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Bridget Nancaro
A Free Woman of Color in Texas in 1813

BY MORRIS K. JACKSON

The story of Bridget (Brigida, Brijida, Brixida, and other variations) as a slave and as a free woman will be discussed in the shadows of developing history of Texas. Her remarkable story is at best fragmentary, drawn upon by the acts of people and surrounding events of the times. Bridget was a slave who was born about 1783 possibly in Spanish Louisiana. In the later censuses, she is listed as a mulatto-- the first born generation off-spring of a Negro and a white Caucasian. In the spirit of her uniqueness, the original spellings of her name that were used in the various included documents are retained in this article

After Spain received the territory of Colonial French Louisiana at the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, Colonial Spain suddenly owned territory that extended from Mexico as far eastward as the Mississippi River. Once enemies, the merger of the inhabitants of the longtime rivals of Spain and France was difficult on the local level because the once separated populations already had their own existing cultural differences, political agendas, and different languages. Spanish Louisiana was placed in the viceroyalty of Cuba while Spanish Texas remained under the auspices of the viceroyalty of Mexico. Spanish Colonies were forbidden to trade between themselves which insured that needed goods would be purchased the mother land. However, the two colonies were unequal in their ability to produce goods and be involved in commerce.

For example, Louisiana had a large active port (New Orleans, founded 1718) which promoted commercial trade on the Gulf of Mexico and the tributaries of the Mississippi River. Spanish Texas had no

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counterpart along the Texas coast and at best had a frontier economy. Deeply rooted in the French trade scheme was a system of colonial plantations along the waterways. Plantations required many laborers and these workers were supplied in part by slave ships from Africa, the Caribbean islands, and other locations. Slavery became a necessary and acceptable way of livelihood for the French colonists. Spain, on the other hand, disallowed slavery but officials often were reluctant to enforce any rules. Citizens in Nacogdoches about 1800, for example, had small numbers of slaves usually of mixed ancestry (caste system) or of Native American origins (Apache). At times, black slaves from the plantations of Louisiana tried to escape to Spanish Texas for freedom but many were captured and returned.

Legal freedom from slavery was difficult to obtain. Granting of freedom might come from the benevolence of the owner of the slave (manumission) or sometimes slaves might be allowed to purchase their freedom. Slaves were considered a valuable property and one slave alone might be worth more than the rest of the owner's estate. On August 7, 1813, a female mulatto slave name Bridget was emancipated in Nacogdoches, Texas by her owner John Nancarrow:

John Nancarrow

Liberte

Sept. 28

Recorded

Know all men by these presents that I John Nancarrow now of the province of Texas, for divers good reasons and considerations me unto moving: having at sundry different times received monies, goods, & chattels from: as well for the faithful services of my mulatto woman known by the name of Bridget do hereby discharge her from all obligations acknowledging to have received full compensation for the amount paid by me for the purchase of her the said Mulatto woman Bridget—and in consideration of the promises

I do by this present act emancipate and set free from bondage and slavery forever, the said Mulatto woman Bridget, having her to her own free will to act for herself—and all right, title, claim or pretentions I have, or ever had to her or her services is now by this act annul'd—done at Nacogdoches in the presence of the commandant and subscribing witnesses the seventh day of August 1813.

John Nancarrow

A true copy of the original deposit among the archives in my office.

Witnesses:

Wm. Garrard, Jr.

Ana. Jose Luis delasses.

I certify the copy to agree to the original deposited in the registry office.

Dortasant.

This act of freeing a mulatto slave in 1813 might go unnoticed in the accounts of Spanish Colonial and Nacogdoches history; however, there is a larger underlying story in history that needs to be told, and Bridget was an eye witness to much of early Texas history. In 1813, Bridget would have been about 30 years of age. This document above is a pivotal point in her life for many reasons as she would live another 30 years thereafter as a free person. But before Bridget was free, she was a slave in Spanish Louisiana. Her other story begins there.

John Nancarrow with another man named Linton purchased a black slave from Edward Murphy named Bregitte on April 18, 1807 for \$700. She was listed as a female mulatto, age 30 (born about 1777), and she was inventoried as an individual. The reason of this sale

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is unknown, but Edward Murphy had just purchased a female slave named Lucy age 27 from a seller in Natchez on March 21, 1807 for \$475. Murphy was in great need of labor. The price differential might suggest that Bregitte was of higher value. Edward Murphy (Eduardo Morphi or Morphil) was a partner of the House of Barr and Davenport that was a trading commercial venture based in Spanish Natchitoches and Nacogdoches beginning about 1798. Edward Murphy was first an Indian trader in the 1790s but later he ran the warehouses and ranches at Natchitoches. Both William Barr and Samuel Davenport lived in Nacogdoches and were the primary traders and contacts with the Indian tribes. A fourth partner, Luther Smith, provided trade connections in New Orleans and Western Florida. The House had obtained a monopoly to trade with the Native Americans and was very successful. Smith and Murphy both died about 1808, and Barr died in 1810. Davenport subsequently inherited or acquired all of the company including large land grants. Murphy had a large land grant called *La Nana* and he certainly needed a large number of laborers to manage the cattle, horses, pelts, and trade goods of the business. Murphy was buying slaves as early as May 11, 1791.

References to Murphy (Morphi) associated with a slave by the name of Bridget are mentioned in earlier Catholic Church records. On April 10, 1803, Brigitte, a mulatto and slave of Mr. Morphil was the godparent to the baptism of a mulatto girl born 26 September in this parish. On May 1804, Marie Brigitte, slave of Mr. Morphil was the godparent of a Negro born 9 April 1804, daughter of Claris, and a slave of Mr. Metoier.

The following baptisms in Natchitoches are listed in an earlier church book by Mills. On August 3, 1800, Brigitte, the slave of Mr. Morphil, was the godparent of Brigitte, a *negritte* of one year and four months, native of this post and daughter of Marie, *negresse*, slave of Pierre Jerri, and a father unknown. A Bregitte or Bridget can be found in a baptism of Jean Baptiste, a *negrillon* of one month of age, the son of Pelagie, slave of Mr. Vilaret, habitant of this post on April 5, 1801. Brigitte, slave of Mr. Morphi, was a godparent along with Pierre, slave of Barthelemi Rachal.

Edward Murphy's name is mentioned in many other slave baptisms, but his name with the associated name of Bridget is only men-

tioned in the five references above. It is possible that Bridget might have been owned by someone else in the Natchitoches area. For example, Barthelimi Rachal, listed above, might have owned Bridget. On February 22, 1797, Brigitte, a *mulatress* slave of Barthelemi Rachal was the godparent to Francoise Jean Baptiste, aged nine months, son of Francoise, Indian of Natchitoches.

Five other instances show that a Bergita who was involved as a godparent are found in the church records but it unclear that this is the same Bridget Nancaro: Bergita *mulata* (August, 1792), Bergita *mulata* (February, 1795), Bergita *mulata* (April, 1795), Bergita *mulata* (April, 1795), and Bergita *mulata* (April, 1795). Since there are no Bergitas prior to 1795 for Natchitoches, she may have lived somewhere else. She at times called herself Maria Brigida Nancaro in later records and perhaps she was using her first name Maria in the earlier records. Unfortunately, her personal birth and baptismal records have not yet been located. Bridget's familiarity to the Catholic Church in baptisms, her profession that she was of the Catholic faith in her census records and her testimony in court in Nacogdoches indicates her religious upbringing.

