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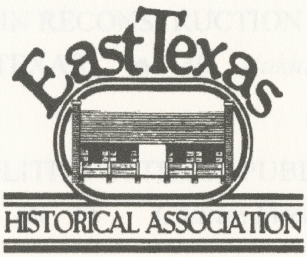

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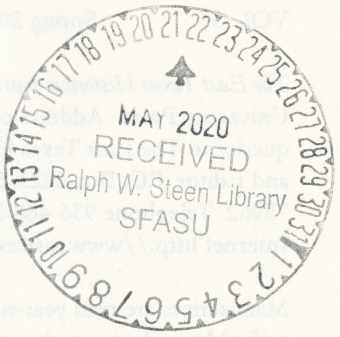

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Bridget Nancaro
A Free Woman of Color in Texas in 1813

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.

Witnessess:
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

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, Brigite, a mulatto and slave of Mr. Morphil was the godparent to the baptism of a mulato girl born 26 September in this parish. On May 1804, Marie Brigite, 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. Brigite, 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-

tocracy 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

(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 at 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

(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 disenchanted 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

that is half white and half black. A common cause for manumission was the blood or concubinial 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 Nancaro 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 Nancaro'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 Nancaro 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 Nancaro, 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) Mancaro[9]

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

$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) Mayniel*[10]

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

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), Sartoucho 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-

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 creek[14] 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*

> *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 Thecier*[16]
>
> *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 *jorongo*[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 Rodriquez and threatened the life of Lieutenant Aranjo. Testimony by town people also stated that Pantalleon had mocked Thorn and other citizens, including Jose Antonio Sepulveda, Juan Lazarin, 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 Sanches. 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

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)*

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

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 Brigida Nancaro, free	*S*	*Catholic*	*45*
1829 Brigida Nancaro	*S*	*"*	*46*
1830 Marie Bridgida Nancaro	*S*	*"*	*45*
1831 Ma Bridgida Nancaro	*S*	*"*	*46*

1832 Maria Bridgida Nancaro	*S*	"	*47*
1833 Ma Bridgida Nancaro	*S*	"	*48*
1834 Ma Brigida Nancaro	*S*	"	*40*
1835 Maria Brigida Nancaro	*S*	"	*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 fed 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 Nancaro.[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 Nancaro in the Republick (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] Nancaro 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:

> *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 Prather*[31] *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.

[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 Mesteños, 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.

"Bold, Bad, Notorious" Hal Geiger: Politics, Violence, and Defiance in Reconstruction Era East Texas

By Nakia Parker

In March of 1872, the law firm of Chandler, Carleton, and Robertson sent a letter addressed to Governor Edmund Davis. The letter contained the findings of an investigation into a hotly contested special election for the position of justice of the peace, held on January 10-12, 1872 in Robertson County, located in east central Texas. The election was rife with accusations of fraud, violent coercion, and tampering of ballots. Thus, two of the candidates called into question the "freedom and fairness of the said election." Many witnesses to the supposed shenanigans during the election, as well as the political leaders themselves, made sworn affidavits. One eyewitness, an African American voter named Jerry Landers, described the actions of a crowd which resorted to violent means to prevent Landers from casting his ballot. Landers had first entered a saloon on the night of January 11, when he came upon an inebriated mob. The gaggle of men then confiscated Landers' ticket. Sensing danger, he hastily left the hostile scene, but the men followed him, and he recalled being "knocked down, kicked, and beaten with a board, and left for dead." The affidavit then identifies the instigator of this mob violence: "One Hal Geiger, who was with the crowd that beat him, made the remark, "'someone would find a man dead in the morning.'"[1]

This image of a vicious, mercurial Hal Geiger stands in stark contrast to the man described in a July 3, 1879 article in the Austin newspaper *The Weekly Democratic Statesman*. Geiger represented Robertson County, serving as one of the few African American in the 17th legislature of the state house of representatives.

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The newspaper reported that in a "furious" speech, Geiger insisted that "the poor people of Texas would hereafter pay no taxes at all unless the schools were given one fourth of the revenue." Although the reporter characterized the speech as "furious," the subject matter belies that description. Advocating for the rights of working class and for education seems a far cry from the man in 1872 who incited a crowd and participated in the beating of a man to within an inch of his life.[2]

These two contradictory examples beg these questions: Who was the real Hal Geiger? The violent, opportunistic man, or the altruistic politician concerned for public schooling? A man who was the victim of his circumstances and environment, or shaped by these circumstances? And what accounts for these deeply contrasting images? Robertson County, where Geiger lived, worked, and served as an influential political and social leader, exemplified Reconstruction Era Texas: volatile, violent, and dangerous for African Americans. Yet Harriel (Hal) Geiger's brief, controversial, and contentious life demonstrates how one black Texan eulogized as "bold, bad, and notorious" deftly negotiated these precarious spaces through a combination of shrewdness, brashness, and aggressive self-determination.

Though Geiger led an unusual and eventful life, a minute amount of scholarship exists about him, in contrast to other prominent African American leaders who were his contemporaries, such as Jacob Fontaine and Norris Wright Cuney. In addition, unlike these leaders, who left much written evidence such as letters, very little of Geiger's own "voice" remains extant in the record (besides his affidavit and various political speeches). Therefore, newspapers of the day provide what details we can construct of his fascinating life. Through these accounts, snippets of Geiger's personality, virtues, and vices can be ascertained. Moreover, the written record can not only illuminate details of Geiger's life, but also reveal the social, economic, and political environment and circumstances black people in Texas faced in general. Newspaper accounts of Geiger's speeches and activities also shed light on common attitudes and stereotyping of African American masculinity during the postbellum period; but he defied such stereotypes in multiple, interesting ways.[3]

The *Texas Legislative Manual of 1879-1880* related Hal Geiger's background in one sentence: "Harrold G. Geiger, of Hearne, Robertson county, was born in Lexington district, South Carolina, in 1839; moved to Texas in 1859, and located near Hempstead, Austin (now Waller) county; was born and raised and a slave, and received no education except what he has acquired by his own exertion; is a blacksmith and wagon maker." In addition, the 1880 U.S. Federal Census and newspaper accounts also provide insight into Geiger's life. The census record lists his information as follows: his birthplace, South Carolina, status, head of household, forty years of age, divorced, his occupation as "member legislator and merchant," and his race as "mulatto." Interestingly, no mention of a black or mulatto man named Geiger appears in the 1870 census, so the likelihood is strong that he kept the name given him while in bondage, and later assumed another moniker. As to further clues to Geiger's identity, articles in the Tuesday, November 5, 1878 edition of the *Galveston Daily News* and the November 9, 1878 *Norton Union Intelligencer* rather disparagingly describe Geiger as blind in one eye: a "yellow, one-eyed man." These details, although scanty, provide possible clues as to his life in slavery and his life as an emancipated enslaved individual in Texas.[4]

Slavery strongholds such as antebellum South Carolina, where Geiger was "born and raised a slave," could be places of physical torture for those subjected to human bondage. One narrative from the Federal Writers Project, from an unnamed enslaved individual born in Lexington County in 1835, recounted to his interviewer Elmer Turnage that "Old Marse Hiller was strict to his slaves, wasn't mean, but often whipped 'em," and would severely punish any slave who attempted to be literate. Runaway slave ads also reveal the marks of violence on recalcitrant bodies. For example, the July 9, 1828 edition of the *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser* contained this notice: "Brought-To the Gaol of Orangeburgh, S.C., on the 2d inst. a Negro Man 5 feet 4 1/4 inches high, says he belongs to Mr. Wm. B. Benton, who lives fourteen milse [sic] from Augusta, Ga. Said fellow appears to be about 25 years of age, has a scar on his forehead which he says was occasioned by a stroke with a stick; has also a scar on his left leg, occasioned by a burn."

Whether Geiger's blindness in one eye derived from "a stroke with a stick," was "occasioned by a burn," or had more benign origins is unclear. Nevertheless, the quotidian acts of violence that occurred in enslaved life leaves open the possibility that his injury had a violent backstory.[5]

Robertson County, where Geiger eventually settled, appears deceptively idyllic and Edenic in local histories of the county. One account describes it as "873 square miles of river and creek bottoms and lush prairies; in a timbered belt of post oak, blackjack, cottonwood, elm, pecan, and mesquite trees...Tidwell and Sandy creeks meander west of Calvert." Since the county was strategically situated between two bodies of water, residents had access to the Brazos River and the Little Brazos River. This ideal location meant that the region enjoyed fertile soils and productive farmland (called the Brazos Bottoms) ideal for "King Cotton." Consequently, the fruitfulness of the area attracted many settlers, particularly potential yeoman farmers and planters.[6]

Population growth in Robertson County exploded in the decade before the Civil War and during the conflict. In 1850, the number of residents stood at just under a thousand, with 934 persons, thirty percent of this total being enslaved. Ten short years later, in 1860, the population swelled to 4,997 persons with almost fifty percent of the population in bondage—a staggering five hundred percent increase. The profitability of enslaved labor in this region, as well as other parts of Texas, meant that "white men of every political party affiliation were interested in land, cotton, and slaves." Unsurprisingly, "the resentment following the election of a Republican president in 1860 was as keen in Robertson County as it was elsewhere in the Deep South," and its citizens vigorously supported secession from the Union. During the Civil War, the enslaved population continued to increase with the migration of refugee enslavers from other parts of the South to Texas. Robertson County tax rolls reveal that between 1860 and 1864, taxation on enslaved persons doubled. This startling statistic suggests that many enslavers viewed the region as a relatively secure place to maintain their material wealth and human property.[7]

This security proved false and short-lived. In the summer of

1865, Union troops rode into Texas counties, including Robertson, decreed that all plantation owners gather together their enslaved laborers, and then proclaimed that these individuals were "forever free." Nevertheless, life as a Freedperson in Texas during Reconstruction proved no less safe or secure than life under slavery. Texas did not suffer from a Union army invasion like some areas of the Southeast, such as South Carolina, which is why many enslavers came to the state as refugees during the Civil War. Nevertheless, the state still experienced the repercussions of siding with the Confederacy in the sanguine conflict. Accounts from the Freedmen's Bureau highlight the dangers faced by African Americans caught in this maelstrom, particularly in East Texas. Inspector General for the Freedmen's Bureau, W.E. Strong, observed that even though major urban centers such as Houston and Galveston remained more amenable to the idea of emancipated people of African descent, Texas still experienced more violence against Freedpersons than any other former state of the Confederacy. In more rural areas such as Geiger's Robertson County, the violence was even more pronounced. Another official, General Joseph Reynolds, sadly commented that "[y]ou cannot pick up a paper in East Texas without reading of murder, assassinations, and robbery...and yet not a fourth of the truth has been told; not one in ten is reported... the devil is holding high carnival in Texas."[8]

Accounts from the Freedmen's Bureau underscore the veracity of these statements. Captain Sam Sloan reported to the Adjutant General Maden on some of these gross miscarriages of justice: "Marie Edwards, a freedwoman, was shot and killed by Court Brown, a citizen of Robertson County...there has been no official investigation...William Tate, a citizen of Robertson County, shot and killed a freedman. Since then Tate has fled the County and as yet there has been no official investigation but is said to have been a cold-blooded murder." In total, the Freedmen's Bureau listed 2,225 perpetrations of violence against African Americans between the years of 1865-1869. The matter-of-fact tone of the above statements imply an air of resignation on the part of federal officials concerning their impotence in preventing these senseless acts and bringing the wrongdoers to justice.[9]

This volatile, dangerous environment made up the place that Harriel Geiger lived in for his brief forty-six years. Yet, despite these harrowing circumstances, and having "received no education except what he had acquired by his own exertion," Geiger became a fairly successful merchant, lawyer, and politician. He was also confrontational, often violent, and opportunistic. The fact that he developed this unpredictable, conflicting personality gives evidence that he was a man determined to survive slavery, and later Reconstruction Era Texas, on his own terms.

