, Wyly Martin Jones and others, and Huff, who had never accomplished anything for himself or his family, wanted to try his fortune in California. James Knight was on the point of going, but the approaching marriage of his daughter interfered and he decided to grubstake Huff. On the 29th of March, 1849 they made a solemn contract which they placed of record, in which it was recited that: "Huff being desirous of visiting California and not having the money or means to do so and having a large and helpless family to support during his absence, James Knight has agreed and binds himself and his heirs, administrators and executors that he will support Huff's family in a decent manner with provisions and clothing and pay for the schooling of Ellen, Mary Louisa and George, Jr. during the absence of Huff in California. He is to furnish Huff \$600 to purchase an outfit for the trip. In return for all these ample considerations Huff agrees that Knight shall have one-half of all the lands, gold and silver that he acquires on his trip to California."⁶

The next year Knight and his colored boy, Bill Moore, went on a trip to California. Whether he went to check up on Huff we do not know, but we do know Huff was soon back in Fort Bend as impecunious as ever. At the close of the war in 1865 he was one of the very few men in the County who had no war record to prevent his holding office under the Carpet Bag regime, and he was for a long time District Clerk.

In the September 2, 1851 issue of the Galveston Weekly News there is a communication from an unknown Richmond correspondent which gives a fine glimpse of the town and the times. He says:

"The river has been so low that there is no navigation for two months. Both steamboats are laid up. The boat "Brazos"

⁶ It was this emigrant gold-hunting train that went provisioned with Gail Borden's meat biscuit which he had just perfected. They lived on it across the desert and proved its great success.

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is at Lynchburg for repairs and the "Washington" is on a bar up the river at Cuney's plantation. A keel boat which has been running between Washington and the mouth of the river is laid up below here. Richmond is cut off from all water communication for the present. The town is improving but lumber is scarce. Brick are made here and we have some brick buildings under construction. A fine academy is being built of brick, sixty feet long, two stories, and will have four large rooms. The grounds about it are being beautified with shrubs and flowers. More than one hundred pupils are expected at the fall session. The town of Richmond now contains two stores, a new fine brick Courthouse, a Methodist Church, Masonic Hall Temperance Hall, etc."

The same or another correspondent writing for the July 19, 1856 issue of the Weekly News brings the town up to date.

"L. E. Harper has a large cotton warehouse. A fine brick building for three stores is under construction, one belongs to Major Herndon, the other two to Mr. Kendall. There are now two fine hotels opposite each other on Morton Street. The Richmond Reporter published by Mrs. Ferguson is doing well."

Outside of Richmond in the County the census taker of 1850 found eight hundred people living in one hundred seventy-two residences. He found eighty-six plantations valued in excess of \$2,000.

Those who owned plantations valued at \$10,000 and up were, Jane Long, Lawyer Herndon, George D. Parker, the Simontons, William Ryon, Henry Jones, David Randon, James Knight, Randolph Foster, James M. Briscoe, the Gastons, Churchill Fulshear, Joseph Kuykendall, Archie Hodge, the Peavyhouse Estate, Samuel B. Glasscock and J. D. Waters.

The average plantation in this limited class was valued at less than \$20,000.

Henry Jones of the Old Three Hundred still lived on his league below Richmond, nor did he live alone. He was now sixty and his wife, Nancy, fifty-six. The children then at home were John, twenty; Hetty, seventeen; Virginia, sixteen; Elizabeth, fourteen; Susan Ann, twelve; Wyly P., ten; Sarah H., five; Thomas W., infant. The oldest daughter, Mary Moore, had married Captain William Ryon from Kentucky and they had made a good start on a family: Nancy, four; Mary C., two; William H., infant. Captain Ryon who had won his military title in the Mier Expedition from which he had lately returned after two years in Perote prison, was soon promoted by common consent to Colonel and is officially known in Fort Bend County history as Colonel Ryon.

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Farmer Jones had a young man from Ireland, Alexander Burton, teacher for his children. There were no public schools supported by the State in 1850. For many years it was thought that one man should not pay taxes to educate another man's children.

Abner and Joseph Kuykendall, who were with the very first of the Three Hundred, lived on their leagues below the Bend from the earliest days. Abner was murdered in 1835, but Joseph, fifty-nine, was there in 1850. His first wife had died in 1848 and he had married a young woman, twenty-three. Two boys, children of the first wife, Robert H., twelve; and Wyly Martin, ten; were still at home. Ten years later only Uncle Joe and the second wife remained on this plantation. When the old man died in 1878 he left his widow, then in her forties, on the plantation, and a roving gentleman named Crabb came along and caught her fancy and they were married. He soon dissipated her dowry but remained in the neighborhood long enough to give it his name, and to this day it is called Crabb or Crabb Switch instead of Kuykendall as it should be.

Uncle Joseph Kuykendall and his first wife, and many of their kin, are buried on the plantation on the line between the Kuykendall and Long leagues and the brick vault and broken headstones may be seen today in the margin of a gully beneath a giant hackberry whose roots "pierce their mould."

Adam Hagan, forty-nine, and Teresa, his wife, thirty-nine, from Maryland, came in 1847 and acquired land on the Abner Kuykendall League. In 1850 they had nine children and in 1861 four of their sons went to war.

In 1852 Thomas Sutherland, an Irishman who specialized in brick cisterns, came from Maryland and lived on a farm adjoining the Hagans. Charles Hagan married Mary, daughter of Thomas Sutherland, and in 1939 R. A. (Dink) Hagan, seventy-one, bachelor, last of the Hagans, lives in the log house his grandfather built on the Kuykendall League ninety years ago. Two daughters of Thomas Sutherland, aunts of R. A. Hagan, live on their plantation east of Fulshear.

On many a Fort Bend plantation of long ago may now be found only a neglected graveyard and one of old Tom Sutherland's brick underground cisterns.

J. H. Pickens, forty-two, from Kentucky, and his wife, Elizabeth, forty-six, from Tennessee, lived on the Pickens labor a half mile from the Hagan place. At that time four of their children were with them, Mary, twenty; Caroline, fifteen; Ed N., eleven; John H. Jr., nine. Their eldest daughter, Jane, had eloped and

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married Wm. K. Davis after he returned from the Mier Expedition.

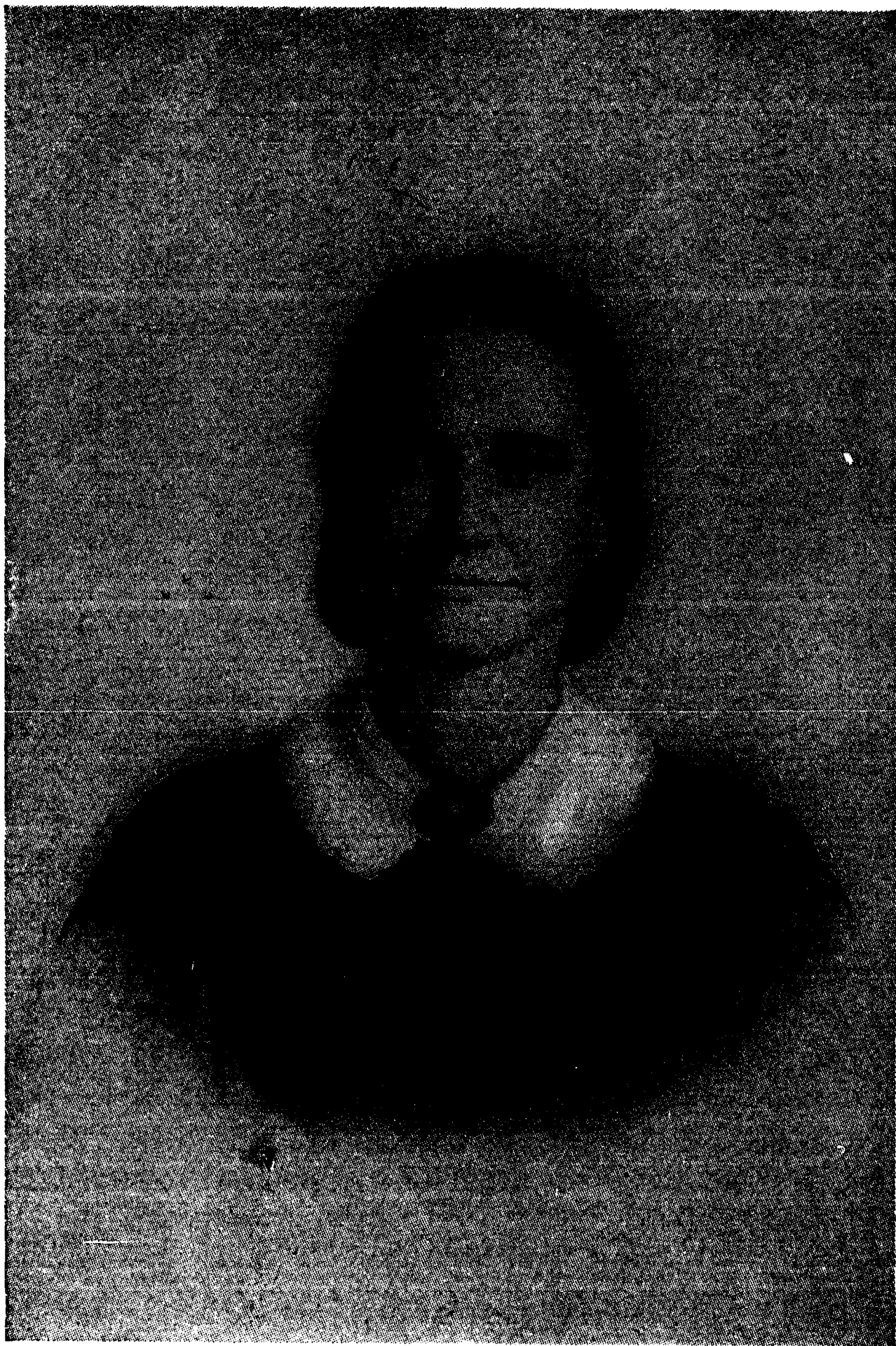
When Ryon's Company marched away to the border in 1842 Kinch Davis, in his twentieth year, was one of them, and he left a sweetheart, Jane Pickens, then fifteen. He was detained in Mexico by circumstances over which he had little control and when he got home she was seventeen, and there was much talk of an impending wedding at the Pickens plantation in which another man was to be the groom. But Kinch was persistent and renewed his suit and the tradition runs that the night before this event Jane rode away by the light of the moon and met the Mier man and they were married by the same preacher who had been invited to preside at the planned wedding.

William Little, who came on the schooner "Lively," died in 1841, but the census taker found a number of Littles. There were James, fifteen; and George, nine; J. M. Little, twenty-five; Lucinda Little, twenty; Susan, infant; William Little, twenty-three, born in Texas and his wife, Malinda, born in Alabama; Walter W. Little, twenty-one, native of Pennsylvania. Four of the Little minors lived with the family of John H. Pickens in 1850.

In 1847 James W. Sansbury, twenty-seven, and his wife, Sarah Pickens, twenty-one, came from Kentucky and acquired a plantation in the Kuykendall League near the Hagans and the Pickens, and in 1850 they had two small daughters, Mary Ann and Juliet.

At the 1860 census the Sansbury family had increased and Francis, three; Eveline, one; and Elizabeth, four, had been added to the household. Francis and a younger sister, Carrie, lived with their cousins, the Booths, at Booth fifty-eight years when Francis died in January, 1939. The sister Carrie is the last of the Sansburys and owns a portion of the plantation in the Kuykendall League which her father bought when he came to the County in 1847.

William Morton, who came up the river with the "Lively" emigrants, was drowned in the 1833 flood, but his wife Nancy, sixty-nine, still lived on the Morton League in 1850. With her were the Glasscocks and Perrys related by marriage, viz., Samuel B. Glasscock, twenty-six; Elizabeth, his wife, thirty; Lucia W., two; Mary Ann Morton, twenty-two; John Kuykendall, fifteen; and Sarah Glasscock, seventy-two; Daniel Perry, fifty-nine; James Perry, twenty-four; William, sixteen; Daniel, Jr., thirteen; Lora, ten; Mary, seven. Daniel Perry married Louisa,



*Mrs. Wm. K. Davis was Jane Pickens, daughter of John H. Pickens
and mother of J. H. P. Davis.*

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daughter of William Morton and Samuel Glasscock's wife, Elizabeth, was daughter of John V. Morton. Her mother, the wife of John V. Morton, was a daughter of Daniel Shipman of Oyster Creek, one of the Three Hundred. All available trace of the descendants of the Mortons has been lost.

There was another family of Glasscocks, Benjamin, forty-two, from Louisiana; Rachel F., forty-one, his wife; and another, Benjamin, forty-two, and Rachel, four, from Georgia.

Hilery Glasscock, thirty, and John C. Glasscock, thirty-six, registered as "traders" both from Louisiana and A. C. Glasscock registered from Germany.

William T. Neal was one of Austin's Colonists and had a grant of one-fourth league at the margin of the prairie between the Stafford and the Bright, about a mile from the present village of Stafford. He married Mary, one of the daughters of Stafford, and when Neal died in 1845 she married E. Cheney from Ohio. In 1850 they were living on Oyster Creek. There were four Neal children, James, fourteen; Thomas, twelve; Adam, seven; and Sarah Ann, ten. And there were two small Cheney children, Abraham, three, and Johnston, one. In 1853 when the yellow fever scourge swept the County the family started for Stafford and the prairie, but were overtaken at Hodges Bend where the daughter Sarah Ann, fourteen, died with the plague. Adam Neal and family were living in the County in 1900.

When William S. Spencer was killed by the Indians in 1824 his little wife, Nancy, did not long remain a widow, for she married Thomas Barnet and they had several children who were living with her in 1850. William Barnet, twenty-three, and Mellisa, his wife, twenty-three; John Barnet, twenty-one (who took the census); Sarah C., fifteen, and James, Jr., eight. Thomas Barnet died in 1843, and in 1845 Nancy married Thomas M. Grey. In 1850 Grey's age was given at forty-three, Nancy's forty-eight, and they had a son, Robert M., three.

John Barnet seems to have fallen on evil days. The Houston Telegraph of April 30, 1856 tells that he had recently been acquitted of killing Glasscock and had more recently committed "an unprovoked murder." A young lawyer named Lawther, who was John's friend, had found him drunk and taken him to a room and put him to bed. Lawther was standing before a mirror with his back turned when John shot and killed him.

The June 11th issue of the same paper has a New Orleans

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news item that John, who was under a \$20,000 bond, was in that city on his way to Nicaragua.

George W. Pleasants was forty, his wife, twenty-three; and four small children, C. F., six; Mary C., four; Edward, two; and Gilbert, an infant. The Pleasants family came from New York to Columbia in 1830, where they lived until the cholera scourge of 1833 depopulated the town. One of George's sisters, Fannie Davis, died with it. She was the wife of Kinchen Davis, one of Austin's Colonists whose league was located in 1831 on Bee Creek just above the Fort Bend County south line. Her grandson, J. H. P. Davis, who was born in 1851, was a civic leader in the County for nearly fifty years. Pleasants was Deputy Sheriff under J. V. Morton, first Sheriff in 1837, and later killed Morton in a controversy, the details of which have not been preserved. Pleasants' wife was Ann Brush, who had come with her mother, a widow, from New York in 1840. The mother was a niece of the English Lord Warnum. Pleasants was in the army with Milam at the capture of Bexar in December, 1835 and in the battle of San Jacinto. Robert Pleasants, a grandson, lived in Richmond in 1939.

Henry Dunlavy, thirty-five, farmer, New York, and four children, James H., thirteen; Sarah S., nine; Rosana, seven; and Mary A., two; lived on the S. M. Williams League. Henry's second wife was Finnetta, daughter of Archie Hodge.

The Cristas had recently come from New York. The widow Rosana was forty-eight and her daughters were: Rosana, seventeen; Hetty E., thirteen; and a son, Henry A., twelve. They had first settled at Velasco. A daughter of the Cristas married Lewis Lum, and one of their sons, Milton Lum, was the father of Mrs. Samuel Allen of Harrisburg. Their descendants, Mrs. W. T. Williams, Mrs. Ed Drouet, Mrs. S. J. Smith and Sam Allen and their children and grandchildren, live in Houston today (1939). The 1860 census taker reported the Lum family then living on their plantation on upper Oyster Creek as follows: Milton, thirty-three; Rosana, twenty-eight; Lewis G., five; Rose, two; Albert, twenty; Lewis, thirty; Lorena, seventeen.

In 1850 James Knight owned land in the Jane Wilkins League and the headright league that had been granted him and Walter C. White in 1824, and had a plantation and a ranch and prairie home.

There is a romantic interest in the dim recollections of this unusual man and his beautiful daughter Lucinda which were still talked by the older people, chiefly their old slaves, forty years ago.

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He was born in North Carolina in 1787. He and his family had migrated to Alabama at the dawn of the century and were living there when James heard of Austin's proposed Colonial enterprise in 1821 and hastened to New Orleans to join the caravan to Texas.

He and Walter C. White, both unmarried, were granted the Knight and White League on Jones Creek in 1824 and opened a trading station on their labor in the Bend in 1825 or 1826.

Knight was a man of fine physique, gray hair, with a scar on his cheek which he was said to have gotten in a duel years before. Though he acquired lands in many counties he always lived in Fort Bend. Here his daughter Lucinda was born in 1830 and here they both died in the late '50s.

Little is known about Lucinda's mother; either she had died or she and Knight had become estranged while Lucinda was yet a small child. Shortly after the Texas Revolution he came to Alabama and proposed to his several sisters and their numerous children that they all come to Texas and he would give each family a home. They came in 1838.

One of his sisters, Mrs. Kirk, had several grown children who came with her. There were two sons, Wright and Norfleet, who came with their families and lived the first winter at a place always afterwards called Kirk's Point near the Knight plantation. The first winter was severe and their accommodations poor, and they and their entire families died in an epidemic of measles and were buried at Kirk's Point. There were two single daughters, Harriet and Nancy, whom Uncle James sent to Rutgersville College and who married and left children. Harriet Kirk married Nelson S. Rector and they lived in Guadalupe County. Their son, Nelson Avery Rector, born in Guadalupe in 1853, was a charter member of the Texas Bar Association, a District Judge at Austin and for years after practiced at Laredo. He died in February, 1939 in his eighty-fifth year.

Among the Kirks who came was a niece, Mrs. Adeline Kirk Patton and Reverend John Patton, her husband. Uncle James gave this niece a plantation on Jones Creek and the Pattons lived there many years, died there, and she and her husband and many of their family are buried at old Union Chapel above Fulshear. Their son Samuel R., who was an infant when they came, grew to manhood there and married Lorena Miller of the old and well known Miller family at Fulshear. Sam died of exposure during the war and left a daughter who married Edmondson. Sam's daughter, Mrs. Edmondson, still lives and

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owns the plantation which Uncle James gave her grandmother one hundred years ago.

When the Pattons reached Jones Creek, James Knight brought his little daughter, Lucinda, to his niece and she cared for her until she was old enough to go away to a convent. When she came home at seventeen her father built a beautiful home in the prairie east of Jones Creek plantation. He was wealthy and his only care was his beautiful motherless daughter, who, in addition to what she had learned in the convent, was a fearless rider and a crack shot, and had musical talent. She was medium in stature and her yellow hair, when loosened, hung below her waist. The wildest horse on the ranch was often her mount, and she rode with her father and his friends on their annual buffalo hunt west of the Brazos.

Colonel Knight had lands in Bastrop and his niece, Mrs. Rector, lived there and he often went there accompanied only by Lucinda and their colored boy, William. On one trip in 1848 or 1849 they were chased by the Comanche Indians and Lucinda begged her father to allow her to lag behind and take a shot at them, a suggestion which still frightened William fifty years later.⁷

In 1849 James Knight and William went overland to California. Lucinda had planned to go with them but a courtship intervened and she gave up the trip to be married to Benjamin William Nibbs of the Walnut Grove plantation. She was nineteen and he was twenty. A year later her scalawag half-brother, Thomas J. Bacomb, killed Benjamin William, for which he was sent to the penitentiary for fifteen years. In 1852 she married Durant F. Jarman, a young and wealthy planter, who had just come from Florence, Alabama, and from college. He was on his way to California, but got no farther than the Knight plantation. Jarman lived only a year and in 1854 she married Dan Connor, who was then twenty-eight. The Connors who had known the Knights in Alabama came into the County in 1852 and bought land on Oyster Creek. The Connor family

⁷ William, an old colored man who had been a slave of James Knight, and who was about the same age as Lucinda, was still living in 1899, a kind of caretaker of property which had descended to Conrad's children. In connection with their affairs he had frequent occasion to be in my office. He still carried a tiny image of some Saint she had given him when she returned from the convent fifty years before. His devotion to her memory was beautiful and he told me many stories of her heroic feats of horsemanship.



Lucinda Knight

*From an old medallion in possession of her
granddaughter, Mrs. Frances Conrad Davis
of Winston-Salem, North Carolina.*

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consisted of James, fifty-five, and Elizabeth, his wife, fifty, Dan and nine younger Connors.

A daughter christened Mary (Mollie Connor) was born in 1856 to Dan and Lucinda. Lucinda died in 1857 and her father James Knight in 1858. They were laid to rest at Kirk's Point.

Dan Connor, who now came into possession of the Knight estate which had been inherited by his little daughter, was one of the wealthiest men in the County and in 1860 assessed his property at \$370,000.

Mollie Connor grew to womanhood just after the war, and was in school in Winston-Salem, North Carolina when she met J. C. Conrad, who came to Prairie Home and married her in 1874. She went away to live in Winston-Salem and only returned to Prairie Home for two brief visits. She died leaving two daughters, who are now Mrs. Mary Coleman and Mrs. Frances C. Davis of Winston-Salem. They have children and grandchildren and Mrs. Davis has a little granddaughter named Mollie Connor.

Mrs. Edmondson, granddaughter of Adeline Patton, niece of James Knight, was living with her daughter, Mrs. Baines, in Baytown in 1939. Another daughter, Mrs. Mozelle Avery, lives at Brookshire, and Miss Bobbie Edmondson is a teacher in the Fort Worth schools. These cultured women reflect into this century the refinement and character of the Knights, Kirks and Pattons.

The Nibbs family, which lived near the Knight plantation on the Jesse H. Cartwright League and what was long years after the Fields place, came into the County about 1840. The father, Thomas W., had died and in 1841 Mary Nibbs purchased one-fourth of the Cartwright League from Jesse H. Cartwright and in 1850 Ann B., thirty-eight, widow, lived on the plantation with the following family: Mary S., eighteen; Austin, fifteen; May, eighty-five. Their son, Benjamin William, married Miss Knight and in 1850 lived on the Knight plantation. In an abandoned graveyard on the Walnut Grove plantation one industrious enough to push through the weeds may now read on a prostrate shaft: "Thomas W. Nibbs, 1807-1844, Mary Nibbs, 1776-1857, Benjamin William Nibbs born 1828, died October 13, 1850 (murdered)."

Bacomb, who murdered Nibbs, was the son of Lucinda's mother by a former marriage, but all trace of the family and her maiden name are gone. He borrowed the gun with which he shot Nibbs, from the Pattons with the excuse he was after

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a bear he had seen on the creek. Lucinda and her husband were on horseback when he was fired on by Bacomb, who undertook to justify his deed with the story that he saw Nibbs slap Lucinda. A few days before Nibbs had given Bacomb an outfit for a trip to California, hoping to be rid of him, and after he had slain Nibbs, Bacomb tried to make his escape on the horse Nibbs had given him.

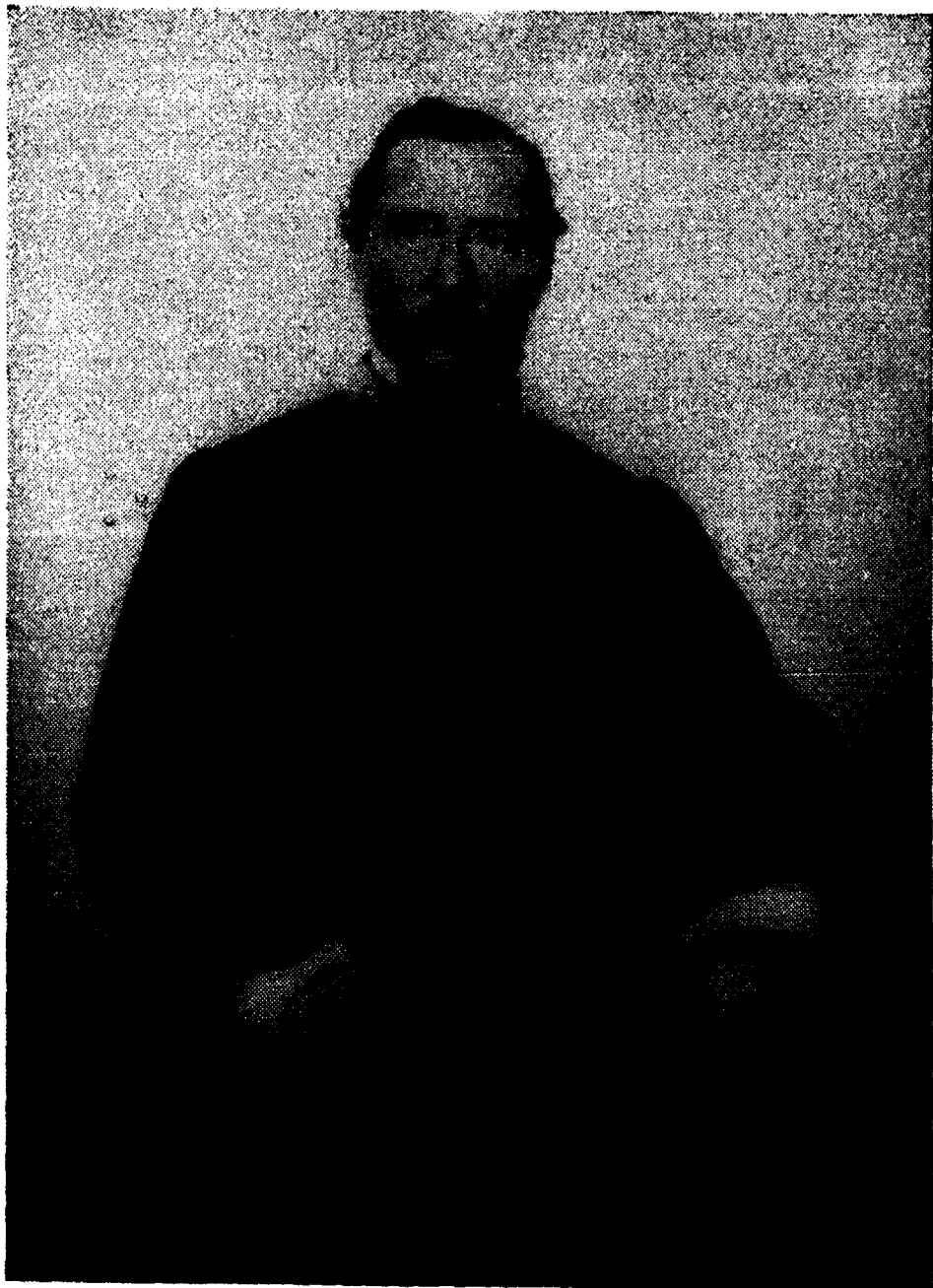
Dr. Johnson Hunter, one of the Three Hundred whose headright was on the Bay in Harris County, became a citizen of Oyster Creek before 1830 and was still there in 1850. Johnson Hunter, sixty-four, farmer, South Carolina; Martha, his wife, fifty-nine, Virginia. Thaddeus, twenty-seven; Messina, twenty-seven; William, twenty; Amanda, seventeen; Walter, fourteen. The oldest daughter Harriet had married Samuel Miles Frost and they and their children lived near by.

Samuel Miles Frost, forty-six, and Harriet Hunter, his wife, then had two small children, Ada B., six, and Henry H., four. Henry was killed on the streets of Richmond in the Jay-bird war, thirty-nine years later.

Out on the margin of the prairie half a mile from the head of Oyster Creek and half a mile from the site of the Johnson Hunter homestead, one may see today (1939) the broken grave-stones in the family burial ground which tell: Dr. Johnson Hunter, born 1787, died 1865; Martha Hunter, born 1792, died 1860; Josephine Boneparte Hunter, born 1833, died 1881; Thomas J. Hunter, born 1821, died 1900; John Calhoun Hunter, born 1817, died 1844; Harriet Hunter Frost, wife of Samuel Miles Frost, born 1818, died 1859. There are many other names and dates which may be deciphered from these broken grave-stones on the margin of the prairie at the head of Oyster Creek.

Thomas J. and Josephine Boneparte Hunter were the parents of Mrs. Frank Williford and the grandparents of Judge Frank Williford of Houston.

Jesse Cartwright, seeking the more salubrious air of the prairie, had left his league in 1830 and bought one thousand acres in the Isaacks League and built his house on the timber line at the very head of Oyster Creek and a few hundred yards from the big bend in Jones Creek. Across the prairie north four miles he could see the timber line on Buffalo Bayou and east as far as the eye could see there was the boundless open space down to the coast. A few hundred yards west of his house there was a lake half a mile long which he called Round Lake. High ground on its north margin commanded a view of rare beauty. Here Jesse reasoned was an ideal site for a city and even before the Revolution he nourished a civic dream.



Capt. Dan Connor

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He bought the Whitehead survey in the prairie which embraced this glorious landscape and advertised his city of Fayetteville, which we have seen was a contender against Richmond in 1838, for the County Capital.

In 1841 Jesse, disappointed in his city building venture, and in bad health, decided to move out on the Guadalupe and sold his plantation in the Isaacks and his land in the Whitehead, Fayetteville and all (reserving three lots which he had sold) to two young men recently arrived from South Carolina named Matthew and Hudson Gaston.

The Gastons came with their slaves, and an ample bank account, and began raising cotton in the bottom and cattle on the prairie. They were the sons of one of the most distinguished families in the Carolinas whose ancestors had come with the Huguenots in the days of Louis XIV.

Hudson married Caroline, the daughter of William T. Austin, his only child who survived the cholera epidemic in Brazoria in 1833, and they built a mansion in what would have been the heart of Fayetteville had Jesse Cartwright's civic dream come true. Here children were born, 1842-1854, and here Hudson Gaston died in October of the latter year in his forty-first year. All the children died but a daughter, Anne Gaston, who in later years married a Castleton and left descendants, but little is known of them.

Two years after Hudson Gaston died, a young man just twenty-one came west following the way two of his brothers had come. He was Joel McCreary and came from Tennessee, tall, sturdy, Scotch, every inch a man. One brother Hugh had come to Texas a few years before and had never been heard from. Another had followed the gold rush to California in 1849 and had never been heard from. But Joel was heard from. He got a job managing the Gaston plantation which he did well until the war, three years later, when he went back to Tennessee, joined the army and fought until that April day 1865 when he and his ragged comrades were paroled and he brought home his parole which his children have to this day.

He was in the bloody battle of Chickamauga which was fought on his father's farm.

After the war he brought his father and mother to Texas and got a job managing the plantation which had been left by Thomas Burke Burton near the Gaston place.

Caroline Austin Gaston, widow of Hudson Gaston, had married a roving man named Emery Jones, who added LL. D. to his name, but among the things he did not know was how to run a plantation. A few years later she died a hideous death

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from some strange malady and Jones, LL. D., moved on. One may see today the dim foundation lines of the Gaston home near the margin of Round Lake. A huge oak stands sentinel over the Gaston homesite and over the dust of Hudson and Caroline Gaston and their children.

Joel McCreary married a daughter of Isaac Brookshire, bought from the Gaston estate part of the old Jesse Cartwright plantation and the house Jesse had built in 1830. Here the fine old Scotchman lived for forty years. His daughter, Mrs. Luda Ballew and her husband, T. H. Ballew, live in the old homestead now (1939) and his son Boyd McCreary and wife live near by on their portion of the McCreary plantation.

Reverius McCloy, forty-nine, was from Tennessee, and Alexander and John, his sons, twenty-five and twenty-two, lived with him in 1850. John was afterwards Dr. John McCloy, who was a surgeon in the Confederate Army and for fifty years an honored citizen. His second wife, Ann Bertrand, daughter of Emily Bertrand, was a daughter of Archie Hodge. Emily Bertrand was afterwards Mrs. Stansbury. Dr. McCloy's daughter, Beulah, is now Mrs. W. N. Foster of Conroe, and his son, Bertrand McCloy, lives at Angleton. They still own part of the Jones Creek plantation that their grandfather Reverius acquired when he came to the County in 1849. Bertrand McCloy married Miss Briscoe whose ancestors came to the County in 1828.

There were many Kegans: Washington, thirty, from Mississippi, and Elizabeth, his wife, with three small children; Clarinda, twenty-seven, and her two children; Mary, sixty-seven and Mary, an infant.

Ten years later there were many more Kegans: Hamilton, forty-five, and Margaret, thirty-seven, from Arkansas and eight children.

They continued a conspicuous family in Fort Bend until the latter part of the century and many of their descendants may be found in Houston even to this day.