How and when John Nancarrow obtained the full ownership of Bridget from his partner Linton remains unknown and may not have been recorded. Like Bridget, much of John Nancarrow's personal life is unknown, but part of his history is buried in the details of other people and events. One of his famous acquaintances and employers was the Baron de Bastrop who was a renowned person in Texas history. In 1805 the Baron de Bastrop left his large tracts of land in the Ouachita area in Spanish Louisiana to seek his fortunes in San Antonio de Bexar in Spanish Texas. Like many of the long line of other flamboyant Texans, his life was an interesting tale. The Baron himself was a hoax because he was not of nobility. He was born Phillip Hendrik Nering Bogel in Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, on November 23, 1759. He moved to Holland with his parents, Conraed Laurens Nering and Maria Jacoba (Kraayvanger) Bogel, in 1759. He married in Holland and had five children and he enlisted in the cavalry there for a time.

In 1793, Phillip was accused of tax fund embezzlement in Holland and he left the country without his family to avoid prosecution. In the United States Phillip assumed a self-asserted position of aris-

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ocracy and he called himself the Baron of Bastrop. When he arrived in Spanish Louisiana in 1795 and he received a large grant of land in now northeast Louisiana and southern Arkansas in the Ouachita District. Bastrop had obtained 12 leagues of land in order to settle families and grow wheat, a badly needed commodity in the New World. Claiming that the land was crowded with Native Americans, Baron received or traded for additional lands in Morehouse and West Carroll parishes where he again purported to establish mills and raise wheat. He also engaged in a mercantile business and Indian trade. The Baron was unable to settle enough families to complete his obligation and sold the grant to Abraham Morehouse. In turn, Morehouse became discouraged with the purchase and later ceded the land back to Baron in 1800. The Baron mortgaged all of his the land to Stephen Wendt to secure payment for a loan in 1802. Following the sale of the Louisiana Purchase to the United States in 1803, the Baron petitioned to move to Spanish Texas. He then executed a power of attorney to John Nancarrow to manage and settle his interests in Louisiana, and the Baron moved in 1805 to Spanish Texas. Here he was able to negotiate his way through the various revolutions and insurrections of the 1810s and became a prominent politician (Alcalde) with the new Mexican government in San Antonio. The Baron acted as a favorable intercessor in the negotiation of Moses Austin and the Mexican Government in 1821 and he subsequently served as the Commissioner of Colonization for the Austin's Empresario grant. He later received a large grant of land between Nacogdoches and San Antonio (near Bastrop) in 1823 to settle a German colony. Despite his various business activities in Louisiana and Spanish/Mexican Texas, the Baron died in poverty.

A closer look at the Baron de Bastrop's activities reveals that he was a colorful promoter of land schemes and deals, most of which were unsuccessful. One reviewer of his life described him as "having vices of the spirit and he deceived people everywhere regardless of their station in life or education, and he ruined all who became interested in his project, which were all marked by disaster." The Baron left the management of his Louisiana properties to John Nancarrow of Natchitoches, Louisiana. While Bridget may not have known the Baron in Louisiana, she would have known about Nancarrow's management. As discussed later, Bridget lived in San Antonio at the same

time as the Baron in 1825, but I am getting ahead of the story.

One of the properties under John Nancarrow's care was 480 superficial arpens of land (12 by 40) which was situated on the Bayou Toupar, about one league for Fort Miro, in "Washita" County. An arpen (arpent) is roughly an English acre or perch. This property was held under the order of survey by Joseph de la Baume on February 22, 1797, but The Baron de Bastrop claimed and was granted part of this land in 1803 because either he or those holding for him were living there in 1803. Joseph de la Baume was a colorful Frenchman who participated in the American Revolution, moved to Spanish Louisiana, and claimed land on both sides of the Ouachita River. When rumors suggested that France (Napoleon) was to regain Louisiana from Spain, La Baume decided to go to Spanish Texas about 1802. He apparently left his holdings in Louisiana to his friend, the Baron of Bastrop. La Baume first settled in Nacogdoches next to another Frenchman Bernardo D'Ortolan on the Bayou Loco. La Baume was later granted 27,000 acres of land near Seguin, Texas and he moved to San Antonio de Bexar about 1806.

Part of the Treaty of Paris which settled the French and Indian War in 1763 was a clause which allowed France to reclaim Louisiana from Spain at a future date. The leader of France in 1801 was Napoléon Bonaparte and he needed money for his regime. France reclaimed Louisiana in 1802 and for a brief year, Bridget and the other constituents of Louisiana were Colonial French citizens. The United States acquired Louisiana and the lands around the tributaries of the Mississippi from France in 1803—the Louisiana Purchase. The once Spanish citizens of Louisiana could petition to move to Spanish Texas and were permitted to do so after a review. The border between the United States and Spanish Mexico was disputed, and both sides positioned large numbers of military forces along the Sabine River. The military build-up suggested an eminent war. The threat of war intensified when Don Nemesio Salcedo, the Commander in Chief of the Interior Provinces, proclaimed freedom for all runaway slaves who entered Spanish Mexico from the United States. The Americans accused the Spanish of "stealing" their slaves and promoting uprisings. The commanders (General James Wilkinson for the United States and Lt. Col. Simón de Herrera for Spanish Mexico) reached an agreement

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(not a treaty) to form a Neutral Strip between the two nations in 1806.

When Don Nemesio Salcedo's nephew, Manuel Saucedo (sometimes spelled Salcedo) became the governor of Spanish Texas in 1808, the escape of runaway slaves was still a problem. The new governor "casually disobeyed" his uncle's instructions and extra legally permitted the slave owners to reclaim their property. Ultimately, the problem corrected itself when potential Negro refugees realized that they would not find asylum in Hispanic Texas and stayed out."

John Nancarrow was the sheriff of Natchitoches in 1806.¹ Land records showed that he had lands near the Red River and Fort Claiborne. Part of his job was to arrest and return runaway slaves. His name first appeared in the Spanish records when a Juan Nacarran was listed in the Chihuahua Archives in 1809 when the slaves Enrique and Arnis were returned to him and Ambroisio Leconti. The slaves had escaped from Louisiana to Spanish Texas.² Leconti may have been the owner of the slaves. This record does not necessarily mean that the slaves had escaped and traveled as far as Chihuahua before capture, but Chihuahua is the place where the records regarding their return were archived. Bridget, then a slave for Nancarrow, most likely knew these two slaves. The 1810 United States census of Natchitoches lists John Nancarrow with three other white males, one white female, and seven slaves. Shortly thereafter, Nancarrow sold a female slave named Fanny, age 16, to James Bludworth on July 2, 1810 for \$500.³ Next he sold Anna, a female age 11, to Pierre Nolasque on June 15, 1811 for \$550.⁴

The threat of war and the formation of the Neutral Strip had a devastating effect upon the House of Barr and Davenport. The once abundant goods from Natchitoches now could not be brought across the international boundary that separated the United States and Spanish Mexico. New competition came from a United States trading store called the Indian Factory that was located near Natchitoches and it provided better quality goods at a cheaper rate. The Neutral Strip became inhabited by bad people who found sanctuary in a no-man's land where there was no government or law and order, and travelers who crossed the strip did so at their own risk. Perhaps the greatest misfortune to the House was the British Embargo of 1808 because needed goods from England could no longer be unloaded by English

ships at New Orleans or ports along the Mississippi. Abruptly, Nacogdoches at this time experienced a severe drop-off in available trade goods and commerce suffered throughout East Texas and Louisiana.

