

## CHAPTER VII

### CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

Montgomery County was one of the largest slave holding counties in the state. In 1850 Montgomery County had 945 slaves, and in 1855 the number had increased to 1448 slaves, and in 1860 just before the Civil War the slave population had increased to 2106 slaves. The total value of the slaves in 1860 amounted to 1,296,380 dollars, and out of the 120 counties the state had at that time, Montgomery County ranked twenty-eighth in slave population.<sup>1</sup> In a period of ten years the slave population of Montgomery County had increased by over one thousand. This rapid increase was due to the many immigrants who brought their slaves from the states of the Old South to find richer cotton lands and to be further away from the people who were agitating the slavery issue in Washington.

Many of these plantation owners who brought their slaves to Montgomery County settled near the vicinity of Old Danville. In 1854 a citizen wrote to his wife that, "Judge Goldthwait of Alabama bought the H. G. Johnson place a little over \$5.00 per acre and has some 100 Negroes on it, and about as many over on the San Jacinto."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Almanac for 1860 (Galveston: Richardson and Company, 1860) p. 206

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, December 16, 1854, in Addison Collection.

The next year he reported in another letter to his wife, "I saw some very fine cotton when I went over to Danville on the 3rd. at Godlthwait's plantation on the San Jacinto."<sup>3</sup>

Another plantation owner was A. J. Lewis who brought his family and slaves from Virginia and built a three story home which he called Elmwood. This mansion was made by his slaves and contained a large ballroom on the third story. Another fine home owned by the widow of General Menucan Hunt was Malmaison, named for the chateau of Empress Josephine.<sup>4</sup>

Other large plantation owners were the Woods and Elmores; he Elmores called their plantation Melrose, after their owner's ancestral home in Virginia.<sup>5</sup>

Not all of the slaves were owned by large slave owners, for many families had just a few to be used as household servants; or a few field hands who helped them in the fields. Frequently during depressed years it was necessary for the owners to hire out their

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<sup>3</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, July 10, 1854, in Addison Collection.

<sup>4</sup> W. N. Martin, "A History of Montgomery," (unpublished Master's thesis, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville, Texas, 1950), p. 76

<sup>5</sup> Loc. cit.

slaves. In 1854 "men field hands hired out for \$190 to \$200 and women \$120 to \$160" a year.<sup>6</sup>

Slaves were a great deal of trouble and expense to keep. They had to be kept healthy and happy in order for the owners to get the best work out of them. Sometimes an owner would acquire one who had a tendency to run away often. The owner usually tried to get rid of such a slave when he captured him, because run-aways were a bad influence on the others. Many times blood hounds were used to trail slaves who had run away. In a letter in 1855 a citizen of Montgomery wrote that, "McHanna's negro, Ball, killed himself when the dogs were after him."<sup>7</sup>

On the whole, ill treatment was the exception rather than the rule in managing slaves because a slave who was injured by beating could not work for several days, therefore the owners tried to sell the ones who habitually broke the slave rules. The following quotation indicates what an owner thought of one of his runaway slaves:

My Negroes are hired out until the 10th. When I sell I will let you hear of it as soon as possible. In your next letter to me say how likely young Negro men sell with you. I have one that I am bound to

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<sup>6</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, January 31, 1854, in Addison Collection.

<sup>7</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, July 15, 1855, in Addison Collection.

sell. He ran away from me twice and is now in the woods the second time from Dr. Miller. He would sell for about 850 dollars here (well enough).<sup>8</sup>

The household servants were treated better than the field hands. They usually had grown up with their masters and their children and were treated like members of the family. In many cases the servants had their church pews and grave plots in the same church and cemetery with their master. When one of the owner's children married it was ordinarily the custom for the parents to give the bride and groom the Negro servant that had attended them when they were children, or one that they had grown up or played with as a child. These servants remained faithful and tended their masters throughout their life time. The following passage shows the faithfulness of one of these servants:

Old Milly returned here this morning from Austin to attend on Fowler whose health is bad. The old negro is in fine health and I reckon a gladder person has not revisited Montgomery for so many years, and all the old settlers were glad to see her. She says the town has improved so she hardly knew it. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Many of the faithful servants were given their manumission papers when their masters died, for owners often provided in their

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<sup>8</sup> Letter of Jane Davis to Betty Davis, September 14, 1852, in Addison Collection.

<sup>9</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, February 4, 1955, in Addison Collection.

slaves should be freed at that time. At the beginning of the Civil War there were many freed slaves who had obtained their freedom by this means.

When the talk of secession began one of the most prominent leaders of Texas, Sam Houston, started campaigning bitterly against the idea and the men who instigated it. On October 15, 1859 the town of Montgomery gave Sam Houston a barbecue where he expressed his views in a speech before the citizens of Montgomery on the subject of secession and the impending crisis of a civil war.