There were the Crumps and Varneys, who lived neighbors on Jones Creek. John Crump, twenty-five, from Alabama; Elizabeth, eighteen, and William, twenty-one. Dr. Ezekiel Varney from Maine, forty-five; Margaret, his wife, twenty-nine, and three children, Mary, seven; Joseph, five; and Ezekiel, three. Dr. Varney, who had come to Fort Bend in the middle '40s had a very modest fortune in 1850 which he appraised at \$6,000. Ten years later he had bought the Neal Survey and part of the Stafford League and built a home and planted a liveoak which towers today a mile below the village of Stafford, though the home and all trace of the Varneys are long gone



*Evelyn Ransom, great-great-granddaughter of Elijah Allcorn
and of Alexander Hodge.*

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and they sleep in unmarked graves on the old plantations. In 1860 Dr. Varney qualified as worth \$100,000, had a school teacher from Vermont for his children. Forty years later the son, Ezekiel, the last remnant of a cultured and wealthy family, lived in squalor on the plantation and it was lost for a small debt. The place passed to Reese Packer who lived on it fifty years and died in 1938 and his children live on the old Varney plantation today (1939).

There were two families of Peavyhouse: William, fourteen, and Frances, his sister, twelve, owned a plantation which the enumerator valued at \$8,000. Squire Peavyhouse, twenty-two, and his brothers John, twenty-one, and Alexander, seventeen, owned a plantation which was valued at \$12,000. All of these young Peavyhouses were natives of Texas.

Alexander Hodge was born in Pennsylvania in 1760 and died in Texas in 1836. He was one of Marion's men in the American Revolution. He came in Austin's second Colony and his league was on the Austin reservation. In 1850 his sons and grandsons were living on it. A. H. Hodge, thirty; Elba, his wife, and four small children. Archie Hodge, fifty-nine; Sarah, forty-five; Aeleast, twenty-six; Lucinda, fourteen; Martha, twelve. A daughter, Emily, first married a Bertrand and after his death a Stansbury. Another daughter, Finnetta, married Henry Dunlavy and was the mother of M. B. Dunlavy. Archie Hodge had a Mexican league grant in Montgomery, but lived and died in Fort Bend.

Below them, near Stafford, there was a family of Hibbards who had come into the County in 1837. There were Lidia, twenty-seven, and her son Loron, ten, and four younger children. They were still on the land in 1850 and Loron now, twenty-four, had cared for the family and the smaller children were now grown. Ten years later there were four grandchildren, and at the close of the century Loron, at seventy-five, was still on the Little farm he had acquired sixty years before.

Henry W. Secrest, forty-one, "sportsman," Tennessee, and his wife, Comfort, forty-one, listed four children.⁸

There was another family of Secrests also from Tennessee, T. G., thirty-six; Martha, his wife, twenty-seven; Nancy S. E., eleven; Albert G., six; Shilix G., four; and Martha A., one.

⁸ There were two Secrests at San Jacinto, Washington and Fielding Secrest. I do not know just what their relation was to this sportsman, nor do I know the nature of his sports.

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Johnathan Dawson Waters, called by courtesy Colonel Waters, was living on his Arcola plantation in the David Fitzgerald League in 1850. He gave his age as forty-two and that of his wife, Clara, as twenty-one. He had come to Oyster Creek in 1840 from the Newberry District, South Carolina, with his wife Sarah Elizabeth Grigsby whom he had married there in 1828. His father and grandfather were both officers in the American Revolution and two uncles had been killed by the Tories in the border wars in South Carolina. His brother, Major Phileman Waters, near his age, had located in Mobile, Alabama, where he had attained a statewide name in the early '40s. He had small means, but tremendous energy, and began planting cotton. By the middle '40s he had acquired a large part of the Fitzgerald League and in 1850 was the owner of the entire league and had the largest cotton and sugar plantation in Fort Bend County. He built a brick mansion on the high bank of the Brazos just where the upper line of the David Fitzgerald League reaches the river a few hundred feet from where many years later the Santa Fe Railroad bridge spanned the river.

In 1844 his brother Phileman came from Alabama to visit him with a view of joining him in Texas. While at the plantation he suddenly died on July 30th and was laid to rest in a grove of pecan trees near the mansion.

In January, 1848 his wife, Sarah Elizabeth, died leaving a will in which she bequeathed her half of the then large community estate to her beloved husband. The beloved was a very busy man and did not get up to Richmond to probate her will for nearly ninety days. He was a practical person and combined pleasure with business, and while he was there filing Sarah's will for probate, he procured a marriage license to wed Clara Byne, an Oyster Creek beauty. He and Clara were wed on March 30, 1848. She was the daughter of Enoch Byne, who lived on the Shipman League, and whose family continued to live there for many years. Enoch and Waters were fast friends and the marriage had the entire approval of everybody concerned.

On down through the '50s he went working with feverish haste, increasing his wealth, driving his slaves and his mules from dawn to dark. At the first light of day he could be seen riding up and down the plantation turn-rows on a splendid black stallion and often at twilight he had changed mounts and was still going. It was the talk up and down the Brazos that he overworked mules and men, and himself as well, and it was also told that he never fed his negroes anything but cornmeal mush cooked in huge boilers. Since he had more than five hundred

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negroes it took a great quantity of cornmeal mush to keep them going.

His mansion had a commanding view of the river for miles up and down and prior to the construction of the Planters Railway in 1856, his cotton and sugar and other produce went to market by boat. His gardens were enclosed by hedgerow fences and one may yet see the knarled trunks of Bois d'Arc a century old that have withstood the floods and storms of the years.

Clara Byne was a talented and beautiful woman and when she died in May, 1860 Waters' grief and his admiration for her found expression in a beautiful shaft of Italian marble which he caused to be erected in the family burial ground two hundred yards east of the veranda of the mansion where he buried his brother Phileman and his first wife, Elizabeth, twelve years before. One with sufficient courage and energy to fight his way into this inaccessible place may see today this shaft now crowded about with the dogwood and the hawthorne, standing in the shade of huge pecan trees that were old when it was erected, whose gigantic boughs are beautifully draped with grey moss. It bears ample evidence of his admiration for Clara Byne and recites that she was "amiable, discreet and kind, the beloved center of her family and social circle, a Christian, cheerful, consistent and zealous in the cause of her Redeemer. She died as she had lived, trusting in God and her once crucified but now risen and ascended Saviour. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." There are no other inscriptions on the ample shaft. Near by are two marble headstones. Upon one the recital, "My wife Elizabeth," on the other "My wife Clara." The splendid iron railing that enclosed these graves has long since broken away and marble urns in which devoted hands placed flowers are fallen, but the shaft stands in its simple beauty.

Colonel Waters soon married again, this time Martha McGowen, the sister of Clara Byne, and the widow of Abraham McGowen. Since Waters had no children by either of his wives he adopted the three children of Martha McGowen. These were a daughter Clara, who had been named for Clara Byne, and two sons, Ladd and William. Ladd McGowen was the father of Mrs. Ballinger Mills of Galveston.

It is said that plantation splendor in Texas reached its high tide in the Waters farms as they were maintained at the beginning of the war. In 1860 he was the richest man in the County. Waters died broken in fortune and in health a few years after the war, but his third wife, Martha, survived him fifty years.

Up in the Newberry District of North Carolina from where

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Johnathan Dawson Waters came, there was a family of DeWalts who had been neighbors with the Waters since before the American Revolution and they were related by affinity and consanguinity. Old Daniel DeWalt had a son, Thomas Waters DeWalt, and a daughter, Harriet Hubert, and they wanted to come to Texas. In 1844 the daughter Harriet married a young lawyer named W. C. Wilson. The following year they took the long trail to Texas and stopped in Houston where they lived and died and their son is Judge William H. Wilson, the great Houston lawyer. The brother, Thomas Waters DeWalt, went on to Oyster Creek where he acquired a plantation and was living there when the 1860 census taker found him. He was then fifty years old and had a wife, Charlotte, twenty-five, from Tennessee. He had two sons who grew to manhood and lived and died on the DeWalt plantation, Thomas W. and Daniel. They married sisters, the daughters of Green K. Cessna of Oyster Creek.

Thomas W. DeWalt was County Clerk of Fort Bend County. A son, Tom DeWalt, lives at LaPorte (1939).

When Daniel DeWalt died, his widow married G. G. Roane, a great-grandson of Archibald Roane, the first Governor of Tennessee. They left two sons, T. R., who is now the Sheriff of Fort Bend County, and G. G., Jr., who is now (1939) the County Attorney.

Neighbors to the Waters, Sarah Fenn, forty-seven, widow of Eli Fenn and daughter of David Fitzgerald, lived on the Fitzgerald plantation. Her father, David Fitzgerald, was of the Three Hundred. Her son, John R. Fenn, then twenty-seven, lived with her.

Sarah married a man named Collin Cox, who was a boisterous fellow, and he and neighbor Waters had a quarrel about some land. Cox declared that he was not afraid of Waters and if provoked further he would kill the big planter and throw his heart on his wife's lap. Waters and a few friends went over to Cox's house where they found him unarmed and Waters slew him in the presence of his wife, Sarah. The Houston Telegraph of March 15, 1847 which gave the event as a current news item, said the details were too horrible to be printed.

In 1852 John R. Fenn married Rebecca Williams, daughter of Daniel Williams, a neighboring planter who lived on the Barnet League. In 1860 John R. Fenn and his widowed mother, Sarah Cox, and his wife, Rebecca, and their infant son, Francis Marion Otis, lived on the Fenn plantation where they continued to reside until the end of the century. Otis Fenn, grad-

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uate of the University of Virginia, lawyer and gentleman, still lives in Richmond (1939).

The Williams family had come from Mississippi before 1850 and in that year there were Daniel, forty-three, and Ann, his wife, forty-two, and five children, Joseph, twenty; Rebecca M., fifteen; Johnson C., twelve; Edwin, six; and Rachel Ann, three.

Near the Fenns the family of the Colonist William Hall of the Three Hundred lived on their league. Susan, his widow, fifty-four; Eleanora, twenty-three; Julia, nineteen; Charles, eighteen, and John A., fifteen.

The 1850 census only registered the names of white people and free negroes. Slaves were numerated like cattle. Greenberry Logan, fifty-two, and his wife, Caroline, forty-eight, are enumerated. Logan was a mulatto blacksmith, a free negro who had come to Texas before the Revolution and had a grant of land in Matagorda. When the skirmish at Gonzales in October, 1835 aroused the Colonists, and Austin and Fannin issued calls for troops, Greenberry Logan, then a strong young man, joined Colonel Fannin's Company and went with the Patriot Army to Bexar. When Milam made his celebrated call for volunteers to go with him into Bexar, Greenberry Logan, who was then in Captain York's Company, was one of the first to come forward. On the first day of the battle which lasted three days, Greenberry was shot through the right arm, a wound which crippled him for life and made it impossible for him to follow his trade. After the war he and his good wife conducted a boarding house in Brazoria. The Provisional Government and the Republic were very antagonistic to free negroes and they were denied residence here. Logan and others, including James Richardson (Handy's Jim), petitioned the Congress for permission to remain in Texas, and it was grudgingly given, but they were refused any remuneration for their services, were not granted land as white soldiers were. And fifteen years later Greenberry and Caroline were living on a little farm on Big Creek valued at \$600 and he was hammering at his forge with an arm withered and crippled in the defense of his country which had refused to do more than permit him to live in it if he could. The census taker in 1860 indicated their color "m."

In 1939 there were people still living below Richmond who remembered Greenberry Logan, the freedman, with expressions of kindness.

Samuel Pharr, who came to Texas from Georgia via Tennessee in 1831 and was granted land below Big Creek, married Lucy Pentacost, and in 1850 the census taker found him on his land. Sam was then fifty-one; Lucy, thirty-five; and the chil-

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dren, Luther, fifteen; William, eleven; Walter, six; Samuel, three; Josephine, one. Three boys were born after this census. There are descendants of Samuel Pharr and Lucy Pentacost living in Fort Bend County today.

The Pentacosts came from Maine in 1829 and George W., fifty-two, and children were living on their plantation in 1850. There were Susan, eighteen; Jane, twenty-one; William, eighteen; James D., twenty-five; Samuel B., three. George W. Pentacost was a veteran of San Jacinto where he served in Captain McIntire's Company. He is buried in Brown Cemetery on Big Creek along with Andrew Jackson Beard.

Among the descendants of Andrew Jackson Beard living in Fort Bend County today are Shirley Beard, Mrs. M. V. Brumbelow, Mrs. H. Brumbelow, Mrs. George Duty and Thurman Brown.

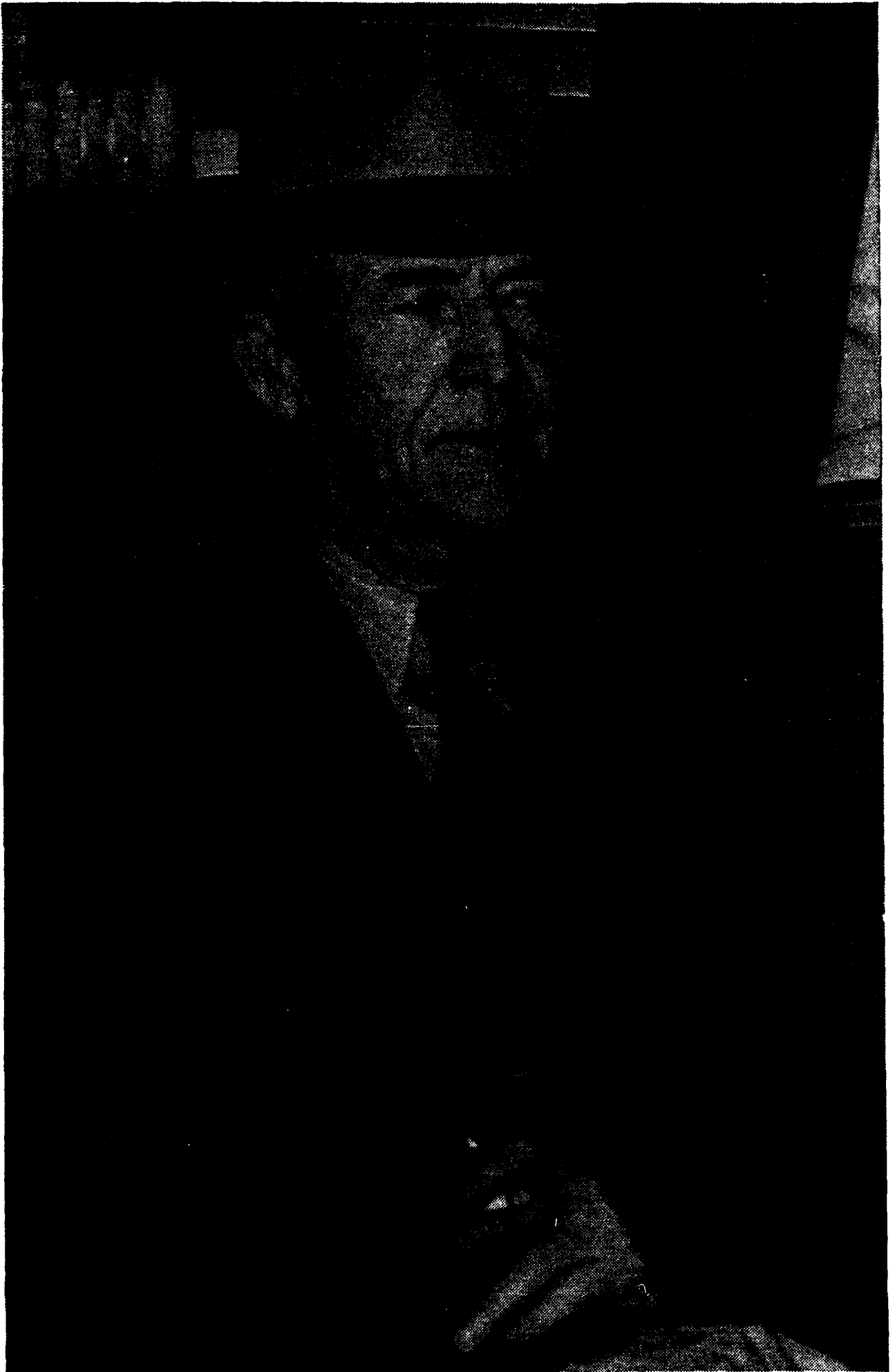
Down the Big Creek way there were many Pilants in 1850. William, fifty-eight, and Elizabeth, fifty-six, from North Carolina; and George B., thirty-eight, and Sarah, twenty-four; Mary Ann, twenty, and Susan C., fourteen, from Alabama. George had gone with his neighbor Captain Ryon on the Mier Expedition and was now home.

There was also a Dr. E. P. Pilant, twenty-nine, and his wife, Mary C. M., twenty-nine, from Tennessee, and their infant son, Alexander. The Doctor made the modest declaration in 1850 that his worldly goods were worth \$800. Ten years later the Doctor told the census taker he was worth \$48,000. Many evidences of such marvelous increase in wealth are found in this decade.

Robert Hodges, forty-five, stock raiser, lived on his league on the Bernard. He was from South Carolina and his wife, Susan, thirty-nine, from Louisiana. They had five children, all born in Texas: Edwin R., sixteen; Robert, fourteen; Samuel, nine; Jane, six; Susan, an infant.

Samuel C. Douglas, sixty-three, and his two sons John C., thirty-nine, and Freeman W., thirty-eight, were farmers and stock raisers from Georgia. Freeman W. was a veteran of San Jacinto and also one of the Mier men and drew a white bean and came home to tell the tales of his two years in Mexico.

Neighbors to the Hodges and the Douglasses was the interesting family of Emory Holman Darst, then thirty-six, and his wife, Mary Ann, thirty, who was a daughter of the Colonist Elisha Moore, whose league lay partly across the Bernard. The 1850 census taker enumerated their children William M., eight; Jane L., five; Harriet, one, but later there were born David, Emma, Warren, Robert and Mary. After a residence of fifty-eight years



Homer Darst, grandson of Emory Darst and of Robert Hodges, great-grandson of Elisha Moore. His grandfather Emory Darst was a great-grandson of Daniel Boone.

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in Fort Bend County Emory H. died in 1880, but his wife, Mary Ann, lived until 1902. The daughter, Harriet Darst, married Sam, son of Robert Hodges, and the oldest son of Emory H. and Mary Ann, William M., married Susan, daughter of Robert Hodges.

William M. Darst, who was born in Fort Bend in 1842, was a most forceful and attractive personality and lived his whole life there. Of his several children only two survive (in 1939), Homer N. and Janie E.

Homer's son, Homer, who married Miss Inez Nott of Wharton, has two children, Elizabeth and William M., great-grandchildren of William Moore Darst.

Robert H. Darst, youngest son of Emory H. and Mary Ann, died in Richmond in 1938 and left surviving three sons, Harris, Thomas B. and Robert M.

Mary, the youngest daughter of Emory H. and Mary Ann, married Lewis Lum, son of Milton Lum and brother of Mrs. Sam Allen of Harrisburg who were natives of Fort Bend County.

Mary D. Lum, daughter of Lewis Lum and Mary Darst, married Raymond Moore, son of John M. Moore, and their daughter Lottie married Judge Max Rogers of Huntsville.

Jane Darst, daughter of Emory H. and Mary Ann, married Harry S. Mason and is survived by two sons, Harry S. and Turner Mason.

Emma Darst, daughter of Emory H. and Mary Ann, married James Davis and among their descendants are a son Sidney and a daughter Lida.

No family in all the annals of Texas has been more thoroughly identified with the progress of the State than the Darsts, who since they first came in the Colonial days, have been worthy men and women, and each generation has contributed its part.

Emory H., the father of the Fort Bend County Darsts, was born in Missouri, son of Abraham, who married Tobethy Calloway, granddaughter of Daniel Boone. Abraham's father Abraham was a native of Virginia and a soldier in the American Revolution. Abraham, the father of Emory H. and his wife Tobethy, granddaughter of Daniel Boone, had a headright league granted in 1831 which includes Damons Mound in Brazoria County. Their first corn crop in 1832 was very much ravaged by bears, but they had ample meat for they killed sixty bears in the cornfield.

One of Abraham's daughters, Lorena, sister of Emory H., married Samuel Damon and from them have sprung a multitude of Damons, who like the Darsts, have been and are worthy citizens.

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Abraham Darst and his son, Emory H., were both at the battle of Velasco in 1832 and Emory and his four brothers and his brother-in-law, Sam Damon, were in the siege of Bexar in December, 1835.

Emory and his brother, John G., were with McNutt's Company at Harrisburg during the battle of San Jacinto and the brothers Patrick, Edmond and Richard were in the battle.

Jacob C. Darst, uncle of Emory H., who was a Colonist with DeWitt, was among those who perished in the Alamo.⁹

Benjamin Z. Boone, the Mier man, who like the Darsts was descended from Daniel Boone, was their neighbor on the Bernard in 1850.

William T. Lightfoot lived on the Bernard in 1850. He was then thirty-eight years old and a native of Kentucky. He had fought in the battle of San Jacinto in William Heard's Company, had married Sarah Jane Scott, twenty-four, and they had two small children, Joseph, five, and Mary Ann, eight. Mr. Lightfoot died on his plantation in 1850.

R. J. Calder, forty, with Mary W., his wife, thirty-four, and Robert J., ten; Jane, eight; Zemula, four; Ann M., three; Samuel D., one, were residents of the Bernard.

Calder came from Maryland before the Revolution of 1835-6 and commanded the Brazoria troops at San Jacinto. After the war he was first Sheriff of Brazoria County.

His son Robert J. was with Terry's Rangers and was killed at the battle of Moss Creek, Tennessee. Jane afterwards married W. L. Davidson, a Richmond lawyer whom, by courtesy, we called Major Davidson at the close of the century, and little Sam many years later married the daughter of Ex-President Lamar.

Ann married J. C. Williams, a Richmond lawyer, who was County Judge in the '80s and was County Attorney when he died in August, 1888. Although he identified himself with the Parker party, he, like Judge Somerville, had many friends and did not arouse enmities.

David, fifty-five, and Nancy Randon, thirty-four, lived on their league up the river. Old David, who was part Indian, was a very thrifty, sporty fellow and gave his worth at \$33,000, a

⁹ Mary Ann Moore Darst, who lived in Richmond with her daughter, Mrs. Sam Hodges, during my residence there, 1897-1901, was an interesting person and many of the incidents related in this volume are from her ample memory.



Captain Robert J. Calder

Capt. Robert J. Calder commanded a company at San Jacinto which was recruited at Brazoria. The day after the battle he and Benjamin C. Franklin were sent with a message to President Burnet, who was on Galveston Island. They made the voyage from San Jacinto to Galveston in four days in a leaky rowboat.

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fortune for those days, and his occupation as planter and horse racer.

Next door to the Randons were two opulent families of Simontons who had recently come from North Carolina. There were Mary, sixty-five; T., twenty-nine; Carolina, twenty-one, and James, thirty-five, and their lands were valued at \$14,000.

On the Andrews League where their descendants live today, the census man found James M. Briscoe, thirty-seven, and his good wife, Susan H., thirty, and their children, Mary, eleven; Ann, six; Mason, four; and James P., two. There were also Dorcasmer Briscoe and John, ten, who lived next door to the Pattons on Jones Creek.

On the same day he reached the Randolph Foster plantation, where Uncle Ran, sixty, and Aunt Lucy, forty-six, had lived since they came, the first of the Three Hundred. Their children, all born here, were Isaac, twenty; Mary, sixteen; Lucretia, fourteen; Caroline, twelve; Lucy M., ten, and Randolph, six.

The Fosters had a teacher for their children, Joseph Pritchard from South Carolina, seventy-four, the oldest man in the County in 1850.

Randolph Foster was born in Mississippi in 1790 and died on his league in 1879 in his ninetieth year—a mature man when he came with the Three Hundred and brought his wife Lucy Hunter, who was only twenty.

Born and reared on the frontier he loved solitude and all his long life craved the woods and the quiet of plantation life. A hunter from boyhood, he often went alone with only his negro servant for long rides across the country, camping at night in the forest. Their homestead where six children grew to maturity and were married was a typical home of the time. There was an affluence and dignity about it that made it interesting. When Aunt Lucy died in 1872, J. S. Sullivan, the Richmond lawyer, wrote for her memory a beautiful eulogy which was published in the Galveston News. Seven years later Uncle Randolph passed on and the same essayist wrote of him that he was fearless, but so modest that it was pathetic. A soldier in the War of 1812 in the same Company with Randal Jones, a participant in the Indian Wars in Mississippi when it was a bloody frontier, a refugee in the Texas Revolution when the Mexican Army swept through Fort Bend, he lived to see the high tide of prosperity of 1860 and the awful catastrophe of defeat and reconstruction. But he lived long enough to see the country restored and died in peace and plenty.

William Walker, who had come from Mississippi before the Revolution, had purchased the Andrews League for the Bris-

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coes and had later bought land and opened a plantation in the Randon and Pennington League near Fulshear. He had died prior to 1850 and the census taker found his children living on the plantation. There were Edward, twenty-six, born in Mississippi, and his wife, Martha, twenty-four, born in Texas. Near by lived Martha, eighteen; Seth R., seventeen; James F., thirteen; William R., eleven. With them lived Rufus Wright, the school teacher, a young man, twenty-six, who had recently arrived from Massachusetts, and Benjamin Bonds, the plantation overseer.

When the census taker of 1860 came around he found Seth R., then twenty-seven, the merchant at Pittsville, with a plantation and a large business, a wife, Marion, and three small children, F. T., four; L. M., two, and Edward, an infant.

There was another family of Walkers on Oyster Creek, John Walker, thirty-five, a native of Georgia, Clarenda, twenty-eight, born in Texas; Samuel, ten; Margaret, four; Matilda, two, all Texans, and with them Edward Miller, twenty-six, the school teacher.

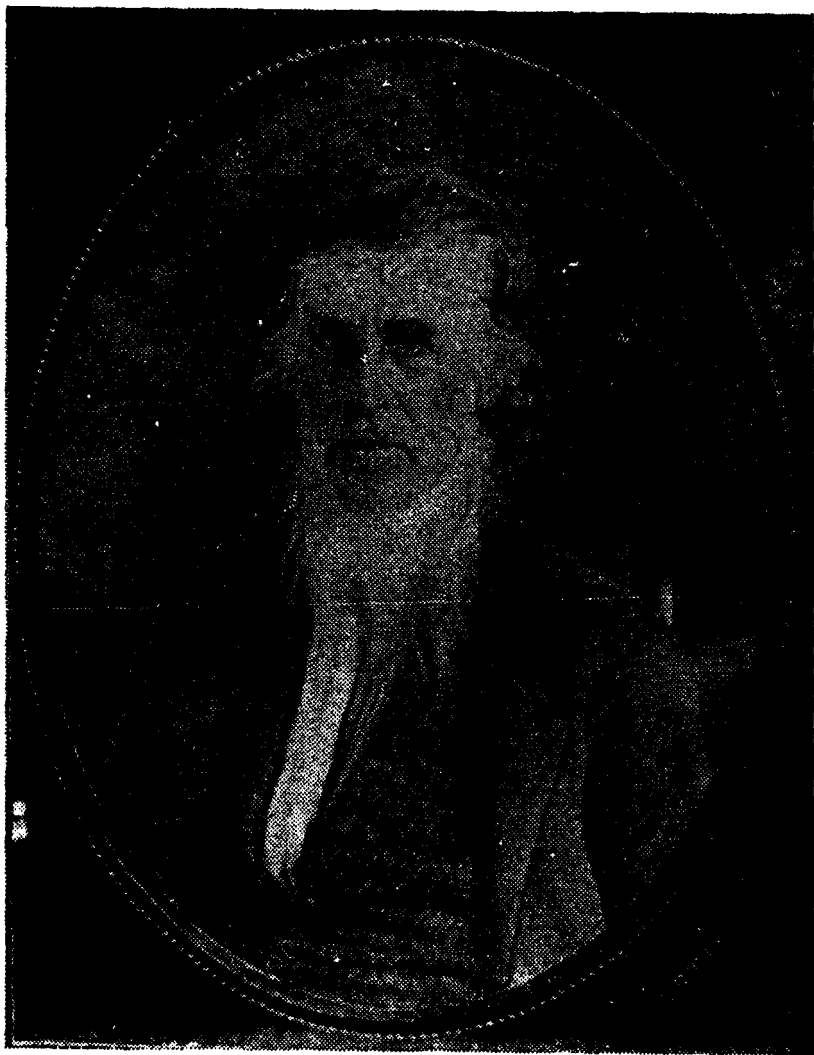
Dr. William Baines lately from North Carolina and Eliza, his wife, and two children, W. W. (Billie), seven and Francis, two, lived up near Pittsville.

Old Churchill Fulshear of the Three Hundred died and left three sons and one daughter. Benjamin and Graves died early and Churchill, Jr., born in 1808, survived and acquired the Fulshear League where he lived nearly seventy years, dying in 1892. In 1830 he married a daughter of Jesse Cartwright of Oyster Creek. In 1850 the family living on the headright league were the father, Churchill, forty-two; Minerva, his wife, forty; and five children, Mary, eighteen; Graves, fifteen; Jesse, thirteen; John, seven; Churchill, III, two. All these children, except Graves, died in early life from consumption as did Minerva, their mother. Churchill II was a race horse man and bought thoroughbreds and for years maintained a race course, Churchill Downs, where races, famous in their day, 1850-1870, were run and racing history was made.

It was on this course that the boy John Huggins began his long career as a jockey and trainer in the '60s.

Graves, the son of Churchill II, left a son, Thomas.

It was always told by Churchill Fulshear that he and his brothers Benjamin and Graves were on scout duty when Santa Anna's army crossed the Brazos on April 14, 1836 and that they followed it at a safe distance and as the army reached the Jones Creek crossing the Fulshears fired from the woods and caused great consternation in the enemy ranks.



Randolph Foster

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It is odd, however, that Colonel Delgado, the faithful diarist for that day, made no mention of the incident.

When the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway built through the County in 1888 the name Fulshear was perpetuated in the town which wrecked old Pittsville.

Near the Fulshears in 1850 was a large family of Millers who were long prominent in the affairs of the County. John W., forty-one, Kentucky, and Malinda, his wife, thirty-eight, North Carolina, had seven children, Newton, twenty-one; Celestany, sixteen; Lenora, fifteen; Lucinda, twelve; Helen, seven; Warren, three, and James, an infant.

A mile above Pittsville in view of the home of Dr. Baines, the planter, George D. Parker, lived in a grove where the Fulshear-Brookshire Road now turns. He had come from North Carolina in the middle '40s and bought a plantation in the Randolph Foster League, which in 1850 was valued at \$21,000. In 1850 he gave his age at thirty-seven and the age of his wife, Mary, at thirty-five. Their children were George D., six; James W., two, and Janette, an infant. This little James W. (Wesson) lived to be a storm center in Fort Bend County politics after the war, as we shall see.

Ten years later father Parker gave his vocation, Methodist Minister, and in those days he preached periodically at Pittsville, Richmond and elsewhere. He then had an afflicted son, M. M., eight, and this grief is said to have caused the good man to turn to a religious vocation.

Brother Parker was evidently something of an evangelist. A news item in the Richmond Recorder September, 1854 recites that he had just concluded a revival in the Cooper neighborhood at which twenty-six converts were added to the Methodist Church.

The Noel Roberts League is near the upper line of the County and he was on it in 1824, and Andrew Roberts had an adjoining league granted in 1827.

In 1850 the following Roberts were living in the Pittsville neighborhood: Elizabeth, twenty-eight; Churchill, fourteen; Eliz, eighteen; George, an infant, all in one family, and another family consisting of E. H. Kemp, forty-one; his wife, Harriet, forty-one; with whom lived H. Roberts, sixteen; John, thirteen; Marg., eleven; Thomas, seven, probably the children of Harriet Kemp. All these Roberts children of both families were born in Texas.

There were only two ministers of the Gospel registered in the whole County and they were both Methodist, viz., James M. Wesson, thirty-one, lately from London, had married a wife

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in Alabama and they had an infant daughter, Mary Jane, born in Texas. The other, James G. Johnson, was thirty-five and unmarried.

There were only seven school teachers in the County, all men, and most of them young men. At that time there was not a public schoolhouse in the County. All the schools were private institutions on the plantations supported by private enterprise.

There were six physicians in the County, two of them in Richmond.

Although the county was well stocked with cattle they had little monetary value for want of market. Twenty men gave their exclusive vocations as stock raisers, but they were all of small means, many of them owning no land.

The most momentous event in the life of Fort Bend County since the retreat of the Mexican Army in 1836, was the advent of the first railroad in 1853. Ever since the Revolution the people had dreamed of and worked for this enterprise. The only dependable transportation to market was on boats and rafts down the river by which the planters had since early Colonial days gotten their cotton and hides and other produce to the mouth of the river where they were taken by steamboat to New Orleans.