Beginning about 1810, a priest named Don Miguel Gregorio Antonio Ignacio Hidalgo-Costilla y Gallaga Mandarte Villaseñor, more commonly known as Miguel Hidalgo inspired the first of the Mexican revolutions against the Spanish throne. He gathered an army of 90,000 poor farmers and Mexican citizens and marched in defiance across Mexico. His army despite their good intentions were poorly equipped and improperly prepared for battles and they were defeated. Hidalgo was captured and later executed by a firing squad on July 30, 1811. In like fashion, a retired military captain in San Antonio de Bexar, namely Juan Baptista de Las Casas, also led an ill-fated small revolution in Spanish Texas. Although he captured San Antonio de Bexar and Nacogdoches, he too quickly was caught and was beheaded for his act of treason. His head was salted and was left on display in San Antonio as a warning to other rebels.⁵

Just on the heels of the defeat of Hidalgo and Las Casas, a filibuster group led by Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara and Colonel Augustus William Magee started to organize. They became known as the Republican Army of the North. After months of preparation in Louisiana, the Republican Army marched across the Sabine River and entered Nacogdoches on August 12, 1812 where they experienced little opposition. Here they decried their intensions of independence and set up headquarters. The local merchant Samuel Davenport, the former partner of Edward Murphy, became the Quartermaster and chief supplier for the army. Davenport may have been despondent by the failing business or by the recent death of his wife. He had asked the Spanish government for a visa to travel to the United States to seek aid for his dying wife, but he was denied travel. Davenport participated in the battle at La Bahia before returning to Nacogdoches for supplies. Another important citizen, Bernardo D'Ortolan, was a former Captain of the Militia, and he became part of the new army. James Gaines, a future signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836, and other citizens of Nacogdoches joined the effort and the army marched towards and successfully conquered the fortress at present day Goliad

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(La Bahia) on November 7, 1812. After receiving reinforcements, the Republican Army then marched to take San Antonio de Béxar. Here some atrocities occurred including the slaughter of the Spanish leaders, and some of the disenchanting rebel insurgents quit and returned to Nacogdoches and Louisiana. The decisive Battle of Medina was fought on open ground about 20 miles south of San Antonio on August 18, 1813. The Spanish Royalist Army leader named General Jose Joaquin de Arredondo defeated a contingency of 1400 Republicans. It was reported that 1300 Republicans were killed on the battle field or were executed after surrender, and only 100 or so managed to escape. General Arredondo commanded his subordinates to pursue the insurgent survivors, the families of the Republican Army, and anyone else that was thought to have provided help to the rebels, and the Spanish military left a trail of blood shed and conflagrations stretching from San Antonio de Béxar to Nacogdoches. Rewards were posted for the deaths of Davenport, D'Ortolan, and other leaders. Joseph de la Baume, a supporter of the insurrection who lived in San Antonio, was captured and placed in chains for seven months and all of his wealth and properties in Spanish Texas were taken.

As shown in the emancipation document above, John Nancarrow freed his slave Bridget on August 7, 1813 in Nacogdoches just eleven days before this fatal battle at Medina. There are some big questions as to the timing of this emancipation. The 1810 Louisiana Census showed that John was a resident of Natchitoches, Louisiana. However, in the document above, however, he stated that he had changed his residence by 1813 and his home was "now of the province of Texas." Since he was not at the Battle of Medina, perhaps he was helping Samuel Davenport the Quartermaster of the Republican Army with supplies. Nancarrow's connection to Murphy and the purchase of his slave suggests that Nancarrow was already employed by the House of Barr and Davenport.⁶ His slave Bridget also was in Nacogdoches and like her master, she undoubtedly supported the Republican Army. Perhaps Nancarrow had left the Republican Party like others who had disputes with their leadership. Bridget would have known Davenport, D'Ortolan, Gaines and many of the other participants. The name of the military commandant that stayed in Nacogdoches at this time is unknown but assuredly he was a member of the Republican Army, and

the two witnesses who signed the document likewise appear to be of French names suggesting that they were from Louisiana. Since all of the records pertaining to Nacogdoches were removed to San Antonio in 1812 for safe keeping in preparation for the advancing Republican Army, no court records, land deeds, legal papers, or church records exist for Nacogdoches after that date. In fact many of the pre-1812 land deeds and other records that were transferred have never been recovered. It is fortunate this single emancipation paper was filed also in Louisiana. This remarkable document establishes that **Bridget was possibly the last known slave to be legally freed in Spanish Texas by an owner.**

After the failed revolution of Gutierrez and Magee, Nancarrow returned immediately to Louisiana, but Louisiana and New Orleans were then involved in the 1812 War with England. Instead of stopping at Natchitoches, the 1820 Louisiana census finds Nancarrow in Ouachita Parish near the northeast corner of the present state on Baron de Bastrop's lands. Here his census includes 2 free white males age 16-25, 2 white males 26-44, and 1 white male over 45. Also in the census are 2 slave males over 45, and 1 slave female 26-44. The total number of free white persons was 5 and the total of slaves was 3. Nancarrow became deeply involved in the settlement of Baron de Bastrop lands in Louisiana. By 1820 dozens of law suits were filled by original settlers in order to obtain their titles for grants that were promised by Bastrop. Supportive evidence can be found for the settlers' land ownership with dates of surveys, inhabitation, and cultivation that were reported to Congress and filed and printed as the United States Documents and Debates 1774-1875.⁷ Claims were also filed for monies owed by the Baron for the construction of mills. Nancarrow appears to fade from the public life and the date of his death is unknown to the author. Perhaps he returned to Natchitoches.

Bridget's emancipation into Spanish Texas as a free woman of color came at a perilous point in Spanish Texas history. She was probably left with very little possessions and homeless in a foreign country that was at war. However, she was Catholic and probably spoke Spanish, maybe French, and some English. But the country and the people were changing and times were hard. How would Bridget fit into the Spanish regime? Bridget was regarded as a mulatto, which is a person

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that is half white and half black. A common cause for manumission was the blood or concubinal tie existing between slave and owner. While the earlier Spanish had used a caste system largely based on heritage and blood to determine classes in the population, by 1800 these standards were beginning to blur and ethnic admixture blends of people of different skin color and heritage became known simply as the Mexican Population. Further these persons were free Mexican citizens, had Spanish names, spoke the Spanish language, could own land, and shared kinships with many neighbors. Despite any mixed blood lines, the Mexican population was considered “white” on censuses.

Bridget was also not alone. Other “free” Negroes were in Nacogdoches, San Antonio de Béxar, and the rest of Spanish Texas. Some like Bridget had received manumission by their owners; others chose to run away to a foreign nation where slavery was forbidden in hopes of freedom. Still others were free people that had purchased their freedom, and there were also some free Negroes that actively immigrated to Texas by choice. Harold Schoen gave a masterful review and discourse on the “free Negro” in Spanish Colonial times, the Mexican Federation, and the Republic of Texas.⁸ He emphasized that definition of the term “free Negro” was a legal term referring to those inhabitants of the Republic of Texas that were classified as a “free person of color” AND they were subject to the special regulations enacted to govern them. He further stated that there were never any strictly defined categories based upon ethnological considerations by which Negroes were segregated from whites. However, these special regulations seemed to change as did the politics. The extensive legal maneuvers and laws that regulated free Negroes, slaves, and slave owners during both the Mexican Federation and the Republic of Texas apparently did not directly involve or affect Bridget as shown in the continuing story that follows.

