

10-1990

A Letter from East Hamilton, Texas

Leon Sanders

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Tell us how this article helped you.

Recommended Citation

Sanders, Leon (1990) "A Letter from East Hamilton, Texas," *East Texas Historical Journal*: Vol. 28: Iss. 2, Article 10.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol28/iss2/10>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in East Texas Historical Journal by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu.

A LETTER FROM EAST HAMILTON, TEXAS

edited by Leon Sanders

The writer of this letter, Robert Sanders, settled in East Texas in 1834 at East Hamilton in what is now Shelby County, with his wife, Sarah D. Woodson Sanders, and three sons and one daughter. Sanders was born in Rowan County, North Carolina, on April 25, 1790, and moved with his family to Buckingham County Virginia, while still a young man. There he met and married Sarah Woodson, and their first child, Spottswood Henry Sanders, was born there in 1814. In 1815, the Sanders family moved to Christian County, Kentucky, accompanied by Sarah's sister, Nancy, and her husband, Thomas West. Three more children were born to Robert and Sarah Sanders in Kentucky, John in 1816, Robert Junior in 1818, and Matilda in 1824. The family moved to Haywood County Tennessee, in 1825 and lived there until they moved to Texas in 1834, where Sanders listed his occupation as a school teacher.

The recipient of the letter, John Sanders, son of the writer, enlisted in the Republic of Texas army in Captain Teel's Company when the war to gain independence from Mexico began. John was with Sam Houston in the Battle of San Jacinto, and was entitled to an additional land grant for his military service in the war. But instead of claiming his land immediately, John returned to Brownsville, Tennessee, to marry Rachel Boyd Willingham. In the letter, Sanders tried to persuade John to return to Texas, which he eventually did, but John and Rachel remained in Tennessee long enough for the first three of six of their children to be born there. Their fourth child, John, was born in Texas on November 17, 1844. Robert and Sarah, John and Rachel, Robert Junior and his wife, Martha Squyres Sanders, lived the rest of their lives at East Hamilton and were buried at East Hamilton Cemetery. About 1921, Mrs. Edith Sanders Jones had the bodies of her grandparents and great-grandparents, Robert, Sarah, John and Rachel, moved to Fairview Cemetery in Center, Texas.

The letter, dated November 25, 1841, is in the possession of Mrs. Shirley Smith Reynolds of Center, Texas, a great-great-grand-daughter of Robert Sanders.

(East Hamilton, Texas)
November 25, 1841

Dear Son,

Although I perceive I have been greatly slighted by you in writing to me, yet it does not destroy that parental regard which I have for you and family. Therefore I once more take the trouble of giving you a short sketch of the time here. In the first place, we are blessed with good health at this time. I wrote to you sometime last summer, stating to you that your land was located in Nacogdoches County. It was a mistake (by) Ragsdale, the man whom Crawford got to locate it. I was at Crawford's last week and saw Ragsdale, who has lately returned from Austin. He informed me he was mistaken in the number

of your certificate when I saw him last spring. Your land is located in Gonzales County, about twelve (12) miles from the town of Gonzales on the Warloop (Guadalupe) about 45 miles from the city of Austin, and about the same distance from the coast or Gulf. It is no doubt very fine land and will be in a few years the most desirable part of Texas. There is some danger in living there at present on account of the Indians. Ragsdale says he will give you Patented Land in this county, Sabine, or on Trinity. I would advise you not to trade it yet; the land unquestionably will be valuable in a few years. I think from the prolific start you have made in the family way, and the undoubted quantity of land you would obtain by coming to this Republic would be sufficient inducement for you or any other man to move.

You would be entitled to 2121 $\frac{1}{3}$ acres besides what is already located, which is 853 $\frac{1}{3}$ acres, making in all 2974 $\frac{2}{3}$ acres.¹ Now my son you must do as you please about moving. I shall never attempt to persuade you to move again.

I expect you have heard much said about the Regulators and Moderators² in this county; they have been in actual rebellion. Both parties about two months since, had taken the field for Battle, and the marshal of the state had to come forward to suppress them which he has only partially done.

The cause was this: a man by the name of Jackson, last summer was a year ago, headed a party of some 40 or 50 men calling themselves Regulators, to ferret out horse thieves and counterfeiters. H.H. Jackson shot one man (said to be a horse thief) dead in Shelbyville, burnt two other men's houses, and the partys injured, way laid and shot Jackson and several of his men. The Regulators then pursued every suspicious man, shot and hung, by order of a committee (as they termed it) 7 men. The two partys have lost eleven or twelve this summer past; they bid defiance to the civil authority.