In 1834 Dr. Rose had hauled his cotton from Oyster Creek to Harrisburg on a sled. After Houston was founded in 1836 a rivalry arose between it and Galveston for the Brazos-Oyster Creek trade. Planters hauled their cotton and hides to Houston by wagon, but this way was impossible in wet seasons. All through the '40s and '50s there was railroad talk and dirt road talk, the latter more definite. In January, 1844 the Telegraph of Houston published a dispatch from Hodges Bend on the Brazos to the effect that the people there were promoting a wagon road to Houston; that it would be "constructed" eighteen feet wide and would cost \$50 per mile. The editor of the Telegraph prophesied that within another year this enterprise would be completed. Three years later the same paper warned the people of Houston that their enterprising Galveston competitor was on the alert, was raising money with which to drag the snags out of the Brazos below Richmond so that boats could ply up and down the river. Navigation on the Brazos as far up as Washington had been accomplished for many years when the river was high, but was perilous and often impossible at low water. The Telegraph alarmed that this might divert lucrative trade, urged that Houston get busy and provide commodious wagon roads all the way to Richmond. If this were

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done the paper was sure that the planters would prefer to haul their produce in their own wagons and haul back merchandise. The perils of water transportation were pointed out. The river was treacherous; the boat might hit a snag; it might be held up a week at the bar at the mouth of the river, if it got that far. If it ever got over the bar (and this the editor gravely doubted), there were the perils of navigating along treacherous Galveston Island. If the boat should ever get to Galveston, which seemed yet more unlikely, then the planter would fall into the hands of commission merchants and would have to pay drayage. If he had any money left he would have to pay his passage home and freight on any merchandise he would take back with him. To avert these disasters it was urged that the road which had been talked about since 1844 be completed; that a ditch three feet wide and eighteen inches deep be made on each side, all of which could be done for \$120 per mile.

Six months later the Telegraph advised that the planters below Richmond were at work removing the impediments from the river and that they would render it navigable the year round and that the steamboat "S. M. Williams" would soon be on regular service as far up as Richmond. But it was thought that Houston might still get the trade from above Richmond if it would finance the completion of the wagon road.

The paper printed a "River Bulletin" which advised that the Brazos was so low that the tides were running in as high as Columbia, and the inference was that it would soon run dry.

Three years later the same paper printed that four steamers were then (January 1850) running regularly on the Brazos from Washington to Velasco.

In 1847 Andrew Briscoe of Harrisburg who owned a large area of outlots in that place conceived the idea of using this more or less useless property to finance a railroad to begin at Harrisburg and go as far west as possible. He employed an engineer who made him a report suggesting that he mortgage his lots for enough money to build to the east bank of the Brazos opposite Richmond, thirty miles. That he open a new town there and sell enough lots to enable him to build up the river thirty miles where he would build another town and sell enough lots to enable him to cross the Brazos and go another thirty miles. He would repeat this performance until he got to Austin, after which he could by the same process go on to El Paso and then down to the Pacific Ocean.

In 1850 the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway was incorporated; in 1852 track laying began; and in 1853 the road had been completed to Stafford in Fort Bend County

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where on July 4th a great celebration was held to which an excursion train brought all Houston to meet with the Oyster Creek and Brazos people.

Two years later the road was completed to the Brazos and it was decided to cross there and go on to the Colorado. Money to build a bridge was the great need and to meet an emergency a temporary structure was built at Richmond which lasted for many years.

It was an ordinary pile bridge about six feet above low water, leaving an open space of fifty feet in the center for the passage of boats. The opening was covered by one span supported underneath by log chains. A large flat boat was kept moored under the span to carry it out when boats wanted to navigate through. The bridge was so low that when there was a rise in the river, although slight, train traffic across was abandoned until the river ran down. Sometimes this would take weeks. Driftwood soon accumulated against the bridge in such quantities that it required the aid of a steamboat to pull it away.

But when the bridge was out of use for trains the flatboats used to support and move the spans were used for ferries and people could cross on them and get on as best they could.

Nervous passengers who feared to ride the trains across this rickety bridge were allowed to get off and cross on the ferry and get back on the train after it had passed over.

When trains from the Brazos began carrying cotton and sugar from Fort Bend to Harrisburg and shipside, there was distress in Houston which was off the great highway, and in 1856 the City built a line to tap the "main line" at Pierce Junction seven miles south, and in this way rail connection between Houston, Oyster Creek and the Brazos was established. The planters of lower Fort Bend and Brazoria rose with great enterprise and extended the line down through the Waters' plantation on to Arcola and on to Columbia.

Johnathan D. Waters was a large stockholder and President of the new railroad which afforded him rail connection with the outer world and made his dreams come true.

River steamers came around the bend and docked at the Waters wharf. Trains pulled by a new and improved engine which the Directors of the railroad proudly called the "J. D. Waters" ran up and down from Pierce Junction to Columbia.

Four years after the B. B. B. & C. crossed the Brazos at Richmond it reached Eagle Lake, and in 1860 the enterprising promoters after ten years got as far as Alleyton, a total distance of eighty miles. Here they rested for a while before venturing to cross the Colorado and were overtaken by the war.

FORT BEND IN THE FIFTIES

When the railroad got to Richmond on January 1, 1856, the Galveston Weekly News made a headline of the event. With much pride it was said that the rail connection between Richmond and Harrisburg was the first in Texas between two major points.

It was announced that the New Orleans passenger and mail boat would leave Galveston for Harrisburg and reach that place a little after dark and connect with the train which would leave there for Richmond early the next morning and arrive there at 11 A. M. on the same day. Stage lines for LaGrange, San Antonio and Austin would meet the train at Richmond.

There was a normal river in 1856 and the boats were running and with a railroad from Richmond to Harrisburg, Fort Bend was on the highway of great progress.

In 1854 anticipating the advent of the railroad, Herndon, capitalist, and Sullivan, lawyer, backed a newspaper called The Texas Sun which they vowed should never set. But after a year it went like the various other newspaper ventures that had preceded it. They were in sad succession, Lamar's and Handy's Richmond Telescope and Literary Register of 1839 which lasted a year; in August, 1851, J. G. Wright began publishing the Brazos Delta at Richmond with high hopes but it lasted only ten months. A contemporary paper wrote the Delta's obituary: That it went off with galloping consumption and that Editor Wright deeply in debt had abandoned the enterprise. On his way out Editor Wright murdered a man named Hanson who was in Richmond on a visit from Houston. In 1852 Judge Fenton M. Gibson, the Mier veteran, started the Richmond Recorder and succeeded in keeping it going two years. Then came The Sun with its high promise and all the prestige of the Herndons and Sullivans behind it. It lasted from January, 1855 to May, 1856. After it the Richmond Reporter published by W. F. Ferguson ran, 1856-59.

After the war there was a succession of papers which, with one exception, were as transient as the ante-bellum press. No file of any of them is in existence and they are only known to this generation from stray copies which come to life now and then from attics, and from mention in the files of contemporary papers which have been preserved.

The exception was the Richmond Democrat published by Jeff McLemore in 1888. It struggled along after a fashion until McLemore sold it in 1889 or 1890 to Gillespie and Henry. George Dunlop acquired the enterprise from these parties in 1895 and changed the name to the Richmond Coaster and he continued

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to publish it until his death in 1900. In 1911 it was acquired from Dunlop's family by H. M. Shannon, who published it continuously until his death in 1938 and now (1939) after the lapse of forty-four years, his son, W. M. Shannon, is carrying it on.

The issue of *The Sun* of August 11, 1855, the only one in existence as far as I know, carried the professional card of a young Doctor named J. A. Gibson, father of the Gibsons of whom we shall read much in a later chapter. It advised that Freeman W. Douglas (the San Jacinto veteran and Mier man) had opened a very high class hotel in Richmond. It also contained a daily schedule of cars from Harrisburg to Stafford's Point; that Hiram B. Waller and William E. Kendall were law partners, and that Fenton M. Gibson (Mier man) and John C. Mitchell were a law firm; that Blum & Mayblum had a large and very select stock of merchandise; that Captain Jenkins of the steamer "Brazos" had tied up his boat with a cargo of cotton and was having teams haul it to the railroad terminus at Stafford; that Pease had just been re-elected Governor of Texas. Fort Bend was on a boom in the late '50s.

CHAPTER XI

THE SIXTIES AND THE WAR

It would be hard to find a more prosperous and contented commonwealth in all of our annals than Fort Bend County in 1860.

The white population, less than 1,000 in 1850 was now 2,016 and the colored had increased from 1,500 to 4,127.

In 1858 the Houston Telegraph said there were 399 voters in Fort Bend County and that the taxable wealth of the County was \$8,340 per voter.

The 1860 census taker found 159 farms in the County, 417 residences, and in that year the cultivated land was about 12,000 acres in cotton, 7,000 acres in corn and 1,000 acres in sugar cane.

The assessments for 1859 were 3,000 negroes, \$2,000,000; 4,000 horses, \$180,000; 57,000 cattle, \$356,000; land, \$1,532,000.

For some strange reason the County put on a great financial front in 1860 and more than doubled its assessments, rendering land, \$3,250,000; slaves, \$3,140,000 and horses and cattle, \$670,000, a total of over \$7,000,000. This was the second highest assessment in Texas that year, only Harris County with a tax value of \$8,000,000 exceeded it.

The B. B. B. & C. Railway, whose terminus was at the Colorado, traversed the County from east to west and gave the Fort Bend County people access to Houston and from there they had connections with Galveston and New Orleans. The Columbia Tap Railway traversed the lower margin of the County.

The Galveston and New Orleans markets could be reached by boat.

Cotton was the great cash crop, but sugar was becoming important. In 1856 Mrs. John A. Wharton of Brazoria wrote her brother in Georgia that they cleared \$25,000 that year on 500 acres in cane.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

Probably 100,000 head of cattle roamed the prairies and woodlands between the Brazos and Bernard and east of the Brazos, owned by easy-going drovers who looked them up once a year to brand them, who did not have to worry about feeding them in the winter, and whose chief concern was the cow thief and a poor market.

Great interest was manifest in fine horse stock and Churchill Fulshear had begun a racing stable which became famous. Dr. Mat Moore had bought 100 blooded mares and a great stallion that he called Frank Terry, and Dr. Feris had imported Arabian stallions.

There are many interesting facts evident in a study of the census sheets of 1860 and their comparison with those of 1850.

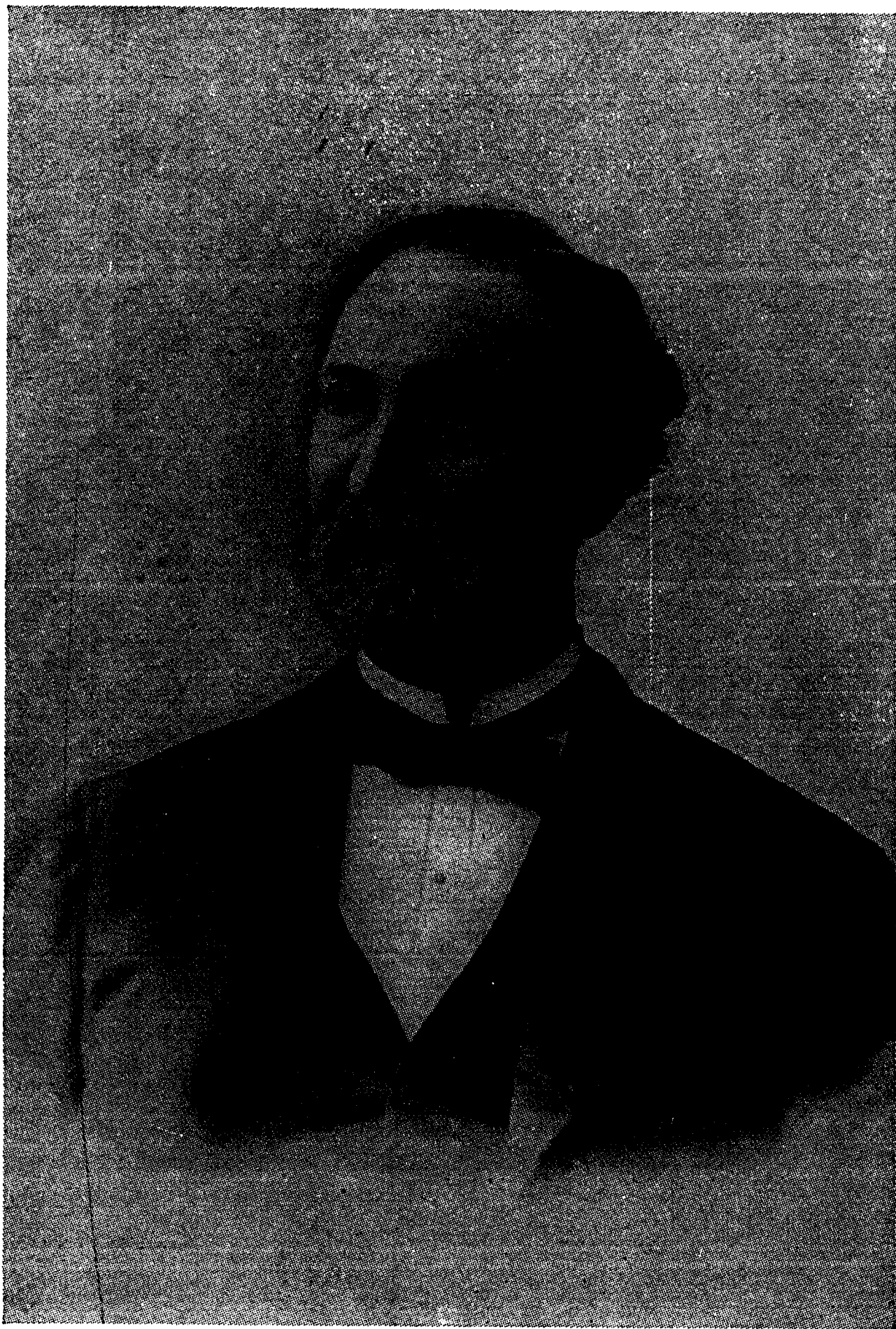
The census taker noted the communities (with post office address) of the people enumerated.

In the Richmond territory he found nearly 1,400 people, Big Creek 120, Pittsville 200. There was no Fulshear then and all those folks up the river who did not get their mail at Richmond were included in Pittsville about two miles above the present town of Fulshear which was not established until the S. A. A. P. Railway was built thirty years later. The remainder of the population was found on Oyster Creek, 80 at Sugar Land and 200 at Stafford's Point, which enumeration took in everybody down to old Francis Bigham's north line.

Many new names of people worth mention are found on the 1860 census rolls while those of the Old Three Hundred who came thirty-six years before were passing out. Joseph Kuykendall and Henry Jones below Richmond, Jane Long and Randal Jones in Richmond, David and Nancy Randon and Randolph Foster up the river, Robert Hodges, Sr. on the Bernard, Nancy Spencer Barnet Gray and Churchill Fulshear II still lived on their leagues.

In 1850 there was not a Jew in the County, but in 1860 the Solomons had arrived. Levi and wife were merchants in Richmond and they listed eight children; and there was a New York Jew named Hyams who had a hole in the wall he called a store. Nathan Mayblum and Sophia, his wife, from Bavaria, had the largest store in town. Leon Blum, twenty-two, had just come from France. Blum¹ and Mayblum operated a store in Richmond in 1855.

¹ He later became the founder of the house of Leon and H. Blum of Galveston, which for 50 years was one of the leading financial institutions in the South.



W. E. Kendall, lawyer, founder of Episcopal Church in Richmond.

THE SIXTIES AND THE WAR

There was a merchant named Philip Vogel, recently come from Germany, who with his wife and five children and the aid of one clerk operated a substantial mercantile establishment.

J. W. Eckman, blacksmith, twenty-nine, and his wife, Catherine, recently from Maryland, had opened a shop and built a house on the very bank of the river, where he was living and plying his trade forty years later. With them was young Robert Eckman, eighteen, blacksmith apprentice, and Daniel Eckman, twenty-four, carpenter.

There were many Germans coming in, mostly craftsmen and trades people. Among these German emigrants of 1856 was Antonio Wessendorf, twenty-four, carpenter from Prussia, and his wife, twenty-one, from Mecklenberg. Their son Joseph was an infant.

All in the same neighborhood the census taker found an Italian shoemaker, Vincent Battalia, and wife; Henry Shaffer, a Swiss cabinetmaker; Antonio Conoy, a Swiss mattressmaker; Charles Fitze, and wife, German carpenter, and several large families of Prussians who had recently arrived.

There were Dr. Samuel A. Stone, twenty-nine, and his wife, Mary, twenty-five, and an infant son. The Stones had very recently come from Virginia and were of old Colonial Virginia stock. For forty years the Doctor went in and out among the people universally respected. A Democrat of deep convictions, he always attended the State Conventions, and during the dark years 1869-1889, was often the only delegate present from Fort Bend County.

The largest hotel in Richmond was operated by John Cornwall from Connecticut and he had an interesting line of guests (boarders). There were R. N. Branch, twenty-six, just arrived from North Carolina who was evidently "looking around." He acknowledged having with him \$28,000. Leon Blum, twenty-two, the young French Jew merchant; W. R. Sullivan, twenty-five, lawyer from Virginia; W. D. Mitchell, forty, lawyer and farmer, Virginia; Charles Norvell, twenty-five, lawyer, Virginia; T. S. Summerwall, twenty-five, physician, Virginia; J. P. Parker, twenty-five, physician, Virginia; W. E. Kendall, thirty, lawyer, Virginia; C. M. McCloy, thirty, Virginia; R. A. Parker, thirty, lawyer, Virginia; Young Adams, twenty-two, Alabama; I. McFarlane, twenty-six, bookkeeper, New York.

Many of these young men were transient and moved on.

In this list one will find several names which become warped into the fabric of our County history.

One of the most historic characters of early Richmond was

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Peter Martin, freedman, about whom so much was said in the debates of the Congress of the Republic twenty years before. Wyly Martin told Congress that Peter had property worth \$16,000 and he would never become a public charge. In 1860 Peter's fortune had been reduced to \$1,200 and at fifty-nine he was a cook and had a small boarding house for white people.

The Gills had "moved in" over on the Bernard where J. P. Gill, lately Sheriff of Brazoria County and a veteran of San Jacinto, had a ranch. He was then fifty-seven years old and lived with his nephew. The old man died there in 1869 and left an ample estate to his brother Robert and his nephew John Ben Milam Gill. His grave may be seen to this day with the simple inscription on the headstone, "Colonel Gill."

The Lawthers and the Learys had just come into the Big Creek-Bernard neighborhood from North Carolina and brought slaves and made large investments in land.

William D. Lawther lived alone and next door to him lived John C. Leary, twenty-eight; Lucy, twenty-eight, and four small children, all born in North Carolina.

Likewise had moved into the Bernard country since the last census the Farmers, one of the most splendid families of men and women whose names have appeared in the annals of old Fort Bend. J. Farmer, forty-one, and M., his wife, thirty, from Georgia, listed three children: Henry, five; C., three, and Ruffin, an infant. Other children were born later—Elizabeth (Mrs. Dance) and Jordon Reese.

G. H. Schley, forty-five, and his wife, E. W., forty-one, from Georgia and their family of six children, came into the same community and about the same time came also Thomas Armstrong, forty, and his wife, M. E., thirty-two, from Tennessee, and their seven children. The Schleys came to Texas from Georgia with the Farmers.

Jordon Farmer died and his wife married White Armstrong, and their son George W. Armstrong lives on the Bernard (1939).

On the Bernard were Eliza Kemp, thirty-two, and her son, Clarence Kemp, eight, and an infant daughter. She was the widow of Thomas Kemp of the Mobile Grays and who was at Goliad and in some mysterious way escaped the massacre. He lived on the Bernard 1850-1860. Their son Clarence lived in Wharton County until April, 1938 and was Sheriff of that County. Eliza was a sister of Leir Scott and divorced wife of Richard Darst.

John Keiser, fifty-four, a farmer and stock raiser and his

THE SIXTIES AND THE WAR

wife, Jane, twenty-nine, lived down the Big Creek way, but after the war John was ill and the lonely ranch was cheerless. So they traded it and moved down on the Tennille Survey, a mile from West Columbia, where they lived and died. On this place to which they bequeathed the name Keisers Mound, the great Columbia oil field was found many years after they were gone. They left no children and their collateral kin had a merry fuss over the estate.

William Styles Jones, son of Henry, first child born in Austin's Colonies, 1822, now thirty-eight, lived on his ranch and plantation and was seemingly prosperous, his property valued at \$40,000. His wife, Mary Barnet, daughter of Thomas and Nancy Spencer Barnet, was thirty-five, and their children, Mary F., thirteen; Thomas, nine; Nancy, six; John, four; Sarah, two. This was an all Texas family, father, mother and children all natives and descendants of the Three Hundred.

Living with the Joneses was a young man, A. T. Cary, twenty-seven, from South Carolina, who gave his occupation as "running negro dogs," by which he meant that he was the proprietor of a pack of hounds and would for a consideration chase and recapture runaway slaves and return them to their masters provided his dogs did not destroy them.

Up in what the census taker called the Pittsville neighborhood, but at Fulshear of our day, he found J. A. Huggins, recently from North Carolina, forty-two; his wife, C. V., thirty-seven, and their two children, E. M., fifteen, and John, eleven. John became a jockey and trainer on the Churchill Fulshear Downs in the '60s and after the Fulshears were gone, went into larger racing fields.

Munsey's Magazine of March, 1901 had the following item: "John Huggins—an American trainer, has been very successful in England where he is employed by Lord Wm. Beresford and Pierre Lorillard. No story of American turfmen in England would be complete without a few words about the world's greatest trainer, John Huggins, who first went abroad to train for Pierre Lorillard at a salary said to be in the neighborhood of \$50,000 a year. In addition he receives a percentage of the winnings of the stable. Huggins trained for Lord William Beresford and Pierre Lorillard." Early in this century he retired and came home to Fulshear where he spent his last days and died in 1914.

At the close of the war 1865, a young Doctor Robert Locke Harris, who had been in the service, a native of North Carolina and a graduate of Tulane, came to Pittsville and began a long useful life. He married Fannie, daughter of J. A. Huggins, and

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when she died ten years later he married Miss Holliday. Dr. Harris reared three daughters and six sons. Four of the sons and a grandson became physicians. When Fulshear was established and Pittsville faded, Dr. Harris moved to the railroad and lived on a fine estate which he developed there until his death in 1905. Children and grandchildren still live in the County.

Also in Pittsville in 1860 were John Irwin and wife and six children; W. H. Winner from Ohio; James W. Wade, thirty-five, from Mississippi, Sarah Wade, twenty-five, and May, eleven, born in Texas; Anna D. Mays, sixty, and John, thirty, and George, twenty-one, who came in 1856 from Mississippi.

I. L. Pool, a large planter, had just come into the Pittsville neighborhood from Alabama, bringing many slaves and a wife, Cora, and two children, James, nine, and Eugenia, thirteen.

There were many Brookshires, I. I., forty-three; L. C., forty-seven; Emma, fourteen; L. S., twelve; A. A., nine; and an infant son.

And many Pattersons, J. R., fifty, from Georgia; Sarah, forty, and their eight children, all born in Texas, John, sixteen; Robert, fourteen; Catherine, twelve; W. B., seven; George, five; F., two; S., an infant. Father Patterson listed his property at \$150,000.

On Jones Creek in the Isaacks League a young planter from North Carolina named Thomas Burke Burton came in 1858 with ample means and many slaves, and opened the Burton plantation. He died in September, 1861 and his nephew William Wiggins of Matagorda, his only relative in Texas, administered his large estate. Among his chattel property was a young, strong, fine looking negro named Walter, twenty years old, who made his mark after the war. Little is known about Thomas Burton in this generation except that he was young and had a comfortable fortune and divided his time between his Jones Creek plantation and his tannery business in Richmond, and he had a house there where he lived much of the time. He was a friend of Captain Connor and had been in college with him and was often a guest at Prairie Home. He and Captain Dan planned to raise a company and join Terry's Rangers when the war began in 1861, but changed their plans. Connor was to go on to Virginia and seek a commission to raise a regiment and Burton would be a Major in it.

There are a number of the descendants of Burton's slaves living along Jones Creek today who bear the Burton name. It often happened that when the negroes were freed that if they had a kindly master they all took his name.

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The Masons had come into the County since the last census and were domiciled over on Jones Creek. There were Samuel, seventy-five, from Pennsylvania; Polly, sixty-three, from Mississippi; Thomas, seven; and Dorsey, five, from Texas; and living with them were four Briscoe children: Mary K., twenty; Ann, sixteen; Mason, fourteen; William, nine.²

There were also on adjoining plantations a family, Louisa Mason, forty; Mary Mason, nineteen; Dorsey, seventeen; Clara, thirteen, and with them two small Fulshear children, Ella, one, and Thomas, three.

James Hilliard, fifty-two, farmer from Virginia, had recently purchased the Wilborn plantation on Jones Creek and began farming on a large scale. His property was valued at \$265,000. He died the first year of the war and was spared the ordeal which came to Dan Connor, his neighbor who lived to face bankruptcy.

About 1855 a very large family of Connors came from Alabama and Georgia and bought land near the Nibbs just west of Sugar Land. There were in addition to Captain Dan, who has been mentioned, other Connors, James M., fifty-five; Elizabeth, fifty; Edward, thirty; May, twenty-five; John, twenty-two; David, twenty-one; Elizabeth, seventeen; Carrie, fourteen; Jennie, twelve; Emma, ten; Joseph, five.

On the adjoining plantation dwelt Baccot Nibbs, twenty-five; Jennie, twenty-one; Allen, three, and Bettie, one.

In the 1860 census Joseph Stansbury, thirty-two, from Ohio, and his wife, Emily, granddaughter of Alexander Hodge, born in Texas, are registered and also two infant daughters, Emily, two, and Nettie, six months, and with them five Bertrand children, Ann, thirteen; Mary, nine; William, seven; Alice, six; Walter, four.

The most conspicuous addition to the Oyster Creek-Sugar Land neighborhood, in fact the County between 1850 and 1860, were the Kyles and the Terrys. Benjamin Franklin Terry, thirty-nine, was a native of Kentucky but came to Brazoria County with his family when a boy, and he and his brothers Clinton and David had grown to manhood there and David had gone to California where he became a Judge of the Supreme Court and was conspicuous for many years. Clinton, the younger brother, was a lawyer at Brazoria.

² Thomas was a mental defective and he and his estate were mixed in much interesting litigation in later years. See *Williams v. Sapieha*, 94 Texas, 430.

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Terry's family was Mary, his wife, thirty-eight; David, seventeen; Mary M., twelve; Frank, Jr., ten; Sally, seven; Kyle, five; Cornelia, two.

His partner Wm. F. Kyle was fifty, unmarried. They were planting cotton and sugar on a large scale and valued their properties at \$250,000.

Frank Terry was a large man, over six feet with broad shoulders, a massive brow and small eyes, wore thin blond whiskers. He looked like one of the Norsemen who came over with Lief Ericson. A man of great dynamic force, he was a tireless rider and an unerring shot. His aggressive nature did not irritate but by common consent gave him a leadership which the County folks were ready to acknowledge. He kept a school at Oakland plantation and Maria Kendall, eighteen, a teacher from Boston, taught the Terrys and children from the opulent Oyster Creek plantations who came on horseback.

There was a resident near by, a Colonel R. J. Kyle, who had a son William R., whose death at twenty-eight in 1859 is noted in the Houston Telegraph with the comment that he left a widow and three children.

At Stafford Paschal P. Borden, whose second wife was Martha Stafford, lived in 1850 with three small children, Milam, Guy and Joseph. In 1860 Henry D., twenty-nine, and his wife, M. I., twenty-two, and Thomas H., fifty-six, a native of Rhode Island and his wife, Levenia, lived with them.

Little Milam Borden went to war two years later and lost his life.

These Borden's with the Staffords were buried on the bank of Oyster Creek within a hundred yards of the gin site where Santa Anna's Army took "lunch" on April 15, 1836. All trace of their graves has been lost, but great forest trees tower above their resting place.

Lewis M. Stroble, a farmer from South Carolina, with Elizabeth W., his wife, a native of Tennessee, with two small children, M. E., four, and Abner, two, lived on a plantation south of Stafford where they had a beautiful home. Elizabeth Wharton Strobel was a niece of William H. and John A. Wharton of Brazoria. Lewis Strobel was Captain of Company F of Terry's Rangers and served during the war. Abner, the little son, lived a long, useful life in Brazoria, dying in 1930.

Jack Adams twenty-eight, and Frank, twenty-six, from Alabama, were on their Oyster Creek plantation below Stafford in 1860 as their descendants are to this day. Young Adams, twenty-two, of the same family was then living in Richmond. On gravestones on the bank of Oyster Creek in the heart of the

THE SIXTIES AND THE WAR

Stafford League one may read today—"Andrew Jackson Adams 1833-1899; Columbia Ballard Adams 1844-1900."

Across the river from the Waters plantation near where Thompson was located when the Santa Fe Railway came many years later, a family of Bohannons came from North Carolina in 1856. In 1860 the family consisted of the grandfather Budd Bohannon, seventy-five; Elmora, a widow, forty-two; and her three children, S. S. (Sid), ten; Mary, twelve; R. I. W., seven. The widow assessed her property at \$65,000 in 1860.

Another Bohannon family headed by W. O. (a son of grandfather Budd), and his wife, F. E., and their several children came in 1860. This family which was long identified with the County suffered many tragedies.

In 1875 W. O. killed his brother-in-law Hill and on a night in December, 1876 while he and several others were seated at a card table a brother of the Hill whom he had slain, shot him in the face with a shotgun, destroying his eyesight so that he remained totally blind until his death twenty years later.

In 1877 he and his wife were divorced and their two daughters were in a seminary at Wheeling, West Virginia, where the mother visited them. The Associated Press, including the Galveston News of July 20, 1877, carried the sensational dispatch from Wheeling that Mrs. W. O. Bohannon of Richmond, Texas, wife of a wealthy stockman, had just been arrested and was in jail on the complaint by the manager of the Seminary that she had refused to pay a debt of \$360 for her daughters' tuition. Further details are lacking. She evidently got out for she was home to testify at the trial of her son for murder a few years later.

The son, F. W. (Buddie), about twenty, was an industrious, trustworthy young man and spent much time at Thompson where he looked after his parent's cattle and handled considerable money. He boarded with a young couple named Knox. On an evening in December 1881 he and Knox were seen together and Knox disappeared. Buddie told everyone, including Knox's wife, whom he asked to marry him (so she said), that Knox had boarded a freight train passing through Thompson and would not be back. A week later Knox's body was found in the river and Buddie was arrested, tried and convicted for his murder and sent to the penitentiary for life. There he learned to be an apothecary and twenty-five years later he was pardoned and under the name of Dr. Bohannon, operated a drug store in Houston.

Sid, the last of the Bohannons, still lived at Thompson at the close of the century.

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About seven miles below Richmond in the Henry Jones, Hagan, Sansbury neighborhood, Dr. John R. Pettus, thirty-nine, a native of Virginia, who had long resided in Texas, settled in 1858. His wife, Mary, was thirty-seven. Their three children were Eudora, seventeen; William G., sixteen, and Laura, fourteen. Years later Eudora married Judge Edwin Hobby, and their son William Pettus Hobby was twenty-sixth Governor of Texas.

Dr. Pettus' son William Gibson Pettus went through the war, returned home and studied medicine. In 1874 he married Alice Secrest. William G. Pettus practiced medicine in Fort Bend County until 1877 when he moved to Georgetown where for forty years he was a leading physician.

While the good Doctor John R. Pettus, grandfather of the twenty-sixth Governor, was administering quinine and calomel and looking after the physical well-being of the people of Fort Bend, the Reverend James E. Ferguson, father of the twenty-fifth Governor, was busy about their spiritual welfare.

The Fergusons were from Alabama. An older brother was one of Fannin's men and fell at Goliad and twenty years later the family came out to claim the lands which the State had given to the heirs of those who perished. There were several of these brothers, mostly Methodist preachers.

James E. came first to Victoria County where he married Anne P. Fitzpatrick and in 1857 came to Richmond where he lived most of the time until the war.

In 1860 the census taker found the Ferguson family domiciled at John Shaefer's boarding house in Richmond. There were James E., the father, thirty-six; Fannie P., the mother, twenty; an infant son, A. F., two; a young nephew, James S., twenty-one, who said he was a lawyer; and a young brother of Mrs. Ferguson, Fitzpatrick, nineteen.

Brother Ferguson was a man of substance and gave his worldly possessions, land \$30,000, personal property \$15,000.

Ex-Governor Ferguson, son of Parson James E., still has in his possession a Bible which the Richmond Congregation gave his father in 1857.

The census taker found an interesting family group in Richmond including names afterwards long known in County history. There was a widow M. I. Colvin and her two young sons, James Garvey, ten, and William Colvin, five. She lived with her two brothers, Thomas M. Blakely, twenty-three, and Jake Blakely, twenty-one, then unmarried. Their father, a native of Ireland, had come to Brazoria County, where he died when they were small children, and they were left orphans.

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The Blakely young men were attractive, sprightly fellows who made friends and in this year Tom had married Louisa, the daughter of Randolph Foster, and Jake, Lucy Hughes Mitchell, the daughter of William D. Mitchell, sister of John C. Mitchell, the lawyer.