A synopsis of the speech is quoted as follows:

Gen. Houston said he cherished the kindest recollections for Old Montgomery. The first barbecue he ever attended in the state, was in Montgomery, in 1841. She was ever in favor of organized government - ever gave a united vote in the early struggles for independence; from which circumstance he denominated her the "Tenth Legion." He recurred briefly to his Kansas-Nebraska vote; said the people were beginning to see that it was a fraud upon the South, gotten up by Pierce and Douglas, for Presidential purposes; that Gov. Hammond of South Carolina, Jeff. Davis and Brown of Mississippi - the most ultra Southern men - had pronounced it a fraud and a cheat upon the South; that in voting with Seward and other abolitionists upon the Kansas Bill, he was, like old dog Tray, in bad company, but the sequel had shown he was right; that since the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, Kansas had been lost, free-soilism had been extended four hundred and fifty miles South, and that all Southern territory was now open to the inroads of free-soilism.

As to the men who had called him an abolitionist and a traitor to the South, he would only say they were a set of perfect gentlemen; but if he were to tell them so,

they would not believe it; that he had shed blood enough on Southern soil to wash away all such charges.

As to slavery he said nature had fixed its boundary - it would go where the climate, soil, etc., demanded it; he had never raised his voice against it; was not in favor of re-opening the African slave trade in order to christianize the negroes; re-open the trade, and cotton would fall to three and four cents per pound; the poor man would be injured by it in consequence of the reduction of the price of labor. He was not opposed to it on his own account, but for posterity.

Ever since the days of Jackson there had been a disunion, Southern Confederacy party. Their object was office. By the formation of a Southern Confederacy there would be more room for great men to come into office. We have so many great men that places can get three or four of them at a time. In case of disunion, what would become of the public money? the navy? the army? -- could the South get them?

He spoke of the Houston convention--wished they had called it another name. The nominees were in favor of re-opening the African slave trade; were ultra in their views, and were advocating doctrines that would lead to disunion and secession--they were about to carry out a policy ruinous to the country. He was induced under the circumstances, though he was not again desirous of entering public life, to obey the voice of the people, and step forth as a candidate for Governor. The people had indorsed him, though they had given him a very decent dubbing two years ago, which they had a right, as free men, to do, and for which he was not mad at them at all.

He spoke of Washington--where was his parallel? He pointed to him as the political Moses, whose farewell address contained the prophesies of our country, which we must heed if we would preserv it. Love of the Union was the inspiration of Liberty; we should cherish it; we should remember it was the Fourth of July.

He paid a tribute to Jackson. He was of the old simon pure Democratic school, and opposed to this modern

Democracy, which declares that you must vote for the nominees of a convention in any case.

He spoke of Seward. He was a resplendent abolitionist. The South had justly denounced him. He regretted the necessity of voting in his company; but he thought the best interests of his country required it at his hands. It does not hurt a good man to go to church with bad men. Seward was a cold-blooded, cool, calculating, unexcitable man. If you were to cut him to the center, it would draw no more blood than you could get from a lizard!

The editor of the State Gazette next received a severe castigation. John Marshall had been connected with a fire eating, disunion paper in Mississippi; had removed to Texas to carry out his ultra views. He (Marshall) had advocated a violation of the law by the juries of the country, as to the re-opening of the African slave trade. A man who would propagate such doctrines, ought not to be countenanced. He (Marshall) had stolen \$20,000 from the Public Treasury, as was reported. He (Houston) did not blame him, since it was his vocation! Yet Maj. Marshall was a perfect gentleman!

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He denounced the Galveston News. It had always been his enemy. If, for fifteen years one could show him a single item that paper had said in his favor, he would form a more favorable opinion of it. It was an enemy in the days of the Republic, by publishing articles discouraging to the Texans, and comforting to the enemy. He could forgive the editor of the News, as far as he was personally concerned; "but an enemy to my country, I never can forgive!"

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He denounced the abuses, intrigues and corruptions of conventions. He was glad to see the late evidences of regeneration of the nation in the independent spirit shown by the people. It was but the proud emotions of the hearts of freemen, rebelling against dictation and demagogueism. Van Buren was the first to go into a convention; Jackson refused to have anything to do with them.

He thanked the ladies for their presence. <sup>10\*</sup>

Sam Houston's speech was of no avail with the people of Texas, or with the South, because their problems had been brewing too long for them to listen to his advice. Many wanted to take his advice and felt that the Union should be saved at all cost, but it seemed that an impetuous force carried them along with the mass from which they could not shake themselves free.

On December 3, 1860 a committee at Austin prepared and published an address to the people of Texas for the purpose of calling a convention of delegates to meet at Austin January 28, 1861 to decide on the question of secession. <sup>11</sup> The citizens of Montgomery County, afraid of the outcome of this convention, on January 25, 1861 addressed the following petition to the legislature:

. . . The undersigned Citizens of Montgomery County in said state believing that our rights can be better secured and maintained in the Union than out of it, Pray the Legislature to take no steps tending to disunion. <sup>12</sup>

The petition was signed by two hundred and eight citizens, which would indicate according to the 1860 census, that at least

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<sup>10</sup> News item in The Standard (Clarksville, Texas), October 15, 1859.

\*See Appendix A for a description of the Montgomery barbecue.

<sup>11</sup> Dudley G. Wooten, History of Texas (Dallas: Texas History Company, 1889), p. 352.

<sup>12</sup> Memorial Petition, January 25, 1861, in Texas State Archives, Number 169.



one out of every sixteen persons in the county was against secession.