The first public mention of Geiger's foray into the political arena comes in the July 15th 1871 edition of the newspaper, *The Reformer.* The piece identifies Geiger as a potential delegate to represent Robertson County at the state Republican convention. Later, under the title "They Forge," the newspaper accuses him of being manipulated by a white Republican, General Clark, into writing a fake letter that encouraged black voters to "accept one Hal Geiger as their leader, denouncing good Republicans." A few months later, the first African American newspaper published in Texas, *The Representative,* also reported on Geiger's political activities, but in a neutral tone. The September 9, 1871 edition simply listed Hal Geiger as one of dozens of men who sat on the Republican Executive Committee of Robertson County, with no hint of devious political maneuvering on Geiger's part.[10]

Thus, two very different portrayals of Geiger appear in the public domain. One depicts him as a political figure engaged in unscrupulous activities, while the other objectively lists his service on a nominating panel. Interestingly, it is the *Reformer*, a white Texas newspaper, which casts the suspicious eye on Geiger's doings and painted him as a man who overstepped his "place" by aspiring to influence in the African American community. This depiction of Geiger as an aggressive, cunning, and yet inept politician played into the common stereotypes surrounding black masculinity during the Reconstruction Era. For example, in his influential book, *The Clansmen*, (which later provided the basis for the popular film *Birth of a Nation*), Thomas Dixon blamed African-Americans for the Civil War, characterized black men as gullible political dupes of white Republican carpetbaggers and scalawags, and predicted

anarchy would result from "Negro rule." Hal Geiger was not immune to this unfair and patronizing form of branding. Nevertheless, a hotly contested election in January 1872 demonstrates that the accusations hurled against Geiger for political impropriety may have been legitimate.[11]

The Republican Party in Texas, following the pattern of most Southern states, was a divided one. Radical Republicans wanted harsher treatment for "rebels," broad application of freedmen' rights, and a more guarded approach to internal improvements. The moderate faction, on the other hand, propagated a platform of railroad construction, advocated leniency toward former Confederates, and encouraged African Americans to accept a subservient role in the Party. One political faction of the party, spearheaded by Rusk County's Major James W. Flanagan, vociferously endorsed this position. Flanagan and his followers claimed to represent the interests of agricultural areas like Robertson County and East Texas in general. Yet, because of the economic dependence of these regions on agrarian labor, especially the labor of African American sharecroppers, these politicians shied away from or blatantly ignored the needs and protests of their primarily black constituency. White economic welfare came before black civil, social, and economic rights.[12]

The one-sided political and economic aims of this faction outraged African-American leaders within the Republican Party, who played a vital role in helping the party ascend to power in Texas. Men such as George Ruby, Jeremiah Hamilton, and Sheppard Mullins realized they needed interracial cooperation to enact changes. Yet, they also were forced to acknowledge that many white Texans remained relatively unconcerned over matters of importance to their fellow black Texans, such as fair educational opportunities for children, and protection from extra-legal violence and economic exploitation. During the beginning of the Reconstruction Era, African- American politicians achieved some success, such as establishing schools and repealing the oppressive apprenticeship laws put into effect right after the Civil War. Despite these minor victories, by the early 1870s, many African American voters like Geiger felt, quite justifiably, that the Republican Party gave only

lip service to advancing the position of Freedpeople in society. This dissatisfaction added to the contentiousness and instability of the party's existence in Texas and seeped down to even supposedly minor aspects of political life.[13]

On January 9-12, 1872, a special election took place in Calvert, the seat of Robertson County, for the office of justice of the peace. According to a local history of the county, Calvert was the equivalent of a biblical Sodom and Gomorrah with dive bars and in desperate need of law and order:

> Calvert was a boom town at birth, and lawless men flourished. Saloons and dives opened up and ran twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The swinging doors of the saloons flapped constantly, and the barber shops that were built at the corners with a back door entering the bars behind a screen ostensibly did a thriving business all day long and until closing time at night... Gamblers, confidence men, and street walkers operated under limited restraint, alluring those who found temptation to their liking. Sin was ascendant. It has been said that the corner "had a dead man for breakfast almost every morning" and the jail was the largest building in town.[14]

After the fiercely contested election, accusations from the losing candidates, a "Captain McHugh and Connolly," of impropriety prompted a legal investigation. Sworn statements from men such as Calvert's Mayor Charles Gillespie, Alderman and prominent local auctioneer H. Bergman, and special policemen Silas Johnson and Abram Raynon all concurred that "the election was conducted impartially...and they know of no one who was hindered in the right of suffrage by force, fraud, threats, intimidation." Geiger's statement agreed with their claims, but went a step farther. He swore that "everyone had free access to the polls;" furthermore, "voters were only denied the right to vote when they had left their [r]egistration papers at home, otherwise we are all good Republicans and voted the Republican ticket." After examination, the law

firm of Chandler, Carleton, and Robertson found that, "no fairer election was held in this state, or indeed in any other state, the candidates who record the majority of voters are fairly and legally elected, and are entitled to certificates of elections." However, the affidavits of several witnesses tell a different story, one in which Hal Geiger, along with fellow "good Republicans" assumed major, violent roles.[15]

The nightmarish experience of Jerry Landers mentioned at the beginning of this paper proved just one of many accounts of violence either directly committed or instigated by Geiger and his associates. Thomas J. Powell claimed that one "Will Hearne," the influential Democratic candidate for justice of the peace whom a disillusioned Geiger was now politicking for, grabbed the ticket of "a colored man named Billy, and substituted fraudulently the Democratic ticket." Hearne brazenly performed this illegal act numerous times, "within ten feet of the ballot box." Charles Jefferson also recounted another one of Hearne's shameless acts. Jefferson witnessed Hearne approaching an African American man who had just departed the voter booth and demanded to know whom the man had voted for. When the man replied he had cast his ballot for McHugh and Connolly, Hearne viciously attacked him and declared "you God d—d black son of a b— I can whip you and all your protectors." Hearne defiantly told his companions that he was ready to be jailed for his actions, but they reassured him that "They can't do that while we're here, for we'll clear up the whole town."[16]

Another report came from an African American voter named Humphrey Johnson. He contended that Geiger's intimidation tactics spread like wildfire among the African American community in Robertson County, and that Geiger may have tried to "convince" other voters of the futility of voting for a party that did not appreciate their support nor advocate for their interests. Johnson claimed he received a warning that "Hal Geiger was in search of me in order to mob me like he did Jerry Landers and also George Murphy... because I was electioneering for the Republican ticket and one of the leading influential Freedmen." This mention of Geiger's activities implies another reason (besides political disillusionment) that Geiger would engage in such violent and illegal activities against

potential allies and fellow sufferers of white injustice. Johnson apparently had stature in the political and social arena, and Geiger may have viewed him as an impediment to his rise in the black community.[17]

In addition, Johnson's further testimony provides evidence that the stereotyping of Geiger's violent behavior was not simply hyperbole by the newspapers. He knew firsthand of how vicious Geiger could be. He had experienced a previous violent altercation with the 'notorious Negro': "Hal Geiger beat me with a stick and kicked me in a very violent manner about five weeks previous to the late election because I was electioneering for Captain McHugh and Connolly." Therefore, Johnson remained firmly convinced that his decision to leave Robertson County that evening before voting prevented his murder.[18]

The testimony of Richard Perry also provides a clue as to the possible motivations behind Geiger's conduct. Perry, an African American Baptist preacher, played an active role in Republican politics in Robertson County. On January 9, he was participating in organizing the vote among African Americans when Hal Geiger warned him to stop. Geiger told Perry that his efforts were wasted since he had "already gotten to the people" and gave the reasoning that "the Republican Party had stolen from them enough, that he was now going to try another party, and that "neither he, nor his friends, were voting." This claim by Geiger, however, did not stop Perry and he continued to get out the vote. On January 11th, Geiger resorted to desperate measures to stop Perry's efforts. Perry stated that Geiger stood up and promised that "all that will vote a Democratic ticket Will Hearne has gave me the money to pay for your hash." Perry also witnessed the actual changing of ballots by Geiger and accused him of holding a grudge against the Republican Party: "He said as the Republicans wouldn't give him an office he meant to be a d—d stumbling block in their way." By all accounts, in this election, Geiger did indeed prove to be a "stumbling block" in the way of Republicans. The Democratic candidate, Will Hearne, won the election. Moreover, Judge Ned Butler, who claimed he witnessed Geiger taking away a Republican ticket from a voter because it "wasn't worth a g—d," estimated that

between two hundred and five hundred African American voters stayed away from the polls due to the intimidating tactics and fear of economic reprisals.[19]

These detailed affidavits paint a less than flattering picture of Hal Geiger and emphasize his volatile personality. Giving the disinterest of white Republicans at the time in black political and social issues and their focus on reserving offices and public patronage for themselves, Geiger doubtless harbored resentment against some in the Republican Party for his failure to obtain an office. That he had political aspirations is clear from the fact that less than a decade later, he ran twice for state legislature and numerous other civic positions, such as sheriff. Apparently, he also wanted to send a powerful message to Republicans that they should not take African American voters for granted. Yet, why did he resort to violence?

In some ways, Geiger acted no differently from many white political leaders in Texas, indeed in other states as well, men who used physical coercion to influence election results. What makes Geiger's case so unusual is that he was a black man, living in the dangerous region of East Texas, a place extremely difficult for African Americans to obtain any kind of political, economic, and social traction. Yet, he still managed the almost improbable feat of cultivating "friends in high places," namely white Texans of political, economic, and social stature. Thus, at this moment, he had very little concern about currying favor with African Americans with more traditional methods, and certainly did not appear afraid of censure or being called to account for his intimidating and bullying tactics. Geiger put on a bravura performance on the local political stage, cultivating backing from white political rivals to emphasize the fact that he was a man in the Republican Party who could not be ignored.

After the troubles of the 1872 election, the record falls silent for six years concerning the public activities of Geiger. He reappears in the October 2, 1878 edition of *The Galveston Daily News.* In an article entitled "Color at Calvert," the Robertson County Greenback Party held a convention, composed of a multiracial coalition of sixty black voters and eight whites. Not only did Geiger

(still considered a Republican), preside over the hearings, but the Greenback Party also nominated him to serve in the state legislature. According to the article, "the greatest confusion prevailed." This statement may be a false one, meant to disparage the Greenback Party and the interracial composition of the meeting. Nevertheless, this brief posting reveals Geiger's chameleon-like ability to survey the political scene and adapt accordingly. By the 1870's the Republican Party's political clout had diminished substantially due to infighting and the growing power of state Democrats. Thus, some Republicans decided to fuse with third-party movements, such as the Greenback Party, in an attempt to regain control from the opposition. It seems Geiger shrewdly realized that to survive politically, he too needed to build alliances across party lines with influential white political leaders. [20]

William H. Hamman was among the politicians at this Greenback convention and the party's candidate for mayor. Previously, Hamman voted Democratic, but eventually turned his allegiances to the Greenback Party. Like many white Southerners at the time, Hamman expressed contempt for African Americans and doubted that they could be prosperous and productive with the 'gift" of freedom. In a section in his scrapbook entitled "Views held by General Wm. H. Hamman on November 18, 1865 as to the North, the Negro, etc.," he condescendingly stated that:

> I do not believe that the negro can be used successfully unless he can be compelled to labor regularly and from the beginning to the end of the year. I have no confidence in the moral suasion in the case of a negro who is at best not above a half savage. The retrogradation of the negroes commenced at the moment of their liberation and will continue until the race is exterminated. Their idleness will beget want, want will give rise to temptation, and temptation makes the villain...Shall I remain in this latitude? or would it be better to go where there are, at least, fewer, or better still, where there are no negroes? [21]

Less than a decade later, however, Hamman found himself, not in a place "where there are no negroes," but rather at a convention with "sixty negroes," apparently burying his deep-seated disdain to consort, at least politically, with Geiger and other black male constituents. The predominately African American composition of the convention also demonstrates that Geiger could gain support from black voters through less dubious methods, and apparently used his persistent determination to achieve personal political ambitions. [22]

However, not all African American politicians cultivated the same amicable feelings towards Geiger. While running for state legislator, Geiger once again became involved in a physical altercation with fellow civic leaders. The October 13, 1878 *Galveston Daily News* recounted an incident during the campaign that occurred between Geiger and an African American politician from Harris County, Richard Allen. Allen's background mirrored Geiger's almost completely—he was born enslaved, self-educated, trained as a skilled carpenter, and rose in the ranks of the Republican Party to become the candidate for lieutenant governor in 1878, the first Black man in Texas to seek such an office. Apparently, Geiger was not in a congratulatory or conciliatory mood as regards to Allen. When Allen began speaking in front of a large crowd of 500 voters, "mostly colored," Geiger and a man named P.W. Hall attempted to drown out him out by yelling loudly, but "they signally failed to confuse him." Despite the rude distraction, Allen campaigned for more than two hours, in the condescending words of the paper, "with an able speech for a colored man....and was repeatedly applauded by his colored hearers."[23]

The reason for the bad blood between Geiger and Allen is curiously silent in the existing records. Considering Geiger's background, the altercation between the two could simply have been due to the normally contentious nature of Texas politics and the manifestation of political jockeying for power between the two men. He also may have resented Allen's nomination, considering Geiger's apparent political ambitions and his previous resentment of the failure of the Republican Party to recognize his civic potential. What we do know, however, is that whatever simmering

tensions existed between the two men erupted in November 1878. The November 9, 1878 edition of *Norton's Union Intelligencer,* under the appropriately named title "Bulldozing at Hearne," gave a condensed overview of the clash.[24]

Allen alleged that while speaking to a large audience in Hearne, he saw Geiger, described by the paper as "a one-eyed yellow man, a keeper of a small dive-in, standing with a heavy sash of green calico over his shoulder." Geiger pointed at Allen and then declared "G—d—n you, you shan't speak, boys put him down." In an apparent pre-planned attack, the crowd of nearly one hundred men, a few white, but the majority African-American, arrived on horseback and foot, then rushed the stage, and pounced on Allen. According to the article, the mayor and marshal of the town tried to arrest Geiger, but their efforts came to naught, since the mob "frustrated their efforts." Allen emerged out of the scrape unharmed because he retired for the day and went into hiding after hearing Geiger's threats "to take him out and hang him" if he attempted to speak again.[25]

Once again, Geiger's bullying nature erupts full force in this account. In fact, this "bulldozing" incident—a term used to describe the practice of whites' physical intimidating African-American voters in Southern Reconstruction era politics—is suspiciously similar to the numerous eyewitness testimonies concerning the 1872 election for Calvert's justice of the peace: the manipulation of the crowd by Geiger for "evil ends," the threat and carrying out of physical violence, and Geiger's escape from immediate reprisal and punishment for his criminal acts. Yet, perhaps because the 1878 election was a high profile one that received greater newspaper coverage, or perhaps due to the influence of Allen, the "bulldozing in Hearne" incident led to the arrest and trial of Geiger after this incident.