William D. Mitchell, with his family and slaves came from Kentucky and reached the Brazos December, 1850. He opened a plantation in 1851, burning off the canebrakes and planted corn and cotton by sticking holes in the virgin soil into which they dropped the seed. Like all others who raised cotton and sugar during this decade, 1850-1860, planter Mitchell prospered.

In 1885 Libbie Mitchell, daughter of John C. Mitchell and granddaughter of W. D. Mitchell, married Clem Bassett and she and her children live in Richmond to this day (1939).

Mrs. W. R. Goss of Houston is a daughter of J. W. Blakely and Lucy Hughes Mitchell, and great-granddaughter of W. D. Mitchell.

In January, 1851 the steamboat "Washington" came up the Brazos and stopped at the Mitchells for a week, where it took on wood for its voyage. It went up as far as Port Sullivan and on its return trip brought down 1,000 bales of cotton.

The Reddings had arrived and the 1860 census taker found R. S., thirty-seven, saddle maker from New York; Caroline, his wife, twenty-two, from Mississippi, with two small children born in Texas, George, six, and Henry, three.

In 1850 the census taker found Walter Andrews, Deputy Sheriff, twenty-one years old, unmarried. In 1860 he found Walter Andrus, thirty years old; Texana, his wife, nineteen, who was a daughter of McMahan, the first Richmond merchant, and their two children. Walter Andrus was the son of William Andrews of the Three Hundred whose league lay across the river from the Bend. How or why the name was changed to Andrus no one seems to know. Andrews' daughter was the wife of Randal Jones. The Andrus (Andrews) were long identified with the County. William Andrus, son of Walter and grandson of William Andrews, married Katie, daughter of Colonel Peareson.

Ex-President Lamar died at his plantation residence in the eastern margin of town, December 19, 1859 leaving his widow Henrietta, thirty, whom he had married in 1851, and a small daughter, Lola, six. Living with them were Dr. Charles McGill and wife, a young couple recently from Kentucky.

Lamar had acquired this property shortly after the Revo-

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lution, twenty-four years before, but had never been closely identified with local life. After he retired from the Presidency of Texas he was in Fort Bend County two years and then went to the Mexican war where he was a Colonel, and after the war he remained on the Rio Grande at Laredo for several years—long enough to serve a term in the Texas Legislature from the border counties he helped organize.

Home again in the early '50s he wrote and compiled his *Verse Memorials*, a volume of poetry which was published in 1857. It never made much impression in the literary world. When Buchanan was elected President in 1856, he was one of a horde of Southern office seekers and got an appointment as Minister to Nicaragua, a new and turbulent so-called Republic.

Home again in 1858 he spent his last year gathering and assorting manuscripts and data for writing a history of Texas. He had a young Mexican student with him in 1858 and 1859, who was assisting with the Spanish source material.

After an interesting and useful life of sixty-one years they laid him to rest in the little Richmond cemetery which William Morton had begun when he buried Gillispie, thirty-five years before.

Although Lamar never lived to finish the history, his accumulation of manuscripts, correspondence and historical notes now published in six volumes, is one of the most valuable sources of such material.

Although much criticized while he lived, and by most all of us who have written Texas history for his many blunders, Lamar was a man with splendid courage and lofty ideals and deserves the respect of all generations of Texans.

His widow, Henrietta, continued to live in Fort Bend County until 1891 when her health became impaired, and in the summer she went out into the hill country of Coleman County for a change. There at the dawn of an October day she died at the mountain home of her nephew on October 7th and they laid her to rest in the Morton cemetery at Richmond beside her statesman-warrior husband who had preceded her thirty-two years before. Her daughter Lola had married S. D. Calder, youngest son of Captain Calder, and their son Robert J. Calder lives in Galveston today (1939).

The children of Mrs. B. B. Rice and other descendants of Lamar live in Houston.

In 1850 the largest fortune in the County was Lawyer Haddon's rendition of \$100,000. All others were well below \$50,000 and there were only sixteen estates in the County valued at above \$10,000.

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In 1860 there were more than one hundred estates valued in excess of \$10,000 and seventy valued in excess of \$25,000 and fifteen of \$100,000 and up.

The following is a list of the large planters who had come into the County since 1850 and the value of their properties as given the census taker.

Colonel Gill, \$30,000; J. Farmer, \$25,000; George H. Schley, \$75,000; William Dunlop, \$27,000; William D. Lawther, \$30,000; John C. Leary, \$20,000; William Freeman, \$45,000; R. A. Torrence, \$35,000; I. T. Patterson, \$152,000; I. L. Pool, \$165,000; L. A. Bryan, \$40,000; Presley Ward, \$27,000; Edward Walker, \$46,000; Thomas W. Mitchell, \$66,000; James W. Wade, \$100,000; Louisa Mason, \$24,000; James Hilliard, \$265,000; Priscilla McCloy, \$50,000; Dan A. Connor, \$370,000; Patrick Perry, \$75,000; Constantine W. Buckley, \$325,000; Felix Secrest, \$48,000; Kyle & Terry, \$250,000; Eleel Edmondson (a dentist), \$60,000; Elenora Bohannon, \$65,000; Dr. J. E. Prince, \$20,000; M. S. Ross, \$50,000; J. M. Wesson, \$83,000; John W. Miller, \$20,000; William L. Sparks, \$30,000; Charles Fox, \$20,000; Adeline Patton \$20,000; E. I. Brussard, \$29,000; Enoch Byne, \$33,000; George W. Watts, \$33,000; John Tomlinson, \$65,000; Dr. John R. Pettus, \$30,000; Dr. Matthew Moore, \$36,000; James E. Ferguson, \$36,000; T. B. Burton, \$68,000; Smith Darnell, \$100,000; J. D. Newel, \$255,000; John Thatcher, \$100,000; R. H. Leigh, \$65,000; John Johnson, \$33,000; R. N. Branch, \$28,000; William Shaw, \$45,000; Joseph Stansbury, \$34,000; T. I. M. Richardson, \$30,000.

The following were here when the 1850 census was taken and below is a comparison of their estates given then and in 1860.

David Randon, who valued his property at \$33,000 in 1850, gave it at \$290,000 in 1860; Colonel William Ryon, \$13,000—\$85,000; the Simontons of Simonton, \$27,000—\$435,000; Archie Hodge, \$13,000—\$25,000; Henry Dunlavy, \$00—\$100,000; Samuel Glasscock, \$18,000—\$33,000; C. C. Dyer, \$4,000—\$40,000; Dr. Pilant, \$800—\$48,000; J. S. Sullivan, \$5,000—\$75,000; Dr. Feris, \$1,500—\$50,000; Mary Cheney, \$8,000—\$46,000; James Kuykendall, \$15,000—\$120,000; Henry Jones, \$30,000—\$200,000; Randal Jones, \$3,000—\$38,000; J. F. Dyer, \$00—\$45,000; S. M. Frost, \$6,000—\$100,000; J. E. Winston, \$10,000—\$50,000; Dr. Baines, \$3,000—\$100,000; J. W. Sansbury, \$3,700—\$30,000; Robert J. Calder, \$400—\$40,000; A. B. Autrey, \$00—\$18,000; William S. Jones, son of Henry, \$00—\$30,000; Ezekiel Varney, \$6,000—\$100,000.

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There are many other estates below \$20,000 which show the same great increase in this ten years, but it would too much prolong the list to note them all. Enough has been cited to show that a great many men of wealth were coming into the County and that those who were there in 1850 had prospered during the decade. Most, if not all, of those who came into the County with wealth were from the Southern States and a large part of their wealth was the slaves they brought.

An interesting illustration of how the planters were prospering is shown in the case of Kyle and Terry who came from Brazoria and purchased the Oakland plantation in the Williams League in 1853. They were induced by the railroad, which was then at Stafford three miles away, and gave \$25 per acre for 2,500 acres of land paying only \$7,000 in cash. They gave notes for the balance due in series up to 1858 when they were fully paid from the proceeds of the several cotton crops.

Another interesting instance is found in the case of Thomas W. Nibbs, an Alabama lawyer who came to Texas in 1835 and tried his profession for several years with little success. Dr. Hunter advised him to come out on Oyster Creek and become a planter. In 1840 he got together a few negroes and bought some land on credit. The first year he planted nine acres in corn by making holes in the soil with a stick and raised 900 bushels of corn. When he died a few years later he had a large plantation and an increasing gang of slaves and his thrifty widow paid the debt off the plantation with the proceeds of a single cotton crop, after which she married Constantine W. Buckley, who in 1860 assessed his wealth at \$325,000.

The Fort Bend folks believed implicitly in the economic and social justice of African slavery.

In 1859 when General Houston was a candidate for Governor against Runnels, the issue of the slave trade was made and the Democrats supporting Runnels wanted very much to declare in favor of "free trade" in slaves, removing the restrictions on their importation from Africa which had long been forbidden by national statutes.

The County Convention met at Richmond to select delegates to the State Convention which was about to meet in Houston and a resolution was adopted (and delegates chosen to go to Houston and present it) which read in substance: That all laws prohibiting the free importation of slaves were a standing reproach and an offensive stigma on the institution of slavery which in the South is regarded as a great and signal

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good both to the white and negro races and clearly defensible on moral, social and religious grounds.³

Although the State Convention did not go this far, the Fort Bend County delegation was on hand sponsoring this sentiment.

A year before Jefferson Davis, Senator from Mississippi, defending slavery, said in the Senate that the South had solved its social problems so that the white population could become the leisure cultured class and the slaves would do all the drudgery. This was the ambition of our two thousand white people in the County in 1860.

There was quite a free trade in negroes on the Brazos as the following incident related to me by the sole survivor in 1938 will show.

A Virginia slave-trader bought seventy-two negroes in that State and brought them to the Brazos in the spring of 1859. Among them, two little boys, brothers, Joseph, nine, and John, seven. The trader gave \$850 for Joseph and \$700 for John and took them from their parents who were left in Virginia. They were put on exhibition in a slave market at Manchester, as they called the railway terminus just across the river from Richmond. The planters came from all over the County to look them over and after three months Samuel Miles Frost struck a bargain for Joseph, giving the trader his note for \$1,350 and he was taken away, and the little fellow John was left in the "bull pen." Frost returned a few days later bringing a likely looking negro, twenty years old, and offered to trade him for John, said he could not bear to see the little fellows separated. Unable to get the Virginia trader to make him any allowance for the value of the twenty-year-old man who was worth much more in the market than the boy, Frost finally traded even and took the little fellow home with him where he was raised with his brother.

Out on Oyster Creek, two miles from the Frost plantation, Joseph R. Jackson (as the old man calls himself), now eighty-eight years old, lives on a little plantation which he bought shortly after freedom and sitting on the porch of his humble home in the soft December sun he told me these incidents. I commented on the kindness of Mr. Frost and the old man said softly, "Yes, suh, he was a good man, besides the fellow he traded for my little brother was subject to bad spells of asthma in rainy weather."

³ Wharton's *History of Texas*, Vol. 2, p. 71.

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Joseph was a boy of eleven when the soldiers marched away to war. He saw Captain Dan Connor and his riflemen training and remembers the Captain's big mustache. He remembered when H. L. Somerville and Holleman, the overseer on the Frost plantation, left for the battlefields, and how the overseer had Claiborne Jones, the plantation blacksmith, make him a very big knife which he took with him to cut off Yankee heads.

The system was perfect. When a daughter of Randolph Foster or Johnson Hunter married, the father would give her and her husband a few hundred acres of the leagues of land the Mexican government had given them, and a few negroes, and the youngsters would set to work raising a family, enlarging the plantation, and the slaves would increase so that when the children were old enough to go off to school the family was opulent, owning a bottom plantation and perhaps a prairie ranch.

They thought this delightful state of affairs was eternal. In 1862 Clinton Terry of Brazoria about to leave for the front, wrote his will in which he advised his Executors to sell his lands and invest the proceeds in slaves which he regarded safer. Having written his will he left for war and was killed at Shiloh.

The people of Fort Bend, who in 1859 looked on the anti-slave trade laws as a standing reproach and an offensive stigma, looked on the election of Lincoln in 1860 as still worse. As far as the records show there was not a Union man in the County in 1861.

At this late date it is difficult to get a picture of the days of slavery in Fort Bend. Most of the legends which come down to us are colored by the traditional kind master and obedient, grateful slave. Now and then we see traces of hideousness.

A March, 1844 issue of the Telegraph of Houston tells of recent slave disturbances on the Brazos. Tells that ten slaves attacked Mr. Terry and how he valiantly stood them off with a pistol and a whip, shot one in the leg to disable him and broke the arm of another with the whip. Tells that the overseer on the Burdick plantation near Richmond was killed by a negro in the field.

There was gossip that Colonel Waters was harsh with his slaves, overworked them and poorly fed them on cornmeal mush.

In 1879 when Sweet and Knox toured Texas "on a mustang" they tell of interviewing old negroes on the Fort Bend plantations who pined for the good old days. One who had been a slave on the Waters place remembered his "ole Massa" with affection and said "the white folks is not as gorgeous as they

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was befo the war. I'd rather be gettin my grub from old Massa's kitchen than skirmishin around fur it like I do now."

On January 8, 1861 an election was held throughout Texas for delegates to the Secession Convention about to be held in Austin. The three counties of Fort Bend, Wharton and Matagorda were to send two delegates and by a common understanding Frank Terry of Fort Bend and John Rugely of Matagorda were the candidates. Having no opposition they were easily elected. Rugely received 224 votes in Fort Bend and Terry 283, which facts were duly certified by George P. Foster, Chief Justice of Fort Bend County, on January 27th.

The delegates were off to Austin and at Houston they were joined by others from Brazoria, Galveston and Harris, and took the train for Hempstead from where a stage line transported them to Austin for the meeting which assembled on January 28th.

The Brazoria delegate was John A. Wharton, then law partner of Clinton Terry, Frank Terry's brother, and Peter W. Gray and Tom Lubbock were delegates from Harris. Frank Terry and Wharton were two of the most zealous and distinguished looking men in the Convention. Young, arduous and ambitious, they were for the most aggressive measures they could think of.

This Convention was probably the most brilliant and able body of men that has ever assembled in Texas.

When the work of the Convention was over and they started home, Terry, Lubbock and Wharton sat together in the stage coach and planned the formation of a regiment which was to be ready at once and which would be tendered the military authorities of the Confederacy for service throughout the war or longer if desired. There was no limit to their ambitions and courage. This was the conception of Terry's Rangers.

This convention called an election to vote on secession for February 23rd, at which Fort Bend cast a unanimous vote for it. If there was a Union man in the County he did not go to the polls.⁴

In March a Committee of Safety was created to see to the immediate evacuation of the Federal Army posts in Texas and E. B. Nichols of Galveston was Commissioner for the Coast Country. He arranged for Frank Terry, who was now Major Terry, to take an armed force to Brownsville and rout out the

⁴ The vote was 486 for secession and 0 against it. This was the largest vote that had ever been cast at any election in the County.

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Federal garrison there. Major Terry was on the way at once. A special train at Houston was ready when Wharton's Company from Brazoria and Captain Dan Connor of Fort Bend with thirty Richmond riflemen and others arrived. Transported to Galveston they took a boat down the coast and after a bloodless contest took over Fort Brown.

Home in a hurry, Major Terry, Lubbock and Wharton left posthaste for Richmond, Virginia to tender their regiment to President Davis and procure the necessary commissions for its organization.

Wharton, who went by boat from Galveston to New Orleans, was held up there by Federal authorities, but Terry and Lubbock got to Virginia just in time to take part in the battle of Manassas where Major Terry as usual distinguished himself and got honorable mention. At an incredible distance he directed a rifle shot which severed the halyard and lowered the Yankee flag which floated over the courthouse, a shot which made him a national character.

Given a commission to raise the regiment, Colonel Terry hastened home, established headquarters at Houston and issued commissions to ten Captains authorizing each to recruit a company of not to exceed one hundred men. Each man was to fully equip himself and come mounted.

Company H of one hundred men was recruited in Fort Bend County and late in August was off to Houston where the regiment was assembled and hastened to the scene of war.

August and September, 1861 were busy days along Oyster Creek and all Fort Bend County was astir. The owners and masters of many plantations were making feverish haste to go to war.

On the last day in August Frank Terry, in a new and splendid uniform, wearing the sword his Uncle Ben Fort Smith had carried in the War of 1812 and at the Battle of San Jacinto, mounted on a superb horse, cantered over the plantation giving final orders here and there, visiting some of the older negroes who were ill and unable to be out and see him off.

The season was at its zenith and a thousand acres of cotton were almost ripe for harvest. Fields of cane, high as horseback, all in splendid green, rustled in the soft sea breeze of early morning.

It was a holiday and a hundred slaves were gathered at their quarters to watch the master ride away. He sat in his saddle as they gathered about and had them sing plantation melodies while he paused for a few moments and gazed out across the beautiful valley of Oyster Creek.

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Then he talked to them, told them he was going away and bade them be obedient to their overseers and take care of Miss Mary and the children. He told them perhaps he would be at home Christmas. With tears they saw him wheel and ride away, vaguely, dimly, realizing he was going somewhere to fight somebody about something and hoping in the depth of their simple souls he would succeed and would come home Christmas.

He bade his wife and children good-bye on the veranda of the "big house," as they called the mansion at the Oakland plantation, and as he remounted his horse an old negro mammy came running from the house with his little five-year-old son, Kyle, in her arms, holding him high as he cried for his father. The warrior reached down and caught the little fellow in a last embrace, handed him back to his mammy and rode away. His son David, in his eighteenth year, splendid in uniform, rode proudly with him, and they went to war to protect the sacred institution of the South.

He was joined by "Dapper Dan" Connor, who was on his way to Richmond, Virginia to apply for a commission to raise a regiment, and brought news that their neighbor Thomas Burke Burton, who had expected to join them on his way to Virginia, was dying.

Scenes like this were being dramatized all over the South in those summer days. Captain Dan was back in November raising companies for Colonel M. T. Johnson's regiment.

On December 17th Terry's Rangers were at a place called Woodsonville, Kentucky on the Green River. They were fired on by an enemy concealed in a near-by woods when the Colonel ordered a charge and led it across a field towards the woods. Riding in the lead mounted on a superb horse, standing in his stirrups, he was the embodiment of chivalry. A soldier concealed behind a stack of fodder⁵ shot him as he passed and he fell in the very first skirmish. They brought him home at Christmas and laid him to rest at the family burying ground on the Oakland plantation.

We do not know just how many men from Fort Bend went to war, but it is safe to say that ninety per cent of those between sixteen and fifty were either in the actual service or some auxiliary war work. They enlisted in so many different commands

⁵ Clem Bassett long years after told John M. Moore that they captured a German-American soldier who was supposed to have fired the shot and that his captors allowed young David to shoot him.

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that it is next to impossible to dig their names out of the vast records.

Sowel in his *History of Fort Bend County* gives the roster of Company H of Terry's Rangers and also a list taken from the rolls of Company F, 24th Texas, showing men from Fort Bend who suffered casualties. These two lists include 188 men and it is safe to say they are fewer than one-half of those from the County who saw actual service. (They are copied in the appendix.)

An analysis of the manpower of the County as it was in 1860-61 shows how thoroughly it supported the lost cause.

In the 1860 census were 628 men found in the County between the ages of sixteen and fifty and 631 who were over twenty-one and eligible to vote. Of these many were transient, men who were in the County when the census taker came along and went away. There were forty-five railroad laborers and forty of them were from Ireland and not one a voter.

In the February 1861 election 486 votes were cast for secession and 0 against. This was about two times the largest vote that had ever been cast in the County.

It is probably true that 400 out of 486 men who voted in this election went to war. In those cases where the soldier left his family without means of support the Commissioners Court of the County made a monthly allowance to the family, and made a record of it in the minutes of the court. It is probably true that fewer than half of those who went to war came home again and many of the latter came home to die of wounds or disease.

The home fires were kept burning during the dreary four years of war and almost weekly some wounded soldier came home on a furlough to tell of bloody battles and bring news of those who could not come.

On an evening in August 1862 there was a gathering of all the womenfolks at Richmond—a benefit gathering at which \$460 was raised for the aid of the families of soldiers at the front. They prayed for peace, but only after victory “when the white winged goddess will unfold her bright pinions.”

A year later still praying for peace and victory with the same fervor, men and women met again to organize relief work for the families of soldiers. There was a subscription of money and a pledge to furnish supplies to relief agencies at low cost. Corn and potatoes 50c per bushel, pork 8c, beef 4c, payable in Confederate money at par.

A committee was named to contact the people and get these

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supplies to the County Judges of the near-by counties for distribution.

Fort Bend County was one of the last to surrender. When news came of Lee's capitulation in April, 1865, the people of Fort Bend were in favor of fighting on, and published a call for a mass meeting which was held at Richmond in which resolutions were passed in substance: That under no circumstances and in no event would they submit to their dominating and perfidious enemies. "They have placed an ocean of blood between us which can never be crossed or dried." They called on the 80,000 Confederate soldiers west of the Mississippi to stand firm, and offered to at once equip and arm 30,000 negroes "who, with the aid of God, Kirby Smith and General Magruder, would hold Texas."

The resolutions passed at this mass meeting were published in the Weekly Constitution of Augusta, Georgia of June 7, 1865. Who attended this meeting and drew these belligerent resolutions and how they got to Augusta, Georgia, we do not know. They were the last gasp, the dying defiance of a brave but conquered people.

Two weeks later Yankee soldiers landed at Galveston. The war was over, the South was conquered, Fort Bend was bankrupt.

CHAPTER XII

TWENTY YEARS AFTER

In June, 1865, while the broken soldiers were returning home to the Brazos, General Gordon Granger, with regiments of Yankee soldiers, arrived in Galveston, and on the 19th issued an emancipation proclamation telling the Texas negroes they were free, and news of it soon reached the Fort Bend County plantations.

There was no immediate manifestation among the negroes who had kept the home fires burning during the four long years their masters had been away at war fighting to keep them in bondage. They had cultivated the plantations, looked after the cattle and cared for the women and children with a fidelity that has long been told in song and story.

General¹ John B. Gordon of the Confederate Army told a reconstruction committee of Congress that left alone by mean white men, the conduct of the Southern negroes after the war had been exemplary.

It was at first impossible for either the master or the slave to realize just what had happened and that the colored man was now as free as the white man and lawfully his equal.

June was the height of planting and cultivating season on the plantations and on most of them the negroes remained at work through the summer and autumn. Most of the planters made bargains to pay them \$10 per month wages.¹

The 3,500 negroes assessed in 1860 had increased perhaps

¹ In 1938 I talked with a daughter of Claiborne Jones, a slave on the Frost plantation, and she said they all stayed on the first year and many of them for years. John Jackson says Mr. Frost said to him, "I have just finished paying that note I gave for you and now you are free."



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in 1865, for thousands had been brought into Texas during the war to escape the invading armies which were overrunning other sections of the South.

The first Federal authorities who came meddling in that long period of reconstruction were the treasury agents seeking cotton which had belonged to the Confederate government and which was claimed and taken as the property of the Federal government. In the last years of the war the Confederacy had made an effort to assist itself financially by taking over cotton from the planters for which it gave Confederate money, and it would sell the cotton, when it could, for gold. Much of the crop of 1864 had never been gotten to market and there were several hundred bales on the Fort Bend County plantations. But most of it had not been sold to the Confederate government and yet belonged to the planters. These treasury agents claimed it all and took most of it as government property and stole most of what they took.

These rascals were the first to stir up trouble among the negroes, telling them they were as good or better than their late masters.

It was told the colored people that the government that had freed them would feed them, that each family was to have 40 acres of land and a mule, and hundreds of them quit work and began to crowd into Richmond and Houston, making quite a problem in the autumn and winter of 1865.

Then too, the white population thinned by the loss of its best men on the battlefield and impoverished by the war was about as poor as the negroes.

But we say with sadness, it was not the Carpetbagger who played with the negro vote and preyed on our people in these years of distress; the leaders who misruled the County for twenty years were from among our own people.

In May, 1866 a correspondent from Fort Bend County wrote the Galveston News of general conditions. He said there had been a very large cotton crop planted because of the high price; that many people were planting cotton with the hope of making enough money to leave the County; that there were many people from the North coming in and planting cotton but they did not know how to cultivate it; and that fully half the plantations in the County had been rented by these newcomers who had "never worked a negro and did not know his habits"; that the crop was in very bad condition and half the negroes were idle. The correspondent thought the greatest trouble was the

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fault of the Freedman's Bureau which would not make the negro perform his contract and he was leaving when he saw fit.

In the midst of this confusion and misery and woe an effort was made to set up a new government in 1866 when a convention was held in Austin to adopt a new Constitution under which conquered Texas would come back into the Union. The framers of this Constitution were for the most part the old regime which had ruled before the war. They were warned that they must provide the vote for the negro or Texas would not be readmitted to statehood, but all they would do was to remove the bar which had always prevented the negro from testifying in court and extend him some qualified civil rights.

In the election held in 1866 when the Constitution was ratified and Throckmorton elected (the almost unanimous vote of the County was for him and against Pease), the following County officers were chosen: Robert J. Calder, County Judge; Robert Hodges, County Clerk; R. H. Morris, District Clerk; J. W. Miles, Sheriff; and T. R. Beard, Assessor.

These are familiar names long identified with the County. Hodges, Morris, Miles and Beard had been in the Confederate Army. J. W. Miles was an overseer on the McCloy plantation before the war and had gone through with Terry's Rangers. He was afterwards killed by a negro. Robert Hodges was a son of old Robert on the Bernard.

But this easy road to amnesty was not to be tolerated. People who claimed they had been loyal Union men during the war and others who were now coming into the country for the purpose, were clamoring for office.

The Republican party in the North saw a chance to enfranchise the negro in the South, disfranchise the white man who had fought in the war, and by control of the negro vote make Republican States out of the entire South.

To this end Congress refused to carry out President Johnson's plan for reconstruction. Throckmorton was removed as Governor of Texas and the State put under military rule. General Griffin, Commander at Galveston, was political chief of Texas (1867) and in many counties local officers were removed by his orders.

A Republican Convention was held in Houston in June, 1867 and plans were made to organize the negroes in the South Texas counties for the elections that were to follow. G. T. Ruby, a mulatto from Boston, now living in Galveston, was president and conspicuous in this gathering, and a young negro,



For the first time in our history the negroes voted

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N. Wright Cuney, son of General Phil Cuney of Waller County, was also there.

Cuney, who was born at Sunnyside in Waller County, was twenty-one. He was in school in the North when the war began and remained there until after it closed. He came home and began an interesting and effective political career which only ended with his death nearly thirty years later.

Plans were now, 1867-8, rapidly put under way for another election, another Constitutional Convention, the colored man participating.

A registration of all voters, white and colored, was had May to September, 1867. In this first registration 153 white and 1,334 colored voters were recorded in Fort Bend. A majority of the white voters were denied registration in 1867. But the Board kept the rolls open during 1868 and 1869 and when they were closed in the latter year 308 white men had been enrolled.

An election was held in December 1867 and delegates chosen to another Constitutional Convention to be held in Austin the next year. A. P. McCormick was chosen to represent the Floterial District, Brazoria, Matagorda, Wharton and Fort Bend, the District which had been represented by Frank Terry in 1861. W. E. Horne was delegate from Fort Bend. The Convention, dominated by Republicans, Radicals and with a sprinkling of negro delegates, met in June, 1868 and deliberated nearly a year. It got so low in the estimation of the world that Ruby, the negro delegate from Galveston, felt impelled to resign to save his reputation. He did so in February, 1869, stating in his letter of resignation that the Convention had lost all regard for dignity or honor and was a disgrace to Texas.² He was right.

In the meantime things were going from bad to worse in Fort Bend. Organizers of Loyal Leagues were at work among the negroes and they were becoming quite a problem on the plantations.

There was quite a shake-up in official circles in the County in 1867-9 after Governor Throckmorton's removal while General Reynolds was the overlord of Texas. Most of the officers chosen in the 1866 election could not take the ironclad oath prescribed by the Reconstruction Act. Under it Calder and Sheriff Miles and Clerk Hodges were disqualified, and the military authorities appointed one Austin Hudgins, Sheriff and later John L. Garwood. Morris, District Clerk, resigned after a few months

² Journal of Convention, Vol. 2, p. 528.

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and the presiding District Judge appointed H. L. Somerville, who was removed by the military the next year.

By various special military orders nearly every official in the County was removed at one time or another between 1867 and 1869 down to the Justice of Peace and Constables. Often several orders are found in succession appointing this official and that one, and early in 1869 there were twenty orders of removal and appointment by General Reynolds, all the way from Garwood, Sheriff, down to a negro Constable in Precinct No. 3. The greatest confusion and much disorder existed.

All the while the new constitution was being written up at Austin and a man named W. E. Horne, whom no one of this generation has ever heard of, was now and then answering the roll call as delegate from Fort Bend.

It took a year to write the Radical Constitution, 1868-9 and all the while the military authorities were governing Texas, and in those counties where there were large negro populations there was growing trouble brought on by impudent negroes incited by scalawag whites. This made it necessary to station Federal troops at various places, and for much of the time, 1866-1869, there were a few soldiers at Richmond.

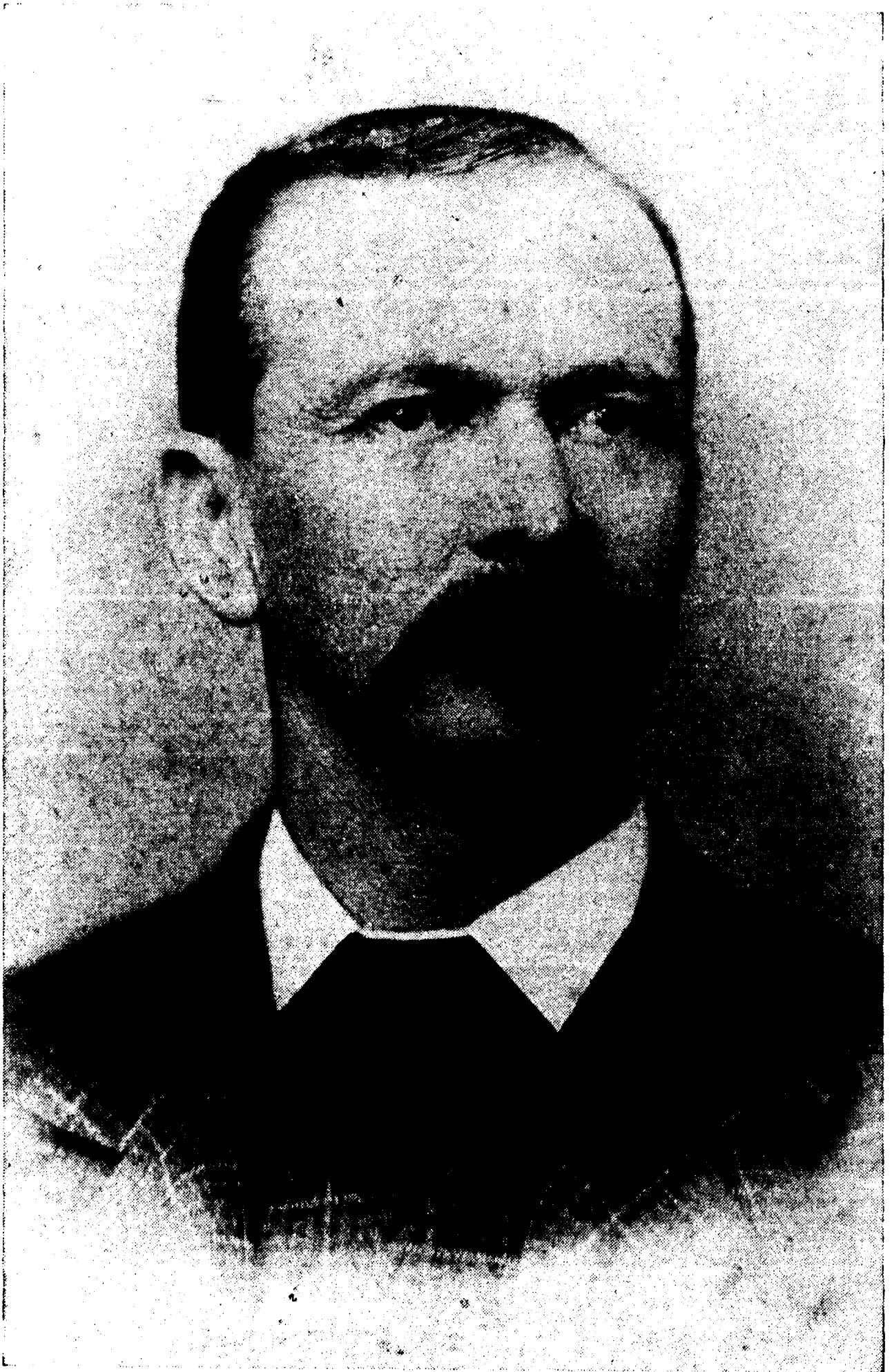
In 1869 the great struggle was not between the white people and the negroes, not between the Republicans and the Democrats, but between the factions of the New Republican party in Texas. The Democratic party had passed out temporarily not only in Fort Bend but all Texas. Hamilton and Davis factions were at each other's throats both bidding for the negro vote.

The Hamilton philosophy was that the negro was the white man's equal—the Davis, that he was superior.