The secession convention met in Austin and on February 1, 1861, by a vote of the delegates Texas declared itself to be with the Confederacy.<sup>13</sup>

Although Montgomery County had a high ratio of anti-secessionists, many turned loyal to the South when the call for troops came and eagerly joined the Confederate Army. Some stayed loyal to the Union, however, because official records show that there were nineteen hundred and twenty claiming to be from Texas who were enrolled in the Federal Army during the war. They were enrolled in two regiments and were organized at Matamores, Mexico.<sup>14</sup>

Most of the men from Montgomery County who enlisted in the Confederate Army served in Company H, Fourth Texas Regiment, Hood's Texas Brigade. The majority of the men in Company H were from Montgomery County with some men in it from Grimes and Walker Counties.

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Wooten, loc. cit.

Frank B. Chilton, Official Minutes of Hood's Texas Brigade, Monument Dedication and Thirty-ninth Annual Re-union, Together with A Hood's Texas Brigade History and a Confederate Scrap Book (Houston: Rein and Sons Company, 1911), p. 58.

Around the first of May 1861 Proctor P. Porter, an attorney-at-law from the town of Montgomery, was appointed enrolling officer to muster recruits from Montgomery County. He established his headquarters in the town, and when the enlisting there was exhausted he moved his headquarters to Red Top in Grimes County, where he consolidated his men with other squads organized by James T. Hunter of Walker County and Thomas M. Owens of Grimes County.<sup>15</sup>

On May 7, 1861, while at Red Top, Company H was formally organized and officers duly elected. Proctor P. Porter of Montgomery County was chosen Captain; James T. Hunter of Walker County was chosen First Lieutenant; Thomas M. Owens of Grimes County was chosen Second Lieutenant; Benton Randolph of Walker County was chosen Third Lieutenant.<sup>16</sup>

Company H, in connection with the other companies that had been ordered for Virginia, left Red Top and proceeded by way of Brenham to Houston. There they were regularly mustered into the Confederate service for the duration of the war by Major Earl Van Dorn, and from Houston they took up the march for the seat of war in Virginia.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 126

<sup>16</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

The following passage is quoted from a letter written by Corporal Zachariah Landrum of Montgomery who was one of the men in Company H that left Houston for Richmond, Virginia. He wrote that:

. . . We left Houston on the 19th of August on the N. C. R. Road to Beaumont and down the Neches and up the Sabine to Niblett's Bluff where we remained a week before we could get wagons. I would have written from there but had no way of writing. We started in the rain for New Iberia all on foot. We were fourteen days getting to New Orleans. We had a very bad time getting over. It rained on us every day but one. We had to wade in the water from shoe mouth deep to waist deep all the time. It is a low flat country like the prairies about Houston and you can imagine how they would be after raining 38 days.

We all had excellent health, but one man died, he belonged to a company from Henderson County. He died from inflammation of the brain. We staid over in New Orleans one day (Sunday). After we left N. C. on the Jackson road I was taken sick with something like the flux but have got entirely well. Twelve miles below Holly Springs, Miss we met with a sad accident, the loss of Ras. Cartwright. . . . .

. . . . .  
 We arrived here (Richmond) three days ago and are camped out in the edge of the city about a mile and a half from the capitol. I have been all over the Capitol grounds. I am now writing in the Library of the Capitol, they allow the Soldiers to come and write when they please. I have not seen the President yet, he is sick. He is going to visit camp as soon as he is able. Hon. J. H. Reagan and Lady were down to see us yesterday. We fare very well, plenty to eat. There is no war news of importance. No battle yet, only a few skrimishes. There are seventeen hundred prisoners now in Richmond. We pass by the prison going to Camps; they are a rough looking set. I do not know where our destination is yet. We have got no arms yet, do not know when we can get them. We have not yet formed into a regiment but will in a few days. I heard this morning that we were to be

moved some ten or twelve miles from Richmond to a camp of instruction. I have not the least idea we will go into actual service before next spring. . . .<sup>18</sup>

Reaching Richmond on September 18, 1861, they pitched camp, which they called Camp Texas, and waited there until they were joined by other Texas companies at which time they were formed into the Fourth Texas Regiment with Colonel John B. Hood in command. The Fourth Regiment brigade with the First and Fifth Texas Regiments constituting a brigade which later became known, when Hood was promoted to a general, as Hood's Texas Brigade.<sup>19</sup>

At the time that Company H of Montgomery County left Houston for Virginia, it was made up of one hundred and five men, and during the war there were added to the original company thirty-eight recruits and two substitutes, making a total membership of one hundred and forty-five members.<sup>20</sup> These men participated in practically every engagement of the Army of Northern Virginia, for Hood's Brigade played a prominent part in the various battles, with the exception of Chancellorsville; and in addition they fought with the forces opposed to General Sherman and General Thomas in

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<sup>18</sup> Letter of Zacharia Landrum to Melissa Landrum, September 21, 1861, in possession of Anna Davis Landrum Weisinger, Montgomery, Texas.

<sup>19</sup> Chilton, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Loc. cit.