Three days later, Geiger appeared before the county court to answer charges against him. For the next several weeks, the newspapers followed the case with almost rabid interest that rivals contemporary interest in Court TV programs. The November 12, 1878 edition of the *Galveston Daily News* reported that Geiger hired an attorney to represent him, and that "your reporter observed two or three negroes, Matt Perkins and Bill McKinney, among Hal Gei-

ger's witnesses, who participated in the bulldozing, but against whom no complaint has yet been filed." On November 14, the reporter wrote that the case against Geiger was still "grinding away," and "there was no telling when it would end. Fourteen witnesses in defense of Geiger had given their testimony, but the reporter arrived in time to hear only one account, the deputy sheriff, a white man by the name of T.D. Jones." He insisted that he had seen nothing out of the ordinary happen that day. He claimed that although "he saw both Allen and Geiger, he saw no act of violence from the latter toward the former, and further stated that he saw nothing during the speaking to calculated to cause bloodshed or insurrection." However, it is a testament to Geiger's keen intelligence, forceful personality, and charisma that he received support from a crowd of approximately one hundred individuals to protect him from initial reprisals, but also that both white and black men came to his defense and testified in his behalf in court.[26]

Although Geiger enjoyed these supporters, newspaper accounts reveal a biased opinion toward him, primarily among white Texans. The November 16, 1878 edition of the *Daily News* opined that justice needed to be served in the Hal Geiger bulldozing case. The trial had adjourned for the week, but the article expressed that "the good citizens of this county are very indignant at the action of Geiger and his associates at Hearne and hope to see them all brought to justice. Prominent citizens who witnessed the affair say strong cases will be made against the rioters." Unfortunately, the wishes of "the good citizens" of Robertson County remained unfulfilled. Less than a week later, the Friday, November 22, 1878 edition of the *Brenham Weekly Banner* declared the results of Geiger's trials in two curt sentences: "Hal Geiger, the Hearne bulldozer, has after a lengthy examination, been discharged. The whole proceeding has been looked upon as a stupendous farce." The November 23, 1878 *Galveston Daily News* newspaper offered more information as to why Geiger could not be detained. Commissioner Bergman decreed that the court did not find any violation of the revised state statues on political bulldozing; moreover, the prosecution failed to show a transgression "of any other provision of election law." Bergman did decide, however, to send the details of Geiger's case

to the district attorney in Austin, and if that court overturned his findings, Geiger could be tried again under federal law.[27]

Interestingly, Commissioner Bergman is the same H. Bergman who was the Alderman of the city of Calvert during the hotly contested 1872 election. Undoubtedly, Geiger benefited from having a fellow co-conspirator presiding over his trial. The press lampooned Bergman's decision. Smarting from this stinging indictment, he defended himself in a letter to the *Galveston Daily News*, on November 22, appealing to the paper's impartiality and questioning the covering reporter's journalism skills. Bergman claimed that the reporter could not possibly know the details of the Geiger case, since "the correspondent had never been there "more than five or ten minutes at any one time while the Gieger [sic] trial was in process." Bergman also offered to willingly publish the entire testimony taken at the trial to prove his supposed fairness. He sanctimoniously concluded his letter with the statement "when an officer of justice finds himself swayed by public opinion, no matter how overwhelming that sentiment may be, it is better for himself as well as the country to retire from his position." Despite Bergman's insistence he ruled justly on the bulldozing incident, these words ring hollow knowing his involvement with Geiger in the corrupt election of 1872.[28]

Geiger received more good news in December of 1878. Despite his legal troubles, with a fusion of support from Greenbackers and Republicans, he won election to the sixteenth state legislature as a Republican. A piece in the December 5, 1878 edition of the newspaper *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* lamentingly (and with blatant partisan opinion) attributed Geiger's election as proof of "the achievements of Negroes, Greenbackers, and fire-eating Democrats." In fact, his victory demonstrates the strength of Geiger's political acumen, his personal tenacity, and his ability to mold his personality to curry favor with people across color political, social, and economic lines, despite his polarizing actions and confrontational behavior.[29]

As a state legislator, Geiger served on the Roads, Ferries, and Bridges Committee. His activities in the legislature demonstrate an interest in the plight of the small businessman like himself as well

as concern for social issues of the day, which seems curious after examining his previous forays into politics. One such instance is found in a Brenham newspaper, the *Daily Banner,* which reported on Sunday February 23, 1879 that Geiger voted against a road being built in Robertson County to protect merchants since the company did not abide by its contract. On the matter of social equality, the *Daily News* published a story about Geiger leading a crowd of over one hundred men, peacefully, to protest the senseless murder of an African American man named Tom Calhoun, who was shot in the mayor's courtroom. Unlike the extra-legal means that Geiger previously employed, he vowed to the newspaper that white Texans had no reason to fear a riot on the part of African Americans; rather, "they were going to fight the matter by law." [30]

In addition, two passionate speeches given by Geiger further emphasize these contradictory aspects of his character. The March 8, 1879 *Galveston Daily News* recounted that Geiger stood up before the legislature to decry the usage of the poll tax to discourage voting from African Americans and poor Southern whites. He declared that "suffrage is God-given and the greatest right of the American people." He also spoke out against convict leasing lamenting the targeting of the poor in this practice. He stated that "[a] man comes in court and the judge sentences him...the sharpers and the scalpers are there to take his scalp and he receives for his labor twenty cents a day. The law provides that he shall not work over 12 hours, but I tell you he puts in fourteen and does not fail to receive the strife on his back when he fails to do his duty, let him be white or colored. The county needs to protect the white as well as the colored." These speeches stand in stark contrast to the man who once deprived men of their right to vote through violent and dubious means.[31]

Despite these poignant speeches, Geiger still retained his usual combative streak. On April 23, 1879, the *Daily Banner* reported that a court in Austin fined Geiger for fighting. Various newspaper articles also refer to his battles in the state House of Representatives. The March 12, 1879 *Galveston Daily News* mentioned that Geiger gave an "excited speech" about, of all things, the "bulldozing" of minority members of the party! For this "unparliamentary language" (according to the article), the legislature formally censured Geiger.

When the resolution came before the members, Geiger, in a rare moment of humility, "retracted and begged the pardon of the house." [32]

Geiger also had choice words for an old political rival, Richard Allen, who also served in the sixteenth legislature. Allen returned to Houston, his hometown, in July 1879 to attend a "colored convention," a political meeting of African American politicians that worked to secure the civil rights of black Texans. He told a correspondent of the *Daily News* that he had "attended the colored association and was not interrupted by Hal Geiger and his mob." When asked his opinion on Allen's statement, Geiger told the reporter that "the night before Allen was to arrive, he was warned by God in a dream that if he met Allen at the association, he would have to shoot him, and he went to Calvert to avoid a difficulty." Given the newspaper coverage of Geiger at the time, perhaps this statement attributed to him is facetious at best, a blatant falsehood at worst. In any case, the time Geiger spent advocating for the rights of the poor and less fortunate during his first term as a state legislator likely did nothing to assuage his dislike of Allen.[33]

Although Geiger declined to go to Houston, ostensibly to avoid crossing paths with Allen, he could not avoid him forever. In October 1879, he received the news that he would be tried in federal court on the bulldozing charge against Allen. In an article entitled "War among the Colored Giants," the October 11, 1879 *Galveston Daily News* reported Geiger's arrest in Hearne and his subsequent arrival in Waco to await federal charges. The court released Geiger on his own recognizance. Thus, Geiger maintained a semblance of personal autonomy and was deemed trustworthy enough to be released without bail. More evidence of Geiger's ability to dictate his own terms in a hostile environment is found in the November 8th edition of the *Denison Daily News*. This newspaper recounted that the Waco court honored Geiger's request for a deputy sheriff for his protection, since he "swore his life was in danger." That the court allowed Geiger any privileges at all in a region that trampled on the rights of African-Americans, particularly black men, stands as a testament to his ferocious reputation and demonstrates that white leaders begrudgingly acknowledged Geiger's influence and stature in the community. [34]

The public perhaps had their full of news of Geiger's antics. Very little press concerning the trial appears in the newspapers, and the information that was reported resembles a human-interest story than a heavyweight political drama: "Last evening we heard that one witness was very sick and a juror had left the city on account of illness. The case cannot be a very healthy one." The uneventful trial lasted only six months; thus by April 1880 Geiger once again dodged another conviction and the federal court acquitted him on all charges.[35]

Although newspaper accounts provide clues as to Geiger's motivations, personality, and actions, these records tell us little about his personal life. By 1880, the federal census described Geiger as head of household and divorced, with no children. Moreover, an examination of his surrounding neighborhood according to the census also does not reveal any direct links to possible relatives. Newspapers are more transparent, however, about details surrounding his involvement in political activities. In September of 1880, Geiger, ever the determined and opportunistic politician, had switched his allegiance firmly to the Greenback Party, and won reelection to the state House of Representatives. Articles in the *Galveston Daily News* emphasize the contentiousness of the campaign, an October 27, 1880 article declaring that "politics are hotter here than ever before," and that "the greenbackers are attempting their same old game of bulldozing, headed by Hal Geiger. Three or four fights occurred today among the colored people, with Geiger being the principle actor." Apparently, two close calls with possible prison time for illegal activities had either no effect on Geiger's method of waging political battle or changed public sentiment toward his behavior.[36]

This political outcome turned out differently than the first. Geiger lost his bid for a second term. Yet, serendipitously, Geiger did not stay out of politics for long. The candidate who defeated him, E.C. Mobley, moved from Robertson County and resigned his position. A special election took place and by the slim margin of two hundred votes, Geiger regained his seat in the legislature. The September 21, 1881 issue of the *Brenham Daily Banner* declared that he owed his victory to African American voters and a fracturing of the white vote: "The negroes voted solidly for Geiger and

the white vote was divided among three candidates." Thus, despite his past misdeeds, Geiger, through guile, charisma, and advocating for the rights of black Texans, resumed his political career but also complicates the common scholarly narrative of the lack of effectiveness of the African-American vote after Reconstruction's end in 1877.[37]

After Geiger's second term in the state legislature, the historical record becomes almost silent concerning his later years. After avoiding attendance at the colored conventions, he finally made his presence known at a meeting in Houston in the summer of 1884. By the 1880s, the African American politicians that gathered at these events were divided over the direction of black protest and rights. Mounting losses of economic and political power, along with increased acts of violence toward freedmen, left some of these men wondering whether the agenda of the conventions should center on social issues, such as education, temperance, and gambling. Geiger may well have been one of the leaders advocating this accommodationist stance.[38]

A year earlier, in June 1883, he planned community activities in Hearne to celebrate Emancipation Day in Texas, otherwise known as Juneteenth. The June 20, 1883 *Galveston Daily News,* a newspaper that formerly excoriated Geiger, highlighted the main portions of his speech, which on the surface carry an air of the "politics of respectability" and reflect the ideological tensions of the colored conventions debates: "Hal Geiger...made a good speech. He admonished the colored people to do right, buy farms, educate themselves, and not antagonize the white race...and if their children were not educated it was their own fault." From this scolding reprimand, it seems Geiger wholeheartedly embraced this conservative agenda. On the other hand, could Geiger's words have been taken out of context, and these stern words for the Robertson County black community be a commentary from the white editors of the newspaper on "proper" behavior for African Americans? Interestingly, the article reported on another orator at that same Juneteenth celebration—William H. Hamman, the Greenback Party leader who was present at Geiger's nomination for state legislator in 1878. Perhaps, then, Geiger's speech provides another example of

a virtuoso "performance': appeasing white patrons while politicking for influence in the black community.[39]