Just who organized Fort Bend for Davis in this contest of long ago I have not been able to find out. It was an isolated little county with a small vote, but it was well looked after by the Davis machine for he got 986 votes—Hamilton 171 and 6 for Stuart, Democrat.

To insure a safe majority for Davis, General Reynolds, Military Commander of Texas, sent fifteen soldiers to Richmond under Sergeant Red and they remained until after the election.

The principal elective office, Sheriff and Tax Collector, was won by Walter Moses Burton, a young negro who for the next four years was the leader in the County. He had been a slave on the Burton plantation in the Isaacks League before the war. His master, Thomas Burke Burton, a young and wealthy planter, had brought him to Texas from North Caro-



J. W. Parker

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lina just before the war, when Walter was only twenty. The master had taught Walter to read and write. Walter was tall, well proportioned with broad shoulders, a fine specimen of physical manhood. Very black, he grew whiskers which turned gray in his later years and gave him a look of dignity.

In November, 1870 the correspondent of the Galveston News from Fort Bend complained that Governor Davis had appointed a company of negro guards in Fort Bend, that the Sheriff elected months before had never given bond and was acting as Tax Collector without bond. Nevertheless Walter Moses Burton held the Sheriff's office until 1873 and then went to the Senate for twelve years.

Under the 1869 Constitution five Justices of Peace were chosen by the voters at large. One must reside at the County Seat and no two were to be from the same Precinct. These Justices were the County and Commissioners Court and they appointed the Constables. They were also the Assessors of all taxes in their respective Precincts and the Sheriff was the Tax Collector. The following were the Justices chosen: Francis Williams, Precinct No. 1, Joseph Wallace, Precinct No. 2, James Wesson Parker, Precinct No. 3, P. L. West, Precinct No. 4. These officials chosen for four years had the County well within their grasp and proceeded to administer its affairs as they saw fit.

One of the most important official bodies under the reconstruction laws was the Board of Appeals which had supervision of the registration of all voters and could add to or take names from the rolls. The first Board for the County was composed of Charles Head, John Cobbin and Henry Phelps, all negroes.

Other officials chosen were W. P. Huff, County and District Clerk; J. P. Marshall, County Treasurer; G. H. Schley, County Surveyor.

J. W. (Wesson) Parker, Justice of Peace from Pittsville Precinct, was a son of the planter—Methodist preacher—George D. Parker, who came into the County in 1846 and acquired a plantation in the upper Foster League and had his home in the low hill country above what they later called Pittsville. Here Wesson was born. He was just twenty-one when he began his career as Justice of Peace in 1869. His mother died before the war and his father married a Mrs. Wade, a widow with a daughter Ruth about Wesson's age. In later years she married a man named Baker who died in a few months and afterwards she married Wesson Parker. Their daughter Mamie Parker was born in December, 1869. Parker was licensed to practice

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law at Richmond in 1868. During the years 1869-1889 he was almost always in office, always in close contact with Walter Burton, Henry Ferguson and those colored men who manipulated the solid negro vote. Parker was the dominant leader of the small coterie of white men who fused with the negro voters during these two decades.

In 1870 the County had reached a low water mark and the white population was less than in 1860 while the colored population was on the increase. In round numbers there were 1,600 white, 5,400 colored.

The vote cast at the election the year before 171 for Hamilton and 986 Davis, was a white and colored vote.

The property assessments for 1870 were the lowest in twenty years. Total valuations \$700,000 against \$2,600,000 in 1866 and an assessment in excess of \$6,000,000 in 1860 (which included slaves, \$3,000,000).

At the close of the war the prairies of South Texas were teeming with cattle and in 1865-7 the cattle assessments were as high as 78,000 head which would indicate a presence of more than 100,000. Then Fort Bend had the third largest cattle assessment in Texas, only Live Oak and Atascosa being greater.

The cattle assessment in 1870 shrank to 56,000 head. But there was little or no market for them. Shortly after the war rendering plants were established at West Columbia, Harrisburg and a few other near the coast places where cattle would be driven from all over the coast country, sold for a paltry sum and the hides and tallow saved while the carcass was thrown away as refuse. Splendid herds were driven from Fort Bend to Columbia and Harrisburg, 1865-70, and slaughtered for their hides and tallow.

Many, if not most, of the large plantations of before the war were now owned by widows who had lost husbands and sons in the war. Often valuable plantations were sold for small debts or taxes. Captain Dan Connor worth \$370,000 in 1860 was declared a bankrupt in 1868.

The case of Dr. Matthew Moore's family will illustrate what happened to many of the most industrious and prosperous in these dire days.

He came into the County in 1857 and practiced medicine and like most professional men had a plantation. When the urgent call went out for volunteers just before the battle of Shiloh Dr. Moore and others enlisted for ninety days and hurried East and took part in that awful battle where so many Fort Bend County men were wounded and killed. He returned home ill and died

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shortly after, leaving his family amply provided for, he thought. On his deathbed he told his wife he owed no debts. Several years later someone presented a claim on a security obligation he had executed for the accommodation of some friend and a judgment was rendered against the estate. In addition to the land and a few cattle Dr. Moore had a fine herd of horses—a blooded stallion for which he had paid \$1,000, and one hundred brood mares worth \$100 each. His little six-year-old son John M. sat on the fence at the plantation and saw these fine animals sold for \$15 per head. A portion of the plantation was sold for a few dollars per acre and Claiborne Jones, the negro blacksmith on the Frost plantation, bought part of it and his daughter lives on it today.

Scenes like this were commonplace all the way from Randolph Foster's to Asa Brigham's.

During the first four years of the "Republican" regime the people became more or less accustomed to negro officialdom and because of the character of Walter Burton they were not aroused as they were later when a different class of negroes came into office. He was always respectful and careful not to annoy or antagonize his white constituents.

He had a white deputy who was charged with the duty of arresting all white offenders who must be visited with the displeasure of the law.³ Although he collected all the County and State taxes no charge of defalcation was ever made against him.

The leading white men had been through the war and had learned to endure trouble with patience. They were willing for almost any price to have peace and a chance to retrieve their broken fortunes. They hoped to be able to unite all factions of white people and regain control of the County government at a near day. But it took twenty troubled years and the aid of a new generation for them to do so.

They put up with Walter Moses Burton, who was not antagonistic, but they loathed to see the Courthouse filled with ignorant negroes.

A smarter man than Walter Burton began his manipulations among the colored brethren in the early 1870s and quietly pushed Sheriff Burton aside in 1873. This was Henry C. Ferguson, who for the next thirty years was the acknowledged political leader in Fort Bend and for whom the white people

³ A little fellow named Connor, who came to Richmond after the war from Louisiana, held this place.

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then had a kindly regard and for whom the generation now living have a kindly memory.

He had been the slave of a planter named Ferguson in Jasper County, Texas and was about thirty when freedom came, the elder of several brothers who wandered into Houston looking for the 40 acres and the mule.

Henry got a job on the Edmund J. Davis police in 1869 and for several years was a police officer in Houston. He won the reputation for discretion and personal bravery. When I knew him near the close of the century he was a tall rawboned man with broad stooped shoulders, high cheek bones, copper colored, and wore a slight mustache and a cutaway coat. He was a man of great dignity, never talked loud in conversation and looked one in the face when he talked.

When Henry became Sheriff he was confronted with a difficulty which always annoyed these off-color office holders. Bondsmen had to be men of property, resident of the County and there was no man of large means associated with this political group who could qualify for a Sheriff, Treasurer or Collector's bondsman.

A number of white men, including J. H. P. Davis, the wealthiest man in the County, agreed with Henry that if he would arrange for two reputable white men they would select to conduct the office as his deputies, they would make his bond.

Charles Norfleet Hill and J. R. Waites, two young men of high repute, were his deputies under this arrangement and well conducted the office.⁴

Henry held the office of Sheriff for two terms and then chose the post of Tax Assessor which he held for several terms. This office had rare opportunities for graft.

Henry, like Walter Burton, had learned to read and write, and regretted that he did not have a better education. He decided to give his younger brother, Charlie (C. M.), the advantages which he had missed, so he sent Charlie to Fisk University where he took a fling at higher learning which was his undoing as we shall see later.

A glimpse of some of the other characters who appear on the stage during this twenty year drama is interesting and necessary to enable us to know the history of the period.

In 1882 L. H. McCabe became District Clerk and those of

⁴ Hill was the father of Norfleet Hill, the present Sheriff of Harris County (1939).

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us who have had occasion to examine the minutes of the Court, 1882-1886, are impressed that they were well written and well kept.

McCabe was a yellow negro with patches of white on his large face. Born in Troy, New York in 1847, he was educated in the public schools and after the war came South like Ruby and other colored adventurers who sought to fish in the troubled waters of reconstruction. His first job was in the Galveston Customs House, and then he went up the Brazos where he taught school. In 1870 he was on Jones Creek where he married the daughter of Claiborne Jones, who had been a slave on the Frost plantation.

In 1875 Governor Coke and his advisers felt the time had come to do away with the Constitution of 1869 which had been written by Davis and his Carpetbag negro allies and a Convention was called to that end.

While "white" Texas had gone Democratic in 1873, poor old Fort Bend with its 1,600 white and 5,500 colored populations cast an overwhelming vote for E. J. Davis. So in 1875 L. H. McCabe of Jones Creek was chosen to represent Fort Bend in the Convention which wrote our present Constitution.

An interesting incident is told about McCabe. He was appointed on the committee to draft the constitutional provisions for an educational system and General Whitfield, a Confederate soldier from Lavaca County, was Chairman of the committee. When it went into its first session and elected a Secretary the General said the committee must have a Janitor to keep the room in order and the delegates supplied with drinking water and they appointed McCabe. In a wave of laughter McCabe rose and with a good natured smile accepted the appointment and all during the session he carefully performed the tasks imposed in such a way as to win him the respect of his fellow members.

During these dark twenty years, 1869-89, there were always (until 1888) some colored County officials and quite a number of minor precinct officers.

A powerful looking, very large, very black, Baptist preacher with the euphonious name of London Branch, was for two terms County Treasurer. Elder Branch, as his people called him, was a power among them, the father of his flock and many of their children. His leather-lunged voice could be heard for a mile on the evening air.

One of his favorite exercises was the weekly "sperience" meeting at which any member of the congregation could rise in

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meeting, advance to the table in front of the altar, deposit a quarter and tell his religious experience. The negro worshipper who could not pay his quarter and make his talk was somewhat out of caste, and a great stack of coins was on the table each Sunday night.

After negro office-holding was outlawed Elder Branch devoted the remaining years of a long life to his religious duties. Wearing a long black broadcloth Prince Albert coat with faultless linen and a broad or often high hat, he walked among his people a veritable patriarch. Few men of any color or anywhere lived a fuller life than Elder London Branch.

The white men who fused with the colored majority during these years were almost all long residents of the County, some of them ex-Confederate soldiers, most of them from old families. First and last there were probably fewer than fifty of them. Among them a few deserve mention, while most of them might best be forgotten.

Henry L. Somerville, who was District Clerk pro tem 1866, Tax Assessor in 1876, County Clerk 1878, and County Judge 1882, was a Southerner of the old school, a Confederate soldier and a man of good character, although not aggressive and easily influenced. Born in Alabama of a distinguished family he graduated at the State University before the war. His father was a distinguished physician at Tuscaloosa and his mother was said to have been the most beautiful woman in Alabama. There were two older brothers who became men of national prominence.¹ Albert, who came to Galveston before the war, amassed a fortune, was Mayor after the war and one time President of the Santa Fe Railway of which he was an active promoter. The other brother was long a Federal Judge in New York and a spokesman for President Cleveland in the South when the Democrats came back in 1884. Henry, the youngest, followed Albert to Galveston and worked for him in the Commission business for a while, and in 1858 came up to Richmond and got employment teaching school on the Frost plantation on Oyster Creek where he was engaged when the war began. He enlisted in the Southern Army and stayed until the end. When Sherman marched north from Atlanta Lieutenant Somerville was with troops who were covering Johnson's retreat and destroying the railroad. In the last days he was at a town in North Georgia dispatching freight north and tearing up tracks and burning stations behind. One evening he loaded a box car with school girls from a boarding school who were frantic to get home to places north, attached it to the last train, burned

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the station and all rolling stock left in the railway yards and went to sleep at midnight in an abandoned mansion. While he slept his company went on without him and when he awoke he saw Federal troops a mile away. He decided then and there to close his military career and took to the woods and headed towards Tuscaloosa, Alabama. A month later he walked into the Somerville home, barefoot, a sleeve out of his shirt, a month's beard and hair, the sorriest, dirtiest looking tramp that ever came that way. His mother did not know him and only the old negro butler could be convinced of his identity. A few weeks later, bathed, shaved and in a clean suit of clothes he was on his way back to Texas and showed up in Richmond.

His first official appointment was to be District Clerk instead of Morris, who was elected in 1866 and could not take the oath. But the next year the military removed Clerk Somerville because he could not take the new ironclad oath. Later, however, he fraternized with Parker's gang.

In 1871 he married the daughter of Christian Stratman, the Republican Sheriff.

He had been in college with Colonel P. E. Peareson, who in 1867 came to Richmond from Matagorda and who was a leader in Fort Bend until his death in 1895, and he and Colonel Peareson continued good friends always. In fact "Judge" Somerville, as he was called in his later days, was respected by those who deplored his political associations.

When Cleveland was President, the brother in New York procured his appointment as Postmaster at Richmond, a position which he held for more than twenty years.⁵

The Blakely boys, Tom and Jake, who had married so well just before the war, were now prominent and prosperous planters, but they mixed in colored politics, and Tom was Sheriff and Tax Collector 1882-86, and at one time was County Commissioner with three negro members on the court. In 1886 his health failed and he resigned and the Commissioners Court at once appointed his nephew T. J. Garvey in his place. He died soon after and did not live to see the day of retribution.

Garvey was very indiscreet, drank too much, made trouble, but paid dearly for his indiscretions with his life. Jake Blake-

⁵ In 1895 a nephew, son of his New York brother, visited the Somervilles in Richmond and fell in love with the Judge's daughter Ella, and in a fit of insane jealousy shot and killed her at the front gate of the Judge's home and in full view of the family.

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ly was County Treasurer in 1884, and he died with his nephew Garvey on the 16th day of August, 1889.

On down through the years they went, 1869-1889, the factions now calling themselves Democrats and Republicans, the latter holding noisy (colorful) county conventions each bien-nium.

In October 1873 the Richmond correspondent of the Galveston News wrote of a convention which had just been held, presided over by "J. C. Williams, white and heavy, William Reynolds, half white and short, Secretary, J. C. Smith, white and long, Doorkeeper." At this Convention Walter Moses Burton was nominated for the State Senate for the District composed of Fort Bend, Waller, Wharton, Austin.

Three years later the correspondent relates that the "radicals won all offices and we now have a colored Sheriff, Treasurer, County Attorney and Justice of the Peace."

In 1880 the Republican Convention again met at Richmond and renominated Walter Burton for Senator, A. C. Thompkins, white, of Waller County, Doc Lewis, colored, of Wharton for Representative, W. H. Burkhart for District Judge and R. E. (Bob) Hanney of Hempstead for District Attorney.

A week later a handful of Democrats (all white) nominated Colonel P. E. Peareson for Senator and two white men for Representative.

The four counties, all black, elected the Walter Burton ticket. The vote in Fort Bend was Burton, 831, Peareson, 240.

In this election the Republicans supported Earnest for County Judge and the white people ran Dr. J. M. Weston, who was defeated.

Three of the four County Commissioners elected in 1880 were negroes, Bill Eaton, Tom Taylor, Jack Cobbin with Tom Blakely, white, fourth member.

Henry Ferguson was re-elected Tax Assessor, London Branch, Treasurer and J. W. (Jake) Blakely, Sheriff.

In 1882 the same pitiful farce was repeated and a dozen Democrats, including Colonel Peareson, Dr. Stone, R. A. Reading, Yandel Feris, Dr. Weston, W. L. Davidson, met and held a session which was reported with great detail to the Galveston News of June 30th.

Major Davidson made a frantic, but unsuccessful, effort to get on the delegation to the State Convention.

A few weeks later there was a noisy rabble rousing gathering of the opposition and a dozen white men and a hundred negroes met in a two day session which was long remembered.



"I rise to a pint of pusal priveluge."

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Chairman McCabe, who had lately helped write the Constitution of Texas, called the meeting to order, and this was the only moment that order prevailed during the two day session.

There were contesting delegations from Kendleton where Tom Taylor, official County Commissioner and ex-officio cattle thief, headed a delegation of eighty negroes, many of whom looked as though they might have been baboons lately caught out of the Bernard bottoms. Reverend Ben Williams, lanky and lusty, with thirty-six followers, who were of the better element, chiefly small farmers, claimed to be the real delegates. Tom and Reverend Ben each addressed the Convention an hour. All the while a little negro from Foster, with a face not unlike a catfish, would repeatedly yell in a droning voice, "Mr. Chairman, I rise to a pint of order," or "I move we degree on a flatform." (agree on a platform.)

The debate between Parson Ben and Thief Tom ended in a riot which was quelled when the delegates had tired themselves out. All the while the delegate from Foster craving recognition, "Mr. Chairman, do you cognize me."

Then Tax Assessor Henry Ferguson took the floor to advocate the seating of Ben Williams' gang and talked for an hour, but above his loudest peroration was the drone of "Mr. Chairman" from the Foster boy.

Henry was followed by State Senator Walter Moses Burton, who with all the prestige of ten years in the Legislature, spoke an hour and hurled epithets at Ben Williams and Henry Ferguson. At the close of his address the riot broke out again and every movable article in the room was being hurled through the air while their white "friends" hurriedly sought safety from stray chairs and brickbats in flight.

But Nelson Lanton, the catfish-faced delegate from Foster, held his ground and demanded "cognition" and declared "I rise to a pint of pusal priveluge." All of which he repeated a hundred times until everybody's nerves were wrought.

Sundown saw the fracas still going on and the Convention adjourned until Monday morning.

Over Sunday most of the delegates went home and when the gathering reconvened on Monday, Lanton from Foster was gone. All the movable missiles in the hall had been removed and Chairman McCabe, who had worked industriously with the factions, was able to bring harmony and a peaceful adjournment.

The colored man was enjoying his freedom and loudly exercising his freedom of speech.

In 1884 the County Republican Convention met as usual

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and Senator Walter Burton made the keynote speech and all the other speeches as well, and advocated a straight Republican ticket for all offices from President down to hide inspector and a full County ticket was put up, half white, half black, and elected as usual. It included J. W. Parker, County Judge; J. J. Dickerson, County Clerk; C. M. Ferguson (colored), District Clerk; R. H. Earnest, County Attorney; J. B. Roberts (colored), County Treasurer; T. M. Blakely, Sheriff; H. C. Ferguson (colored), Assessor—four white men and three negroes.

In 1886 Parker gave way to Earnest, who succeeded him as County Judge, and when the County Democratic Convention met that year Parker was present and conspicuous as were others of his crowd. Dr. J. C. Mayfield presided, W. H. Gayle was Secretary.

Parker offered a resolution that the delegates to the State Convention support Colonel Peareson for Attorney General of Texas.

Parker, Peareson, H. H. Frost and Bassett were delegates to the State Democratic Convention. Parker was doing a fine job of running with the hare and training with the hounds.

From the very beginning of this mongrel political situation there was petty graft, favoritism in tax assessments. During the nearly six years that the Justices of Peace assessed taxes in the several precincts, this favoritism could be had at a price.

While the first Justice Courts were all filled with white men, Carolina Kinchloe, a negro, became Justice at Precinct No. 4 in 1870 and held the office several years.

After the assessing function was taken from the Justice of Peace in 1876 Henry Ferguson chose the office of Tax Assessor and held it nearly twelve years, and amassed quite an estate.

The volume of records which would show the doings of the Commissioners Court for 1869-1889 has long ago disappeared.

The County finances were always bad and its credit all but destroyed, and most all the time it operated on depreciated script. The Commissioners Court never made financial statements. The school fund was raided and the tax rate was always very high.

On one occasion the County Judge and Commissioners Court bought a second-hand bridge from up the river and installed it across the Brazos, paid an exorbitant price for it, and after a short service it fell with a herd of Will Nash's cattle and drowned two of his drivers.

When the town of Richmond was created, a courthouse square was set aside, and in 1849 the County authorities had contracted

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with lawyer Herndon to build a courthouse, which he did for \$2,500, taking an old building at the foot of Morton Street in part payment at \$600.

This new 1849 structure had become inadequate for the expanding activities of Parker and the Fergusons, and the Court was moved about until 1885 when a contract was let for a modern up-to-date two-story brick structure with a steeple clock.

Of course there was a scandal in this enterprise. While one Trester was the contractor, Henry Ferguson was supposed to be the actual builder. After the structure was finished they applied a coat of plaster to the rough outside brick walls and it was told that this was done to keep the building from falling down.

A favorite method of petty graft was for the County officials to be employed by the court to recopy records. McCabe, District Clerk, got \$350 extra for an index to court records; Dickerson, County Clerk, \$396 for copying a deed record. C. M. Ferguson did considerable copying while he was District Clerk and was paid \$926 for extra work.

While these things were serious and impaired County credit and increased County taxes at a time when the property owners were struggling to overcome the burdens and losses of the war, yet the most regrettable aspect was the stigma put upon the County by an administration with negro domination and official incompetency. Add to this the insufferable insolence with which C. M. Ferguson and a small group of his followers conducted themselves and the arrogance of Parker and outbursts of Garvey, and the wonder is that the regime lasted as long as it did. It would have been wiped out ten years sooner but for the patience and forbearance of a group of men who had the interest of the County at heart and who bore insult and suffered indignity with hope that some day the situation would be righted without bloodshed.

The war had taught many dear lessons to the crippled generation which came home to fallen fortunes in 1865, but a new generation was now maturing men who were too young to go to war and their impatience was only restrained by their elders with great effort.

The manpower of the County had been decimated by the war and there was not an outstanding leader among those who came home. Some few like Clem Bassett, who were capable of leadership, shrunk from its responsibilities. In 1869 the Demo-

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crats, seeing defeat, kept from the polls, only six voting in the County.

J. H. P. Davis, born in 1851, did not come to man's estate until in the middle '70s; John M. Moore and S. J. Winston until the early '80s.

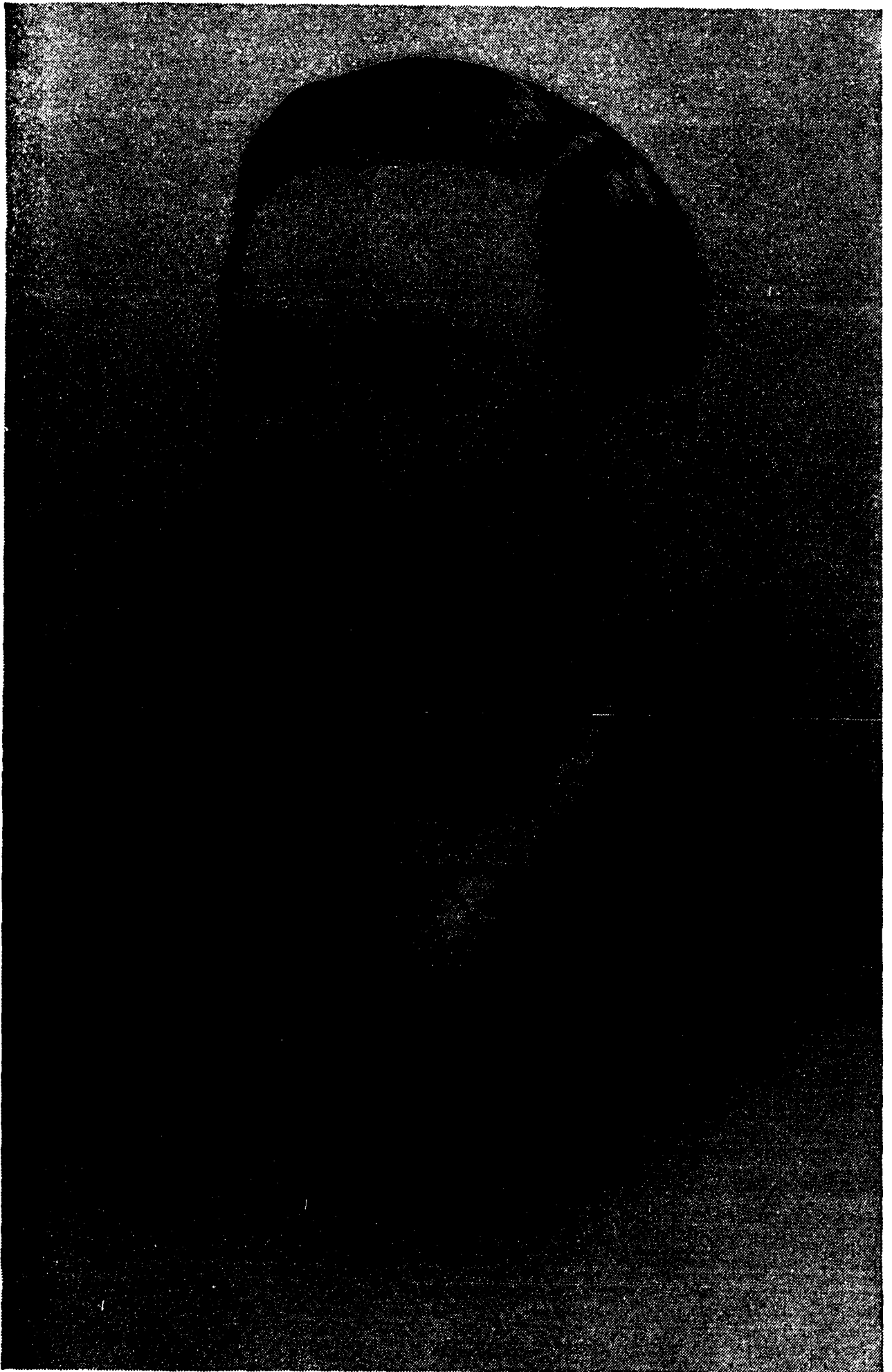
In 1867 a young man just home from the war came from Matagorda County to Richmond and began the practice of law and soon established for himself a position of leadership and an honored name which survives today in his son and his grandson. Philip E. Peareson and Wells Thompson, who lived on near-by plantations in Matagorda, both of whom had equipped themselves to practice law before the war, looked over gloomy local prospects and planned a trip about the country for suitable locations for lawyers. They left on horseback and rode towards Houston, swimming the Bernard, and first stopped at Richmond where Peareson decided to stay. Thompson went on to Columbus where he remained thirty years.

Colonel Peareson, as he was always called, remained at Richmond several months before he could make suitable provisions to bring his wife and little boy E. A. (Dolph) and finally located a homesite on the block where his son D. R. Peareson and his grandson Philip were born and live today.

He found the Cooks, Honorable Nat and his son Gustave, practicing law at Richmond. The former, who had been a leader at the Mobile Bar before the war, had been driven west by reconstruction. The younger, Judge Gustave, had been County Judge at Richmond before the war and married a daughter of Randal Jones. He removed to Houston where he was long Judge of the Criminal Court of the Harris and Galveston Districts. Peareson and Nat Cook were partners for a time.

During the next ten years Colonel Peareson made himself the leading lawyer at the Bar and became intimate with Davis, Moore, Winston, McCreary, McFarlane, the Farmers and the other leaders of the County and they relied much on him. A pleasing personality, always kind and courteous, with splendid courage, he did not make enemies even among those who were not in agreement with him.

J. H. P. Davis (Judge Davis), who was born in 1851, was now a mature man and one of the finest characters that can be found in the annals of Texas. A large man, slow of speech, with a kindly face, his mannerisms were so pleasing and considerate that his friends called him Judge, although he never held an office. His first wife was a daughter of Colonel William



Col. P. E. Peareson

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and Mary Moore Ryon and his daughter, Mrs. A. P. George, now (1939) lives on the Jones League. During all the trying years following the war he and Colonel Peareson, Clem Bassett, John M. Moore, the Farmers, S. J. Winston and a few others were a cohesive, conservative force that maintained and cherished the honor and dignity of the County.

In the late '80s there were a dozen or more young men in the County just coming to manhood, sons of well-to-do, mostly old families who were above the average in intelligence. Most of them had some schooling away from home, were well informed and of good address. Some of them had enjoyed more leisure than is good for young men, but they employed most of this spare time, 1888-90, to ways and means of getting rid of what then became known as the Woodpecker faction.

There were in this group of younger men the four Gibsons, sons of Dr. James A. Gibson, who came from Mississippi in 1853 and married Laura, daughter of Randolph Foster. These Gibsons, grandsons of Uncle Randolph, were Ned Connor, born 1857, Volney 1861, Guilford 1865, and James A. 1867. They were all sprightly and unusual young men and universally loved by their associates.

There were the two Blakelys, Calvin and Bassett, sons of Tom M. Blakely and also grandsons of Randolph Foster; the two sons of Colonel Peareson, E. A. (Dolph) and D. R. (De Rugely); Dolph afterwards became a Major in the Spanish American War and was Sheriff of the County when he died in 1902. D. R. Peareson still lives and has been the leading lawyer at Richmond for forty years. A man of spotless character, he has during all these years been a conservative force for civic righteousness, and his son Philip Peareson is worthy to succeed his father and his grandfather in the annals of Fort Bend. There were four Mitchells, sons of John C. Mitchell, who for many years had been District Attorney while Burkhart was District Judge. The Mitchells were outraged by the assassinations of Shamblin and Frost and after that were very active in their opposition to the Parker-Garvey regime and were among those who organized the Jay-bird association. There were the three McFarlanes, sons of Ike McFarlane, the Morton Street merchant. William, the oldest, was afterwards County Judge and father of Clarence McFarlane, the Houston lawyer. Dudley Bell was just coming to manhood and Dan Ragsdale, the druggist, was soon to be the victim of a sad fate. William Little, great-grandson of the first William Little, who was closely identified with these

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young men in the late '80s, lived at Columbus but was much at Richmond.

While Colonel Peareson, Davis, Moore, Winston and others spent much time and gave much thought to how to oust the undesirables from control of the County, there was one man who gave all his time and his undivided attention to this laudable enterprise and this was Henry H. Frost, son of Samuel Miles Frost of Oyster Creek who in the '80s operated the most genteel barroom in Richmond. This was his theme by day and his dream by night. He had married a daughter of George H. Schley of the Bernard. Now in his forty-second year, a dynamic personality, medium stature, he wore the regulation beard of the Kentucky Colonel and feared no man. He operated a general mercantile business to which was attached a saloon, which was the club for gentlemen of Richmond and the ex-officio headquarters for the opposition to the County clique. It was housed in a two-story frame building at the corner of Morton and Second Streets, and in the second story Colonel Peareson had his law office.⁶

The election of Cleveland in 1884 brought cheer to benighted places in the South which had not seen a Democratic victory since the war.

The next year the young men of the town organized a club which was said to be social in its inception, but if so it took on a political aspect very soon for that was the chief town and county topic those days. It was at first called the Rosebud Club and Colonel Peareson was its founder, and it met upstairs over Frost's.

It was in August of this year that Tom Blakely resigned as Sheriff and his nephew Garvey was chosen to succeed him, and Garvey was an apt man in arousing antagonisms.⁷

When Blakely resigned, Charlie Parnell was a candidate before the court for his place. Parker was County Judge. There were three Commissioners present, Mason Briscoe and McMahan (colored), who voted for Garvey, and Ike McFarlane, who voted for Parnell.

The Rosebud Club, which enrolled more than eighty mem-

⁶ This structure was damaged in the 1875 storm and always after inclined somewhat like the leaning tower. In 1900 Peareson & Wharton had their office in the second story and the storm of that year finished the destruction of this historic edifice.

⁷ In 1877 he had killed Henry Sherrard in the streets of Richmond.

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bers, soon became the Young Men's Democratic Club of Richmond and Colonel Peareson pushed it until it became in 1888 a countywide club which in that year organized the first real fight on the Republicans, Woodpeckers as they were then called, that had ever been waged.

A County gathering, the first mass meeting of white citizens held in Fort Bend since the war, met at Richmond on July 7, 1888. There were white haired veterans of San Jacinto, crippled veterans of the Civil War and young men who had grown to manhood during the twenty years that the Republican colored coalition had ruled the County. It was a holiday and vehicles with banners drove up and down the sandy streets and met the incoming trains. The young manhood of the town and County was on horseback and galloped up and down with feverish haste. A procession, headed by Major J. J. Cain, formed at Morton and Second Streets and marched in double file to Davis Hall bearing a banner which had been made by the women of the County and presented to a committee an hour before at a ceremony which deserves mention. Miss Charlie Woodall of Huntsville, who was a guest of the Booths and who had made quite an impression on the young gallants, many of whom were marching in the parade, had been chosen to formally present the banner on whose ample folds were written "Young Men's Democratic Club of Fort Bend County" and on the reverse side "Tell the Truth," a terse expression of Grover Cleveland's which had recently been made famous.⁸ The procession paused for the presentation of this flag received from the hand of the fair visitor, and gaunt, sharp faced Jeff D. Bryant, young lawyer lately come to town, made the usual spread-eagle address of acceptance.