The location of Bridget shortly for the decade following 1813 remains unknown. Although she was now a free woman with choices, these were troubled times. If she did return to Natchitoches, her name does not appear in any of the Catholic Church records. Bridget adopted Nancarrow as her last name, perhaps in honor of her emancipator. The name Nancarrow most often appears as Nancaro but other vari-

ations, viz. Nacaro, Nancarro, Mancaro, and Nacaró, have been written. It is quite possible that Bridget Nancarro stayed in Nacogdoches or perhaps moved near the San Antonio area and witnessed the filibusters of James Long in 1819 and the final revolution by Mexico to oust the Spanish crown in 1821. She may have witnessed Stephen F. Austin or his father before him riding their horses into streets of downtown San Antonio de Béxar. She may have been one of the thirty four remaining inhabitants in Nacogdoches in 1821.

Bridget Nancarro's name is mentioned in San Antonio de Béxar in a trade agreement for three mules in 1825. Previously, she had purchased a house and land in San Antonio in 1825:

“Bridget Nancarro certified that I have sold my house and lot that I have in Bexar to Señor Jose Valentin, for which Señor Valentin delivered to me an obligation for three mules as part of the payment for said house and lot, being obliged to me to deliver the said three mules in the month of February of the year past at the house of Señor Sartouche on Trinity. I Bridget Nancarro, having sold said three mules and received the value of \$90.00 from the Señor Pierre Mayniel, to whom I sold them, obligating myself to deliver them in the month of April of the past year. As Jose Valentin until this time has not paid the said three mules nor complied with his trade, I declare, as far as I am able, that as I have not passed any sale of my house and lot that I have in Béxar to Señor Valentin nor to any other person, that if José Valentin refuses to admit the payment of the said three mules, my properties and my house and lots that I have in Béxar are indebted for the said three mules to pay to Pierre Mayniel.”

Bridget (her X mark) Mancaro⁹

The above document states that Bridget owned a house and land in San Antonio de Bexar circa 1825 but sold her property to a Jose Valentin (Joseph Valentine) for three mules. Mules were a very valuable work animals and could pull wagons or be used in the field. Bridget sold her interest in the three mules to Pierre Mayniel for \$90 cash. It appears that Valentin should have delivered the mules directly to Mayniel, and in essence Bridget sold her house and property for the

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\$90. Such three way deals rely upon the good faith of all three participants, especially if the mules were not physically present. Samuel Norris, the *Alcalde* (mayor) of Nacogdoches apparently ruled that Mayneil needed to contact Valentin first to close the deal, to which Mayneil later replied:

1826, June 29. To the Citizen Don Samuel Norris, Constitutional Alcalde of Nacogdoches:

By virtue of the judgment given by you against the properties of Bridget Nancarro in my favor, I declare and certify as far as I am able and the law permits, that I have issued the necessary judicial proceeding to see if the Senor Joseph Valentine wished to pay me, or to deliver to me the said three mules, and that his silence to my letter of inquiry is an entire denial of it to me, and as he is living in the United States of the North he is not subject to the laws of the Mexican Federation.

With the most humble submission and due respect, I request of you that the properties that Bridget Nancarro has in the city of Béxar may be sold in order to pay me the value of the three mules, and if you find it proper and just, interest be paid to me from said properties as the law permits, having suffered very much on account of the great delay, as well as to pay the amount of 21 pesos 4 reals costs of court in such matter.

As I had occasion to sell my mules at 50 pesos each, I consequently claim the sum of 150 pesos for said three mules from the properties of Bridget Nancarro.

I swear that the aforesaid is without any malice. Nacogdoches, June 29, 1826.

Pre. (Pierre) Mayniel¹⁰

Still having no resolution for his three mules, Mayniel appealed once again to the *Alcalde* of Nacogdoches:

Nacogdoches, September 18, 1826.

Power for Senor Erasmo Seguin

I say that on this day I give my power and authority, with all the right that the law permits me, to the citizen Erasmo Seguin, in order that, performing and representing my person, he may be able with all right to do and explain what is conferred in the right that the document expressed by the Judge of this town Nacogdoches on the properties of Bridget Nancaro, giving me by the same right that pertain to me as legitimate proprietor. Only being obliged by other issues that by this, immediately returning the money that is seized that belongs to me.

Therefore, I signed it before the Alcalde of this town of Nacogdoches, September 18, 1826.

Bridget's ownership of a house and lot in San Antonio suggests that she was in part successful in business and she was capable of completing trades involving larger sums of money. She appears to be honest. Nancarrow mentioned that he was paid monies from Bridget, although the amount was not given. In 1825, she was at the house of Señor Sartouche (Sartoucho) on the Trinity River, but this was a place that she did not want to stay. Another contemporary source three years later reveals the dismal time in Texas just after the Mexican revolution.

General Manuel de Mier y Terán made a visual inspection of Texas in 1828.¹¹ Terán was traveling from Mexico through San Antonio de Béxar on to Nacogdoches as the leader of a Boundary Commission. He lamented about his personal misery with mosquito, fly and other insect bites and the difficulty of the trail with many arroyos. Terán was leading an entourage of people who were to explore and record the conditions of Texas. Included in his group was Jean-Louis Berlandier, a Frenchman who along with José Maria Sanchez y Tapia made sketches of many of the illustrations of flowers, animals, and Indians tribes that are featured in museums and publications today. Terán recorded the various species of

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plants and animals that he observed, and he had wagons filled with instruments to measure temperatures and scientific data. He recorded his encounters with many American Indian tribes around Nacogdoches. Terán's escort would often prepare bridges to cross the arroyos because recent rains had caused flooding in low areas. Approaching the Trinity River from the west, the group came to the ranch of a Mexican called Sartucho, who along with a boy of five or six years lived in "this wilderness." According to Terán, Sartucho was an old man from Saltillo who settled on the Trinity River five years ago. His wife and another woman had since died. Terán commented that "judging by Sartucho's sickly appearance, the boy will suffer the desolation of becoming the sole inhabitant of the *rancheria*. Nearby, an American family had settled without the consent of any authority." The Trinity River was impassable and to the relief of his escort, Terán sent his wagons and the sick Berlandier back to San Antonio. Since this location was on the San Antonio-Nacogdoches Road (once called the old El Camino Real), Sartucho may have had a ferry or a place for travelers to stay and Bridget may have worked for him as a domestic assistant. This location along the road would have been a place to share stories. The news of the recent Empresario grant to Hayden Edwards in East Texas may have stimulated Bridget's interest to return to the growing town of Nacogdoches.

Bridget was called to testify as a witness in a case of theft:¹² Note that she signed her name with an X:

Fourth Seal-- Provided by the State of Coahuila and Texas for the year 1826. The interested party paid 2 reales value of this Seal to the Treasury in my charge. Nacogdoches, July 24, 1826. Supulvada

In Nacogdoches on the 27th day of the month of July, 1826, I the National Alcalde, Samuel Norris, on said day, month and year, made to appear present in my tribunal, Ma. Bridget Nancaro, to take the oath as our God and law commands us, to whom having examined, her, if she knew what the oath contained, such as that she had taken, she answered

that she knew it well, and that with that knowledge, and the oath she had taken, she promised to tell the truth in all that she would know about what she will asked.

To the Sherriff

You are commanded to attach so much of the property of Abner Askins as will satisfy a confessed judgment in favor of Bridge Nancarra for a cow and calf damage of the same as well as cost of suit and make return of this suit on the 20th on instant wherein fail not as given under my hand the above written date.