The last mention of Geiger in press accounts concern his sensational murder. In 1886, Geiger earned his living as an attorney. The May 19, 1886 *Galveston Daily News* reported in an article entitled "A Courtroom Tragedy," that Geiger was in a Hearne courtroom defending "lewd women of the town for vagrancy" when he purportedly made insolent remarks to the presiding judge, O.D. Cannon. Cannon stood up, calmly shot Geiger five times as point blank range, and left him in the courtroom mortally wounded as punishment for his lack of deference and for Geiger's offense to Cannon's 'honor." According to scholar Bertram Wyatt-Brown, white Southern men like Cannon expected that "blacks show obedience with apparently heartfelt sincerity. Grudging submission to physical coercion would not suffice." Nevertheless, although the article deemed Geiger's shooting a "tragedy," the correspondent also depicted him in typical stereotypical language: as a "bold, bad, notorious Negro," a "terror" who enjoyed "great prestige among his race, but was also feared among them." Put simply, Geiger deserved his fate. His wounds were life-threatening and there remained little hope of recovery. After almost a month of suffering, the June 22th edition of the *Brenham Daily Banner* announced Geiger's death with this terse eulogy: "The notorious Negro, Hal Geiger, died of his wounds on the 11th on this month. There will be no mourning over Geiger's death." Apparently, there was no desire for justice concerning his murder either. On July 8, 1886, a jury deliberated ten minutes and acquitted O.D. Cannon of his crime.[40]

While there seemed to be no apparent mourning over Geiger's untimely and tragic demise, his life story remains extraordinary, indeed almost larger than life. Popular twentieth-century author James Michener evidently thought so—in his massive historical fiction work on the state of Texas, he created the character of an African American civil rights advocate who mentions the murder of Geiger when reciting the history of black Texans. Geiger's life, however, should not be reduced to a paragraph in a fictional work. Furthermore, his lived experiences complicate the common scholarly arguments concerning African American life during Re-

construction Era in Texas. Although a self-educated man, merchant, politician, and lawyer, Geiger did not totally subscribe to respectability politics, on many occasions employing violence and intimidation. Yet, he also tirelessly fought for issues such as equal treatment under the law for white and black Texans, for fairer educational opportunities, and for social justice. Indeed, Geiger proved to be not merely a passive victim of white violence, nor an angelic black political and social figure, but a complicated and fascinating individual whose story deserves to be unearthed.[41]

Notes

[1] Affidavit of Jerry Landers, Texas State Archives, Secretary of State Election Records, Box 2-12, folder 572, *1872 Robertson County Election Returns Contested.*

[2] *The Weekly Democratic Statesman*, July 3, 1879, accessed October 16, 2014, https://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/tdnp/, University of North Texas Libraries, Texas Digital Newspaper Program, The Portal to Texas History. Hereafter cited as UNT, TDNP, PTH.

[3] For previous scholarship on Hal Geiger, see J. Mason Brewer, *Negro Legislators and their Descendants* (2nd edition), Austin TX: Jenkins Press, 1970; Lawrence D. Rice, *The Negro in Texas, 1874-1900*, Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1971; Merline Pitre, *Through Many Dangers, Toils, and Snares: The Black Leadership of Texas, 1868-1900*, Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1985; Dale Baum, *Counterfeit Justice: The Judicial Odyssey of Texas Freedwoman Azeline Hearne.* Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2009.

[4] Biographical sketch of Harrold G. Geiger, *Texas Legislative Manual of 1879-1880,* 259, accessed October 16, 2014, http://www.lrl.state.tx.us/scanned/members/bios/16th_Geiger.pdf; 1880 United States Federal Census, Ancestry.com, accessed October 16, 2014, http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&db=1880usfedcen&rank=1&new=1&MSAV=0&gss=angs-d&gsfn=H.G.&gsfn_x=NP_NN&gsln=Geiger&msydy=1880&msypn__ftp=Texas&dbOnly=_F000686E%7c_F000686E_x-%2c_83004006%7c_83004006_x%2c_83004005%7c_83004005_x&uidh=xxd&pcat=USFEDCEN&fh=0&h=40622374&recoff=&ml_rpos=1; *Galveston Daily News,* Tuesday November 5. 1878, *Norton Union Intelligencer,* November 9, 1878, UNT, TDNP, PTH.

[5] South Carolina WPA Narratives, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, accessed November 15, 2014, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mesn:1:./temp/~ammem_qEbq::.; *City Gazette and Commercial Adviser,* July 9, 1828.

[6] J.W. Baker, *A History of Robertson County, Texas* (Waco: The Robertson County Historical Survey Committee, 1970), 1, 3; Dale Baum, *Counterfeit Justice: The Judicial Odyssey of Texas Freedwoman Azeline Hearne* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 7.

[7] *Baum, Counterfeit Justice,* 8, 42; Richard Denny Parker, *Historical Recollections of Robertson County, Texas, with Biographical & Genealogical Notes on the Pioneers & their Families,* ed. Nona Clement Parker (Salado, TX: The Anson Jones Press, 1955), 30.

[8] Baum, *Counterfeit Justice,* 49; Kenneth E. Howell, "The Elusive Story of Violence in Reconstruction Texas, 1865-1874," in *Still the Arena of the Civil War: Violence and Civil War in Reconstruction Texas,* 1865-1874, ed. Kenneth E. Howell (Denton: The University of North Texas Press, 2012), Kindle edition.

[9] *Freedmen's Bureau Records: Texas Reports of Murders and Outrages,* Records of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, accessed November 8, 2014, http://freedmensbureau.com/texas/millicanoutrages.htm.

[10] *The Reformer*, July 15, 1871; *The Representative,* September 9, 1871, UNT, TDNP, PTH.

[11] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001), 111.

[12] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row Publishing, 1988), 300; Carl Moneyhon, *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1980), 84.

[13] Alwyn Barr, "Black Legislators of Reconstruction Texas," *Civil War History* 32, no, 4, (December 1986), 347-48.

[14] Richard Denny Parker, *Historical Recollections*, 83.

[15] Affidavits of Charles Gillespie, H. Bergman, Silas Johnson and Abram Raynon, Texas State Archives, Secretary of State Election Records, Box 2-12, folder 572, 1872 *Robertson County Election Returns Contested;* Affidavit of Hal Geiger, Texas State Archives, Box 2-12, folder, 572, *Robertson County Election Returns Contested;* Letter of Chandler, Carleton, and Robertson Law Firm, Texas State Archives, Secretary of State Election Records, Box 2-12, folder 572, 1872 *Robertson County Election Returns Contested.*

[16] Affidavit of Thomas J. Powell, Texas State Archives, 1872 *Robertson County Election Returns Contested.*

[17] Affidavit of Humphrey Johnson, Texas State Archives, Secretary of State Election Records, Box 2-12, folder 572, 1872 *Robertson County Election Returns Contested.*

[18] Ibid.

[19] Affidavit of Richard Perry, Texas State Archives, Secretary of State Election Records, Box 2-12, folder 572, 1872 Robertson County Election Returns Contested; Affidavit of Ned Butler, Texas State Archives, Secretary of State Election Records, Box 2-12, folder 572, 1872 *Robertson County Election Returns Contested.*

[20] "Color at Calvert," *The Galveston Daily News*, October 2, 1878, UNT, TDNP, PTH; Rice, *The Negro in Texas*, 1874-1900, 53.

[21] "Views held by General Wm. H. Hamman on November 18, 1865 as to the North, the Negro, etc.," *William Harrison Hamman Papers,* 1840-1879, Box 2R29, William Hamman Scrapbook, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[22] "Color at Calvert," *The Galveston Daily News,* October 2, 1878, UNT, TDNP, PTH.

[23] *The Galveston Daily News*, October 13, 1878, Ibid.

[24] *Norton's Union Intelligencer*, November 9, 1878, Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] *The Galveston Daily News,* November 12, 1878, *Galveston Daily News,* November 14, 1878, Ibid.

[27] *The Galveston Daily News*, November 16 1878; *Brenham Weekly Banner,* November 22, 1878; *Galveston Daily News*, November 23, 1878, Ibid.

[28] *The Galveston Daily News*, November 22, 1878, Ibid.

[29] *The Weekly Democratic Statesman,* December 5, 1878, Ibid.

[30] *The Brenham Daily Banner*, February 23, 1879; T*he Galveston Daily News*, August 19, 1879, Ibid.

[31] The Galveston Daily News, March 8, 1879, UNT, TDNP, PTH; Hal Geiger speech, quoted in Pitre, *Through Many Dangers,* 73.

[32] *The Brenham Daily Banner*, April 23, 1879; *The Galveston Daily News,* March 12, 1879, UNT, TDNP, PTH.

[33] *The Galveston Daily News*, July 20, 1879, Ibid.

[34] *The Galveston Daily News*, October 11, 1879; *The Denison Daily News*, November 8, 1879, Ibid.

[35] *The Galveston Daily News*, April 24, 1880, Ibid.

[36] *The Galveston Daily News*, October 27, 1880, Ibid.

[37] *The Brenham Daily Banner,* September 21, 1881, Ibid.

[38] Alwyn Barr, "Early Organizing in the Search for Equality: African American Conventions in Late Nineteenth Century Texas," in *Seeking Inalienable Rights: Texans and their Quest for Justice,* ed. Debra A. Reid (College Station, Texas A& M University Press, 2009), 8.

[39] "Emancipation Day Celebration," *The Galveston Daily News,* June 20. 1883, UNT, TDNP, PTH.

[40] "A Courtroom Tragedy," *The Galveston Daily News*, May 19, 1886; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, 25th edition), 363; *The Brenham Daily Banner*, June 22, 1886; *The Galveston Daily News*, July 8, 1886, UNT, TDNP, PTH.

[41] James Michener, *Texas: A Novel* (The Dial Press, Reprint Edition, 1985, 2014), 694.

Presidential Politics in the Republic of Texas

By Charles Swanlund

Presidential politics in the Republic of Texas were notably raucous and contentious. For the most part, issues did not play a huge role in the politics of the Republic, but personalities did. Campaigns largely consisted of what one observer of the Texas election of 1841 described as being "a glorious orgy of name calling", and on at least one occasion, the vitriol flew so fast and furious that one candidate was moved to challenge the other to a duel *during the campaign*! With the exception of the dueling aspect, a time traveler who observed the recent U.S. presidential election might well consider that the 2016 presidential race had been conducted with the utmost in civility and grace by comparison to the "full contact" nature of presidential politics as practiced in the Republic.

Given that only four men, David G. Burnet, Sam Houston, Mirabeau B. Lamar and Anson Jones would serve as the chief executive of Texas during the Republic period, it stands to reason that much of Texas's politics would be personality driven. Texas would not really develop a two-party system until after the Civil War. Prior to this time, factions were the order of the day. Before the Revolution, there was the "Peace Party" and the "War Party". Once the path to Revolution was clear, the "Peace" faction was subsumed by the "War" faction, and for a brief time, Texians seemed to agree with each other, at least in terms of politics. After the Revolution however, factions would once again become the fashion, only now they revolved around Sam Houston, either in support of, or in opposition to him.

The traditional view of the presidency of Texas more or less revolves around the notion that Sam Houston was the "indispensable man" of the Republic. Not only was he the leader who had delivered Texas from its thralldom to Mexico, he was a larger than life figure who had been associated with Andrew Jackson and was therefore destined for great things.

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He would be responsible for the survival of the Republic during his two non-consecutive terms in the presidency. His successor, Mirabeau B. Lamar, quite often is portrayed as being well meaning, but incompetent. The last president of Texas, Anson Jones, is rarely even included in the discussion, and has more or less faded into obscurity through the years.

David Burnet, while never a permanent chief executive of the Republic, merits some attention in as much as he presided over Texas during the critical period of the Revolution to the establishment of the constitutional government in Columbia. Burnet, in his capacity as *ad interim* President of Texas, oversaw the negotiation of the Treaties of Velasco, safeguarded a captive Santa Anna from a lynch mob, called for the election of permanent government officials, and presided over the installation of the first constitutionally sanctioned government of Texas. He was the Vice President in the Lamar administration, and served as acting president of Texas during Lamar's prolonged absence. All of these are worthy accomplishments, but Burnet was a cantankerous man who seemed to revel in his great hatred of Sam Houston. It was Burnet's personal animosity towards Houston that in large measure, provided the lion's share of the impetus for the rise of the anti-Houston faction in Texas politics, which pretty much would come to define Texas politics. Anson Jones, the last president of Texas and a keen observer of his time noted of him that: "D.G. Burnet is a good, honest man enough, has patriotism, and means well enough, and has decided talent; but he lacks tact and judgement, and is always too much under the influence of his prejudices, which are very powerful. He has every kind of sense but common sense, and consequently will never do for a statesman."[1]

The personal animus between Burnet and Houston seems to date back to the Revolution, when Burnet famously chided the Commander in Chief of the Texas Army, "Sir: The enemy are laughing you to scorn. You must fight them. You must retreat no further. The country expects you to fight. The salvation of the country depends on your doing so."[2] Burnet assuredly did not appreciate Houston's thinly veiled sarcasm in his response to the missive: "I have kept the army together under most discouraging circumstances, and I hope a just and wise God, in whom I have always believed, will yet save

Texas. I am sorry that I am so wicked, for the 'prayers of the righteous shall prevail.' That you are so, I have no doubt, and hope that Heaven as such, will...crown your efforts with success on behalf of Texas and humanity."[3] After the Mexican army had been defeated at San Jacinto, Burnet and the anti-Houston members of his cabinet began to search for ways to discredit Houston. Robert Potter, the Texas Navy Secretary proposed that they should charge Houston with malfeasance for distributing Santa Anna's treasure among the troops. When Surgeon General Alexander Ewing recommended that Houston be removed to New Orleans for treatment on his grievously wounded ankle, Burnet denied permission for Houston to leave the army. When Ewing and the captain of the steamer *Yellowstone* ignored Burnet, Burnet relented, but stripped Ewing of his rank. It was hoped that Houston could be transported to New Orleans aboard the Texas navy vessel *Liberty*, but Burnett again denied Houston permission to leave the army, hoping to charge Houston with desertion. Houston would finally be transported aboard a second rate ship, the *Flora*, but the die had been cast.