When the marchers were packed into the small room by courtesy called a hall, Colonel Peareson made a keynote speech which rang clear but dignified defiance to further corrupt misrule in Fort Bend County.

A constitution was read and adopted which declared for honest County government and declaring for honest tax assessments and honest expenditures of these taxes. After this, all present signed the roll of the County Democratic Club.

⁸ In the Presidential campaign which was then going on Mr. Cleveland had been accused of being the father of Maria Halpins' son. When asked by his campaign managers what to say he gave the laconic reply "Tell the Truth." Just who this challenge was aimed at in the Fort Bend County campaign is not known.

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J. H. P. Davis headed the list followed by Dr. Gibson and his four sons, H. H. Frost and J. M. Shamblin, who with the Gibsons were soon to become martyrs to the cause, and three of the sons of John C. Mitchell, although his name did not appear. He had been District Attorney for years elected by the colored vote of Fort Bend, Wharton, Brazoria and Matagorda, the District over which Burkhart had long presided as Judge. John M. Moore signed just below Vol Gibson and below them Jeff McLamore, young and handsome, a brilliant writer whose facile pen has left us many details of the occurrences of the eventful year to follow, many years later he was a Congressman from Texas; Dr. G. A. Feris, who nearly sixty years before had stood by the deathbed of Wyly Martin; Colonel P. E. Peareson, who for twenty years had worked for this day, and his gallant son E. A., afterwards Major Peareson; the erratic boisterous W. O. Ellis; H. S. Mason, Jr., grandson of Emory Darst, whose father's name does not appear, signed just below his Uncle W. M. Darst; Ike McFarlane and his son W. I.; three Bertrands; G. W. Pleasants, who had fought at San Jacinto; W. M. Andrus, and Dan Ragsdale, who with W. I. McFarlane, the Gibsons and others were present on August 16th of the ensuing year when this work was finished; J. R. Waites, afterwards General Waites in the Spanish War; Ed H. Cunningham, the founder of Sugar Land, and Major Brahan, his father-in-law, and many others worthy of mention.

Although a part of the roll was lost, 226 names have been preserved, enough to show that the power, intelligence, character and wealth of the County was behind the movement.

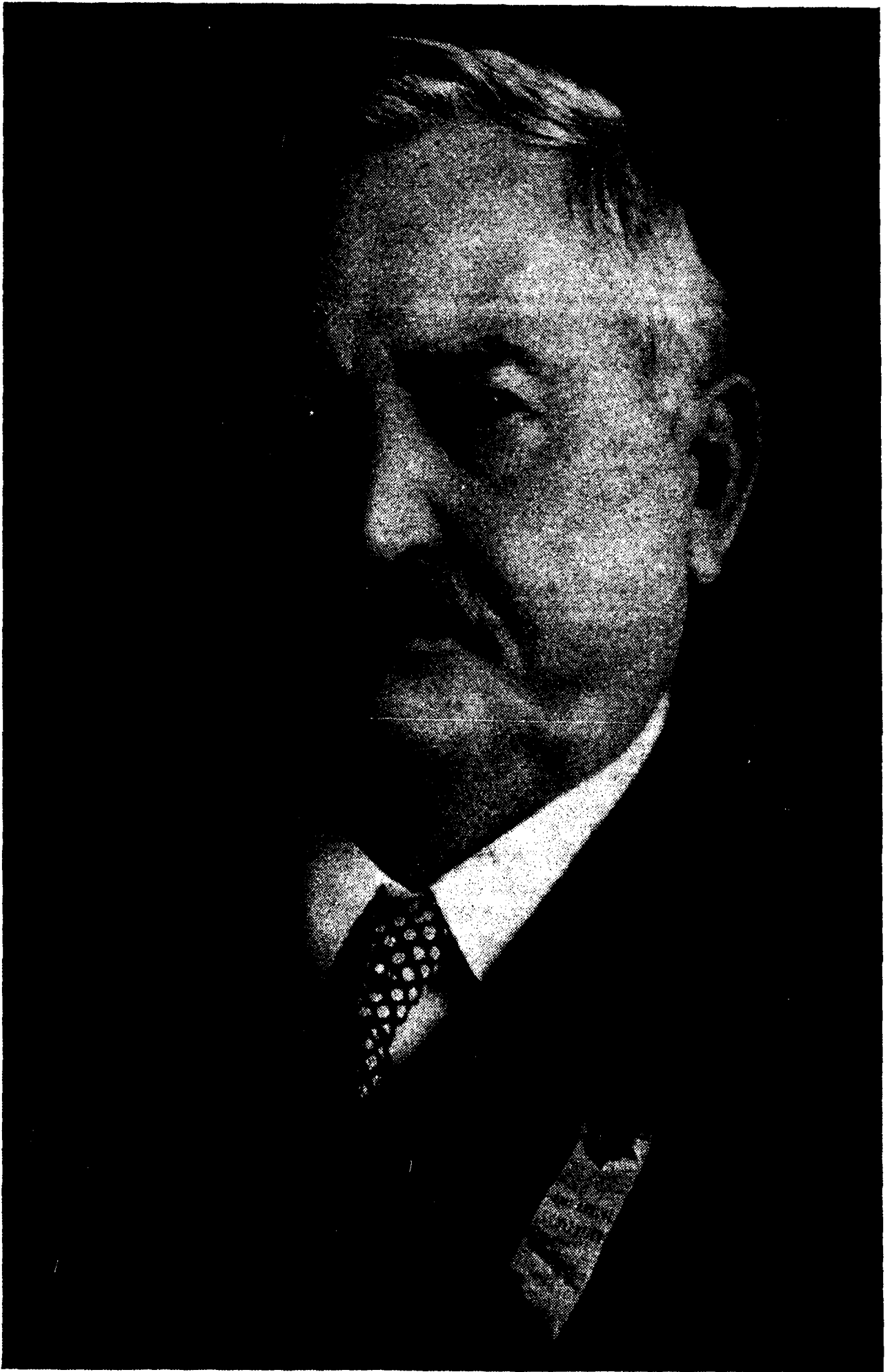
The great show of numbers in the July mass meeting made a profound impression on the office-holding gentry and on those colored men who made money out of county politics, and they became alert for some reactionary force to meet the encroachment.

Parker and his "Cabinet" met the situation by intrigue—some of their colored allies by assassination.

Immediately after the July meeting the Democrats began caucusing for a county ticket with the usual strife among those craving office.

Before the end of the month there was an open split in the ranks that it had taken twenty years to consolidate and a group headed a separate Democratic organization which they called the Cleveland and Thurman Club.

It is impossible at this late day to uncover the personnel of this club.



J. H. P. Davis

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Some few of the men relied on by the County Democratic Club became disaffected and for a time lent their names and influence to the Cleveland and Thurman Club, among them Clem Bassett.

Parker had always claimed to be a Democrat and had political aspirations beyond county boundaries. The Richmond Democrat of July 7, 1888 told that Parker had been importuned to run for Congress as an independent against William Henry Crain, but had indignantly refused to do so, resenting the aspersion on his democracy.

All during July the sole topic of conversation was the coming election. In the midst of the confusion the name Jay-bird came to be applied to those who sought to get the incumbents out, and the "ins" were called Woodpeckers. The Jay-birds were trying to get the Woodpeckers out of their holes. The name Jay-bird was first applied in derision and very soon was accepted and adopted by the dominant Democratic Club as its official name.

They say an old half-crazy negro named Bob Chapel improvised a song about the Jay-bird who flew to the Woodpecker's hole and the Woodpecker said, "Damn your soul." One of his maudlin sayings was, "Walk about Jay-bird," and this phrase seemed to appeal to Frost who was always using it.

In October (1888) Garvey made a public statement which was published in the Houston and Galveston papers in which he called the opposition "The Jay-bird Club," and on October 24th a sponsor of that club writing from Richmond to the News replying to Garvey said, "The name Jay-bird is a nickname arising out of some ridiculous circumstances bestowed on the Young Men's Democratic Club . . . The so-called Jay-bird Club is the mass of the County democracy."

Later on in the same article this sponsor refers to the Young Men's Democratic Club as the Jay-bird Club.

On October 18th J. L. Wimberly, writing from Richmond to the Galveston News, said the Jay-bird Club was comprised of thoroughbred Democrats and embraced the greater number of white citizens of the County.

David Nation, correspondent for the Houston Post all during the summer and autumn of 1888, who was careful to write harmless articles which would give no offense, repeatedly referred to the Jay-bird Club and noted such local news items as, "Calvin Blakely, a leading Jay-bird, went to Wharton Thursday, etc."

In his article of August 16th, writing of the Pittsville bar-

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becue, he said, "The Jay-birds, one of our most recent organizations, will attend in their gaudy uniforms and shout for democracy."

From this it will be seen that the term had then by common consent been accepted by the regular Democrats.

Colonel Peareson, testifying in the examining trials before Judge Hightower in September, 1889, said that although the name had been thus adopted he had not approved. It did not meet his ideas of dignity and propriety.

When the Democratic mass meeting was held in July, it was resolved to wage an active campaign to win the colored voter and a series of barbecues were to be held at which he would be fed roast beef and hear public speakers. The first of these was held at Pleasants' grove, Richmond, July 18th when Gustave Cook of Houston and Judge Mott of Galveston made patriotic speeches and the colored man was told of his civic duty. It was probably the largest gathering that had ever been assembled in the County.

Sidney Johnston Winston, great-grandson of Mrs. Long, was Marshal of the day and five veterans of San Jacinto and four Mier men were present.

Cartoons and posters lauding Cleveland and lampooning Harrison were displayed here and there. One of them on a tree near the road read—"Grandpapa Harrison's pants will not fit Benny."

The enthusiasm was spreading and the planters were talking to their negroes, and loafing negro agitators who had infested the County for several years were being told to move on.

J. M. Shamblin, son-in-law of W. D. Fields, who lived on the Walnut Grove plantation, and who had taken a conspicuous part in the formation of the Young Men's Club, gave a warning that he would not allow any political agitators among the negroes on his plantation. On the evening of August 1st he and his wife and her sister were seated about a table in the large hallway of the house, which was on summer evenings the family sitting room. The room was lighted by a lamp by which Shamblin was reading. A large Bible lay on the table. His little daughter Maude was playing on the floor. The door which led from the hallway to the front gallery was open. It was just after dark when someone from the outside shot Mr. Shamblin with buckshot and he fell mortally wounded.

Although the shot scattered, no one else was hit, but one shot was imbedded in the family Bible and others in the wall of the hall.

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W. D. Fields, who lived a mile away, heard the shot and was the first person to reach the stricken home. Near the front gallery he found paper wadding which came out of a muzzle-loading gun.

Dr. Mayfield, physician at the State farm near by, was summoned and told the family that Shamblin could live only a few hours.

After the moon rose he and Fields found a piece of paper fastened on the gatepost on which someone with a lead pencil had written in a bold crude hand a strange rambling note. An inspection of the paper showed it had been torn out of a tablet or notebook which bore the letter or billhead, "H. H. Frost, Proprietor Red Hot Bar, Dealer in General Merchandise, Buggies," etc. at Richmond. The death message on the paper read:

"i am Just From town and Full of Hell in the neck for all dam misleaders, July, 18881. (sic) July 29, 1888

Mr. Shamblin: You have been Holding democratic meeting with the negroes and you have said that eny negro dont vote a democratic ticket on the election day is sticking a knife in your chiles side the Republican partie have declared that no democate shall be aloud to hole Eny democate meeting in Eny private place among the Eigrant Race of negroes, it is said Grandpapa Harrisons pants will not fit benny but benny is going to wear them before the end of time the Republican parties is going to hold up their heads if they die hard we will have no democate to mislead the ignent negro Race astray. You are a man to lead them a stray and then cut their throats and suck their blud I am a republican and have no use for a dam democrat this is a lesson to all dam cut throat democrats to hold noe more meetings with the ignorent negro race of people."

When this note was shown Mr. Shamblin, though dying, he told Mr. Fields that it was written by a negro named William Caldwell who was a tenant on the plantation and lived a mile away.

A few months before he had caught Caldwell and another negro in the theft of a bale of cotton from his gin. They had been indicted and were out on bond. Ike Brown, a negro witness against them, had died suddenly and it was thought Caldwell had poisoned him. Caldwell had said that if Shamblin was out of the way he could not be convicted.

Early the next morning Fields found tracks of two persons who had walked from Shamblin's gate across plowed ground towards Caldwell's house. One of them was barefoot and

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Fields recognized his track as that of a young brother of William Caldwell who had a deformed foot.

Sheriff Garvey, who had now arrived, went with Fields to Caldwell's house. They saw him in the yard at the rear as they rode up and when they went into the house he fled.

Garvey asked a colored woman in the house for some blank paper on which to write and she brought him a tablet of bill-heads which had come from Frost's in Richmond. They found an Enfield rifle which would discharge buckshot. It had recently been fired. They also found brown paper of the same kind as that which had been used for wadding which Fields found at Shamblin's front gallery. They found a shot pouch with buckshot the same size as those used in shooting Shamblin.

Caldwell was found hiding in the woods. He was taken to Richmond where there was some talk of lynching him, but Garvey took him to Houston for safekeeping.

When he was locked in the Houston jail he denied his guilt and told a Post reporter that a mob of many armed men had tried to take him but that Garvey had bravely stood them at bay, and all this was published in the morning paper. Henry Frost at once wrote the Post denying this, said the "mob" was only half dozen very young men, whom he named, who made no demonstration, and that Garvey was making all this mob talk for notoriety.

Caldwell was tried in the Criminal District Court of Harris County in the following year. The case was a celebrated one and was given wide notoriety. He was represented by able lawyers, among them A. C. Allen, a son of one of the founders of Houston, and afterwards Criminal District Judge of Harris County. In the trial it was proved in addition to the motive which Caldwell had and the other incriminating facts already stated, that he had said that Mr. Shamblin would never appear against him as a witness in his cotton stealing case; that the note on Shamblin's gate was in Caldwell's handwriting; that the paper was a leaf taken from the blank book which Garvey found in his house the next morning. It was shown that anyone going into Frost's store and saloon in Richmond could get one of these tablets and that negroes often did so. The sheet bearing the writing found on the gate fitted into the sutures of a stub found in the book.

The case was taken to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and when affirmed there Caldwell's attorneys procured a certiorari to the Supreme Court of the United States claiming that the indictment was fatally defective. The case was argued in

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that court in 1891. James S. Hogg, Attorney General of Texas, appeared for the State and J. Randolph Burns for Caldwell. The Supreme Court refused relief and Caldwell was hanged.⁹

Few cases in the annals of our criminal jurisprudence afford a stronger record of guilt and few show a more painstaking trial or more competent defense. The defendant had every aid and guaranty which an accused could have.

The County was profoundly shocked at this awful crime and its echo had not died when another followed.

On the evening of September 3rd Henry H. Frost left his store just at dark and walked home, his residence being across the street from John M. Moore. When within twenty steps of his door someone concealed behind one of the trees in front of Moore's house fired on him twice. One shot struck him in the back and right arm, the other tore away the brim of his hat. He walked into the house and calmly told his family, unaware of the assault, that he had been wounded and a runner was sent for Dr. Dillard.

The town was aroused and neighbors flocked into the room where the wounded man lay. When one of these near neighbors, H. F. Randal, Deputy County Tax Assessor, who had always been friendly to Frost, came into the room, Frost rose on his elbow and angrily ordered him from the house.

Jack (Happy) Randal, as he was called, had come into the County after the war and was at first a bookkeeper. He was a genial, kindly person of good address and had married a sister of M. B. Dunlavy and had a family of small children. At this time he was Deputy Tax Assessor under Henry Ferguson. His whole life as known to his neighbors was inconsistent with his guilt, but there were some strong incriminating circumstances which caused his arrest the following Tuesday.

An hour after the shooting bloodhounds from the Ellis plantation were requested and before midnight they were on the ground. They took and followed a trail to a negro cabin in the southern suburbs about a mile from the Frost residence. There they halted, ran on to the porch and jumped on the door. There was no light in the house, but a negro man came to the door with a gun. The house was now surrounded by fifty armed men who searched it and found and arrested John Ewing and Mitchell, his son, and a school teacher named John Donovan, all of whom were lodged in jail.

⁹ Caldwell vs. State, 28 Tex. Criminal Appeals 566, id. 137 U. S. 693.

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A guard of armed citizens stood by all night to prevent mob violence and to prevent Garvey from taking them away pending further investigation.

Knowing the people had no confidence in him Garvey made a suggestion that a committee of ten be appointed to sit as a Grand Jury and investigate their guilt. This committee, headed by Colonel Peareson, took over the prisoners and the same night reported to the populace that they doubted their guilt.

This did not suit the "populace" and another committee was named to take charge of them and try to force confessions from them. Garvey properly refused to turn them over to the new committee to be tortured and defied it to try to take them. They were kept in jail for a time and when the next regular Grand Jury was convened they were not indicted and were released.

Deputy Assessor Randal, who was released on a nominal bond a few days after his arrest, left the country, went to Mexico and never returned.

Monday and Tuesday the town overflowed with armed men from every part of the County and the most tense feeling prevailed. There was much talk that the men in jail, and Happy Randal as well, should be lynched. But then, as all through these troubled days, J. H. P. Davis, J. M. Moore, P. E. Peareson, Clem Bassett, and those who advised with them, prevailed on the younger men to keep cool, and in the annals of all Texas there cannot be found a greater example of dignified patience than that which prevailed here during the remainder of the year—patience which only gave way after the assassination of Ned Gibson the following June.

All white Fort Bend County was in Richmond Tuesday the 4th, and at one o'clock four hundred men assembled in the District Court room and "organized" with Clem Bassett as presiding officer.

There was little speaking, but a quiet determined action planned the night before in which the assembly went on record to denounce "the leaders of the Republican Party of Fort Bend County" as morally responsible for the assassination of Shamblin and the attempted assassination of Frost, and to demand of them that the guilty parties be brought to justice.

They were told this in a resolution which was adopted without debate, and were also warned, "That the patience of an outraged people is exhausted and that if another Democrat in the County is harmed the leaders will be held personally responsible."

Committee on the subject of
by the David Davidson
of the Board of Trustees
of the University of Chicago
The following names
of the members of the
Committee are
The Secretary of the
Board

- W. H. Anderson
- W. H. Anderson
- F. D. Booth
- W. H. Anderson
- W. H. Anderson
- W. H. Anderson
- W. H. Anderson
- W. H. Anderson
- W. H. Anderson
- W. H. Anderson

Facsimile
(Handwriting of J. H. P. Davis)

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A friendly statement was made to the laboring negroes who were told they should have the right, which the white people claimed, to live without fear of assassination.

The written resolution declared that the public good required that C. M. Ferguson, H. G. Lucas, Peter Warren, Tom Taylor and C. M. Williams, all negroes, be required to leave the County in ten hours.¹⁰

Had they lynched these negroes, as many of the young men wanted done, they would have had less trouble as we shall see. But it is a pleasing task for the historian, writing after the lapse of fifty years, to be able to relate the decorum which characterized their conduct in these trying days.

Charlie Ferguson, now about to be deported, was twenty-seven. He had spent two years in college and was serving his third term as District Clerk, to which position he had been elected when he was only twenty-one. He had a brick home in town and a 1,500-acre plantation on Jones Creek valued at \$30,000. Considering the salary of \$2,000 per year which the Clerk's office paid, he had done quite well financially during his six years in County politics. He was a very aggressive person and in the April Convention of the Republican Party at Fort Worth he had been chosen a delegate to the National Convention at Chicago which nominated Harrison for President.

David Nation, Richmond correspondent of the *Houston Post*, had written in April that "Our genial fellow townsman, the efficient District Clerk, Charlie Ferguson, has been signally honored at the Fort Worth Convention."

The mass meeting formed a parade and rode to the houses of those living in Richmond who were warned to leave. Charlie Ferguson had already gone but the resolution was read to his household in the hearing of three hundred men. Davis and Lucas, colored school teachers, left at once. Williams, who was a barber, accepted the warning without protest.

A negro restaurant keeper named Warren, whose name was not in the resolution, was added as a second thought. When the cavalcade reached his house he seized a gun and went to an upstairs window where he displayed it. He was at once covered with a hundred revolvers and came down to hear the resolution which was read to him in a loud tone of voice, after which he departed with the school teachers and the barber.

¹⁰ *Houston Post*, Sept. 6, 1888.

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Kyle Terry, who was with the marchers and an enthusiastic partisan of the Democratic Club movement, was in for doing violence to Warren, but was restrained.

Tom Taylor, the other undesirable, lived out on the Bernard at Kendleton. He was a County Commissioner and he and his brother were farmers and cattle thieves.

The entire three hundred who visited those in Richmond who were warned to leave, found it impossible to go to Kendleton and a committee of ten was chosen to take the tidings to the Taylors, and they went forthwith.

Kyle Terry insisted on going with this warning committee.

They reached the Taylor ranch at nightfall and did not make as impressive demonstration as the three hundred had done in the afternoon.

Tom and his brother Jack, big black burly fellows, defied the committee. The visitors had been instructed not to use force and had promised to refrain from violence unless driven to it in self-defense. But for this the Taylors would have "gone out" that night. Tom told them that they were instigated by Mr. W. M. Darst (whose ranch was on the Bernard a few miles below and from whom they had been stealing cattle for years) and that he would get Mr. Darst. Darst was a member of this committee and heard this threat.

Kyle Terry, who was with the committee visiting Kendleton, was in for doing violence to Tom and was restrained with much difficulty.

Hampered by its limitations, the committee sent a messenger back to Richmond for instructions. The news from Kendleton brought together at least one hundred fifty armed men and at 10 A. M. on the 7th forty mounted men with Winchesters rode toward the Bernard. Sheriff Garvey watched them depart in silence and wired Governor Ross for Rangers.

In addition to this mounted force, a special train from Richmond to the "Colony," as they called the negro settlement, carried many men heavily armed.

During the day while word was waited from Kendleton the "minute men" who had come in from the County were entertained by the Richmond folks who kept open house.

On Thursday evening there was a meeting at the Courthouse in which a military company was organized.

All kinds of rumors were afloat. The Santa Fe station agent at Thompson wired C. A. Beasley, agent at Richmond, that Henry Ferguson was about to cross the Brazos with hundreds of armed negroes on his way to aid the Taylors in the Colony.

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Friday morning the tension was lessened by the return of the mounted men who had gone to Kendleton, with word that the Taylors had gone to Wharton.¹¹

On Saturday morning King, Adjutant General of Texas, came to town in answer to Garvey's frantic appeal for protection.

Again, the third time in the week, there was an open meeting at Davis Hall attended by representative men from all over the County and the citizens seized on the opportunity to tell their story to the public through the press. For this purpose Colonel Peareson prepared a long forceful statement addressed to General King which was formally presented to him at this Saturday meeting and published in the Houston and Galveston dailies.

The recent assassinations were reviewed; how calmly the people had acted; that although convinced Shamblin's murder was for political purposes, his murderer was not molested by the people who had let the law take its course. They pointed out that they knew the crimes were being committed by negro politicians, most of whom were transient; that no violence had been done by an outraged people in retaliation for the killing of Shamblin and the attack on Frost; "that the younger and more impetuous men had been restrained by their elders." They urged King to advise the Governor against sending Rangers to the County and promised to continue the same forbearance. They expressed the belief that the trouble was over.¹²

In the feverish days which followed, all factions seemed to have fused and the Cleveland and Thurman Club and Jay-birds and Woodpeckers were for a few weeks forgotten.

It was charged that Garvey, Sheriff, had made no effort to apprehend the assailant of Frost. If he had done so, his actions would have been suspicioned. He and Parker seemed all alone in the early days of September. They met the challenge that they were morally responsible for assassination with a scowl.

Three days after the return of the minute men from Kendleton and while many men from all over the country were in Richmond a meeting was held in which Major Brahan, Chairman of the Young Men's Democratic Club, was asked to call a mass meeting of white Democrats to be held in Richmond on September 21st to nominate a County ticket, and he did so.

¹¹ Nine years later I heard Tom Taylor address a meeting of negroes at Wharton in which he advocated Hope Adams for Sheriff. He left Wharton the same year under great pressure.

¹² Houston Post, September 8, 1888.

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It was then thought that there would be no opposition to this ticket.

When the first mass meeting was held on September 5th and the list of those negroes who were to be driven from the County was being made up, there was a demand that Henry Ferguson, long the colored boss, should be included. The committee kept Henry's name off the prescribed list. Nevertheless he lost no time in selling out his plantation and leaving the County, taking up his residence in Houston.

At once after the call had been issued for the September 30th mass meeting to name a white Democratic ticket, men who had befriended Henry, got in contact with him and made a "gentleman's" agreement that he would use his influence to induce the colored people of the County either to vote for the ticket or not to vote against it and they would throw nothing in the way to prevent a free colored vote for Congressman and members of the Legislature. This would enable the Republicans to vote for a Republican Congressman and would give Henry his chance at Federal patronage. Besides it would keep off Congressional investigations of Fort Bend County elections.

Henry came to Richmond on Saturday, September 16th, and made a public address to a small audience in which he advised the colored man to stay out of politics and seek his advancement in industry and thrift—said he had left the County because he feared assassination, and did not want to live where law abiding men were assassinated as Shamblin and Frost had been; said he had many friends among the white Democrats.

As Chairman of the Republican Executive Committee of the County he caused the most vigorous denunciation of the assassinations of Shamblin and Frost to be published in the Richmond, Galveston and Houston papers.

Everything seemed well arranged on the 16th and few, if any one, anticipated the trouble that was ahead.

On September 21st a white mass meeting assembled and selected a County Democratic ticket. No man who was an aspirant for office was chosen. Those selected were "drafted." More than three hundred men were in attendance and the greatest earnestness prevailed. It adjourned just at nightfall. There was a wedding that evening at the church where D. F. McLaughlin married Miss Fields, and the wedding guests and attendants left the church just in time to join the conventionists who were on their way to Clem Bassett's house to notify him he had been chosen for Sheriff. He entertained them with



Clem Bassett

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the "finest sherry," after which they repaired to Colonel Peareson's and were again entertained.

The ticket chosen was headed by Colonel Peareson for County Judge; Bassett for Sheriff; T. E. Mitchell, County Attorney; Jo Chaney, County Clerk; C. W. Parnell, District Clerk; Ned Gibson, Tax Assessor; Dr. McCloy, County Treasurer. On down to the smallest offices men of high character were chosen.

While the white mass meeting was naming a ticket at Davis Hall there was a very small "mass meeting" of about twenty men at a caucus in the Courthouse. In the name of the defunct Cleveland and Thurman Club it nominated a Democratic County ticket.

They headed it with Dr. John Weston, a lifelong Democrat, Regimental Surgeon for Terry's Rangers. Garvey was named for Sheriff, Dr. John C. Mayfield for County Treasurer; L. B. Smith, County Clerk; W. H. Gayle, District Clerk; James V. Meek, County Attorney, and last but not least, Kyle Terry for Tax Assessor.

Parker was candidate to succeed himself in the Legislature, but was just then being mentioned for District Judge and was a potential candidate against Burkhart.

An enthusiastic correspondent for the Galveston News (October 4th) said of this ticket—that it was thoroughly Democratic and would be all but unanimously elected. That every man on it was a true Democrat, most of them born and reared in the County; that they did not have to parade their democracy for they were born in the Party and had been in it all their lives. He hoped that the element which had been making trouble would not mar the harmony of the quiet election of this highly white Democratic ticket.

Old friends of a lifetime were surprised at Dr. Weston and Dr. Mayfield and astonished at Kyle Terry. All three of them were charter members of the Young Men's Democratic Club and had been present at the September 10th meeting when the call for the September 21st mass meeting was made. Weston and Mayfield were mature, dignified, well meaning men.

Kyle Terry had demanded assurance that he would be on the Young Men's Democratic ticket and had not gotten it. Besides he was much in love with Mamie, the daughter of Wesson Parker who was now nineteen and beautiful and had recently returned home from school in Kentucky. Although Parker did not want him for a son-in-law, he did want the great name of Terry appended to his ticket.

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A week later the County Republican Convention met. Fifty negroes came quietly, furtively to town. County Judge Earnest presided, Henry Ferguson was present. J. V. Meek, candidate for County Attorney, and J. W. Parker, addressed them in behalf the Independent Democratic ticket and they endorsed it and adjourned as quietly as they came.

The tumult and shouting of the Conventions of 1884 and 1886 were absent and Henry Ferguson and Walter Burton were both silent.

The Jay-birds openly charged that the Woodpecker ticket and the forty white men back of it were apologists for assassination, and the Woodpeckers were squirming under these charges when an incident happened which they seized upon to charge back.

There was a shooting scrape at Liberty Hope colored church near Pittsville on October 12th in which a negro named Lamar Johnson was killed and another, Taylor Randon, was wounded.

Garvey gave an interview to the Galveston News in which he declared it was another political assassination and told the world Fort Bend County was unsafe for human life and he contemplated moving his family elsewhere.

Answering this it was shown by the statements of Taylor Randon, the wounded negro, that the shooting was about a negro woman.

Garvey's interview, which was published in the Galveston News of October 17th, charged that the assassination of these law abiding negroes was for the purpose of intimidating the Fort Bend County colored voters and that "what is known as the Jay-bird Club, a new Democratic organization in the County, is directly responsible for this unprovoked assassination."

He admitted he was a Democrat and had been elected on the Democratic ticket, but said he had rather shake off his party alliance than keep silent when the party was guilty of murder as a stepping stone to success.

He denounced the Jay-bird Club as the lawless bad element of the County having a baneful influence on the young men of the County who were often ignorant.

The "interview" concluded with the statement by the News reporter that Garvey had wisely removed his family to Galveston where they would be safer than in Fort Bend.

A few days later an anonymous correspondent from Fort Bend answered Garvey's statement in a very dignified way, suggesting that he must have been misquoted and saying that when he and Garvey were young men they had often painted

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the town red but now Garvey was painting the whole County black.

These statements by Garvey were bitterly resented and a year later Clem Bassett gave them as one cause for the August, 1889 outbreak.

During August and September, 1888 there was a series of barbecues all the way from Pittsville to Arcola at which there were public speakings, and the negroes were fed and exhorted to show their disapproval of assassinations and to vote for the Democratic County ticket. Little effort was made to induce them to vote against the Republican nominee for State and National office. They were given to understand that it was only a local house cleaning that the Jay-birds were after. A colored band from Galveston was brought to the Richmond barbecue in July and to the Pittsville celebration in August.

After the so-called Cleveland and Thurman Club ticket was named in late September there was an effort made by the decent men on both sides to hold some joint discussions at these barbecues and a gentleman's agreement that all would attend unarmed.

The last attempt at this orderly procedure was at Duke on October 19th. The Jay-birds who came on the train cached their guns at Fenn's plantation store. The Woodpecker contingent, Parker, Garvey, Kyle Terry and others, came in hacks and although they left their Winchesters in the hack, some of them kept on their "small guns" and they all sat on the front seat facing the speakers' stand.

Francis Marion Otis Fenn, wearing his black broadcloth Prince Albert and his shopmade boots, the most neatly dressed man in the County, presided in his happiest manner and did his utmost to make everybody feel at home.

All went well until Kyle Terry, Woodpecker candidate for Tax Assessor, came to speak. Otis introduced him as a "Southern gentleman, son of an illustrious sire, etc." But Kyle forgot the proprieties of the occasion and let loose a tirade of abuse on Ned Gibson, his opponent who was absent. One of Ned's brothers, who was present, resented it and Kyle jumped from the stand, drawing his pistol and was about to use it when an old negro who had been a slave on the Terry plantation threw his arms about the belligerent and said: "Marse Kyle, 'have yo self."

Clem Bassett and others interfered and he was induced to put up his gun.

If the Jay-birds had not been separated from their artillery

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it is quite probable that the shooting would not have been deferred until the next August.

The election of November 6th was a sad disappointment to the Jay-birds who lost every contest. For some reason fewer than half the white voters went to the polls.¹³ Colonel Peareson testified in 1889 that he doubted if more than one hundred white men voted, that many of the negroes voted with the Jay-birds.

The vote for President was 220 for Cleveland, 317 for Harrison. For County Judge Colonel Peareson, 234; Dr. Weston 311 and the other Woodpecker candidates were elected with about the same majority.

If the Jay-birds had voted as strong in November as they marched and talked in August and September, they could have carried the election, for it is obvious that fewer than one-fourth of the negroes voted. Why so many white men stayed away from the polls is a mystery I have been unable to solve.

It would be difficult to express the deep feeling and intense hatred that prevailed after the November, 1888 election.

Tom Garvey, suave when sober, was intolerable when drunk. He met Keen Feris on the street and abused him roundly, denounced him for being a Jay-bird and denounced the Jay-birds in general. He encountered harmless old Jim Slyfield, the saloon man lawyer, and threw his (Garvey's) hat at Slyfield's feet, and drawing a gun, ordered him to pick it up, cursed him, slapped him.

Wesson Parker did a little swaggering and drew a gun on gentlemanly little Dr. John Dillard and even Harry Mason swaggered and offered to slap Dr. McCloy.