Georgia and Tennessee, participating in the desperate fighting at Chickamauga and the siege of Knoxville.<sup>21</sup>

One of the battles in which Company H participated, the battle of Gaines's Mill in 1862, was described by a soldier from Montgomery County. He wrote the following concerning the battle:

. . . . I suppose you have now heard about our glorious victory before Richmond. I would have written sooner but could get no paper and at last have made out to get this which is a poor apology. Willis and I neither were in the fight. Our Brigade left Richmond to go up in the Valley to reinforce old Stonewall Jackson. Willis was left at sick camp near Richmond, I had been there some-time but thought I was able to go. I started and the flux broke out on me very bad at Lynchburg. The Hospitals were so crowded there I could not get in, so I went on to Charlottesville where I was at the time of the fight. I left there Sunday to come back with Jackson. I passed over the battle field Monday where they had fought. Thursday until Monday our forces kept whipping them back and on Tuesday about 12 o'clock I got to where our Regiment was, but it was on the opposite side of a field and supporting a battery of ours that was in the field shelling the enemy. The shells were flying all over the field and I could not get to them until next morning. Here, Tom Scott from Waverly got his leg so shattered by a shell that it had to be cut off. Here, I first learned our loss accurately. We had ten killed out of our company on the field. I will name all you know. Charlie Conrow was shot through the breast, was dead when found. T. O. Wilkes, who lived with Joe Evans, shot through with a grape shot, was dead when found. R. Quigley, son-in-law to old man Travis, I don't know where he was hit. Ben Allen lived up on Lake Creek near Alstons, shot in the head. A great many were wounded, among them Capt. Porter, in flesh part of the thigh. He was taken to Richmond and there was taken with the Typhoid

21 Loc. cit.

fever and died in a few days—thus went as true and noble a man as lived. . . . Lt. Randolph was wounded, in the heel, Billy Fisher was wounded in the arm. I saw him yesterday. He is coming out here to sick camp to stay until his arm gets well. No bones broken, he will be well in a few weeks. I told him I was going to write home, he says tell his folks that he is doing finely, can't come home till he gets revenge. He did not get but one shot before he was wounded. Clint Lewis was wounded through the shoulder. Billy says he was doing finely when he left to go to his uncles. Henry Travis was wounded in the arm, he has come out to camp so his wound is not very bad. Capt. Hutchinson was wounded through the arm and breast with a grape shot, and died the next day. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Later, in 1863, Zacharia Landrum wrote again, describing the battle at Gettysburg, in which engagement Company H lost half of its men dead or wounded. In the letter he said:

. . . I would have answered your letter that you wrote me by Jimmie Cartwright, but we have been on the move ever since, and in that trip, to Pennsylvania, where I received a slight check in my farther process from a Yankee. You have no doubt before now received through the papers an account of the fight at Gettysburg. It was one of the severest battles that has been fought during this war. We had to fight the Yankees on a Mountain, when it was very steep and rocks as large as a meeting house. We drove them back a distance of a mile and a half and took between 10 and 15,000 prisoners. Had gone a considerable distance up the mountain when one of the rascals put me to a stand still by the means of a minnie ball through the thigh just above the knee and across the top of my thigh going in my left thigh and out striking the other, bruising it a good deal but not going in. . . .

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<sup>22</sup> Letter of Zacharia Landrum to Nancy Gay, July 27, 1862, in possession of Anna Weisinger.

I will give you so far as I know a list of the killed and wounded of our company. Lieut, Ben Reynolds from Anderson killed. Lt. Spivey from Huntsville wounded in the leg, I. Stuessey wounded in the foot, Bob Rankin fore finger shot off at first joint. A. B. Seay wounded in the foot, he was at home on furlough last year and in Montgomery. I believe that is all that you know. I will mention that Jack Ellis was wounded in the leg and Tom Dillard is missing, they are two of Mr. Wm. Taylor's friends. A. Taylor, Billy Fisher, Green Griggs, Jim Hall, Henry Travis, and Dick Walker, and Ruben Talley are all safe. John I. Smith was not in the fight, was left sick at Culpeper. We lost about half the Co. wounded Eob Brantter is taken prisoner, Col. Powell supposed to be killed. I can't give the particulars as I was carried to the Hospital one morning and sent on in a wagon to Williamsport, Md. and from there here in an ambulance. They are sending the wounded from here to Stannton as fast as they can. . . .<sup>23</sup>

In another letter written some days after the one quoted above, he wrote more particulars concerning the battle of Gettysburg. Part of the letter is quoted as follows:

I gave you a list of the killed and wounded in my other letter, but I suppose you have seen a list published before now in some of the Texas papers. Willis was not in the fight, he was sick at the time and is here now at the Texas Hospital, nothing serious. We lost about half of our company killed and wounded, but one killed that we know of for certain, Lt. Reynolds from Anderson. It was one of the severest battles of the war. We had to charge through a wheat field about 500 yards wide with the Yankee artillery of about 100 guns firing on us after reaching the woods, where there was a stone fence, at the foot of a mountain, we ran the Yankees from the fence and up the side of the mountain which was quite steep and covered all over with large rocks until we drove them away, up to the top of the mountain where they had breastworks and thru lines of battle from which we were unable to drive them away, We fell back

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<sup>23</sup> Letter of Zacharia Landrum to Nancy Gay, July 15, 1863, in possession of Anna Weisinger.

about a hundred or two yards and lay there until our retreat from there. I was wounded about 3 hundred yards before we got to the breastworks, the fight we were in was on the 2nd of July, on the fourth they started all the wounded that could walk and ride in the ambulances and wagons to the rear. I was in a wagon with five others of our company, we started on the morning of the 4th and drove without stopping or anything to eat until next eveing we arrived at Williamsport, Md. on the Potomac to find the river up and the pontoons destroyed by the Yankees. We had a rough time coming down on a turnpike across the mountain, the roads are made of rock thrown in the road and beat down, and a wagon running over them, with the Yankee cavalry running into the train, and the wagons stopping and then having to trot, to catch up and keep closed up, with a sore leg is anything but pleasant.