When Burnet called for elections to be held to establish a permanent government for Texas, it was widely assumed that Stephen F. Austin would be elected as Texas's first president, running against Henry Smith, who had briefly been the Provisional Governor of Texas at the outset of the rebellion. Shortly before the election, Sam Houston was induced to run for the presidency largely because he feared that the army would stage a coup. When he allowed his name to be placed on the ballot, Smith dropped out of the race and Houston handily defeated Austin by a wide margin. Austin never really understood the damage he had done to his reputation and credibility by advocating conciliation with Mexico until it was too late. In this election, as in future elections, the case can be made that had there really been any credible opposition, Sam Houston may never have won election to the Texas presidency.

When Houston arrived in Columbia to take up the reins of government, Burnet abruptly resigned the presidency. This too would further the hard feelings between the two men. The anti-Houston faction would charge that Sam showed up earlier than he was supposed to in an attempt to force Burnet to resign a month early. La-

mar, now firmly in the anti-Houston camp wrote in his diary that, "Houston was so anxious to enter upon the duties of office that Burnet was forced by threat of members of Congress that if he did not retire for the new president, he would be pushed out. The constitutional period for the installation had not arrived as yet by a month. Houston could not wait. Burnet was forced to retire...this was the first Act of the Government, a palpable violation of the Constitution. The little month Houston could not wait; nor could the hungry expectants brook the delay who were looking forward to presidential favors."[4] The attacks were just beginning.

As President Houston labored to impose some sort of order onto the chaos that was the nascent frontier republic, the next salvo in the war against him would come in February 1837. A short, thirty-eight-page pamphlet entitled *Houston Displayed: or Who Won the Battle of San Jacinto* entered into the political fray. This little pamphlet, which accused Houston of cowardice at San Jacinto among other things, would become the driving force behind the anti-Houston movement. *Houston Displayed* was the brainchild of Robert M. Coleman, a veteran of the Texas army and the Texas Rangers. Coleman had decided for a variety of reasons to bring down "Old Sam", charging him with cowardice at San Jacinto, drunkenness throughout the Revolution, and of being an opium fiend as well as pretty much being the worst person ever. The pamphlet appears to have been ghostwritten by Algernon Thompson, publisher of the Velasco *Herald*, and was printed on a printing press that was secretly owned by none other than Vice President Mirabeau Lamar. Lamar managed to keep his involvement from coming to light, even when an irate Houston tossed Coleman in jail for several months without ever preferring charges. Lamar became so uncomfortable with his position in the administration, he asked Congress for permission to leave Texas for a few weeks to take care of some personal business in Georgia. He left Texas in April of 1837 and did not return until November. By the time the Vice President returned to Texas, the furor had died down and Coleman had been released from jail. Coleman incidentally, would drown while bathing in the Brazos River several months later.[5]

The charges laid against the president were so legion that talk of

them even reached back to the United States. The New Orleans *True American* contacted Dr. Ashbel Smith "as to the truth about President Houston's conduct, his drinking, his beastliness, and his generally erratic behavior." Dr. Smith's response was reprinted in the Texas *Telegraph* on February 24, 1838, "He has been represented as an imbecile in body and intellect: - a moral and physical wreck. Never was a calumny so false. His health has certainly been impaired by privations and exposures, but he possesses at this moment...more physical force than ninety-nine able-bodied men out of a hundred." Smith continued, "As regards his mind, he is still in the pride of his intellect...his bearing is that of the most lofty and princely courtesy...Despite what has been said to the contrary, I believe him to be the most popular man in Texas. The statements of him being a madman and cutting tall antics before high Heaven and man are utterly and gratuitously false."[6]

Sam Houston was constitutionally prohibited from serving a second consecutive term, so he would not be a factor in the 1838 election. Lamar had managed somehow to remain above the fray in the controversies of Houston's first administration and was clearly the choice of the anti-Houston faction to be the next chief executive. The pro-Houston side was, however, without a clear choice to replace Sam. The first candidate to be nominated to run against Lamar was Peter Grayson, who had served as Attorney General in the *ad interim* Government, and as a commissioner to the United States. Grayson would not survive until election day, taking his own life several months before the election. He was replaced as the nominee by James B. Collinsworth. Collinsworth would also not make it until election day, either falling or being pushed overboard from a boat in Galveston Bay several weeks before the canvas. The final pro-Houston candidate on the ballot was Robert Wilson, original founder of Harrisburg. Lamar trounced Wilson in the most lopsided election in the brief history of the Republic.

The Texas presidency would undergo the first peaceful transfer of power in its history, but it would not go particularly well for the incoming president. Sam Houston arrived on the steps of the capital in Houston dressed as George Washington, with a powdered wig, knee "britches", and the whole package. Houston then proceeded

to steal the show, launching into a three-hour valedictory address to great applause as Lamar quietly seethed. When Houston finally turned the stage over to Lamar, all he could do was to hand his carefully crafted inaugural address to the clerk of the Senate, Algernon Thompson, who delivered Lamar's speech in a monotone to the few people who remained after Lamar left.[7] Houston had so completely stolen the show that even Francis Moore, the decidedly anti-Houston editor of the *Texas Telegraph* was moved to opine, "The day will come when his name will appear in the pages of the Texian story, unsullied by a single stain-his faults forgotten, his vices buried in the tomb."[8]

The presidency of Mirabeau Bonaparte Lamar started as badly as it possibly could have. Dr. Kenneth Howell, in his chapter about Lamar in *Single Star of the West (*this incidentally, in case you missed it, is a shameless plug for the book*)*, posits that had the inaugural ceremonies proceeded a bit differently, Lamar may have indeed changed the trajectory of the Republic. Lamar had planned in his address, to inspire a new sense of hope into Texas. He had planned to share his vision of a "new" Texas, one that he believed could become the envy of the world. At the time of his ascension to the presidency, the people of Texas were certainly disillusioned with the course of events up to that point. In fact, many Texans hoped that Lamar could provide the answers to many of the challenges confronting the Republic. Howell also maintains that Lamar believed that by downplaying his own abilities in his inaugural speech, he could lower the expectations of his presidency, thus making any future accomplishments all the more significant. On top of all else, Lamar stressed the need for political unity. Despite his calls for unity however, almost everything he did served to further entrench political divisions in Texas. [9]

The short version of Lamar's tenure as president is that basically, it was a disaster. After removing the Cherokees from East Texas, he kicked over the anthill and started a war with the Comanche and others, spending the cash-strapped Republic into even farther into oblivion. He annoyed Mexico by leasing the Texas Navy to Yucatan, which was in open revolt against the centralist Government. He further antagonized Mexico with the abortive Santa Fe Expedition,

and maybe worst of all, he had no choice but to induce a crippling inflation by flooding the economy with un-backed currency. In addition to all of this, he had moved the capital to a "Comanche infested site," Austin, which Sam Houston called "the most unfortunate site upon the earth for a capitol." Had he been able to receive the anticipated $5 million loan from France, it is possible that history may have been kinder to Lamar's reputation. But Texas did not get the loan, and despair returned to the Republic. Anson Jones, the acerbic contemporary observer of Republic politics, and at the time, the President *pro tempore* of the Texas Senate, records several comments about this period. On April 13, 1839, Jones noted that "It is a very strong evidence of the poverty of worth or talent, when such a man as L. is called for the head of a country: He is a very weak man, and governed by petty passions which he cannot control, and by prejudices that are the result of ignorance (of the world)..."[10]

On August 20, 1839, Jones said, "Gen. Lamar may mean well- I am not disposed to impugn his motives- he has fine belles letters, talents, and is an elegant writer. But his mind is altogether of a dreamy, poetic order, a sort of troubadour and Crusader, and wholly unfit by habit or education for the active duties and the everyday realities of his present station. Texas is too small for a man of such wild, visionary, 'vaulting ambition'".[11]

By the end of 1839, Sam Houston had returned to Texas and been elected to the Texas Congress by the people of St. Augustine. Jones astutely noted what he believed Houston's strategy concerning Lamar was: "Gen Houston, I fear, does not care how completely Lamar ruins the country, so that he can hide the errors, the follies, and widespread ruin of his own past administration, and have it to say, 'I told you there is nobody but Old Sam after all."[12] On January 1, 1840, Jones expanded further on Houston, writing that, " he appears only intent on making Lamar's administration as odious as possible, in order the contrast with his own may be favorable to him. He is willing the government should be a failure, in order that he may have it to say, there is no one but Old Sam that the people can depend on, and that he is the only man that can successfully administer the government of Texas. Lamar is certainly no statesman, and he and his friends are going to the Devil as fast as Gen H. can possi-

bly wish..."[13] At the end of Lamar's term of office, Jones noted that Texas was; "Brought to the extremist point of exhaustion consistent with the ability of being resuscitated."[14] Even before his term was up, Lamar again abandoned Texas, leaving his Vice President David Burnet in charge.

Lamar was also unable to run for another consecutive term, so he endorsed Burnet. Sam Houston and his acolytes concentrated on trying to associate Burnet as much as possible with the disastrous policies of Lamar. What followed would become what can be viewed as the most contentious election in the history of Texas politics. This campaign would feature a bit of everything. The Burnet crowd would re-issue the *Houston Displayed* pamphlet, and both candidates would use the press to smear their opponent. Burnet with a series of op-ed pieces signed "*Publius*", and Houston with an equally nasty series of attack pieces signed "*Truth*". James Morgan, in a letter to J.W. Webb in January of 1841 described the situation as he saw it, "We have a bad state of affairs here now. – Lamar, the poor imbecile, could not hold out and had to give up the helm of state to Burnet, who is even more worthless...Old Sam H. with all his faults appears to be the only man for Texas. He is still unsteady-*intemperate*, but drunk in a ditch is worth a thousand of Lamar and Burnet... Burnet has rendered himself supremely ridiculous is so much disliked and being naturally of turbulent disposition that he has become as snarlish as a half-starved dog dealing forth anathemas against everybody...report says he challenged Gen. Houston because H. intimated that B. was a hog thief."[15]

Houston's favorite pejorative against Burnet was indeed "hog thief" or "King Wetumka, which Houston swore meant "Hog Thief in Indian."[16] Burnet also, had challenged Houston to a duel through Branch T. Archer. Houston laughed off the challenge noting that he was "sure that the people are disgusted with both of us," and added that Burnet would "have to get in line as there were at least a dozen ahead of him." As *Publius*, Burnet wrote sixty-six columns in which he charged Houston with military incompetence during the Revolution as well as "beastly intemperance and other vices degrading to humanity."[17] The *Texas Sentinel* of July 5, 1841 said that Houston was accustomed to "blaspheme his God, by the most horrible

oaths that ever fell from the lips of man."[18] Houston's *Truth* pieces lacked the inherent vitriol of the *Publius* articles, adopting instead a rather mocking and sarcastic tone. His letters of August 16 and 18, 1841 appeared in the *Houstonian*. He created a character, a little man called "Grog" who went around Texas telling lies. "Grog", who was sometimes a little unsteady himself, made a habit of charging other people with being drunk. "*Truth*" related the time when, "... you swelled to a most consequential degree; and really the collar of your shirt, from connection to your imagination, I presume outtopped your ears, while your step was as lofty and aimless too, as that of a blind horse! Was there any liquor in this? It appeared so to those who dared to question the *indomitable sobriety* of the illustrious *hero*, Davy G. Burnet..." Houston went on to accuse Burnet of personal motives for removing the Cherokee, and amplified the accusation that Burnet had bilked hundreds of immigrants to Texas out of their life savings. Houston finished with this: "You prate about the faults of other men, while the blot of foul unmitigated treason rests upon you. You political brawler and canting hypocrite, whom the waters of Jordan could never cleanse from your political and moral leprosy."[19]

The editor of the Houston *Morning Star* may have spoken for most in Texas when shortly before the election he wrote that, "We should be heartily glad when this political canvas is over."[20]

The election was held on September 6, 1841. When the votes were tallied, Houston garnered 7,508 votes, against Burnet's 2,574. Drunk or sober, Sam Houston was again the people's choice. It was widely reported that Houston, during all of his inaugural festivities, "touched not a drop of the ardent spirits." The main thrust of his second administration was simple: survival until such time as annexation became possible. While slashing the budget and trying to keep the peace with Mexico, Houston also worked hard on the question of annexation. He rightly reasoned that annexation would continue to be politically problematic in the United States, so he embarked on a strategy that some say was actually proposed by his Secretary of State, Anson Jones. Jones continued trying to curry favor with France and Great Britain as a means to put pressure on Mexico to recognize Texas.