While Garvey would act the fool only when drunk, Kyle Terry, now Tax Assessor, could be counted on to do so drunk or sober. He was universally hated as an apostate by his late friends. Miss Parker had not encouraged his suit. Otis Fenn told him that Parker had rather see him shot than have him for a son-in-law.

Shortly after the election the young people of Richmond gave a ball to which they were careful to invite only members of the Jay-bird faction.

A week later the Woodpecker people gave a ball and since

¹³ In an editorial in the Galveston News of August 28 discussing a division of the County it was said that Fort Bend had 2575 qualified voters, 575 Democrats, 2000 Republicans.

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there were very few of them they extended invitations to a number of Jay-bird young folks.

It was charged, and was probably true, that some of these invitations were remailed to negroes. At any rate Kyle Terry accused Volney Gibson of having done so, and when Volney denied it, Kyle, who was a powerful man, struck Gibson, who was of small stature, and knocked him down. The assault was brutal and unprovoked. Gibson, who was unarmed, sent Terry a challenge to a duel which he declined, he said, on the advice of J. W. Parker. Later Terry sent an odd counter-challenge that they go to Wharton and shoot it out with shotguns on the public square.

At round-up time the spring of 1889 the cattlemen from Richmond, Big Creek and the Bernard were on the range with their outfits working the prairie from south to north. These occasions were half way social events and guests often went along to enjoy the open camp life for a week. Jolly Ned Gibson was with them. Ned had been admitted to the Richmond Bar in April, but his practice did not interfere with his social obligations. William Little joined them on the West Bernard.

Tod Fitzgerald was a cattleman at East Bernard and rumor had it that he was careless about brands. He and William Little, who had extensive herds on the range, had almost come to "blows" about these matters.

One evening Tod, who was known to all the crowd, rode up to camp and they invited him to stay to dinner. Tod was a gunman of some repute. He saw William Little standing by the chuck wagon watching him, with a Winchester rifle in his hands and recalled an engagement he had to dine elsewhere. That day they had found one of William Little's cows with an altered brand, Tod's brand had been superimposed on it. This was a felony and one and all were laying for Tod. In the presence of all hands they killed the cow and took the hide to Wharton where a complaint was lodged against Tod Fitzgerald for having feloniously rebranded one of William Little's cows.

Ned Gibson, who saw the animal caught and killed and could identify the hide, was, of course, an important witness.

The case attracted wide attention and when it was called in Wharton for an examining trial in June, 1889, there were many people present from Fort Bend, and Will Little and Ned Gibson were there.

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Kyle Terry had no interest in the matter except his friendship for Tod Fitzgerald, his enmity to Ned Gibson and his propensity for hunting trouble.

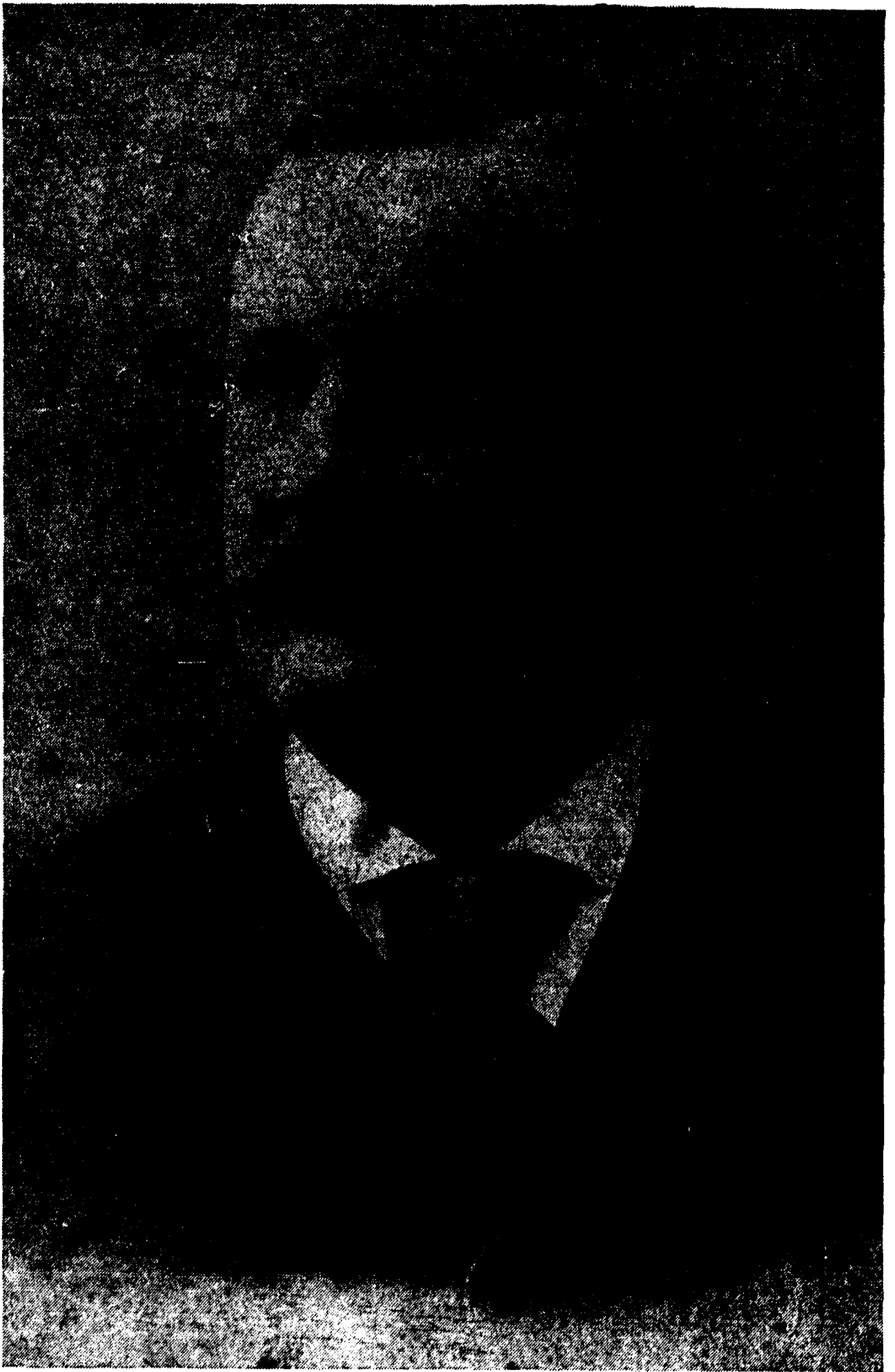
The main line of the Southern Pacific then, as now, went by East Bernard and Kyle and Tod instead of going on the Macaroni¹⁴ as all others did, took the main line to East Bernard and drove over in a stealthy way. When they got to Wharton they went to Malitz and Barbee's saloon where from behind a screen door they could look across the square to the Ford Hotel where Little and Gibson and their friends were stopping. Both men were armed with shotguns.

Presently Little, Ned Gibson and Frank Bell left the hotel together, walking around the square towards the Barbee ambush. Little had forgotten something and went back to the hotel, the others walked on. When they were opposite the screen door behind which Kyle and Tod were hidden, Terry stepped out and shot Gibson. It has always been said that they had agreed that he would get Gibson and Tod would assassinate Little, whose life was saved by the incident of his return to the hotel.

Terry was lodged in jail, but was admitted to bail which was first fixed at \$25,000 which he was unable to furnish. Later it was reduced to \$15,000 and he made bond, but he never returned to Richmond. Parker went to Wharton and represented him in his examining trial. When he left Wharton he went to Galveston where he remained during 1889 and until he was killed there by Volney Gibson, and others in February, 1890.

He was a pathetic figure as he loafed about the Galveston saloons during this long exile. He had long ago squandered the small remnant of his father's estate which had come to him, and now he was getting threadbare and shabby, and the world, outraged at his awful crime, shunned him. Seven years before he had killed Williams, a policeman in Houston. Otis Fenn, who witnessed the shooting, saw Williams fall just where the Dowling monument now stands, saw him attempt to draw his gun, and after he had fallen Fenn looked to see what had prevented him from doing so and found that the hammer was caught on the waist band of an undergarment. Otis saw Kyle

¹⁴ The Victoria branch of the Southern Pacific built from Rosenberg after the war was constructed with Italian labor which ate much macaroni, the first many people of the County had ever seen, and for forty years this branch line was called the Macaroni.



Kyle Terry

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in Galveston in the summer of 1889 and told him that it would be suicide for him to return to Richmond. Kyle knew this and told Otis that when he was acquitted for the killing of Gibson, as he said he hoped to be, he was going to South America.

At the same time he told Otis that his father's saddle, from which Colonel Terry had fallen in Kentucky, was at a certain shop in Richmond and that he could have it if he would pay the small repair bill on it. Otis did so and the saddle hangs in his hall today.

The murder of Ned Gibson aggravated the already impossible situation at Richmond and it was now only a matter of days until there would be a reckoning. Henry Frost knew that men would be killed and felt that he would be one of them. He told J. M. Moore and J. H. P. Davis that he would fall in the defense of decent government for Fort Bend County and said, "When I do I want the Jay-bird Association to build a monument to me and those who fall with me and put a Jay-bird on its crest." And they did.

Tom Smith, Garvey's chief deputy, was his brother-in-law and son of Tom Smith, who had survived the Goliad massacre. His brother was now County Clerk. While Parker and Garvey were hated, Tom remained on friendly terms with the young men with whom he had been raised and often at night would meet and talk with Will McFarlane, who told him frankly that Garvey was a marked man.

Ned Gibson was loved by his friends, and all Richmond, with a few exceptions, were his friends. His murder had made a kind of blood feud and if they could not get Kyle Terry, they would take Parker. So tense was the situation after the killing of Gibson in June that eight Rangers had been sent to Richmond. Four of them were removed early in August.

There was quite an apparent tension in Richmond on Thursday, the afternoon of August 16th. There had been a week's vacation party at the beach chaperoned by Mrs. Dyer and others, and most of the young people, including the Mitchells, Gibsons, Calvin Blakely, Dudley Bell, Dan Ragsdale and the two Pearesons were with it. They returned to Richmond the morning of the 16th.

In the late afternoon Parker was on horseback in front of the Nation Hotel across from the Courthouse and exhibited a pistol on his hip with some remark about its being a good one. Dr. John McCloy testified at the examining trial a week later, that Parker seemed excited on Thursday afternoon, that just

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before Parker left the Courthouse he had a conference with Garvey and went to the vault and got guns.

Albert George, Sr., who was very drunk, had made a disturbance down Morton Street and expressed a maudlin desire to shoot some of the Woodpeckers and Harry Mason, Deputy Sheriff, locked him up.

Henry Frost suggested to Will McFarlane that he go down to the jail and get George released. McFarlane went and found that George had lapsed into a drunken stupor and he and Mason decided that it would be best to let him sleep off his drunk in jail. McFarlane returned to his father's store on Morton Street where he was employed, and reported these facts to Frost who was sitting in front of the "Red Hot" saloon.

In the late afternoon D. R. Peareson and the two Gibsons were riding in the southern suburbs of town, but he had left them and returned to his father's office in the Frost Building. They were armed as usual, but during the half hour ride nothing was said about immediate trouble, although it was constantly apprehended as the presence of the Rangers, and the fact that men went about heavily armed, would indicate.

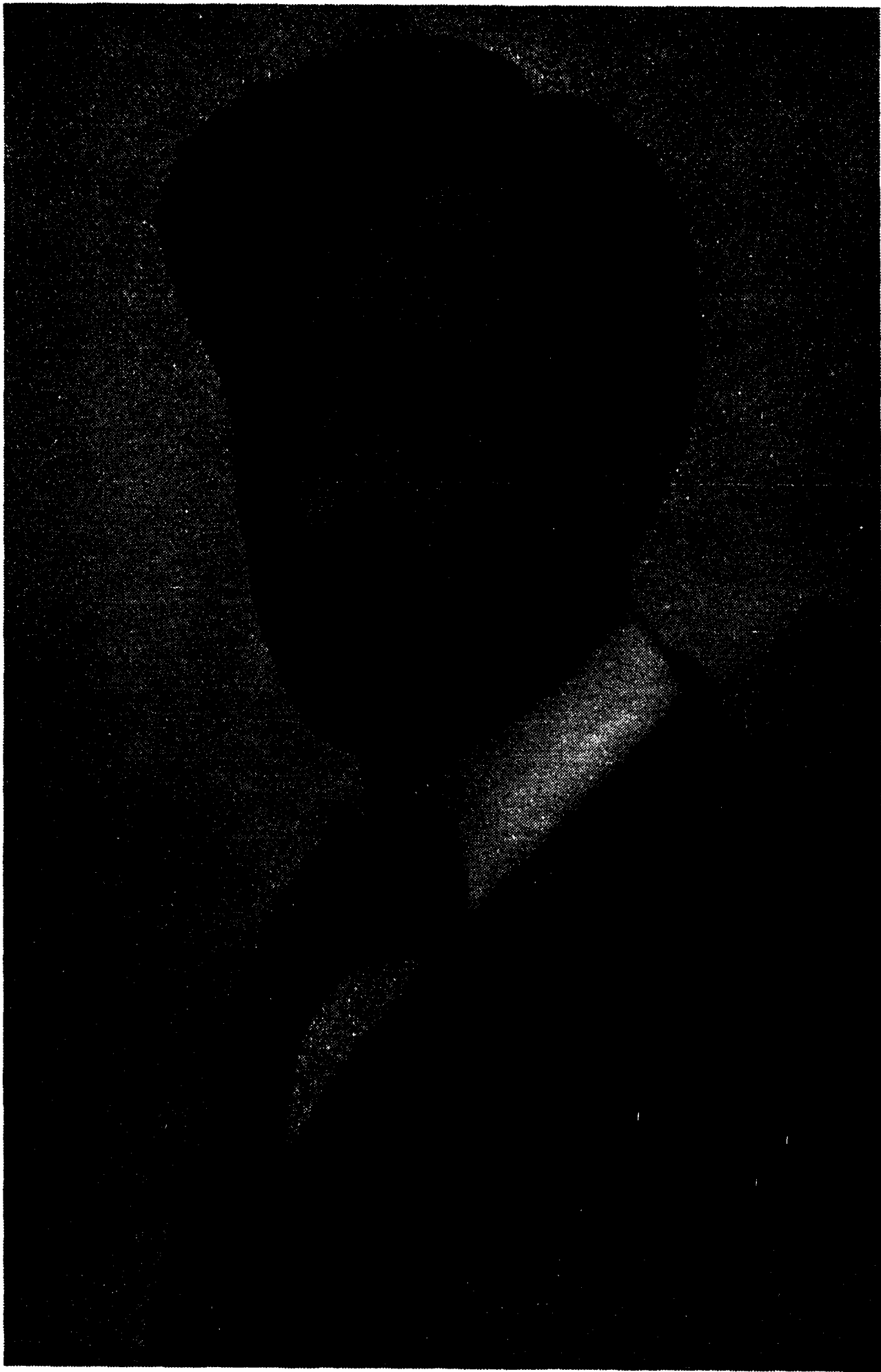
It was nearly six o'clock.

A herd of a thousand cattle being driven from the west to Sam Allen's ranch at Harrisburg had halted just outside of the town and a young cowboy named Walter Williams had been sent ahead to see if the way was clear for the cattle to be driven through town to the Brazos bridge and was galloping down Morton Street towards the river.

John M. Moore was showing his new saddle horse to J. E. Dyer in front of the Dyer residence. Mrs. Dora Ferguson, the Postmistress, was standing in the door of the little pine box-like post-office. D. R. Peareson was at his father's office contemplating the coat of tan he had gotten on the week's outing at the seashore. Horace Booton was sitting on his gallery looking out on his pear orchard which hung heavy with ripening fruit. Robie Smith, a little negro girl, was passing on an errand from Mrs. Newel's residence to the Moore homestead across the street. The quiet of the summer evening prevailed.

Suddenly a shot rang out followed by a fusillade and J. W. Parker was seen riding fast and furiously, firing back as he ran, followed by Guilf Gibson, who emptied his pistol at him. Parker left his horse and sought safety in the Courthouse. The Jay-bird had chased the Woodpecker into his hole.

Only a few moments before Parker had left the Courthouse to ride home and his brother-in-law, Will Wade, rode with him.



DeRugely Peareson

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Just as they were leaving, Freeman said to Parker, "There go the Gibson boys," and Parker saw them riding down Jackson Street a block from the Courthouse and saw that Volney Gibson had a Winchester. They turned east at the McFarlane corner and were for the moment out of sight.

Horace Booton saw them ride by and saw one of them tinkering with his Winchester which seemed out of fix.

The four horsemen met at Booton's corner and the firing began. The Gibsons said that Parker opened fire. Parker and Will Wade said the Gibsons fired first.

The only casualties were the little negro girl who lay dead on the sidewalk and J. Wesson Parker shot in the back just below the shoulder blade. The bullet from Guilf Gibson's pistol passed entirely through his body and through his purse in his breast pocket, cutting two bills which he carried, and lodged in the outer cover of the leather purse.

Vol Gibson and Wade both dismounted and Gibson shot at Wade, and then tried to shoot Parker, who was riding away, but his Winchester would not work.

Will McFarlane heard the shooting and hurried home three blocks away, got his Winchester and as he returned passed Colonel Peareson and as he entered Morton Street saw a dozen armed men hurrying up the street towards the Courthouse and joined them.

Henry Frost was running in the middle of the street. He saw Dan Ragsdale, H. E. and Jim Mitchell, Calvin Blakely, J. D. Bryant, Will Andrus, Guilf and Volney Gibson, who, after chasing Parker into the Courthouse, had joined the men on Morton Street. He also saw D. R. Peareson, who, at his father's office, heard the shooting, got his Winchester and a six shooter and went on the street.

There were also the Rangers Robinson brothers, Ira Aten and Smith. Aten said to McFarlane, "Have you ever been in anything like this before," and when told no, said, "Keep cool," and they went on together.

Some of the men replenished their ammunition by cartridges from the belts of the Robinson Rangers as they hurried along together. When they reached the vicinity of the then old brick hotel (Farmers Bank of today) they saw Sheriff Garvey, Deputies Harry Mason and Tom Smith on the corner of the Courthouse square and firing began from both sides.

D. R. Peareson reached the old boiler by the brick hotel and emptied his Winchester after which he fired with his six shooter until it was exhausted.

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Tom Smith said that when Parker came running into the Courthouse he told them he had been shot. They saw these men coming up Morton Street armed and went out to meet them and were fired upon. Judge John A. Ballowe, who was passing, was almost between them, and said Frost and Garvey fired at each other almost simultaneously. Garvey fell with seven bullets in his body. Frost was mortally wounded. Harry Mason was wounded and ran back into the Courthouse. Tom Smith stood by the iron fence and shot at the men in Morton Street until his ammunition gave out and then went back into the Courthouse.

Someone from the upstairs of the brick hotel fired at the men in Morton Street who had halted and were shooting at the Courthouse from the vicinity of an old iron boiler which lay in the street near the rear of the brick hotel. Henry Frost who was standing under a chinaberry tree near this boiler, for some reason, perhaps to get away from the sniper in the hotel, walked across the street in open view of Tom Smith who was shooting from the fence. He was wounded and had dropped his gun and walked on to the corner of Morton and Sixth Streets where the John M. Moore two-story frame building then and now stands. Yandel Feris, who was on this corner, had raised his gun to shoot Jake Blakely, who was on the sidewalk near the front of the Post-office. Mrs. Ferguson was imploring Feris not to shoot when Frost, although mortally wounded, stepped up, snatched^d the gun from Feris and killed Blakely and staggered on towards his home.

When the first shooting began Dolph and Sid Peareson, his cousin, were walking up town from the Peareson residence and reached the McFarlane residence when the fusillade on Morton Street was in full blast. They ran upstairs to the rear windows which looked out on the Courthouse a block away. They found young Earle McFarlane, then a lad in knee trousers, shooting at someone in the hall of the Courthouse. They could see several men back in the Courthouse hall, among them Parker, J. V. Meek and Dr. Mayfield. A shot from the McFarlane house struck Parker in the groin.

Dudley Bell, who reached McFarlane's just after the Pearesons had gone upstairs, was told by Mrs. McFarlane, "The boys are upstairs," and he joined them.

Firing from the Courthouse ceased and Dudley Bell went around to where Jake Blakely lay and helped remove his body. Quiet now ensued and darkness came. The only lamp which

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shone from a window in town that night was one in the brick hotel.

Parker's family and Harry Mason's family joined them in the Courthouse, where they remained for several days, and received medical attention for their wounds.

Among the Jay-birds who were wounded were Volney Gibson and William Andrus, neither seriously. A Ranger named Smith, who was on Morton Street, was wounded.

Judge Dr. Weston wired the Governor for help and the Houston Light Guard came next day, and a few days later a Company from Brenham relieved them.

Governor Ross came down in person and undertook mediation. More Rangers were sent. But the trouble was over. Garvey was dead, Kyle Terry in exile, and although Wesson Parker, talking from his bed, declared he would never leave Fort Bend County where he was born and had lived all his life, yet he was making plans to get away as soon as he could travel.

At sunset the next day there was a double funeral in the old Morton cemetery when J. W. Blakely and his nephew Tom Garvey were laid to rest not far from the green grave of Ned Gibson.

After they had been thus hurriedly buried without inquest, someone told Judge Weston this would not do, but he had no white Justice of Peace available, and sent a horseman posthaste to Pittsville twenty miles away for Squire Sims, the only white coroner in the County, intending to dig them up and have the formalities of the law performed. But Squire Sims, who was a venerable old man who wore a long beard and a very high hat, had no relish for such a gruesome job and refused to go on such a fool's errand.

Henry Frost died slowly. Governor Ross called on him and he sat up in bed and entertained the Governor fifteen minutes before the end came.

Within a few weeks there was an exodus of Woodpecker families. Parker and his partner, Phil Peter Pearson, and the Masons and Jim Meek went out into the Panhandle country. The Westons and Mayfields went away. Others went here and there. Many of the avowed Woodpecker partisans remained and were not molested.

The Ranger Ira Aten was made Sheriff, and M. J. Hickey, a lawyer from Brazoria, County Judge, and within a few weeks every Woodpecker office holder in the County had either resigned or been removed from office. The only unfinished business on hand was to square accounts with Kyle Terry.

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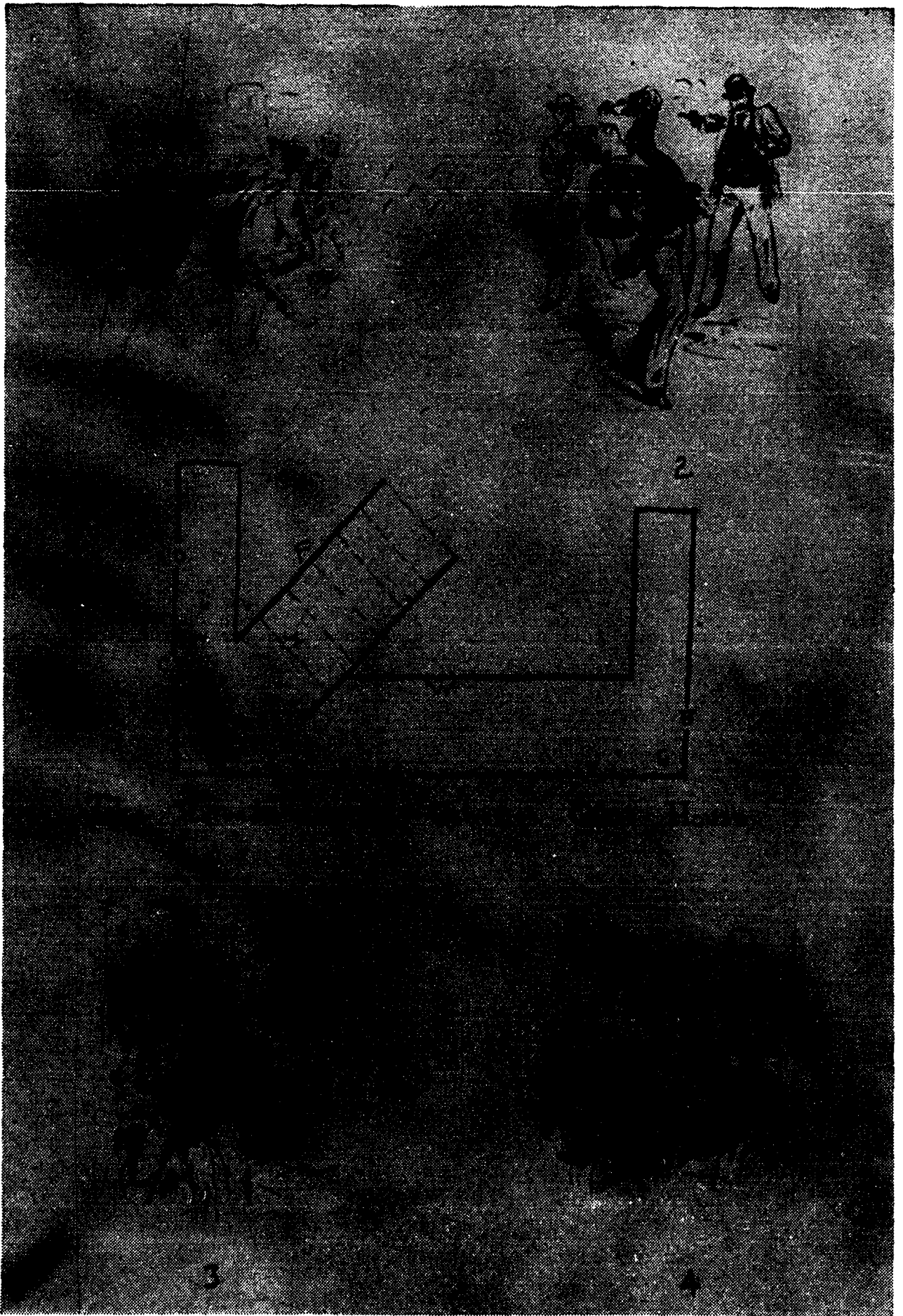
A few months later some of the young men who had participated in the August 16th affray took offense at an article harmless old David Nation wrote for the papers and brutally assaulted and whipped him. Since about 1881 this family had resided in Richmond where Carrie Nation, afterwards the famous woman of the hatchet, operated the National Hotel. She had very strong religious convictions and when the town of Richmond was destroyed by fire in June, 1885 and her hotel was menaced, she loudly and fervently prayed until a slight change in the wind turned the path of the flames and her hostelry was saved. After the assault on old David they left Texas, but she returned for an occasional visit, bringing her famous hatchet.

In the latter days of August a United States Marshal was in Richmond serving process in a suit for \$50,000 damages filed by Charlie Ferguson against John M. Moore and forty others. Ferguson had gone to Tennessee where he had stayed long enough to establish a legal residence so as to enable him to sue in the Federal Court and had instituted his action in that court at Galveston. A similar suit was filed by Davis. The forty defendants called on their associates in the enterprise of running Ferguson out of the County to assist them in defraying defense of this suit and in the several meetings which were held in the summer and autumn of 1889 the Jay-bird Democratic Association of Fort Bend County was organized under that official name and for a quarter of a century functioned and controlled the political affairs of the County. This organization was perfected on October 22, 1889 when a constitution and by-laws for the association were adopted and the following officers chosen: Clem Bassett, President; D. P. Coulson, First Vice-President; Yandel Feris, Second Vice-President; F. M. O. Fenn, Secretary; J. W. Eckman, Treasurer.

The constitution, which was an elaborate document, provided for the machinery by which the white voters of the County would control its affairs. The purpose clause was "to secure to the people of Fort Bend County economical and honest County government" and this high purpose was well fulfilled for all the years.

It required a two-thirds vote to nominate a candidate and where he was an aspirant for a second term, a three-fourths vote. A County official was not to serve more than two successive terms.

A Fort Bend County Grand Jury indicted J. W. Parker for the killing of Robie Smith, the colored girl who was a victim of



The Terry-Gibson Feud

Cartoons taken from National Police Gazette February 15, 1890.
1. Terry slaps Volney Gibson's face. 2. Terry shoots Ned Gibson. 3. Stampede from Galveston Courthouse. 4. Carrying Terry away from Courthouse.

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a stray bullet in the firing between him and the Gibsons. The case was transferred to Galveston for trial as the Kyle Terry case had been from Wharton, and they were both set for hearing January 21, 1890. Volney and Guilf Gibson, Calvin Blakely, W. I. McFarlane, Dan Ragsdale, William Little, William Andrus, J. R. Mitchell were witnesses and went down under process to attend the trial.

They were in the Courthouse on the first floor at the door of the Sheriff's office where they were in conference with a Deputy Sheriff when the hour to convene court approached. They told the Sheriff that they feared trouble and suggested that they be furnished separate witness rooms. While they were standing there a number of persons came into the Courthouse and went up the stairway on the left which led to the Criminal District Court room on the second floor.

Terry, accompanied by Parker and his other lawyers, and preceded by Otis Fenn, came into the Courthouse hall or rotunda and was within forty feet of Gibson and his friends who were standing about the door of the Sheriff's office.

As Terry and Parker entered the door they turned at once towards the stairway when Harry Mason said, "There is Gibson." Terry partially turned, drawing at his pistol. Gibson called shrilly to Otis Fenn to get out of the way, and fired. Almost instantly there was a fusillade. Every man in Gibson's party was shooting at Kyle Terry and he fell shot through the heart. Otis Fenn was one of the first to reach his body and saw his pistol partly drawn, clutched in his dying hand. It had hung on the band of an undergarment just as policeman Williams' gun was caught when he fell at Terry's fire on the market square in Houston ten years before.

It was said that Volney Gibson killed Terry and he was indicted, but died a few months later. But no one will ever know which of the half dozen men who were shooting at him sent the bullet through his heart. Otis Fenn, the last surviving eye witness who jumped aside to get out of the line of fire, says that it was Calvin Blakely.

David Terry, the older brother of Kyle, who had come from California to be present at the trial, was arrested in the crowd for having a pistol, and being a stranger to the officers, was pushed into a room in the Clerk's vault where Volney Gibson had been incarcerated and they, being strangers to each other, paced the room in solitude.

Parker was tried and acquitted the next day for killing the

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colored girl, and many eye-witnesses to the August 16, 1889 tragedy were interrogated.

Volney Gibson was brought out of jail where he had been lodged for killing Terry the day before and gave his version.

Parker testified and a transcript of it all was printed in the Galveston News. A few days later the Grand Jury of Galveston County indicted Volney Gibson, James Mitchell, Dan Ragsdale, William Andrus, W. I. McFarlane, W. R. Little for the killing of Terry and the cases were transferred to San Antonio where they remained inactive on the docket for a year.

The same influences which were behind the damage suits which had been filed by Charlie Ferguson and Davis in August 1889, induced a Federal Grand Jury to indict many citizens of the County on charge of interfering with a Congressional election. On the eve before 1889 Christmas, the westbound Southern Pacific passenger train transferred a passenger coach to a switch just west of Richmond, and J. J. Dickerson, United States Marshal, and several Deputy Marshals, at once proceeded to arrest practically all the adult male citizens of the town and many from the country, requiring them to report at once at the transferred passenger coach for transportation in custody to Galveston, there to be held until bond was given or refused by United States District Judge, C. B. Sabin.

The coach was filled to overflow by the "prisoners" and the journey on the "Day before Christmas" began, and as it proceeded, additional "prisoners" were picked up at several stations in the County. The Houston friends of the Fort Benders obtained notice of the wholesale arrests and when the train reached the station in Houston many of the Houstonians were there and vigorously voiced their protest, among whom were Captain J. C. Hutcheson, and W. D. Cleveland. Some suggested a "rescue" and for a while a conflict was imminent, but good counsel prevailed and the journey continued, and Galveston was reached late in the afternoon of Christmas Day. There being no Federal jail in Galveston, Marshal Dickerson was compelled to deliver the "criminals" to Sheriff Tiernan of Galveston, a liberty loving Irishman. Notwithstanding the warnings of the Marshal that he was delivering a bunch of dangerous and irresponsible men who should be confined in jail, Mr. Tiernan, after receiving the men, promptly informed the Marshal that he was responsible for the safekeeping of the criminals, and that they would not be placed in jail. He notified the prisoners to report to the State District Courtroom in the Galveston Court-house, then a large room, where he, with the assistance of many

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prominent citizens of Galveston, obtained cots and blankets and otherwise made the Fort Benders as comfortable as possible. At the Sheriff's suggestion several of the "criminals" assumed responsibility for the others and all were permitted to leave the "prison" to go to meals without escorts, being required to return promptly. Not a man violated the parole.

Federal Judge Sabin was absent from Galveston at the time and did not return for several days, requiring the men to remain in custody for four or five days, including Christmas Day.

Finally bail was granted to each in amount of \$21,000. The financially able citizens of Galveston, Houston and the surrounding country came to the Federal Courthouse in flocks for the purpose of furnishing sureties on the bonds required before the men would be released.

J. J. Dickerson, the Marshal who planned to have all Fort Bend in jail on Christmas Day, had long been a resident of Richmond and was County Clerk by virtue of the negro vote, 1884-1888. These spite indictments and the meanness of the Federal officials only resulted in a closer and more harmonious Jay-bird organization.