After our arrival at Williamsport, they had a cavalry fight, or at least the Yanks had cavalry, and we had wagoners and a few infantry, they had artillery and I had just got under <sup>bank when</sup> a shell past through an ambulance up on the bank and bursted a few feet in front of me. We hobbled down to the Ferry and our Quarter Master advised us to go across the river, we got over and staid there four or five days. As good luck would have it we met up with one of the Fifth Texas going on to the Regiment, he stopped with us, drew rations and cooked them and got us a tent and we got along very well. We staid at Winchester three or four days when we were sent to Stannton and from there here, and an awful hole it is. The bedding and everything is nice with the exception of the eating which is beef and bread, and not enough of that, for morning and dinner and bread and coffee (hot water) made from wheat for supper.

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The report was in circulation here that Texas and La. and Ark. had seceded from the Southern Confederacy and placed themselves under the protection of France. I was in hopes it was so. I think when a nation can't protect the states that form it, they ought to protect themselves in the best way they can. I would much rather the French, (if it does come to the worst) should rule us than any nation on the Globe. I am anxious that



the war should close, but I am not willing to go under Abe's Rule. We will fight until all are killed or we will have our Independence.<sup>24</sup>

By the close of the war practically all of Company H had been killed or incapacitated, because out of the one hundred and forty-five original members, when Company H along with the other companies of Hood's Brigade surrendered at Appomattox, only nine men were left in the company. Sixty-seven had been killed on the battle fields, while forty-seven were wounded, many of them dying from their wounds in the hospitals. Some had gotten discharged, others were captured as prisoners, and one had transferred to the navy.<sup>25\*</sup>

While the younger men of Montgomery County were off fighting in the war the older men and heads of families were busy at home organizing into units of home guard. Soon after Company H left, several companies were formed in the county to serve in the State Militia in case the state was invaded. The county was divided into five beats and each beat formed a company led by a captain who was selected from the company by the men of the group. Over the captains was a major appointed by the Adjutant-General in Austin. The companies were attached to the Third Regiment, Seventeenth Brigade of the Texas State Troops. In 1862 the major over the Montgomery

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<sup>24</sup> Letter of Zacharia Landrum to Nancy Gay, August 4, 1863, in possession of Anna Weisinger.

<sup>25</sup> Chilton, op. cit., p. 123

\*See Appendix B for a list of the members of Company H

County companies was Israel Worsham from the town of Montgomery.<sup>26</sup>

One of the first home guard companies formed was Captain Lem. G. Clepper's company of "Montgomery County Rifle Boys" organized from beat three. While reporting to the authorities about the organization of the company, Clepper wrote the following:

Permet me to report to you a volunteer company numbering Seventy men known as the "Montgomery County Rifle Boys". Organized as home guards under the order issued to you by Adjutant-General Byrd, made up of poor men who can not leave their homes but a few weeks at a time without leaving their families destitute or in want, but are willing to act as minute men in case their Services should be deemed necessary for a few weeks at a time; except during time of planting and making their crops, and desire that you should report the following members and officers as home guards and active minute men should the services of said company be demanded as such.<sup>27</sup>

The men listed by Clepper were: Lem. G. Clepper, Captain; S. W. Smith, First Lieutenant; William T. Jones, Second Lieutenant, H. D. Ethridge, Third Lieutenant; and seventy-two enlisted men were enrolled.

Another home guard company formed in 1861 was that of Captain R. O. Oliver's company. Most of his men were from beat one of the town of Montgomery. The company doctor for this company

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<sup>26</sup> Memorial Confederate Muster Rolls, May 10, 1862, in Texas State Archives, Number 398.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., July 22, 1861, Number 296.

was Doctor J. L. Irion, and when the company organized it was immediately dispatched to Galveston Island to do patrol duty in that vicinity.<sup>28</sup>

The following letter written from Montgomery to Galveston explains the preparations that were made by the local citizens to provide for Oliver's company stationed in Galveston:

. . . I went to church last Sunday and then and there saw several of the young ladies of the ville and vicinity looking well but lonely. I had a few days previous been up in the Court House where Miss Cora and others who were calling and making up pants for Capt. Oliver's Company. The sewing was generally done at home. I went up to get Bro. Neal's and yours to have made but some of the young ladies were ahead of me, so you and he may know you are not forgot.

. . . . .  
Davis and Ellis made rapid sales of their new goods especially calico etc. Davis sold \$1,000 per day for several days. Willis and Bro. have nearly sold out and Davis and Ellis sell on credit. P. J. Willis returned lately from Mississippi and Alabama. Says he will let the residue of their goods go as the main stock has gone, but that he is done buying.