Samuel Norris

Attached Two Cows and calves at the hand of Daniel Clark and left in his charge One Bridle cow branded with a flower de luce. One ditto black with a white back and belly with the same brand. This 18th of March 1827.

James Gaines, Shff.

Returned on the 19th of the same.

James Gaines, Shff.

Perhaps the most interesting finding in this suit was that Bridget had a brand in her name which was perhaps shaped like the French *fleur de lis*. This brand does not appear the list of brands submitted in Jack Jackson in his book *Los Mesteños*.¹³ However, Jackson only recorded the Spanish brands up to 1821. Also, Norris and Gaines were Bridget's future neighbors.

When Hayden Edwards received his empresario grant on April 14, 1825, he was excited that his long sought-after dream of established in colony in Texas was coming to fruition. Edwards received a large grant which extended from 15 leagues north of the town of Nacogdoches to a southern boundary 20 leagues from the Gulf of Mexico. His land extended to the east as far as 20 leagues from the Sabine River and to the west to the Navasota River. Here Edwards would establish a colony of people from the United States and beyond. However, some of the land that was located in his grant was already occupied by var-

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ious tribes of American Indians and prior settlers of Spanish, French, and other European cultures. The ownership of the Spanish families dated back to the settlement of Nacogdoches in 1779. When Edwards demanded that the settlers prove their ownership of the land or else the land would be sold at auction, there was trouble.

Anticipating a potential conflict, the Spanish Alcalde Jose Antonio Sepulveda and clerk Luis Procela (Procella) began producing and validating old Spanish and Mexican land titles. Edwards accused the officials of fraudulent documents. Indian tribes, both indigenous to the area and immigrants recently displaced from the United States were unable to prove their ownership on paper and were unyielding to move. In fact, the Cherokees were in Mexico at the same time as Edwards with their own petition for a grant. After so many complaints, the Mexican authorities revoked Edwards's land grant in October, 1826 and canceled his previous land deeds. Edwards was in the United States at that time where he was trying to influence more colonists to come to Texas. His investment at the time was over \$50,000 (over one million dollars by today's standards).

Edwards and others organized a revolution and received some assistance from Cherokee, Caddo, and other tribes after promising land to them.

The Fredonia Rebellion touted independence, freedom, and justice and their flag had equal red and white stripes to depict the equal parts of the Indian and white relationship. The rebellion began on November 22, 1826 with the arrest of the local Mexican leadership and on December 21, Edwards occupied the Stone House (Old Stone Fort) in downtown Nacogdoches. In a counter move, the new Alcalde Samuel Norris tried to regain the Old Stone Fort but was routed. Upon learning of the rebellion, the army of Lt. Colonel Mateo Ahumada, the military commander of Texas, was joined by colonists of Stephen F. Austin and they marched towards Nacogdoches. Peter Ellis Bean, a familiar face in Nacogdoches since 1801, and seventy militiamen from Austin's colony entered Nacogdoches on January 31, 1827. When the Indians failed to support Edwards' rebellion at this point, the rebels left hurriedly for their homes or the United States. By the time Ahumada and Salcedo arrived on February 8, order had been restored.

Ahumada proclaimed a general amnesty to those involved except for the two Edwards brothers, Martin Parmer, and Adolphus Sterne. Moreover, the Mexican authorities would soon reinforce its military presence in Nacogdoches with a larger garrison of 300 soldiers under the command of Colonel José de las Piedras to prevent any similar reoccurrence.

Perhaps one of documents that contributed to the Edwards' Fredonia Rebellion was a document created on December 1, 1826 by Luis Procella that involved Bridget Nancaro:

Escritura de Benta del Solar del finado Ant. Cordova; que se haya a la margen Ysquierda del arroyo del Bañito, esto es junto al mismo Bañito, vendida por el vecino Batís La viña, a Brichita Nancaro, fue bendida en 1st D'bre de 1826. Y archivada en 26 de Marzo de 1829 por el regidor 2th Luis Procela.

Documento Original 938.

A rough interpretation of this document indicates that Batís La viña sold a lot of land along the margin of the Banita creek¹⁴ that once belonged to Antonio Cordova to Bridget Nancaro on December 1, 1826. It is interesting that different last names of a Spanish citizen at times were interchangeable: La viña (Spanish) is Lavigne (French) and Lavigne is the same as Tessier (French) or Tesie (other phonetic spellings).

An accompanying document that supported this transfer was also done on the same day and official paper were signed by Jose (X) Tesie and witnessed by Julian Grande.¹⁵

Nacogdoches, December 1, one thousand eight hundred twenty six: By these presents sell as it are to be sold to the Madam Brichita Nancarro, woman of color, a lot that originally belonged to the deceased Anto. Cordova, the title and purchase may be seen in the Archives of Bexar; said lot is situated on the edge of the creek called "el Banita" on the western part of this said town, on the bank of this side and sale was given in

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the referred place before the first Regidor of this community through an act of the Alcalde, I being obliged to record this said sale in the archives of the referred and aforesaid place on the first opportunity for having sold my legitimate property and having received the amount to my entire satisfaction and which I sign with a cross in the presence of the under signed witness, on the present day month and year:

Signature of the cross of Jose Thecier¹⁶

Witness Julian Grande

This document was further ratified by the Mexican Government in series of confirmations: in April of 1827 by Saucedo and gave dimensions and a boundary were given:

1827, April: Grant from the Mexican Government to Bridget Nancaro, a lot commencing with the lot of Patricio de Torres, 30 varas front 60 varas depth (Nacogdoches Deed Records Vol. I: 256).

1829, May 22.

On August 6, 1827, Rafael de los Santos Coy petitioned for a lot of vacant land on the Bañito Arroyo. This lot had the following boundaries: along the north side by the Calle Real which runs from the east to the west; to the east by the land of Brichita Nancaro; to the west by the Bañito Arroyo; and to the south by the street that runs behind the church to the Bañito arroyo. The land grant consisted of many pages with each article being signed by different officials: 1) Encarnación Chireno, 2) Vicente Cordova, 3) Ramon Musquis, 4) José María Mora, 5) and James Gaines. The land that Bridget and Rafael owned was part of a large piece of land that had been given to the parochial church. The land deeds Coy and Nancarro described their land as being to the west of the Parochial Church.

Piedras was the Commandant of the 5th Company of the 12th Permanent Battalion which was headquartered in Nacogdoches. Piedras was in charge of 300 men who were divided into a cavalry cuartel and a regular cuartel in downtown Nacogdoches and along El Camino

Real and La Calle del Norte. Some historians suggest that Piedras confiscated the lands around the church so that he would not have to pay for other lands as such. The church itself had deteriorated to the point of disuse from lack of care during the revolutionary times. Military barracks were subsequently made out of the seized religious buildings and vacant surrounding lands were offered to the military.

While Piedras was more involved in the military aspect of the battalion than of the town, some of the soldiers were preoccupied with involvement in the town and with its townspeople. Piedras was out of town for this incident. On the 17th of the month of November 1829, a soldier named Isidoro Pantalleon (Pantaleón) was accused of vagrancy and had been placed in the police guard of his cuartel by order of the Señor Alcalde since the morning of the 17th. In the following trial, Lieutenant Don Carlos Ocampo (O'Campo) accused Pantalleon of mocking him two times in public and on the third time, Ocampo mounted a horse to chase him. Apparently, Ocampo was not fully dressed in this activity as one testified that he "only saw the lieutenant Ocampo, mounted on a horse, hairy and clothed only with white drawers and an embroidered *lorongo*¹⁷ that covered it and with a sabre placed in the belt." Jean Cazenave testified that he came out of the house of Bridget to witness the event.