J. W. Parker, and his Richmond law partner, Phil Peter Pearson, located in Vernon, Texas where they practiced law together. In the latter days of March, 1891 they were attending court in a plains county some distance from Vernon and on their way home were caught in a Panhandle blizzard. They both contracted pneumonia and both died within a week. Ten days later Volney Gibson died of consumption at Richmond.

The cases against Gibson and his friends for having killed Kyle Terry, which had been transferred to San Antonio, were called in November, 1891. The District Attorney announced that the death of Gibson and Parker squared accounts and all cases were dismissed.

Grim tragedy continued to pursue the Parker family. The beautiful and accomplished daughter Mamie, who married Dr. Cunningham, died at thirty. The mother, who had been Ruth Wade, returned to the Parker plantation in Fort Bend with her four boys, all of whom in a few years came to abrupt and unhappy ends. She married Robert Parker of Brookshire, who was twenty years her junior. He was a very distant relative of Wesson Parker, was the son of Sophronia Cayce Parker and grandson of Thomas Cayce of the lower Colorado, one of the Three Hundred, who was said to have been the handsomest man in the Colonies. Robert, like his grandfather Cayce, was a handsome, likeable fellow, but was under a social cloud.

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One day in August, 1896 they were living in a new and elegant home which she had built at Brookshire. Her little son, Wesson Parker's boy, was playing in the yard when he heard shots in the house and summoned the neighbors. Handsome Robert Parker had shot and killed Ruth Wade Parker and then himself. They were buried at Union Chapel in the same grave and after fifty years the Parker family passed from Fort Bend County forever.

There was political peace and an honest and efficient County government in Fort Bend for many years.

The account in the Galveston News of October, 1890 telling of the first biennial meeting of the Jay-bird Democratic Association is full of interest and enthusiasm. It speaks of good humor and harmony. Chairman Bassett called the meeting to order and balloting begun for County officials.

When they reached the County Judge nomination the report reads "The name of the most popular gentleman in the County was put before the Convention and as the last syllable of his name was spoken there was a wild burst of enthusiasm throughout the entire Convention and M. J. Hickey was nominated with loud acclamation."

He was then about forty, a man of splendid appearance who dressed with as much elegance as Elder London Branch or Otis Fenn. He had been Sheriff of Brazoria County and practiced law there and came to Richmond shortly before the outbreak, in 1889 and enlisted his sympathies with the Jay-birds who chose him to fill the unexpired term of Dr. Weston.

Hickey was a man of brilliant parts and but for a strange childlike trait of character would have been a great man. On the slightest provocation, and often without provocation, he would take deep offense at one who had long been his friend and would pass him by without a word. Often his grievance would be purely imaginary and he would cease speaking to a person who would not quite know what his offense had been. In this way he accumulated many enmities and when I went to Richmond in 1897 he was not on speaking terms with half the people of the County and had made himself so ridiculous that he was the most unpopular man in the County, although no one had a real grievance against him.

The Jay-bird Association continued to function with an efficient harmony which was unusual, for a quarter of a century, and its principles prevail in County affairs even to this day. Until 1912 it held its biennial mass meetings and made nominations. In 1898 I had an opportunity to see the Association func-

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tion in its fullness. It met in Richmond to nominate a County ticket and every white man in the County was supposed to be, and ninety per cent of them were, present. The men from the prairie were there in large numbers along with those from the plantations and all was done in noisy good humor.

At that time Hope Adams, a Wharton saloon man, was leading a ticket in that County backed by the colored vote and Tom Taylor, formerly of Kendleton, was one of Hope's henchmen. The Wharton white people were confronted with the same situation which had confronted Fort Bend ten years before and Hope's life was in jeopardy.

While our Jay-bird Convention was progressing in hilarious harmony I had a telegram from G. G. Kelley, the Wharton lawyer, that Hope had just been shot by unknown persons on the public square at Wharton. I mounted a table and read this message to the Jay-bird Democratic Convention and after the cheering had subsided Freeman Booth made a motion that we wire congratulations to the people of Wharton, which was done.¹⁵

¹⁵ Tom Taylor moved to Houston and he often told me with hearty laughter how he swam the Colorado under water and under fire.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST YEARS OF THE CENTURY

During the twenty years covered by the last chapter there was a constant and material progress being made. The most important of these changes was the advent of a white population beginning in the late '80s which gradually converted Fort Bend from a colored to a white County. The population steadily increased from 7,000 in 1870, to 9,300 in 1880; to 10,500 in 1890; and to 16,500 in 1900.

In the latter year there were 10,800 colored people and the County was still 65% black. In 1910 it was 62% black, and in 1920 for the first time in its history it had a white majority, 12,000 white and 10,000 colored.

At the beginning of the Revolution the Mexican government had granted the lands as shown by the map facing page 72 and a very large part of the County, especially the prairie land on both sides of the river, was still public domain. During the railroad building era just before and after the war, many railroad land locations were made all the way from the Borden League on the north to Damons Mound, and a very substantial part of the County had been covered by these small surveys which were on the market. The land speculators, who might with some imagination be called Empresarios, began bringing emigrants into the County in the '80s—white people with families seeking homesteads.

The Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway was begun at Galveston in 1875 and had reached the vicinity of Richmond in 1880.

In that year Rosenberg station was established and named for Henry Rosenberg of Galveston who was President of the

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road at the beginning of its construction. He was a Swiss Jew and one of the greatest benefactors of Galveston.

The first settlement of Rosenberg was a grocery store and saloon, and Mrs. Ebell began the pioneer hotel which flourished for many years. In 1895 Rosenberg had a newspaper which went under the showy name of *The Silver X-ray* and which had an editor with a great imagination by the name of George B. Lang. It was the predecessor in title of the *Fort Bend Reporter*.

Among the early settlers of Rosenberg was R. T. Mulcahy, a native of Kentucky, who came to Texas in 1871 and to Rosenberg in 1883. Mulcahy, identified with all the enterprises of the community for more than forty years, has been affectionately called the father of Rosenberg. His widow, and his daughter, Mrs. Joe Catron, still live in Rosenberg.¹

Outside of Rosenberg and a few improvements along the railway, the prairie country remained unchanged until the German farmers began coming in in the late '80s. A good glimpse of this country from the close of the war until the Schendels and Foesters came is shown in a statement of Gayle Snedecor, who is still a resident of the County and whose family lived on the margin of the Bernard settlements prior to the Civil War. In a sketch of his early recollections he says, "North of our settlement were the Darsts on Turkey Creek; south approximately twelve miles was the Damon Mound settlement; east of us lay the broad expanse of unoccupied prairie between the San Bernard and the Brazos upon which was a growth of grass so tall that it would wet one's feet while riding horseback in the early morning. We would go to Richmond, twenty miles away, for our food, clothing and drugs for the entire neighborhood. The settlers took turn about, one going one month and another the next. Usually the one to make the monthly trip went to all the neighbors a few days beforehand advising that his wagon would start to Richmond on a certain date and he would get a list of purchases from each farm. The trip took from two to three days. The farmer of that day did not think kindly of the black prairie land but rather confined his activities to the cultivation of the lighter, sandy soil."

The first settler on the railway school lands in the prairie country between Rosenberg and Damon was P. F. Ward, who

¹ The facts with reference to these prairie settlements were gathered for me by Miss Pauline Yelderman of Rosenberg, one of the outstanding citizens of Fort Bend of today.

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

bought a section of land near what is now the town of Guy in 1889. He was a typical pioneer who had gone from Tennessee to Oklahoma, and in a prairie schooner which carried his family and worldly effects he traveled from Oklahoma, across the almost roadless prairie to his new location. Children and grandchildren of pioneer Ward still live in the County.

A few years later in one of the first of the large migration of Germans from Washington, Fayette and other near-by counties came Charles Abendroth.

And about the same time F. Foester came from Chicago.

Charles Blohm, August Bode and Theo Aderholz settled near and located the village of Fairchilds about 1890.

In the early '90s a large consignment of Bohemian settlers, coming largely from Fayette County, was led by Nat Holub.

In 1891 August Schendel built his residence and small store on the high prairie at a place which was for a time called Schendelville and because of its requirements Mr. Schendel changed the name to Needmore and learning there was another place in Texas which bore this post-office name he changed it again to Needville.

The hardships endured by these first prairie settlers fifty years ago were almost as cruel as those which annoyed the first settlers along the rivers one hundred years ago. The roads along the prairies could not be traveled except in clement weather. The water supply from shallow wells was inferior and many months of the year the grass-covered country was infested with terrible swarms of mosquitoes. The mortality among the first settlers and especially among their children was very great.

In 1896 a colony of Mennonites bought a league of land on Big Creek at what is now the village of Fairchilds and fifty families came with the settlers. They established a village and system of roads through their colony, a school, and employed their own teacher, the school building being the community center. Many of them built homes and they went to work with industry and thrift. They were bitten by mosquitoes, afflicted with malaria and in dire distress when the colony was smitten by the 1900 storm and all but destroyed. After this disaster many of them went back to the northern states from which they came. Only two or three families remained.

Of the original German settlers in the prairie, or sometimes called the Ridge country, F. Foester and Henry Banker are the only survivors (1939).

These people were a thrifty and industrious type and before the close of the century had transformed the prairie country

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into a series of small settlements, but they were still without roads and the development had been slow and painful.

Now, nearly forty years later, their descendants can point with great pride to the beautiful little city of Rosenberg and the splendid chain of farms extending from the Southern Pacific to Damon, all on the prairie country that the original settlers of the Colonial days did not deem worth private ownership.

In 1899 Cecil A. Beasley, who had come to Richmond many years before as Santa Fe Railway Agent, had become the local banker and an outstanding citizen of Richmond. He owned a tract of land on the lower line of the Southern Pacific or Macaroni Railroad half way between Rosenberg and Bernard and conceived an idea of locating a village and procuring for it railway facilities. The town was promoted and it was to be named for Miss Isabel Dyer of Richmond whom Beasley, with considerable competition, was courting and whom he afterwards married. The name Dyer had been appropriated by another village in the County and the name Isabel Dyer seemed too cumbersome for a small village and after much discussion the new town was christened Beasley.

Twelve years later Stern & Stern of Kansas City, Missouri projected one of their Colonial ventures in this neighborhood and under the hands of the settlers whom they introduced, Beasley and the country to the south has assumed the prosperous aspect of today.

From about 1895 to 1900 J. S. Dougherty of Houston, who twenty years before had been one of the promoters of modern Dallas, opened a real estate office in Richmond, maintained salesmen there and carried on an extensive campaign of advertising far and wide which resulted in bringing many farmers to Fort Bend. His activities were at high tide when the 1900 storm turned the tide.

North of Rosenberg the little community of Orchard was built on lands owned by a man named S. K. Cross, who had a ranch covering a large portion of the Gail Borden and Sarah Kennedy leagues. He sold tracts for settlement to some German families named Zogg and in 1890 Dr. Chenewith and Frank Chenewith came there from Caterville, Missouri and built homes.

In 1893 H. H. Aylor, who had been a miner in Missouri, became a settler at Orchard buying a large quantity of land upon which he lived for many years.

In 1894 a party of twenty-seven emigrants came from Akron,

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Ohio to Orchard. Mrs. Mary Sager was among them and still lives there.²

Among the Ohio emigrants was J. Nelson Gray and his wife and family of small children, the youngest of whom, Bert Gray, is now (1939) President of the Houston Electric Company.

In 1890 Cash and Luckle, Houston relators, bought four sections of prairie land north and east of the Stafford League on the Harris County border and promoted a town which they called Missouri City. They had induced a number of families from Missouri to settle in the genial sunshine of eternal summer, as the real estate men of fifty years ago represented this section of Texas to the "snow diggers" as they called the Midwesterners. Homes were built in the village and on near-by farms and the community grew and prospered until the terrible 1900 hurricane all but destroyed it.

One of the first of these newcomers into this neighborhood was the patriarch W. A. (Allen) Robinson, who with his good wife who had been Susan Wyman, and their large family of boys and one girl drove in from Arlington, Texas in 1893. He built the first house in the village, bought land near by and opened a farm which he and his boys cultivated.

Along with them came the A. S. Mercer family who lived near by.

The Robinsons have remained identified with the County until this day.

Wyman Robinson, the oldest son, married Mary Mercer. The sons Emerson, T. B., George and Hamp are still identified with the business affairs of the County and all live in or near the village.

About the time Allen Robinson came from the prairie the Dews from the Port Lavaca country inherited the Belvidere plantation from an old uncle and they came to claim their inheritance. There were the father and mother, and the following sons and daughters: Dr. H. S., Henry, George, Frank, Walter, Ruth, May, Ruben, Jessie and Maggie. The father passed away many years ago and the mother, Mrs. Alice Dew, still lives on the old plantation. All the sons are dead except Henry, Frank and Walter. The daughters are all living. They

² Most of these facts pertaining to the settlement of Orchard are taken from a story written by Mrs. Mary Sager for the Centennial Edition of the Fort Bend Reporter in 1938.



Bert Gray, who went to Orchard with an Ohio Colony in 1894.

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have clung to the plantation through the varying fortunes of forty-five years.

Emerson Robinson married May Dew and they live in Missouri City.

In 1895 I. J. Nichols from Illinois joined the colony and his son, Roy Nichols, who in our own day has been Postmaster in Houston, is still interested in the community and is now (1939) industriously engaged in an effort to extend the limits of Houston to Missouri City.

The Storelands who came to Missouri City from South Dakota in 1895 are here yet. The second and third generation owns the lands that they first acquired.

In 1894 a young school teacher from Ohio named J. C. Florea, taught the first school in Missouri City and married Miss Dunlop and lived there for ten years. He later became County Judge of Fort Bend County, and he and his family were on a vacation at the mouth of the Brazos in 1915 when they all lost their lives in a tropical storm except a daughter, Minnie, who escaped by clinging to a log which carried her entirely across Galveston Bay and landed her on the Island. She lives today.

When the Robinsons and Mercers came in 1893, H. M. Robinson was living at Stafford two miles away. A handsome young Doctor, H. M. Tucker, from Louisiana just out of medical college, married Eloise, the daughter of H. M. Robinson. He lived his entire useful, professional life in Missouri City and died there in 1937. His widow, Eloise, lives there now. Their daughter, Lucy, married A. J. Adams, whose family was living on Oyster Creek when the 1860 census taker was there.

In 1896 Missouri City was in an election precinct which extended to Arcola and there were 411 votes cast, of which 64 were white, the remainder colored. These 340 negroes were hauled in plantation wagons like cattle to vote for McKinley and the Republican Congressman, R. B. Hawley. Their tickets were bobtailed and carried no candidates for local offices. A colored lieutenant of Henry Ferguson was present and handed each negro his ballot which he proceeded to vote straight, after which they were hauled home as they came. The colored voters had lost interest in local politics.

In the latter days of the century the Fort Bend County penal population was increasing. This institution which had always been located east of the river had its beginning in this way. Before the war there were very few colored inmates in the penitentiary, but when the colored brother became a citizen his civic

HISTORY OF FORT BEND COUNTY

obligations were increased and he was held strictly accountable for the violation of the criminal statutes and it resulted that there was a substantial colored population in the State Penitentiary.

The State long followed the lease system under which a lessee took charge of the entire institution, including the plant at Huntsville. Convicts, white and colored, were hired out to do railway construction work and farm work. They were only suited for the latter work on large plantations. A number of such plantations in Fort Bend County were worked by hired convicts as early as 1870. In 1879 Colonel Ed. H. Cunningham of San Antonio leased the penitentiary for five years and next year he associated with him in the enterprise Littleberry Ambrose Ellis of Jefferson, Texas, and they leased and bought plantation lands in Fort Bend and began successful convict farming on a large scale. Cunningham bought the old Oakland plantation and other lands and Ellis purchased farms in the Cartwright and Williams leagues. Their success was so spectacular that the State decided to embark in the convict farm business and in 1886 having abandoned the lease system the Legislature authorized the Penitentiary Board to buy farm lands. In that year the Board purchased the Harlem plantation, 2,500 acres, from the heirs of Guion and Williams who lived in New York. The Evarts had been long lessees and had a sugar house and other improvements on the land which were purchased by the State which was now in the convict farm business for all time.

Captain R. J. Ransom, a successful planter, who had married Miss Stansbury, the granddaughter of Archie Hodge and great-granddaughter of Alexander Hodge, was put in charge of the plantation and continued to operate it until his death in December, 1895. He succeeded so well with it that the Penitentiary Board in its annual reports gave great praise to the enterprise and in 1890 made the boast that the System was out of debt and owned a fine plantation worth \$200,000.

The Harlem farm was the only one owned by the State at the close of the century. Since that time others have been added.

After Colonel Cunningham went out of the convict business he built the sugar mills and refineries at Sugar Land and operated them with varied success until about the close of the century. The change in the sugar market after the Spanish American War made it more economical to import raw sugar from Cuba and gradually the Fort Bend County planters were

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forced to abandon the sugar culture after more than fifty years. After the death of Colonel Cunningham the great Sugarland properties passed into the hands of their present owners, the Eldridge Estate and the Kempners.

My first glimpse of Fort Bend was on a morning in May, 1897. The vast prairies looked like shaven lawns. The woodlands on their margins were draped with gray moss. Far away the trees seemed to stand in a haze of liquid air.

Richmond, with fewer than a thousand white people and more than two thousand negroes, was a quiet, sleepy, sandy place with seven saloons and at that hour seemed all but deserted. Uncle Tom McGee was standing in front of his saloon and red-headed Frank Bell was sitting on his horse out in front having a chat with Uncle Tom before starting on a half day's ride to his ranch.

My friend, Robert H. Woody, lawyer, met me at the Santa Fe station. Negroes with one-horse, two-wheeled vehicles were hauling freight and express to and from the town half a mile away.

A few months before a man named George Priddy, tenant on the Ellis plantation at Sartartia, had killed W. O. (Will) Ellis. Some years before Priddy had been a tenant on my father's farm. Through Woody, who had resided in Richmond a few months, it was arranged that I should assist in the defense of Priddy. I was hunting a new location at which to practice law and seized on this opportunity to be associated in a celebrated cause, for the killing of Ellis had been a widely advertised event and had met with general, if not universal, applause.

The Ellis plantation at Sartartia was chiefly in the Jesse Cartwright League and embraced lands which had belonged to the Connors and Nibbs and Dunlavys before the war. Sartartia, a station on the Southern Pacific which ran through the plantation, had been named for the beautiful daughter of Littleberry Ambrose Ellis.

Will Ellis, manager of the Ellis plantation, had a system which worked like this—

A tenant would sign a printed contract which contained many provisions in small type and which gave the landlord power to dispossess him almost at will and at any time. Often this contract would be presented for signature after the tenant had begun his crop and at a time when it would be almost im-

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possible for him to move elsewhere. The plantation store would give him a limited credit during planting season and after his crop was matured and ready for harvest, he would be told that he had breached some term of the contract which would justify his summary removal from the premises and the forfeiture of his unharvested crop which would be taken over and gathered at a small expense.

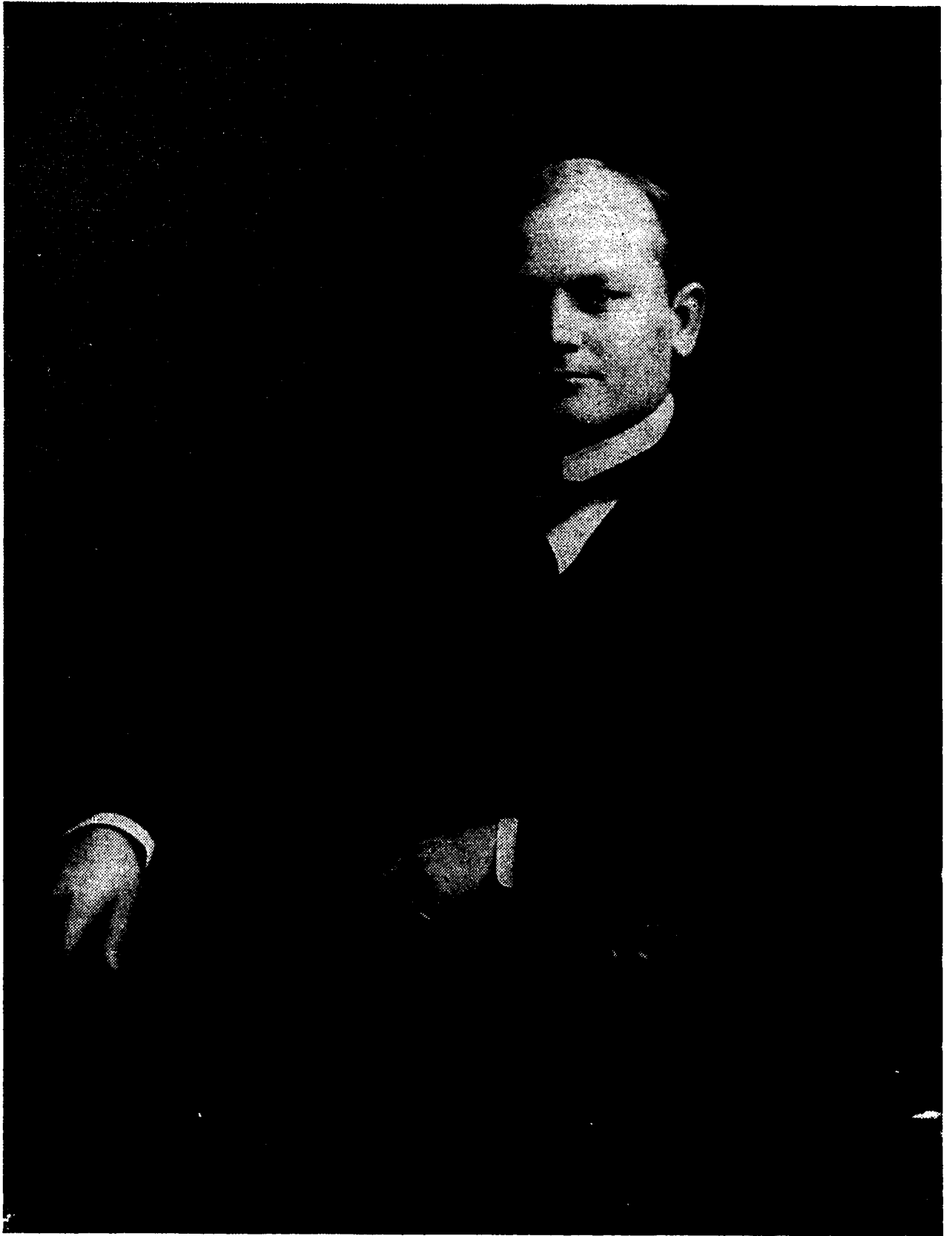
Among the things a tenant could not do was to leave the premises for more than a week.

After his crop was "laid by" in August Priddy took his family in his farm wagon and drove down to the coast for a few days and when he returned found a sign on the door of his house that he had forfeited his crop and must leave at once. The same day the plantation foreman began gathering his ripe corn. Priddy protested but was told he must go. He went to the house and got his Winchester and drove away the outfit which was gathering his corn. When they went back to plantation headquarters Will Ellis, who had been accustomed to dealing with negroes and indigent whites, was roused to great wrath and seized his shotgun which he had the day before loaded with buckshot, called his overseer Bertrand and his bookkeeper Hickman to come with him, which they did, each providing himself with a pistol. Thus armed they drove down the turnrow in a buggy, Ellis sitting forward with his shotgun on his knee. The evening before Hickman had fired Ellis' shotgun at a jack rabbit and reloaded with a shell he got out of the shot pouch, which, by accident, was very small mustard seed birdshot. Ellis did not know the gun had been used nor did Hickman know he had inserted a harmless shell.

As they reached the margin of Priddy's cornpatch they saw him standing in his horse lot with his rifle, and Ellis had them stop the buggy while he jumped out and called them to follow. Ellis ran forward a few yards, was now about seventy yards from Priddy and fired; almost simultaneously Priddy fired.

The mustard seed shot from the shotgun peppered Priddy's face, and a bullet from the Winchester killed W. O. Ellis. Neither Bertrand nor Hickman had a heart in the affair and they gathered up the dying man and took him back to the plantation store.

The venue of the case was transferred to Wharton County



*Robert H. Woody
The 1900 storm blew him to Brooklyn.*

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where we went to try it in May, 1897 and where Priddy was acquitted.³

In the last days of the century the County was settled down to the tame routine of rural life. The big cotton plantations were still operated with a fair degree of success, but the sugar planter was about to pass out. The small farmers on the prairies were fighting alternate seasons of deluge and drouth. There were cattlemen large and small on the prairies. Though slow, there was sturdy progress. It was four years before the first oil discovery in the coast country, ten years before the automobile came. The terrible storm of 1875 which had ravaged the coast country, destroyed Indianola and shaken the Frost Building out of plumb was now a tradition.

On the night of September 8, 1900 the hurricane, which will always be called the Galveston storm, swept the country and all but wrecked rural Fort Bend. Whole communities were wiped away, and while many people patiently rebuilt, many more went elsewhere.⁴

The war had disrupted the affluent easy system of the slavery days, but a new generation had made itself a new and different system. The industry of the people who remained and others who came, rebuilt after war, floods and storms.

But the great change wrought by the reconstruction after the war, the difference between life in 1860 and 1900 was not so marked as the greater change wrought between 1900 and today (1939) in the march of what we call progress. But I leave to the historian of 2000 to tell the sequel of so many things whose ultimate we cannot foresee.

³ Priddy still carried a face full of mustard seed shot at the time of the trial and testified that he felt the sting of the shot before he fired. Woody and I had him retain them as evidence until after the trial.

⁴ In the exodus after the storm, lawyer Woody went to New York City where he lives today and I began life anew in Houston which then had a population of 40,000.

APPENDIX

TERRY'S RANGERS, COMPANY H.

Colonel Frank Terry,* Second Lieutenant Robert J. Calder,* Third Lieutenant W. D. Adams,† Gustave Cook,° Robert Hodges,° E. Griffin,† Jack Adams,° Addie Autrey,* Clem Bassett,° G. R. Brom,° James H. Brown,° David Cook,* W. B. Earnest,* Jesse Dean,† John Fowler,° J. D. Freeman,° N. Freeman,° John Fisher,° Jake S. Godsey,* Steve Gallaher,° James Gallaher,° E. D. Gibbon,* A. H. Hart,† S. H. Jones,° James H. Lowther,† John Lanier,† John H. Miller,† Addie Moore,* Sam Moore,† J. H. Morgan,* E. McDaniel,° Floyd McCarty,* J. E. Perry,* John Ryon,° S. B. Rory,* John Rory,† James Rector,† A. L. Steel,° W. H. Silliman,† W. B. Spencer,* R. A. Torrance,° Henry Thompson,° G. T. Walker,* Captain John T. Holt, First Lieutenant Thomas S. Weston, W. D. Adams,† G. Thompson, E. A. Bolmes, J. H. Edmonson,† Dave S. Terry, T. D. Barrington,° F. Z. Buckley, L. W. Atwell,† B. F. Adams,† R. J. Adams, W. H. Albertson, F. M. Arnold, Joseph T. Asher, Milam Borden,† G. H. Bailey, E. H. Byne, William Byrne, D. B. Bohannon, A. Brown, William Bestiveck,* Lytle Crawford, G. H. Chambers, O. M. Caleb, P. D. Crown, L. S. Caloway, B. Caloway,† J. L. Cox,° N. C. Davis,† R. A. Drane,† W. H. Darst, James Davis,* D. G. Davis, Pembroke Dyer, Steve Etherton, C. H. Edmonson, R. C. Feris, M. L. Fitch,° A. Feris,† D. C. Fielder,° B. H. Fatheree,† John Ferguson, S. Glasscock, M. B. Groce,° M. Houston,† L. Herbert, J. Hirschfield,† Arthur Hirschfield,° Jackson W. Hall, Herman Emile, James Jones, E. P. John,† C. Himp, F. Kimball,* J. A. Lilly, C. Lewiston,† J. A. Lackey,° W. McIlroy, C. A. Moore,† G. L. McMurphy, W. P. A. Murray, Isaac McFarlane, J. McFarlane, C. H. McMahan, A. D. McArthur,° M. C. McKethen, N. H. Morrow, J. T. Maxwell,

APPENDIX

J. A. McKenzie, Floyd McCarty,† J. Miles, C. D. Nelson, Robert O'Brien, Tom O'Brien, J. D. Parmer,† M. A. Page,* A. H. Perry, W. J. Rhodes, Ed Ryan, W. T. Reeves, S. H. Roarke, E. T. Robinson,° T. M. Robinson,° James Rector,† W. J. Sevilley,° J. S. Stewart,† Nelson W. Shaw, A. Shehan, Harrison Tankersly, J. B. Van Houton, J. G. Ward,° Dr. J. M. Weston, H. C. Wiley, W. W. Waller,† Clarence Williams, J. C. Williams, Jonathan Coddington Williams,† Joseph Smith Williams.†

* Killed.

° Wounded.

† Died in service.

COMPANY F, 24TH TEXAS

Jasper Pharr,† Henry McGaw,† Kit Jones,† Thomas Cary,† Jake Roper,† Ed Walker,† J. C. Williams,† Joe and Johnston Williams,† J. T. Corbett,† Lewis Lum,† ————— Killough,† ————— Childress,† Wm. Latourny,* Thomas McGee,* Dudley Wright,* James Dagnall,* Tom Modest,* Jake Bleeker,* Wiley Ott,* W. H. Stevens,* Dudley Gibson,° Tom Gibson,° James Weatherford,° Bob Hodge,° John C. Smith,† Willis Weaver,† William Phillips,† Jeff Sutton,† S. M. Clanton,† John Fulshear,† Sam Tennyly,† Jeff Howard,† Tom Roberts,† C. L. Fox,† M. G. Mays,† John Wyman,° ————— Housenworth,† Bob Hill,* ————— Minstead,† Sam Mason,† Henry Compton,° D. R. Perry,† William Perry,† Bob Hudgepeth,* Wm. Pentacost,° Zan Wade,° Second Lieutenant R. P. Briscoe.°

* Killed.

° Wounded.

† Died in service.

MEXICAN GRANTS IN FORT BEND COUNTY MADE SUBSEQUENT TO 1824.

Kinchen W. Davis, Edward Robertson, Barrett and Harris, Samuel Pharr, Robert Peebles, Charles D. Sayre, Elizabeth Lipincott, William T. Austin, Barnabas Wickson, Michael Young, Asa Wickson, A. J. James, Wyly Martin, John Jones, Launcelot Smithers, Edward Jeffrey, John W. Moore, John T. Edwards, Henry Scott, Sarah Kennedy, Gail Borden, Jr., Andrew Roberts,

APPENDIX

Isaac N. Charles, Nathan Brookshire, Jane Wilkins, Jesse H. Cartwright, Mills M. Battle, Alexander Hodge, S. M. Williams, Brown and Belnap, William Neal, Jeremiah O'Connor, Charles Baird, Andrew Northington, Joseph Powell, Gabriel Cole, James M. McCormick, Isaac McGreary, Elizabeth Powell, Thomas Gay, Peter Conrad, Robert Hodges, Jesse Vance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The preface gives some idea of the search for and source of material that has been used. Footnotes through the pages tell of source material.

In 1904 A. J. Sowel published a history of the County which contained much material not now otherwise available, as the sources of his information are gone.

The records of the General Land Office have been searched and Miss Harriet Smither has helped with the State archives.

The greatest aid came from the old newspapers. E. R. Dabney, Curator at the University Library, has searched them all and copied every Fort Bend County item found in them from 1835 when the Telegraph was begun until it suspended in 1885, and the Galveston News down to 1892.

The assistance of interested parties has been tireless and it would be impossible to name all those who have generously helped me. I must, however, make special mention of those who have continuously aided me during the last few years while the manuscript was being written. Homer Darst, whose ancestors were Austin Colonists, a descendant of Daniel Boone, has given weeks to the work and furnished much dependable data. D. R. and Philip Peareson have ransacked the County records and D. R. Peareson and John M. Moore have gone deep into their memories of a long past. F. M. O. Fenn, who gave Sowel much of his information, retold it all to me thirty-five years later. Mrs. Mozelle Avery of Brookshire, whose great-grandmother was a niece of James Knight and whose family has been identified with the County for one hundred years, wrote me a series of informative letters whose interesting details and literary merit would warrant their publication, but we have decided that they shall not be published during the lifetime of either of us. Houston Wade of Houston gave me his files about

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the Mier Expedition, and L. W. Kemp, a generous friend, rendered much aid. The children of Joel McCreary, Mrs. Lee Briscoe of Fulshear, Mrs. William Wade, now of Houston, Mrs. Avis of Fulshear, the Robinson brothers of Missouri City, Miss Pauline Yelderman of Rosenberg and a host of others helped.

During the last two years I have spent many afternoons in the County interviewing very old colored residents found in humble cabins all the way from Fulshear to Arcola. Many of them remembered incidents of seventy and even eighty years ago. Garrulously they talked of slavery days, of days before the war, of their white folks gone so long ago. These long vanished masters whose names the old darkies often bear are always remembered with kindness.

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