I think my household can squeeze along next year in the way of clothes. I propose wearing ossanbury pants next summer, but Mrs. Davis bought me some linen the other day. Some, if not many, of the women folks bought for weeks back, as though they really feared they would have nothing to wear. I am not uneasy about clothes next year; but I fear I may not have enough to eat. I have got no pork or salt. I believe I can buy and pay for salt, yet, I have hopes that some of those in debt

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<sup>28</sup> Personal interview of the author with Mrs. J. B. Addison, Montgomery, Texas, July 8, 1952.

to me will supply my smoke house at some price. If they don't, I will do the best I can. We ourselves now have cornbread, beef and barley coffee without sugar. We make some butter and have a pretty good garden. Times are growing harder and men becoming more selfish.

I am pleased to learn that the health of Captain Oliver's Company is now pretty good and partically so to know that you are well and getting along finely in the discharge of duty and find some agreeable society in the City. Mr. I. C. Davis and Griffin are nearly the only young men to call on the ladies. Miss Iantha (Lewis) was over a few days last week. Mr. Clepper is a candidate for Colonel in this militia regiment. He is in good health, sickness is not over with here.<sup>29</sup>

In beat two the company organized was led by Captain S. D. Wooldridge. This was a cavalry company called the "Mounted Riflemen". When it was organized, Captain Wooldridge wrote the following letter to the Adjutant-General in Austin:

Capt. S. D. Wooldridge's Co. of "Mounted Rifelmen"  
Danville, Montgomery Co., February 14, 1862  
17th Brig.

To the Adjutant-Genl:

Sir I here with report and transmit--in obedience to an act passed Dec. 25, 1861, a "volunteer company of "Mounted Riflemen", or troop formed on the 4th day of May 1861, under an act passed Febr. 15, 1858.

.....  
Forty-two of this roll are married men heads of families. The company has drilled once every week

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Letter of Nat Hart Davis to William H. Warren, December 17, 1861, in possession of Mrs. J. B. Addison, Montgomery, Texas.

since its formation and then has left its ranks for active service about thirty. The company is armed with shotguns and rifles, about an equal number of each. This company has reported to Genl. Hebert and was accepted by him to be called immediately into service in case of invasion.

W. D. Wooldridge, Capt.<sup>30</sup>

Fifty-three officers and men were enlisted in Captain Wooldridge's cavalry.

Beat four organized their company on March 29, 1862 and elected John N. Scott, Captain; W. W. Mills, First Lieutenant; Owen Shannon, Second Lieutenant; William Polk, Junior-Second Lieutenant.<sup>31</sup>

Beat five of Montgomery County organized their company March 10, 1862, and the following letter was written concerning the election:

This certifies that at an election held, on the 10th day of March, 1862 in Beat No. 5 in the county of Montgomery, to elect company officers for the company of State Troops within said beat, the following persons were duly elected viz: A. Phillips, Captain; J. F. McFadin, 1st Lieutenant; Samuel Haden, 2nd Lieutenant; Alexander Copeland, Junior-Second Lieutenant.

Please forward commissions for the above officers to Maj. Israel Worsham of the town of Montgomery. Also

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<sup>30</sup> Confederate Muster Rolls, February 14, 1862, op. cit., Number 1148.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., April 7, 1862.

send to Major W. the copies of the Military Laws to which the officers of Montgomery County are entitled.<sup>32</sup>

Practically every able-bodied man in Montgomery County was, before the war ended, mustered into one of these companies. In 1864 nearly all were doing some phase of war duty, either guarding at Galveston or fighting in the war across the Mississippi. Men were at such a premium in Montgomery County just before the close of the conflict, and so many men had gone from the town of Montgomery, that a Confederate soldier doing patrol duty when he passed through the town in 1864, described the village in his diary by saying that, "the war had dried the little place up--not a door open in it."<sup>33</sup>

The women of Montgomery County had a voluminous job during the war. They busied themselves with spinning, weaving, and making clothes for the soldiers. Nearly every family bought wheels and looms, and an abundance of cloth was manufactured. The trade across the Rio Grande, and that carried on by running the blockade, kept the people tolerably well supplied with such necessities as could not be produced in the State.

To show the tasks of the women during the war, the following parts of letters written by women during the Civil War are quoted:

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., March 10, 1862.

<sup>33</sup> H. C. Medford, "Diary," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXXIV (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1930), p. 138.

. . . The ladies have been busy the last few days making uniforms which are grey trimmed with yellow, they look very pretty. . . . Times are very hard here, it takes all the money we can spare for the soldiers, though not withstanding the blockade we have plenty to eat. I have raised a great many chickens this year and we have had fine gardens, and all kinds of vegetables in abundance. . . .<sup>34</sup>

In 1862 another correspondent wrote:

. . . Well how do you get on making cloth, I have made 90 yds. and have another piece ready to weave. Plain white cloth is selling for 50 and 60 cents per yd., and calico at 25 and 30. I bought several calico dresses, but we have no where to go. No preaching for several months. I made me a nice hat and dyed it black out of wheat straw. I have been busy making Mr. Davis shirts. Ma and Hellen are making them a tulip quilt like yours. . . .<sup>35</sup>

In 1863 a letter from Fairfield, Texas reached Montgomery and said in part:

. . . . . I have no news of importance to write only we are all busy at work here. I am spinning me some dresses, I have almost got them done. We have to make our own clothes up here. The people here are all hard at work, I want you to write to me what you all are doing down there, if you are trying to make any cloth about Montgomery and how you are getting along in that way. I would like to know what you do for cotton cards down there, they are very scarce up here and very high also. Every thing in the provision line is very high, bacon is selling for 50 cents per pound, corn 2 dollars per bushel. We have some new comers to this neighborhood, among them are some families from the northern states that have lost nearly all of their property. It was taken from them by the Yankees. . . .<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Letter of Amelia Jane Davis to Betty Davis, August 7, 1861, in Addison Collection.