Houston may have believed that Anson Jones was a loyal supporter of his, but he would have certainly been shocked had he learned Jones's real opinions of him. As early as November 24, 1839, Jones had recorded his belief that "no man is more completely master of the art of appropriating to himself the merit of other's good acts, and shafting onto others the odium of his bad ones, than Gen. Houston."[21] Jones also confided to his journal that Houston, "is not so strong in what he does himself; as in what his enemies do: It is not *his* strength, but *their* weakness- Not his *wisdom*, but their *folly*. Cunning, Indian cunning is the secret of his business. Old Bowles, the Cherokee Indian chief learned him all he knows, and... he learned *Indian* well."[22] Jones further confided that Houston's political methods were not to his taste, "I have also strenuously opposed his system of petty, vindictive warfare upon individuals and the "Honourable Congress" which are gotten up by him to make political capital for himself; but are injurious to the interests and character of the country.- Gen. Houston and myself are drifting away from each other hourly."[23] On December 31, 1843, Jones appeared to have completely given up on Houston. He wrote, "...I may have to play the part of "Curtius" and if so, am prepared and willing to make a sacrifice like his if the grief of destruction...for Texas can happily be closed. – I am also content to let Gen. Houston be "Caesar"- for it is only by yielding to his vanity and ambition that we can now get together. And the whole safety of the country and the successful issue of the important measure now pending that we should cooperate, for however powerless Gen. Houston might be to do good, his position as president puts it in his power to do great harm..."[24]

The last presidential election in the history of the Republic was almost anti-climactic. The anti-Houston faction nominated Houston's Vice President, Edward Burleson. Burleson had been somewhat of a non-entity as Vice President and had quite often voted against Houston's policies as he presided over the Senate. Burleson's main support came from the West, as befitted his frontier military background. For the pro-Houston faction, they had hoped to talk Thomas J. Rusk into running for the presidency, but Rusk declined to be nominated to the office. The ultimate choice for the pro-Houstons

was Secretary of State Anson Jones.

The key issues in the campaign were the economy, the growing separation between the interests of Texans in the East from those in the West, and of course, annexation. There would be however, little discussion of the issues in this campaign, as the main emphasis was on staining Burleson with the policies of Lamar, and conversely, to paint Anson Jones as little more than a puppet for Sam Houston. Political passions were still running high in the Republic. The editor of the La Grange *Intelligencer* wrote that, "Caligula, the depraved and worst of all tyrants that ever ruled Rome, after having trodden the spirit of his people into the most abject slavery, showed his contempt for them by making his horse a Consul. Gen. Houston, thinking the people of Texas in a like condition, evinces a much greater contempt for them buy wishing to impose Dr. Anson Jones upon the Republic as president- *A Less Noble Animal*."

The Houston *Telegraph and Texas Register*, on February 14, 1844 officially endorsed the candidacy of Burleson, and blasted Jones as being one "who is so embecile [sic] that he will be required to be kept in leading strings by his predecessor."[25] In the June 4 edition of the same paper, editor Francis Moore opined that, "The party spirit in the United states is tame and mild compared to the bitter, malignant, demoniacal zeal with which is displayed by the partisans of our candidates."[26] The Houston *Morning Star*, not to be outdone, opined on July 13, 1844 that, "On the one hand, Dr. Jones is going to be forced upon the people by the merits of Gen. Houston, and on the other hand, Gen. Burleson is to be sacrificed by the demerits of Lamar."[27] For their part, those who supported Jones made a number of scurrilous accusations, most implying that Burleson was functionally illiterate, and merely a pawn of Burnet and Lamar.

The candidates appeared to be running close, and ultimately it came down to Sam Houston's endorsement, which rather half-heartedly went to Jones. Houston said, "I am not opposed to his (Jones's) election. If I have not been a noisy advocate for his success, it has not been because I did not confide in him...He has conducted the foreign relations of the Government, and I have confidence that if the choice of the people should devolve upon him, he would consult the true interests of the country, and he would endeavor to carry out

the policy which he might conceive would but promote its honor and prosperity. I have arrived at this conclusion from the fact that I know him to be intimately acquainted with the true and abiding interests of the people."[28]

While hardly a ringing endorsement, it did the trick. Jones won the election with 7,037 votes to Burleson's 5,668. This would prove to be the closest presidential election in the short history of Republic politics. Dr. Anson Jones would become the last President of the Republic of Texas. If Sam Houston is indeed the "indispensable man" of Texas history, then Jones must be considered as the "Disposable Man" of the same. The only real issue that Jones had to face, was just how short his presidency would be. Annexation to the United States was in progress. U.S. President John Tyler had become determined to bring Texas into the Union as his legacy, and shepherded a Joint Resolution to annex Texas through both houses of Congress. Anson Jones, who had been working towards annexation for pretty much all of his public life, now had to face the diplomatic realities of the situation. Such reliance had been placed on the super powers, France and Great Britain getting Mexico to recognize Texas's independence, that Jones felt an obligation to allow them one more chance. Jones was also I believe, really in favor of annexation, but was also interested in completing what he started. He wanted to wait on presenting annexation to the people until he had both options to present. Statehood or independence. Where he made his great mistake was however, not truly understanding the depth of popular support for annexation. The people of Texas were no longer interested in going it alone. As far as the folks were concerned, the "Grand Experiment" had failed, and it was time to put an end to it. The La Grange *Intelligencer* once again weighed in, saying on March 31, 1845, that Jones,"...without talents, without political honesty, has had greatness thrust upon him. His elevation shows to the world *King Log* in his native colors and shows a little mind swelled up to fancied greatness. Truly does he remind one of the fabled frog trying to swell up to the size of an ox: and now Anson tries to strut a patriot, statesman, and hero. 'Shame where is thy blush...Sir, take your old post to the rear and leave the question for the Texas people to decide, for you cannot induce anyone to believe your opposition

to annexation arises from any native sentiments."[29]

All throughout the process, Jones's delay was seen by some as an attempt to circumvent annexation and the will of the people. When Jones finally called the Texas Congress into session on June 16, 1845, Congress, when presented with the two options that Jones had wanted to present, immediately and to a man voted against independence, and voted unanimously to accept the annexation offer; they then stripped Jones of all but ceremonial powers and censured him. On February 19, 1846, Anson Jones mounted the rostrum and offered up his valedictory address. The close of his speech is oft quoted, "The Lone Star of Texas, which ten years ago arose over fields of carnage, obscurely seen for a while, had culminated, and following an inscrutable destiny, has passed on and become fixed forever in the glorious constellation which all freemen and lovers of freedom must reverence and adore- The American Union. Blending its rays with its sister states, long may it continue to shine, and may generous Heaven smile upon the wishes of the two republics now joined as one. May the Union be perpetual, and may it be the means of conferring benefits and blessings upon the people of all the States, is my ardent prayer. The final act in this great drama is now performed. The Republic of Texas is no more!"[30] With these words, Anson Jones left the rostrum, and faded into obscurity, as would Burnet and Lamar during their times. Sam Houston of course would remain the sun around which the political planets revolved in Texas.

With the demise of the Republic, Texas politics remained contentious and tumultuous, but in the main they resembled merely a microcosm of what was occurring on a national level. If politics are indeed a spectator sport as some pundits have maintained, then for sure the Republic of Texas gave the fans their money's worth. In recent years, one often hears the lament that this election or that election is the most raucous and contemptuous in history; all one really needs to do is to look back at the brief political life of the Republic to realize that this simply is not true.

Notes

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[18] Ibid

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Drs. Truman and Virginia Blocker: Tales of a Texas Power Couple Presidential Address, East Texas Historical Association

By Heather Green Wooten

Some individuals were born before their time. Others were born for their time. Drs. Truman and Virginia Blocker were both. They were the ultimate powerhouse couple that shared a mid-twentieth century vision of bringing worldwide acclaim and generous research endowments to a small medical school, located on a Texas barrier island. Both possessed the characteristics required for such a daunting aspiration. They were ambitious, energetic, idealistic, brilliant and courageous. More importantly, both possessed a strong level of compassion, brought to bear through life experience. Each became intimately acquainted with pain and human suffering and thereby sought to alleviate it through their life work. However, one partner in this union achieved a far stronger legacy than the other. The first to hold the title of president of the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (UTMB), Dr. Truman Graves Blocker, Jr. acquired local and world renown as an outstanding surgeon, researcher, teacher and administrator. Disadvantaged by social mores and institutional regulations, Dr. Virginia Irvine Blocker never achieved the status or recognition commensurate with her talents and abilities. Regardless, the accomplishments emanating from the Blocker partnership are nothing short of impressive. Their efforts left an indelible mark on the practice of medicine in war and peacetime. What else could have been is a question readers of the Blocker story can answer for themselves.

The seeds of medical ambition were planted early in the lives of Truman and Virginia. Born in 1909 in West Point, Mississippi, Truman spent the first twenty years of his life in the quiet college town of Sherman, Texas.

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Although his world would eventually reach global proportions, he considered the time spent within the intimate, small-town atmosphere, as the most cherished of his life. Truman's mother, the former Maryanne Johnson, was a highly talented painter of still life. His father, Truman Graves Blocker, Sr. was a traveling businessman, whose early circumstances thwarted his dream of becoming a surgeon. Despite his frequent absences, Truman Senior found the time to take his son on hunting and fishing expeditions and to Sunday school. Fatherly advice to his son included three basic tenets: Refrain from bad language; always show respect for your elders; and become a surgeon.[1]

Dr. Howard Thomas Irvine harbored similar aspirations for his eldest daughter, Virginia. Born in May 1913, Virginia spent her early childhood in Canada where her father practiced medicine in the rural wilds of western Manitoba. Her mother, Annie Sowell Irvine of Denison, was a University of Texas graduate, who taught school and served as an assistant in her husband's medical practice, including emergency operations on rural dining room tables. Both parents possessed remarkable intelligence, spirit and tenacity that became Virginia's birthright. A notable example related to her father while on routine calls in a horse and buggy. The hunting gun Dr. Irvine carried accidentally discharged, blowing off the top of his left shoulder. Bleeding profusely, the young doctor made a tourniquet of the reins, and clasped the ends in his teeth, until he could make it to the nearest farmhouse.[2]

Seeking greater opportunities for himself and his household, Howard Irvine moved his young family to Austin, Texas in 1921, where he opened a new medical practice and Anne began pursuing a master's degree in English from the University of Texas. However, the promise inherent in these transitions took a tragic turn. In 1923, at the age of 35, Howard Irvine succumbed to Bright's disease. Two years later, Virginia's younger sister, nine-year-old Alice Irvine died as a result of a brain tumor. These devastating losses marked Virginia for the rest of her life. She found expression for her grief through the writing of poetry, and devoted her energies to excelling in school. As a result, Virginia entered UT-Austin at the age of 15 and graduates four years later, having earned both a bachelors and master's degree in languages. Despite this academic concentration, Virginia's continued

to develop her passion for medicine, engaging in the field whenever possible. When a boyfriend sustained an emergency appendectomy, the operating physician invited Virginia to watch the procedure and then bestowed the appendix as a gift.[3]

After completing high school, Truman remained in Sherman to attend Austin College. Measuring a formidable six-feet-four inches and possessing a husky football player frame, the eighteen-year-old earned the college nickname of "Jumbo", an appellation that stuck for life. The first evidence of surgical talent on Truman's part occurred in the midst of Dr. P. P. Reed's freshman biology class. The irrepressible young man brought to class a pregnant cat that appeared ready to deliver. Dr. Blocker later recalled the scenario: We gave her ether—without (knowing about anesthesia). I tied up her uterus and gave her a Cesarean section. We delivered six kittens, I think. The cat and all the kittens lived."[4] Upon graduation from Austin College, Truman headed to the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, enrolling in the fall of 1929. Upon receipt of his M.D. degree in 1933, Dr. Blocker fulfilled a two-year internship at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate Hospital before returning to Galveston to complete a residency in general surgery at John Sealy Hospital. In 1937, Truman joined the academic ranks as assistant professor of surgery and accepted a position as surgical pathologist at John Sealy Hospital.[5]