Pantalleon escaped the pursuit by running up and down the streets of Nacogdoches. He then stopped in front of the cavalry and pointed a pistol at toward the Ensign Don Pedro Rodriguez and threatened the life of Lieutenant Arango. Testimony by town people also stated that Pantalleon had mocked Thorn and other citizens, including Jose Antonio Sepulveda, Juan Lizarin, Jean Cazenave, and Juan Jose Ybarvo. Pantalleon also made the most scandalous jeers and strong coughs at Lieutenant Don Juan Jose Gallardo, 2nd Lt. Don Miguel Zarazosa, and Sergeant Marcos Sanchez. In other testimony, Sergeant Marcos Sanchez noted that a corporal of his company criticized some of the officers in the house of Bridget Nancaro. Bridget Nancaro testified as a witness that she had heard rumors of Pantalleon's activities and was a witness when an officer was insulted.

From this story above, Bridget appears to have had a house nearby the soldier's quarters and she perhaps provided domestic services which might include baths, shaves, food, drink, smokes, laundry and

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the like. Both soldiers and town people found their way to her home. It is possible that she had rooms like a hotel that were available for travelers, and this may be have similar to her status as Sartouche's place on the Trinity River.

The arrival of new settlers from the United States and other countries as immigrants under the Empresario grants reintroduced slavery into Mexican Texas. Once forbidden in 1810 under Spanish law, the matters concerning slavery were voiced at both the local and governmental levels. Some suggested that Texas should be exempt from the general provisions of the abolition decree. Based upon letters from Piedras and others, the government compromised stating that no new slaves could be brought into Texas but that owners could bring their "old" slaves with them and that the children born in Mexico from those slaves would thereafter be free. Bridget undoubtedly felt the indignation and pain of slavery in the faces of the slaves that passed by her door.

The Honorable Congress of Mexico in 1827 requested information about corporate land and funds that were in the town of Nacogdoches. This was answered by the Alcalde Jose Maria Mora:

"in this town there are not recognized any land that belong to corporations, than that in which the Father Ministers of this town lived in those years in which the land had the name of the Mission of the Fathers. It is gathered that all this land is partitioned among ten citizens who had had it in possession at the rate of 30 varas front and 60 in depth; that is, they were sold to them, they live on them, and their possession has not been extended to them; advising that these citizens are:

*Ensign Don Nicolas Flores, another Juan Jose Gallardo, Corporal Morales, and Citizens Patricio de Torres, Rafael de los Santos, the widow Josefa Morvan, Henry Stockman, Nathaniel Norris and James Gaines."*¹⁸

A notable absence in the list of nine above is the name of Brigida Nancarro. She would have been the tenth person. Also there is a

strange inclusion of Mrs. Josefa Morvan. Josefa Morvan was a priest in Nacogdoches about 1800 and was not married. I do not know if there is a connection here or this was a bad translation of the original. Henry Stockman did receive a second lot, and the lot of Sargent Eduardo Arriola was mentioned in the deed of James Gaines and the deed of Crecencio Morales. The latter was part of the cavalry, and his name is not in the list. Also the name of a Samuel Norris appeared in a deed, not Nathaniel. The lots to the southeast did not all contain 30 X 60 varas; Gaines' lot was 35 X 40 and Morales' lot was 25 X 60. Arriola's land was reduced to 30 X 20 varas (as if Gaines and Arriola split a lot). The measurements for the cuartel were never given, and the confiscation of the lot was not mentioned in Mora's report.

As seen in Figure 1, there are actually eleven blocks, and modern Block 12 is not square or rectangular. The boundary of the east side (North Street) is shorter than the west side (Bayou Banita), and although the south boundary (Pilar Street) is perpendicular with margins of the block, the north side boundary (Main Street) is slanted. A similar appearance is seen in Gibson's map of Nacogdoches in 1837. The approximate locations of the lots of the early settlers are illustrated upon a modern 2013 Google Earth geospatial map of Nacogdoches. North is perpendicular with the left margin of the photo (North Street is N-NE).

Figure 1: Lots of the 1827 land owners for modern Block 12.

Lot Land owner(s)

1. *Church grounds taken over by the Mexican military cuartel, Col. Piedras*
2. *Lt. Juan José Gayardo (Gallardo)*
3. *Lt. Nicholas Flores*
4. *Patricio de Torres, postmaster*
5. *Bridget Nancarro, free woman of color*
6. *Rafael de los Santos Coy, later by Bridget Nancarro*
7. *Not issued, maybe Christopher Peña later*
8. *Silvestre Leal, Josefa Moreno (names not on list)*

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- 9. *Henry Stockman*
- 10. *Henry Stockman*
- 11. *Unclear boundaries, Samuel Norris to the north, then east to west on bottom row—
James Gaines, Sgt. Eduardo Arriola, Crescencio Morales*

Block 12



Brichita Nancara, described as a free woman (*mujer libre*) and black of color (*negra de color*), purchased the adjoining lot from Rafael de los Santos Coy on March 3, 1831 for thirty five pesos.¹⁹ This lot had a house on bald ground. She now had two lots which extended to the Banita Creek. For reasons unknown, Rafael de los Santos Coy sold this same lot to James Boulter on March 25, 1835 and this lot was sold to Phillip Carroll 1837, then to Charles Sims and George Pollitt 1838, and then to Frost Thorn and H. H. Edwards in 1839.

In a series of documents,²⁰ the lot belonging to Nacara (Sic.) with her little house (*casita*) which was located west of the parochial church was sold to Maria Antonia de los Santos Coy. The title from April 4 1827 was reviewed (signatures of Navarrete, Saucedo, and Samuel Norris). A second document written by Jose Antonio Saucedo in Bexar of June 14, 1827 confirmed the above record. The title from August 2, 1831 was signed by the Alcalde Manuel de los Santos Coy and his assistant Fran. Guerrero.

A more precise description of the boundaries was then given by Santos Coy and Vital Flores on August 4, 1831:

The property was located on the Principal Street, beginning at the corner of the lot of Patricio de Torres extending to the west 30 varas of frontage along the same Principal Street, bordering on the lot with the house and lot of Rafael de los Santos Coy, and with a second measurement to the south of 60 varas which borders on the lots of Silvestre Leal and Josefa Moreno, and a third measurement of the lot to the east of 30 varas to join with the same lot of Patricio de Torres.

Finally, a document was signed by Brigida (X) Nacaro who verified the sale of the land for the price of 30 pesos. This lot was held by Maria Antonia de los Santos Coy for two years and sold in 1833 to Juana Gertrudis Enrique.²¹ The lot was sold by Enrique by power of attorney to Vital Flores who later sold the land to Richard Parmalee.²²

The Mexican government had an interesting way of solving civil misunderstandings among their citizens which is akin to arbitration. This method was probably used by the Spanish and was passed on to

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the Federation. Instead of the Alcalde (mayor) giving a verdict or decision individually in a particular case, each person involved could select one good man to represent them and to hear the case. According, the good men could question the accuser and the accused in a general discussion and could apply common sense as well as the law to obtain a solution. Usually the deal was resolved by bartering. While the opponents did not actually have legal representation by an attorney, the conclusion was nevertheless binding.