John D. Moore³ I am anxious should be regulated, and will try to have him a benefit given and Matilda⁴ taken from him. He lied so very bad, and conducted himself so badly in this country. He ran away and carried all he had to Potter's⁵, 150 miles from here. I seldom hear from Matilda, she had a very severe spell of sickness last summer which caused an abortion. She was very near dying and was in bad health the last account I had from her; poor woman. When Moore carried her away he pretended he was going to take her to see Spottswood;⁶ Moore has never been divorced, and his first wife is living in Houston.

We have rented a place for the ensuing year. I do not know whether I shall teach school or not another year; if I do I shall have to walk 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles or board with the scholars.⁷ My last school has enabled me to make a little rise. I feel as independant as T. Bond, and hope I shall not be compelled to eat green corn and Irish potatoes again without Meat or Bread: We have 23 head of hogs, Cow & Calf and I have bought Pork enough to do us next Year. I have 30 Dollars which I intend to send by Robt.⁸ to Natchitoches to buy us some necessities.

Robert keeps us plentifully in Venison; he kills them mostly by fire hunting, that is, he carries what is called a fire pan, with a large torch and shines in their eyes.

I hope you will not be as neglectful as you have been in writing. I have rec. but one letter from you since I have been in Texas, and that was dated 29th August, informing us, to our great astonishment

you had another heir.⁹ Tell Rachel¹⁰ for the Lord's sake, to hurry on now to a New Country before it is the case again; move where you can give your Children some Land if nothing else.

If you will direct your Letters to San Augustine by way (VIA) Fort Jessup they will come safely to hand if you pay the postage to Fort Jessup.¹¹

Your Mother appears to be tolerable well satisfied, though we have no person to help us do anything but Jeb. Negroes cannot be hired in this neighborhood. Sally sends her love to you and Rachel; also wishes to be remembered to Caroline Langster and all her old neighbors. Tell Mr. Langster I think he has been very neglectful in not writing. I have received but one letter from him, be sure to write to me often. Corn is worth 75 cents per bushel, Pork 3½ dollars per CWT (hundred weight) Money is remarkable scarce, you can get 320 acres of Land for a good saddle horse — for money 50 cents per acre — good title. Give my love to Rachel — farewell my son.

Robert Sanders

(The following two postscripts were written in the margin)

Tell old Mr. Pervis his Son died here in October last. He was sick near four months.

Tell Peter, Jefferson and Jarrel Willingham they can realize 500 per cent in a few years by laying out money now in this Republic.

NOTES

¹The larger acreage was John's land entitlement for settling in Texas; the smaller acreage was bonus land for military service.

²Regulator-Moderator War is widely covered in Texas history; sites of First Battle and Last Battle near Shelbyville are marked by historical markers placed by the State of Texas in 1936 in observance of the Texas Centennial.

³John D. Moore, believed to be the brother of Harriet Moore, wife of Robert Potter, signer of Texas Declaration of Independence and senator in the Republic of Texas. The story of Rob Potter and Harriet's romance is the subject of the historical novel by Elithe Hamilton Kirkland, *Love is a Wild Assault* (Doubleday, 1952).

⁴Matilda Sanders, daughter of the letter writer and sister of the recipient.

⁵"Potter's Point" on Caddo Lake, established by Robert Potter, who gave John Moore 100 acres to move there.

⁶Spottswood Henry Sanders, Matilda's older brother.

⁷"Walk 3½ miles or board with the scholars..." Robert's inventory of livestock does not include a horse.

⁸Robert Sanders Jr., John's younger brother.

⁹"...another heir." Ann Eliza Sanders, born August 2, 1841 in Haywood County, Tennessee, the second child of John and Rachel Sanders. Ann Eliza married Henry McCauley, died in 1922, and is buried in the old cemetery at Tenaha, Texas.

¹⁰Rachel Boyd Willingham, John's wife, descendant of George Boyd (1691-1731), who came to Pennsylvania from Ireland in the early 1700s.

¹¹Fort Jessup, Louisiana, then the western-most outpost of the United States, a few miles from the Republic of Texas boundary on El Camino Real (King's Highway) connecting Natchitoches, Louisiana, to San Antonio, Texas, via San Augustine and Nacogdoches. Fort Jessup, near present Many, Louisiana, has been restored as a park and museum by the Louisiana Department of Parks and Recreation.

¹²Peter, Jefferson, and Jarrell Willingham — Rachel's relations; she was the daughter of Jarrell Willingham Junior.