Central to Truman's professional maturation was the role of his mentor: Dr. A. O. Singleton, one of the leading surgeons in the United States during the early twentieth century, and a pioneer in the field of plastic surgery. A bold and swift surgeon, with extremely long sensitive fingers, Singleton emphasized gentleness . . . in the handling of tissues and furthered an understanding of professional anesthesia in surgical teamwork. Singleton's skill was matchless, Blocker later recalled, and, under his professor's leadership, the young protégé eagerly cut his teeth on the surgical profession.[6]

As the youngest on the UTMB surgical staff, Truman found himself assigned to tasks his senior colleagues wished to avoid. One regular assignment involved the cleaning and dressing of serious wounds—especially those belonging to burn patients. Despite his low rank, Truman's strong, towering personage proved to be an asset on the hospital ward. In later commenting on his work, Truman conveyed

his characteristic humor and compassion. "I was so big," he recalled, "that I could pick up the children and carry then down the hall from the ward to the tub room...and they were mean...they resented anyone who looked like a doctor (doctors meant pain)..." Truman sought comfort for his young charges on both the personal and therapeutic levels. "I entertained the children a good deal—made cards disappear, flip coins up my sleeve—that sort of thing, promising to do another trick if they let me put them in the [treatment] tub" In time, the young patients looked forward to Truman's visits "whenever I went to the bedside," he remembered, "they put their arms around me."[7]

Ironically, by assuming the cast-off work of other surgeons, Truman acquired entre into the nascent—but highly lucrative—field of plastic surgery. Many great strides in medicine have been made in response to urgent need. Plastic surgery is no different. Trench warfare in World War I resulted in devastating injuries in large numbers. Trenches protected a soldier's body, but left the face and head exposed to flying shrapnel. During the war, marked progress was made in maxillofacial surgeries: the treatment of fractured jaws, the repair of destructive facial wounds, bone grafting and cartilage transplants. Artificial replacements were created for chins, noses, ears and eyes began to be devised as well. As a result, A. O. Singleton began to envision a higher calling for his young protégé. He assigned Truman all the cleft lip and cleft palate cases—procedures that Singleton himself had tired of doing but were valuable exercises in medical craftsmanship. The experience strengthened Truman's interest in the specialty. Over time, Blocker earned a reputation for his natural creativity, dexterity and speed--essential in days before air-conditioned operating rooms.[8]

It was also in 1937 that Truman encountered an exceptional student on campus. Having set her sights on medical school, Virginia Irvine enrolled at UTMB the year before, embracing everything UTMB had to offer. Obstetrical deliveries and emergency room operations fascinated her. Virginia excelled in Pathology and Anatomy, that quickly earned her a student position in the Autopsy Room and the nickname, "Gertie the Gut Girl". In her sophomore year, Virginia acquired a student assistantship funded by the National Youth Administration. She was assigned to a young, professor-surgeon by the name Truman Blocker, who was known for enjoying a steady stream of girl-

friends and companions. However, in the summer of 1937, Truman found himself experiencing a temporary shortage and consequently, his attention turned to his attractive assistant.[9]

From there, Virginia's life as a medical student became anything but typical. While dating was common among medical students and single professors, academic and physical rigor of medical school soundly discouraged ideas of matrimony. Nevertheless, Virginia and Truman became engaged by Christmas of 1937, and married the following February. The wedding was an all-school event with A. O Singleton giving the bride away. Virginia became pregnant almost immediately—an act even more discouraged than marriage. Continuous nausea plagued her as she pushed through a brutal junior year of heavy coursework, exams, and clinics. In December 1938, Virginia gave birth to her first child, a son, Truman Graves Blocker III, nicknamed Bo, missing only "a week or two of school" in the process. Her academic survival during this period depended upon what colleague Grace Jameson (Class of 1949) called the three H's: good health, a good husband, and plenty of paid domestic help. Virginia graduated with highest honors from UTMB in May 1939.[10]

It did not take long for Virginia to discover that the energetic union forged with Truman Blocker would perpetually inhibit her career aspirations. Bound by young motherhood and other familial obligations, her options for a career in medicine were limited to Galveston Island. The University of Texas nepotism guidelines denied Virginia an internship and a residency at John Sealy Hospital. However, as John Sealy was city owned, the hospital superintendent hired Virginia as assistant director. By then, she was expecting once again—this time with daughter, Anne. Pregnancy was traditionally a disqualifier from employment in those days. However, Virginia was allowed to maintain her administrative position as long as she could camouflage her expanding waistline underneath a voluminous white clinical coat.[11]

World War II brought further alteration to the Blocker household. Having recently been certified in plastic surgery, Blocker enlisted in 1942, first as a surgeon in the U. S. Army Air Corps and later in the U.S. Army. His decision did not come without some hesitation. Singleton needed him. As more surgeons headed to the front, Truman's talents became increasingly indispensable in both the classroom and

operating room. In 1980, provided a humorous reason for enlisting: "At that time, I was working under Dr. Singleton, who was head of [Galveston] civil defense. He used me as a go between with Mrs. I. H. Kempner, head of the American Red Cross, and Mrs. Dan Kempner, head of the American Women's Volunteer Service...Well, I was caught in the middle, and those two ladies were really powerful women of Galveston. So, I left and joined the Army." After several assignments, Blocker became chief of plastic surgery and later chief of surgery at Wakeman General Hospital in Camp Atterbury, Indiana, one of nine centers built by the U. S. Army designated specifically for plastic surgery work in the United States. With an occupancy that increased from 2,000 to 6,000 beds by the end of the war, it was one of the best-equipped military specialty hospitals, and the largest in the Fifth Service Command.[12]

Wakeman served as a proving ground for Captain Blocker's surgical skill and organizational talents. Shortly after Truman assumed his post in late summer of 1944, the first D-Day casualties began to arrive. His unit oversaw five wards that commonly held as many as 350 plastic surgery patients at any given time, many of whom underwent an average of four operations. To effectively address the daunting caseload, Colonel Blocker recruited a highly qualified staff and developed a team approach. He devised a massive bulletin board bearing all the patients' names, color-coded for type of injury, surgery scheduled or completed, condition and drugs prescribed. This level of efficiency and expertise enabled unit surgeons to perform 15,000 plastic surgery operations over the next two years, earning the team national renown for outstanding feats in trauma surgery.[13]

Plastic surgery served as a great morale builder among the wounded. An editorial in the *Indianapolis Star* of November 7, 1945, heralded the monumental work of surgeons under Blocker's direction: "One of the most heartening accomplishments of medical science," wrote the author, "has been successful bone and skin grafting. Men barely surviving terrible injuries are being restored to [full and useful lives] with little evidence of their experience." In an interview published in the Camp Atterbury newspaper, the *Camp Crier*, Colonel Blocker expressed in his customary, unassuming manner the basic premise of his practice. He likened the work of a plastic surgeon to that of a

sculptor who takes a shapeless mass of clay and molds it into shape—except that the surgeon and the sculptor approach their work from opposite directions. The sculptor first builds the framework and then molds his clay around the framework, explained the colonel. "The plastic surgeon puts the flesh in place first and then when it is needed molds it into shape by grafting bone or cartilage under it."[14] In time, the Wakeman plastic surgery department earned a national reputation for achievements in the field. While still at Camp Atterbury, the U.S. Army awarded Blocker the Legion of Merit, an unusual honor for a plastic surgeon. Discharged as a colonel, he continued in the Army Reserve, was a consultant to the Surgeon General of the U.S. Army and earned the rank of brigadier general, also unique for a plastic surgeon.[15]

The war years were formative for Virginia as well. Truman's absence enabled her to complete a nine-month internship and brief residency in Internal Medicine at John Sealy Hospital. Virginia reveled in the long, intensive schedule of morning rounds, patient consultations, laboratory work, and house calls conducted with her mentor Dr. Charles Stone, Chairman of the UTMB School of Medicine. She also took on clinic work for the Galveston Public Health Service, taught First Aid and nutrition classes. The depth of experience Virginia gleaned during this period would be of great value to her within a few short years.[16]

Navigating a fledgling medical career with two young children on one's own is rife with challenges. However, for Virginia, the summer of 1943 was particularly difficult. Polio incidence spread rapidly throughout Texas during the war years and in June, an epidemic struck the Island and adjoining mainland. Almost 750 reported cases of paralytic poliomyelitis were reported in Texas that summer. Virginia was one of them, having contracted the disease while overseeing patients at John Sealy Hospital. Alone, with two young children, Virginia remembers being highly distressed and "fatalistic."[13] Truman acquired a brief furlough and returned home. Once recovered, Virginia opted to join him in Indiana. While there, polio paid another cruel visit to the Blocker household, leaving five-year-old Bo seriously febrile and unable to walk. "As bad as it feels to have the dreaded disease yourself," Virginia later remembered, "you just feel terrible when it happens to

your own child." Although Virginia's paralysis and that of her young son, was short-lived, Virginia claimed she never completely recovered—physically or emotionally—from the ordeal.[17]

Virginia returned with her children to Galveston in early 1945. Truman joined her the following year. He returned to UTMB as a full professor and organized the Division of Plastic and Maxillofacial Surgery, of which he was named chief. He also spearheaded the establishment of a new hospital: the Special Surgical Unit (SSU), designed to address large numbers of military casualties spawned by the war. Virginia closely collaborated in these endeavors, assuming the title of research associate in Plastic Surgery. She also taught and supervised medical students, residents and nursing students and established Diabetic and Nutrition Clinics at UTMB—again, without pay on account of the Nepotism laws.[18]

Yet, the war impacted Virginia and Truman in ways beyond the development of technical and academic skill. Both encountered suffering through a variety of lenses. Truman, through the lens of a military trauma surgeon. Virginia, through the lens of a traumatized patient. Both Truman and Virginia through the lens of compassionate caregiver, through the lens of distressed spouse or parent of a seriously ill patient. These collective experiences bolstered the Blocker partnership on both the personal and professional levels. A deeper transformation soon followed.

On April 16, 1947, Truman was performing a routine surgical procedure when a tremendous explosion jolted every instrument on his tray. Looking out the operating room window, Blocker observed a magnificent mushroom-shaped cloud. "Having a lot of information about the atomic bomb," Blocker said, "I thought this was one and that World War III had started." In reality, two freighters loaded with ammonium nitrate fertilizer had exploded at the dock in Texas City, initiating a series of blasts that killed almost 600 persons and injured thousands more. Truckloads of casualties headed to John Sealy Hospital. As co-director of medical operations, Truman and fellow World War II veteran and surgeon, Dr. Robert Moore, directed the hospital's emergency response. Having recently returned from the front, a hospital staff familiar with mass casualties quickly fell into familiar patterns of emergency duty with a military dispatch that onlookers

found "a little short of fantastic." Ten operating teams were set up to work in 48-hour shifts, with three or four physicians on each team. Virginia was assigned to overseeing triage. As the casualties quickly crowded hospital corridors Virginia's team cleared out all hospitalized patients who did not require immediate treatment. She also helped coordinate a makeshift emergency hospital in the Galveston City Hall and commissioned a windowless high school gymnasium to serve as a morgue.[19]

The Texas City Disaster, as it came to be known, utilized every skill contained in Truman and Virginia's combined medical repertoire. But the tragedy also spurred the couple to think out of the box, especially relative to the notion of "military disaster preparedness" in the atomic age. More than 800 casualties were treated at John Sealy Hospital after the explosion. Many of them required months, sometimes years, of ongoing treatment. Believing research essential to better patient care, the Blockers launched an innovative project in relation to mass casualties. They jointly conducted a comprehensive survey that documented over a nine-year period the treatment and recovery of these patients suffering traumatic injuries. The survey began with individuals on the initial 1947 casualty lists. A follow-up survey completed in 1956, also included lessons learned relative to thermal injuries, civilian triage, mobile hospitals, the development of a blood bank, and other issues deemed highly relevant to scientists and citizens at the height of the Cold War.[20]

The administration of this project reflected a common routine. Truman conceived and created the policy and approaches. Virginia researched, organized and artfully composed the data. In an era before computers, Virginia meticulously recorded all relevant information on three by five index cards. Such a system, while admirable, portended to be risky when administered within range of a growing family. Two additional sons were born to Truman and Virginia within five years after the explosion: Sterling, born in 1948, followed by Gordon in 1952. One day in 1956, as Virginia was laboring to complete the survey, four-year-old Gordon entered the forbidden domain of his mother's upstairs home office, knocked over and scattered several large stacks of index carded data. Immensely aggravated, Virginia swept Gordon up and began carrying him down the stairs. She stumbled, resulting

in what Gordon later described as a flurried cascading pinwheel of arms, legs and skirts. The long tumble down the stairs gave Virginia a bruised face and black eye. For several years afterward, Virginia often concluded presentations covering her disaster-related research with a slide of her facial injuries, entitled "The last casualty of the Texas City Explosion." It was well worth it. The published study garnered national and international attention, and soon, funding for additional research flowed to Galveston.[21]