In a curious case Bridget Nancaro gave a horse to Joseph L. Hood for him to sale but over time there were some disagreements in this trade.²³ Bridget filed a grievance. Both plaintiff and defendant selected their good men to hear the case and perhaps to present a point of view. The story is somewhat unclear but Hood may have been using the horse instead of trying to truly sell it. Anyway, Bridget demanded the horse back. By common consent, Bridget paid the account that she owed to the contrary party, and the party defendant paid the plaintiff the sum of ten pesos for "having had in his hands a horse that had been given him for sale and had been served by said horse." The horse was returned to the legitimate owner, Bridget, and Bridget paid for what "pertains to the said horse." This must be for feed and care of the horse in hands of the defendant, and that cost was deducted from the ten pesos. The Alcalde ruled that everything was in conformity with the law, and all involved signed.

On the 20th day of September 1831, Bridget requested a resolution to a problem that he had with William Roberts before the constitutional Alcalde of the village. Nancaro demanded payment of rent owed to her by Roberts. Roberts and Nancaro each selected a good man to hear the problem. It was proven that Nancaro, the legal owner of the house, had prepared the house and rented it to Roberts but she was never paid. She had "closed" the house to other possible renters waiting on Roberts to pay. The good men decided that she was to be paid and that she could rent to another person.²⁴ There were other complaints about people not paying rent or mortgage in Block 12, and part of the blame was due to a lack of specie, that is, a hard currency that can be exchanged from person to person. Colonel Piedras tried to settle many of his debts in town with paper Mexican *boletas*, a note with a value of ½ real. Merchants like Haden Edwards and the Rueg

brothers accepted these “Red House” notes in their stores. Since there is no record of Nancaro selling the Santos Coy property as described above, perhaps the title reverted back to him because of lack of payment.

In early 1832, skirmishes at Anahuac and Velasco marked the beginning of outward protests of the Spanish citizens against the rule of the current administration. Piedras had marched part of his men from Nacogdoches to curtail the rebellions along the coastline. When he returned, he found the town of Nacogdoches in turmoil. On August 2, 1832, several groups of Spanish Texans proclaimed allegiance to Antonio López de Santa Anna and the Mexican Federalists against the Centralist regime. Since Piedras remained loyal to the current Bustamante administration, Piedras would not proclaim for Santa Anna. A battle started around noon and stopped at sundown. Since Bridget owned property on the margin of the Mexican Military cuartel, her home was in the line of fire and undoubtedly it was part of the battleground. Piedras and his men slipped away under nightfall but were captured near the Angelina River west of town. The soldiers subsequently gave up Piedras and proclaimed their allegiance to Santa Anna. The prisoners were marched to San Antonio, and all of the Mexican military personnel were removed from East Texas.

On May 9, 1833, Bridget sold a small house (*casita*) and a lot (*un pedaso de tierra de treinta varas de frente a la calle primera and corre de Sur a Norte por de esta banda del Arrollo nombrado el Bañito*) to María Josefa Delgado for 25 pesos.²⁵ The house was located on the first street that ran north to south along the bank of the Bañito (Bonito) Creek (future Taylor Street, now Pearl Street) and was continuous to the south with land already owned by the buyer. María Josefa Delgado was the wife of José Mariano Acosta. Acosta and his wife sold a lot to Richard Parmalee on May 19, 1845.

Bridget’s name appeared continuously through first and last censuses of the Republic of Mexico of Nacogdoches:

1828 <i>Brigida Nancaro, free</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	45
1829 <i>Brigida Nancaro</i>	<i>S</i>	“	46
1830 <i>Marie Bridgida Nancaro</i>	<i>S</i>	“	45
1831 <i>Ma Bridgida Nancaro</i>	<i>S</i>	“	46

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<i>1832 Maria Bridgida Nancaro</i>	<i>S</i>	“	47
<i>1833 Ma Bridgida Nancaro</i>	<i>S</i>	“	48
<i>1834 Ma Brigida Nancaro</i>	<i>S</i>	“	40
<i>1835 Maria Brigida Nancaro</i>	<i>S</i>	“	47

Now in her early 50s, Bridget Nancarro would see many of the prominent men and women who were to build the new Republic. However, the recorded history of her personal life is limited to a few land deeds and one legal complaint.

Vicente Cordova was the leader of a group of Mexican settlers, American Indians, and black slaves who banded together as a form of revolution. This rebellion was supported and encouraged by the Mexican government and hostilities began in 1838 with civil unrest and attacks on families west of Nacogdoches. In March 1839, Cordova's group was located and republic forces led by Thomas J. Rusk pursued the rebels and broke their ranks. Cordova escaped and fled towards Mexico. Some rebels in this group were killed or captured near Sequin, but Cordova did evade his pursuers and ultimately secured refuge in Mexico. Locally captured members of his rebellion in Nacogdoches were tried in court (in San Augustine, Texas) and most were pardoned.

Continuous with this unrest was the participation of the Cherokee Indians and other groups who were likewise disgruntled and in part had followed Cordova. The Republic of Texas soldiers and militia fought the Indians in the Battle of Neches River (sometimes referred to as the Cherokee War of 1839) and successfully removed these Indians from East Texas on July 15 and 16, 1839. Republic forces were led by Generals Thomas J. Rusk and Kelsey Douglass. As a point of local history, Rusk was the second in command under General Sam Houston at the battle of San Jacinto in 1836. When Houston was injured, Rusk led the men to victory. Both signed the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836 and both had houses across the street from each other in Nacogdoches. Rusk purchased and lived at the old Red House that was built by Col. Piedras as his headquarters. Houston would become the first and third Presidents of the Republic of Texas and a governor for the State of Texas. Both would be the first Senators of Texas to the Congress of the United States in 1846. Rusk's house

would become the first university of Nacogdoches shortly after Rusk moved to his plantation to a location now across from the entrance to the Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches.

If Bridget Nancarro was suspected as a sympathizer, supporter or participant in the Cordova Rebellion of 1838, Rusk would not have sold land to Nancarro.²⁶ It is interesting that in the middle of these two battles, Rusk found time to exercise his private affairs.

For the sum of \$40, Thomas J. Rusk sold a parcel of land being one labor on the west side of Rusk Brook on the road leaving from Nacogdoches to John Durst.²⁷

A complaint concerning a settler/squatter on this land was filed by Bridget Nancarro in the Republic (sic) of Texas, County of Nacogdoches, against Holman Duncan for trespassing.²⁸ She claimed that she had held in possession her premises or plantation about 1 ½ to 2 miles from the Town of Nacogdoches much longer than one year. She stated that Duncan was only a tenant at will and she had given him a legal notice to leave but he obstinately refused to give up the possession of the said premises.²⁹ Nancarro sold the Rusk tract to George Clevenger, blacksmith, and James A. Parsons, a new immigrant in 1841, on February 2, 1842 for the sum of fifty dollars.³⁰

Bridget Nancarro sold a lot in the town in Nacogdoches on August 2, 1844 to Haden H. Edwards, the son of the Empresario Edwards. The lot was located on the east bank of the Bayou Banita together with all of the buildings and improvements thereon. This is where Bridget then resided. The price was one hundred and seventy dollars. No survey or other geographical attributes are noted in the deed, but this may be land on the Bañito Creek adjacent to the land sold to Delgado. Less likely, this might be the land in plat No. 1 of Block 12 in Nacogdoches that was done about 5-10 years later. This map showed ownership of a lot by S. W. Thorn (daughter of Haden Edwards and wife of Frost Thorn) and another lot by H.C. Hancock at the same original allocations of the land of Bridget Nancarro and Santos Coy.