<sup>35</sup> Letter of Amelia Jane Davis to Betty Davis, December 30, 1862, in Addison Collection.

<sup>36</sup> Letter of Elizabeth Bennett to Betty Davis, February 22, 1863, in Addison Collection.

On June 19, 1865 General Gordon Granger of the United States Army landed on Galveston Island, assumed military command over Texas, declared all that had been done by the State government since 1861 null and void, and proclaimed the freedom of the Negroes; hence the reconstruction period began.

Montgomery County had its share of corruptness during the reconstruction period like any other thickly populated Negro county. The first trouble began at the time emancipation was confirmed by General Granger. In June all crops were at a stage where they needed much care and attention. Many of the slave owners did not want to tell their field hands about the emancipation until fall when the crops had been harvested. This created some excitement between the newly appointed federal officials of the county and the local farmers. Finally contracts were given to the Negroes to finish out the farming year. By fall, when the crops were gathered, all the slaves had been turned loose to wander about the county to grapple for a living as best as they could. The freed Negroes became destitute, and when winter approached a rumor of a Negro insurrection was talked which caused the local citizens to be uneasy for their safety. Close to Christmas time rumors had become so alarming that the citizens petitioned the Governor to send state troops for protection. The petition that the citizens sent is as follows:



The undersigned respectfully ask leave to represent to you, that they have, as they verily believe good grounds to apprehend an insurrection of the Negroes at or about the New Year at this place and Waverly, and they can not doubt, from information had from other parts of the State, and the Warnings of the public prints that an insurrectionary organization -- perhaps aided by the Jay Hawking element -- exists wherever the Negroes are in numbers.

The collected information of numerous reliable individuals, both as to the conduct of and admission by Negroes, of the fact that a general rising and division of property is contemplated, on the part of the Negroes; (those admitting it, however, denying all connection on their part with the movement) cannot be ignored, however, much their good conduct during the war would lead us to hope it otherwise.

What the Negroes, in the face of the strongest assurances of the authorities and the late speeches of Genls. Strong and Gregory warning them to the contrary, they still determinedly believe and express their belief that a general division of the Land and property of the county, will be made among them, if not at Christmas, yet as soon as the "Great Man", the Superior officer of the Govt. can attend to making it.

.....  
 Another belief prevails among them that in the event of an insurrection, the Government soldiers will not take part against them, and from the intimacy or fraternization that takes place, on all occasions, between them and the Govt. and Common soldiers -- even those that escorted Genl. Gregory in his late tour, we cannot doubt but that the Negroes have some grounds for this belief.

Were no dangers of an insurrection of a preconcerted character to be feared, still one may be expected, (from their ignorance, folly, and late teachings of equality in all respects), when they gather in large bodies -- freed from their contracts during the holy days and feel the momentum of numbers and corporal strength with supplies of liquor and proceed from a small beginning, to breaking open stores, ending in violence, outrage, destruction of life, stores of food, corn, and other property -- which we learn from a

reliable Negro as to the destruction of the corn cribs.<sup>37</sup>

By 1870 Montgomery County was in the clutch of the Carpetbag and Scalawag rule which lasted over ten years. In 1870 a petition was presented to the reconstruction legislature for relinquishment of the state tax for the years 1870 and 1871. The tax money was to be paid to the county officials so that they could pay the county debts. The reason the petition listed were clearly stated:

The County, by the effect of the Rebellion, lost the revenue (full one half of its former income) derived from the taxable value of those who are now freed persons.

There has not been any immigration to the county, nor any work of Public improvement undertaken, since the Rebellion. So, there has been no increase in the value of real and other property. Consequently, there had been no increase of revenue at these sources -- which have been so largely enjoyed by other counties, neither has there been any increase of revenue to the county at any other source.

All the limited income of the County -- since the War has been expended, in the partial payment of the current expences of the county.

The jail, and the Court house of the County require material repairs or re-novation.

The present income County taxes (for the year 1870) will not be sufficient to pay the accruing Jury fees and other annual county expenses of the present year.

There is also a large indebtedness against the County, now standing from unpaid Jury fees and other expenses, necessarily incident to county organization and government.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Memorial Petition, November 1865, in Texas State Archives, Number 267.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., June, 1870, Number 180.