The Texas City tragedy also galvanized Truman Blocker's lifelong interest in the treatment of severe burns. In 1947, individuals with burns on more than half of their body had less than a 50 percent chance of survival. Blocker was determined to reverse that statistic. To do so, Truman instituted two treatment practices that, while common today, were revolutionary at the time: exposing burn wounds to the air and feeding burn patients promptly after the initial burn incident. The basis for Truman's theory harkened back to his early years at UTMB when faculty superiors delegated the unpleasantries of basic burn care to him. The orthodox treatment at the time involved starving the patient for forty-eight hours after the burn incident to incite the body's metabolism. Patients were also immediately wrapped in bulky dressings that required frequent changes—at great expense and pain to the patient. During the early part of the twentieth century, Scottish medical pioneer A. B. Wallace began to feed burn patients rather than denying them sustenance during the acute shock phase. Truman experimented with this practice on his pediatric rounds. He later wrote, "By cleansing the wounds and feeding the children as much as they could tolerate, their [belligerent] personalities were just turned around...I learned how to handle adults, too, in much the same way." His research proved that feeding patients all they could eat—accompanied by a constant-drip high protein diet—created significant gains in appetite, weight and body strength. The open treatment of wounds cut the infection rate, increased patient comfort and decreased overall morbidity.[22]

Blocker promoted these concepts through a new multidisciplinary burns program and UTMB soon became the standard bearer for innovation in the care of patients with severe burns. In 1953, Truman was invited to Japan by the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission. While in

Hiroshima, he collaborated with Japanese plastic surgeons to repair the damaged eyelid of a young woman who had written a song entitled "The Verse of the A-bomb Maidens," which brought international attention to the plight of Japanese youths severely burned by bombs the United States dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Truman's experiences in Japan and later Korea gave him new insight not only into blast injuries but also into human nature. In his words, "it taught me a great deal about people all over the world—they're the same as we are—and I became a pacifist."[23]

Both Truman and Virginia also formed personal and scientific relationships with Soviet scientists during the Cold War, and were among the earliest Americans allowed to visit inside the Iron Curtain in the late 1950s. The Blocker's investigations into burns and mass casualties ultimately resulted in almost 200 publications, many written by Virginia, as well as five shelf feet of Army Grant Reports on Burns and Wound Healing.[24]

As a result of his leadership abilities, Truman Blocker rose rapidly through the administrative ranks at UTMB, achieving the presidency in 1967. It is impossible due to time constraints to list everything the Blockers accomplished over a ten-year period known as the "Blocker Era." However, several highlights are necessary: Truman and Virginia's dedication to all phases of burns physiology and treatment helped persuade the Shriners of North America to select UTMB Galveston as the site for its first hospital specializing in the treatment and rehabilitation of burned children. In 1963, the Shriners Burn Institute opened within John Sealy Hospital. Today, the Shriners Hospitals for Children-Galveston, occupies an eight-story tower on the medical school campus. These and similar join endeavors caused the American Burn Association to grant both Drs. Blocker its prestigious Harvey Allen Award in 1972.[25]

Under the Blocker administration, the Medical Branch became larger, better known, and more highly respected, both as a medical college and as a research facility. At least a dozen buildings were added to the campus, and the number of faculty and students doubled. William C. Levin, a close colleague who later succeeded Dr. Blocker as UTMB president recalled Blocker's formidable presence during these years. He recalled: "Just as the imposing figure of Winston Chur-

chill was immediately recognizable, even when photographed from the back, so the looming figure of Truman Blocker, often with lab coat fluttering and half-glasses precariously perched, was a familiar and imposing image through the hospital corridors, labs, classrooms, conference rooms, and offices of UTMB. This picture and the warm down-to-earth humor accompanying great size" continues to elicit fond memories to those who knew him. Blocker was so valued by the University of Texas System that in 1972 the Board of Regents asked him to work his managerial magic and serve as interim president at the UT San Antonio Health Science Center while still president at UTMB. The regents provided an airplane to enable him to do both jobs simultaneously. After he stepped down as president of UTMB in 1974, the UT regents again summoned him—this time to lead the UT-Houston Health Sciences Center as interim CEO. No individual in history has occupied the presidency of three medical centers. Proud of his contributions, Blocker boasted to friends, "I bleed orange."[26]

Virginia did not relish the role of UTMB first lady. She felt heavily constrained by social obligations that included endless teas and receptions, recruiting activities, and chauffeuring VIP's to and from Hobby Airport. These obligations stirred a nagging resentment. Virginia often publicly proclaimed that effects of the Texas nepotism laws were immaterial. Promoting the best for UTMB was more than any monetary award. In truth, the restriction left her rather embittered. "I never made any money of my own," she later reflected, "I particularly resented how people never considered me a REAL doctor." In time, Virginia found herself falling far behind the current medical literature. That, she admitted, was a "real sorrow." As an outlet, Virginia resurrected her youthful love of writing poetry, adopted the pseudonym "Victoria Browne," and published books of poems that contained titles suggestive of her mood: the satirical "Welcome to the Head Table," "Poems of Sadness and Madness" and "Paper Zinnias."[27]

Despite the confines of her position, Virginia never ceased to make an impact. She engaged in a nutritional study among the Blackfeet and other Indians in Montana and revised the American Red Cross First Aid Manual, popularizing CPR. She researched and wrote the history of the first seventy-five years of UTMB. In 1966, Virginia created and implemented an institutional desegregation plan as a birthday present

to Truman, that involved integrating the medical school, hospitals and clinics in a mere eight hours. Despite the stormy times, no protests were recorded of any kind. Another shared project involved initiating a restoration of the Ashbel Smith Building, known affectionately as "Old Red." Dismayed by plans to demolish the magnificent structure that housed the original medical school, the Truman and Virginia helped initiate a fundraising effort to save it. The beautifully restored building reopened in 1986.[28]

It was the love of books and learning in all its dimensions that produced Truman and Virginia's greatest gift: the acquisition of a superior rare book collection, the largest treasury of its kind in the American Southwest. Truman believed that the knowledge of medical history is essential for understanding current issues and problems. He would have identified with the sentiments of medical editor and translator, Saul Jarcho, who wrote "there are many things about a human being that you can only understand by reference to his condition in an earlier age."[29] Truman's favorite subjects were the anatomists and surgeons of the Renaissance, whose work contained the roots of Modern-Day medicine. With Virginia often at his side, Truman toured ancient schools of medicine and visited noted scholars, purchased rare books, prints and other medical memorabilia. Today the Truman G. Blocker, Jr. History of Medicine Collections housed in the Moody Medical Library includes some 18,000 volumes, 10,000 woodcuts, engravings and photographs, and a wide array of medical artifacts and memorabilia. It includes the works of Vesalius, Da Vinci, John and William Hunter and Louis Pasteur. As one of UTMB's most prized possessions, the collection encourages a celebration of the human condition while paying homage to one of man's most noble traits—the spirit of scientific enquiry. Above all, it reminds us that in a world of impersonal, technological invention, medicine must be an art marked by caring and compassion. These were the ultimate ideals of Drs. Truman and Virginia Blocker.[30]

Notes

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[3] Knappe, "Virginia Irvine Blocker, M.D," GTHC.

[4] Mason Guest, "The Man, The Surgeon, The President: Truman G. Blocker, Jr.," *University Medical 5*, no. 6 (1974): 3-32; Bremer, "Giant," 8.

[5] Guest, "The Man, The Surgeon, The President," 2; William C. Levin, "Truman G. Blocker, Jr., *The Bookman* 11, no. 4 (July/August 1984): 3-6, pp. 3-4.

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Lone Star Mind: Reimagining Texas History by Ty Cashion. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK. 2018. Introduction. Notes. Bibliography. Map. Index. Pp. xiv, 296. Ebook. Cloth. $34.95.

I was recently invited to talk to students are a Houston-area middle school. The 7th grade Texas history teacher asked her students if anyone had any questions. One precocious lad quipped, "Is Texas history really history?" I laughed and suggested he might want to read Ty Cashion's *Lone Star Mind*. Anyone who has seen Cashion at conferences for the past few years knows that he is an iconoclast of what he has termed "Texceptionalism", the insular view of the Lone Star past that has masqueraded as history for many years, yet has permeated the general public's mind largely through such "histories" as the ever-popular *Texas History Movies* comic strips that have been popular since the late-1920s to the somewhat more recent T. R. Fehernbach's *Lone Star: A History of Texas and Texans*, first published in 1968 in the wake of Disney's television series and movies about Davy Crockett, and John Wayne's successful film *The Alamo* (1960). What Cashion provides readers is a deconstruction of the almost homoerotic male-centric myth (30) of ruggedly handsome men who were more interested in their horses than women, and boldly wrested Texas from the unworthy hands of Mexicans, African-Americans and Native Americans, to bring it civilization.

Cashion's book is a historiographic tour-de-force that makes an integral component with other recent books that have shed light on how Texas history is written. In many respects, it is a historiographic seminar on Texas history, with Robert Calvert and Walter Buenger's *Texas Through Time: Evolving Interpretations* (Texas A&M University Press, 1991), Gregg Cantrell and Elizabeth Hayes Turner's *Lone Star Pasts: Memory and History in Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 2006), and Buenger and Arnoldo De Leon's *Beyond Texas Through Time: Breaking Away from Past Interpretations* (Texas A&M University Press, 2011) assigned on the course's reading list.

Cashion explains that the popular image of a rough and rugged Texas history that makes it so unique from the other 49 states has had a deleterious effect on the serious study of the state's past.

Texas exceptionalism both encouraged and suffered from its isolation: it encouraged an iconoclastic self-congratulatory history and discouraged other historians from seriously including it in Western or Southern histories. As he points out it "creating a vacuum that allowed Texas exceptionalism to thrive." (62) What we are left with is a history "assembled from museum exhibits, historic sites, the popular culture, and everything else *true* Texans share that satisfies their emotional and cultural needs. (67)

Cashion in the chapter "Who Owns the Texas Past?" "Traditional history revolves around the unalterable rock of American exceptionalism, self-justifying our national flaws into a teleological tale of moral instruction. The progressive interpretation embraces the attitude that a malleable and ever-evolving warts-and-all past provides its own tonic for engendering pride and loyalty, even if by ablution, rather than self-congratulations. Increasingly, the traditionalist vision of history has come to represent the core of a meta-narrative outfitted to bear the weight of conservativism. Conversely, the progressive view of history, until recently at least, could be likened more to a guiding attitude that informs everything but unites nothing, owing to a lingering postmodern distrust of grand narratives." (129)

Cashion proposes the construction of a new meta-narrative to both explain Texas history, but also to make it more usable and more "relatable" to a modern populace. Historians have often talked about establishing a new metanarrative for the history of our nation, and the Lone Star state. Instead of one based on the narrative of the Lost Cause, or of the triumph of settlers over Native Americans and Mexicans – the *Legacy of Conquest*, as historian Patricia Nelson Limerick called it. These long-standing metanarratives formed the identity of the United States for generations and have been deeply embedded in our national imagination and psyche through the popular legends, stories, poems, songs, movies, and television shows that we watched, read, learned as children. The *Texas History Movies* comic strips read by thousands of Texas children in the pages of the *Dallas Morning News*, and later classrooms where these books assigned from the 1930s – 1970s, and in the history textbooks since the 1890s until very recently. Cashion argues that it is time to have those old narratives fade away and establish a new one for a more diverse twenty-first century Texas.

Those stories that formed the nucleus of the persistent metanarratives and the countless other stories that adorned those stories like ornaments on a Christmas tree were largely selected by individuals and groups that had the power and wealth to promote, promulgate, publish, and perpetuate these versions of popular history. Others have told different stories throughout the centuries, many ignored or forgotten. But if we are to make these alternative stories viable challengers to the hoary heroic narratives, now long in the tooth, they have to be similarly adorned and made attractive to present and future generations. Some people hold onto those old narratives because they explain an environment where they, despite the problems their ancestors faced, overcame and became successful. But just because people become successful in an environment doesn't mean the environment was good, but that they overcame the obstacles; it tells that some were able to achieve despite the environment, and that if the environment were improved perhaps more would succeed as well. New metanarratives should explain how people saw the American dream – regardless of how accurate or accessible that dream was – and sought to make it their own. Not unlike the old narratives where people struggled against adversity, but the mountains they climbed were different mountains, some the making of other climbers, and made the way for others to follow, not just themselves and their families. Cashion writes, "A new usable Texas past properly conceived will certainly be driven by the collaboration between persistent revisionists and cultural constructionists; even so, it will also leave ample room for the work of updated traditionalists to advocate the self-interested ruling class. Texas exceptionalism as a point of reference, moreover, should not be overlooked for its residual utility in helping intellectuals come to grips with the historical mind by enabling them to correct misperceptions and calibrate new directions in scholarship."(174) Cashion's monumental work is a step in that direction, and should find a place on every Texas historian's bookshelf.

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