On March 13, 1845, Bridget Nancarro sold a lot to Bennett Blake. Like the land deed above, a deed of title has not been located:

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In the town of Nacogdoches and bounded on the East by North Street; on the north by a lot formerly belonging to Amos Donovan and recently sold by Wm. Goyens to Alexander Joost, and on the south by the street running from one bayou to the other, east and west parallel with Main Street. Said lot having 36 varas front on North Street and being 48 varas deep, sold lot being the one formerly owned by Stephen Prather³¹ and by said Prather sold to P.E. Bean, and by said Bean to myself.”³²

This corner lot was next to William Goyens, a blacksmith, who was called a free man of color. This property at the junction of North Street and Main Street faced or was part of the church square that was related to the Catholic parochial church that was built in 1804 in downtown Nacogdoches. After the Battle of Nacogdoches in 1832, the church was reclaimed by the people but was razed in 1835. Bridget's history began with her records as a godparent for baptisms in the Parish Church in Natchitoches, and her last documented property was associated (perhaps only by memory) with the Catholic Church in Nacogdoches.

Bridget's personal history now seems to close just at the brink of the Statehood for Texas for no records appear in the county or court records of the State of Texas, and she is not found on the 1850 census of Nacogdoches. She possibly did live to see Texas Statehood in February 1846. Although age 30 when emancipated, she would have been about 62 or older in 1845 and thus she lived most of her life as a free woman of color. No record has been found on her birth or the names of her parents. There is neither any evidence of a marriage nor the birth of any children for her. We have no physical description of her and we have not yet located her burial location in Nacogdoches.

Bridget's life was both simple and complex. She was a mulatto slave and a free woman. She lived under eight different flags. She was both Spanish and briefly a French citizen before Louisiana became part of the United States in 1803. She lived under the short regimes of Gutiérrez-Magee in 1813 and James Long in 1819. She became a citizen of the Mexican Federation in 1821 and lived in San Antonio in 1825. Bridget was present at the Fredonia Rebellion in Nacogdoches in 1826; she lived next to the Mexican soldiers at their cuartel in

Nacogdoches in 1829 and there witnessed the Battle of Nacogdoches in 1832. Bridget was in Nacogdoches at the time of the Cordova Rebellion and the Battle of the Neches. She owned land as a free person and exercised her privileges to speak out and file law suits in the Republic of Texas as late as 1844. She was known by dignitaries and townspeople alike. I have yet to find another person that can claim this unique history.

Notes

¹ State Library of Louisiana, Works Progress Administration of Louisiana, Emancipation of a mulatto slave named Bridget by her owner John Nancarrow in 1813.

² See reference in the New Orleans Public Library, Conveyance Book 33, Document 3488 dated 4/18/1807, Natchitoches Parish.

³ Conveyance Book 33, Document 3479.

⁴ Samson was purchased for \$1208. He was brought to America on the ship Luisa from Africa. Orleans Document 301, May 11, 1791.

⁵ Elizabeth Shown Mills transcribed “Natchitoches, Translated abstracts of Register Number Five of the Catholic church Parish of St. Francois des Natchitoches in Louisiana, 1800-1826,” 2007, Heritage Books.

⁶ Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Natchitoches, Abstracts of the Catholic Church Registers of the French and Spanish Post of /St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches in Louisiana 1729-1803, Heritage Books, 2007.

⁷ Mills, see footnote No. 4

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ This explanation was extracted from Félix D. Almaraz, Jr. in his book “Tragic Cavalier, Governor Manuel Salcedo of Texas, 1808-1813,” University of Texas Press, Austin, 1971.

¹¹ In Folder 4, George Williamson Collection, Northwestern State University of Louisiana-- “Appointment of John Nancarrow as sheriff of Natchitoches County (Parish) April 21, 1806.”

¹² The Bexar Archives (1717-1836), A Name Guide by Adán Benavides, Jr., University of Texas Press, Austin, 1989.

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¹³ Conveyance Book 35, Document 3823.

¹⁴ Conveyance Book 2, Document 150.

¹⁵ The intense reaction of the Spanish military to insurgents and revolutionaries is described by Donald E. Chipman and Harriett Denise Joseph in "Spanish Texas, 1519-1821," revised edition, 2010, published by the University of Texas.

¹⁶ Ted Schwarz claims that Samuel Davenport had a quartermaster corps of twenty men, "Forgotten Battlefield of the First Texas Revolution: The Battle of Medina, August 18, 1813," Eakin Press, Austin, 1985.

¹⁷ American State Papers, House of Representatives, 14th Congress, 1st Session, Public Lands: Volume 3, No. 245 and No.368. Also see list of other claims, 16th Congress, 2nd Session, Public Lands, and Volume 3.

¹⁸ Harold Schoen, 1935, "The Free Negro in the Republic of Texas," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 39, July 1935-1936 and Vol. 40 (four more chapters).

¹⁹ Robert Bruce Blake Supplements, XV: 366-367; also Blake Supp. XVI: 56 (called Nacogdoches Archives XXVI: 202 in 1826). The letter M and N in cursive writing is often difficult to distinguish in translations and the translator of this document gave Bridget a last name of Mancaro.

²⁰ Blake Supp. X: 370.

²¹ "Texas by Terán, the Diary kept by General Manuel de Meir y Terán on his 1828 Inspection of Texas" was written by Jack Jackson and translated by John Wheat, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2000.

²² Nacogdoches Archives—July 24 to Oct. 31, 1826, Transcript Vol. XXX, pages 1-2, July 27, 1826.

²³ Jack Jackson; "Los Mestefios, Spanish Ranching in Texas 1721-1821," Texas A&M University Press, 1986.

²⁴ Banita Creek or Arroyo means little bath but it has also been called Bonita (beautiful) Creek and Mission Creek (1806 Pedro Walker map). All three titles are in the literature.

²⁵ Nacogdoches County Deeds F: 168-169.

²⁶ Jose Tesier Lavigne registered as a foreigner in Nacogdoches in 1809. His residence prior to this was the Black Islands of the Province of Louisiana. In Nacogdoches he received a large tract of on the Angelina River south of Nacogdoches.

²⁷ A jorongo (sometimes jorongos) is a sleeveless poncho.

²⁸ Blake XXI: 118

²⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 105-106.

³⁰ These documents can be found in the Nacogdoches County Deed Records I:256-259 and in Blake II: 63-68.

³¹ Nacogdoches County Deed Records I: 260-261.

³² Nacogdoches County Deed Records I:261-262.

³³ Blake XXII: 304. This case took place on August 9, 1831.

³⁴ Blake XXII: 306

³⁵ Blake IV: 294.

³⁶ Rusk represented a petition for the black man William Goyens and eight other unnamed persons for legal recognition in the Republic and 54 citizens of Nacogdoches signed the petition in support of Goyens. See Schoen, Chapter 5, p. 274.

³⁷ Rusk to Nancaro, June 11, 1839, Nacogdoches County Deeds F: 170-171.

³⁸ This may be George H. Duncan, resident of the State since 1833 (from Ericson, Carolyn R. "Nacogdoches—Gateway to Texas, Volume I, revised, Ericson Books, 1991).

³⁹ Blake XV: 257.

⁴⁰ Nacogdoches Co. Deed Records F: 51-52.

⁴¹ Prather was a veteran of the War of 1812, New Orleans, and was on the Mexican side for the Fredonia Rebellion of 1826. He arrived in Texas in 1821. He is buried in San Augustine County.

⁴² Nacogdoches Co. Deed Records H: 368.