After the war Montgomery and Harris Counties had been placed in the same state congressional district. In the state congressional election of 1870 two Negro representatives were elected to represent Montgomery and Harris Counties. Goldstein Dupree, Negro from Montgomery, and Richard Allen, Negro from Houston, were elected. While campaigning for Governor Davis in the next election, that of 1872, Goldstein Dupree was caught by the Montgomery unit of the Ku Klux Klan and killed.<sup>39</sup>

In the November election of 1872 Richard Allen, Negro from Houston, was re-elected to the Legislature. The Radical Republicans ran E. Anderson, Negro from Montgomery in Goldstein Dupree's place and he succeeded in being elected to the Legislature. The election was contested and Anderson gave up his seat before his term expired.<sup>40</sup>

The 1872 election was one of such fraud that the whole election was contested by the losing candidates. The case was tried before the Thirteenth Legislature in the senate chamber in Austin and the trial lasted several months. The charges brought against the Radicals concerned their tactics and illegal methods in elections. The group that had been elected, one senator and three representatives, was charged

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<sup>39</sup> Contested Election in the Fourteenth District in the Senate, 13th Legislature, State of Texas (Austin: John Cardwell, State Printer, 1873), p. 68

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

with the following:

That more than fifty men, after voting for you in Harris county, again and during the same election voted for you in Montgomery county. That more than four hundred men voted for you in Harris county, who at the time of voting were not and never had been citizens or residents of said Fourteenth Senatorial District, nor were they duly registered in said district. . . . .

That more than two hundred men in Harris county voted for you upon their affidavits that they were registered and qualified voters in said county, and had lost their registration papers, whose names do not appear upon the registration list of said county, which was done in contravention of the General Election Law. That the same thing was done in Montgomery county by one hundred men. That more than fifty negro men were allowed to vote for you who gave different names to the judges of election, from the name called for by the registration papers they presented, and were so allowed to vote without any one identifying them, or being known to either of said judges, and without examination as to their qualification as voters. That one hundred or more men were allowed to vote for you who presented no registration papers, but merely a slip of paper containing what they said was their number on the registration list, and this was done without any examination of the voter by the judges of election, and not one of whom was known to either of said judges or other present. . . . That the man Sheridan, one of the Board of Appeal, during the time of the ten days' registration by the Registrar, was engaged as a "runner" for the Radical party, and was employed in hunting up and bringing to the Registrar colored men for registration, thereby disqualifying himself to act impartially and with fairness in the exercise of his "revisory power" as a member of the Board of Appeals. That the colored men, numbering from three to five hundred, and all Radicals, and your political friends, mobbed, on Wednesday of the election, a colored man for voting the "Democratic ticket", thereby intimidating and preventing many other colored men from voting for me and other Democratic nominees. . . . . That men who served in the penitentiary of the State for crime, and who had not in any manner to the law been restored to the right of suffrage, voted for you.

That the Board of Appeals failed to strike from the registration lists the names of those who had died or removed from the county, and that some fraudulent votes were cast for you upon the registration papers of dead Negroes. That some negroes who had not arrived at the age of majority were registered and voted for you. . . .<sup>41</sup>

An example of what had happened at the polls was given in one of the testimonies of Sam Ashe. It was stated:

I heard Sheridan say frequently to the Negro voter who had given a different name from the one called for by the registration paper, "your name is so and so" calling the name called for by the registration paper, but in those instances the voter persisted in giving his name, saying that that was his right name, and that he was not going to change it, which caused laughter among the bystanders. . . . I appealed directly to Sheridan and told him that the frauds would vitiate the election, but he paid no attention to me. The frauds were so apparent that everybody could see them, and the negro policemen were laughing about it. It was a subject of joke amongst them.

Robert Ashe, colored, living in Galveston county, and voted in Harris county under an assumed name. I was standing by and knew the name he voted under was not Ashe, and I know that his name was Ashe. He belonged to me; I knew him all his life; we were raised together.

Tom Sanders, colored, handed in his ballot to Sheridan. When it was discovered to be a Democratic ticket, his papers were handed back to him as rejected, Sheridan retaining his ballot and placing it on the table outside of the ballot box.

Tom Sanders asked me to examine his papers. I examined, and told him that they were regular, and entitled him to vote, and told him to present them again to Sheridan. He did so, and at the same time a colored policeman forced him a Republican ticket, in spite of his declarations that he had already passed into Sheridan's hands another ticket.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-3.

The Republican ticket was rapidly taken by Sheridan and put in the box. To this I made strong objections, charging Cheridan with open fraud, and manipulating Tom Sander's vote. I used some very severe language to him, because he was impertinent to me.

I was in a little difficulty myself on one occasion. I was passing into the court house from the sidewalk through a dense crowd of colored voters, when a fist fight occurred between a white man and a black man. A colored policeman named Johnson interfered and arrested the white man. About that time I came upon the scene and arrested the colored man. At the time I arrested the colored man he was striking at the white man, who was under arrest. This created a good deal of excitement among the negroes, and they threatened to overwhelm me. I held on to him, however, until other parties came up, and they were finally separated.<sup>42</sup>

The contestants won; the Negroes and Radical Republicans were ousted from their seats, and the Democratic candidates took their place. This was the point of the beginning of the ebbing tide for the Radical control in Montgomery County. The Ku Klux Klan became very active to keep the Negroes and Radicals away from the poles. Every Negro who was courageous enough to become a candidate received a call from the Ku Klux Klan. In the town of Montgomery the sound of the Negroes being punished by the Klan could be heard from one side of the town to the other.<sup>43</sup>

In 1870 a Yankee came from Illinois to Montgomery to teach a three month school for the Negroes. In a few weeks he

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>43</sup> Personal interview of the author with Mrs. J. B. Addison, Montgomery, Texas, July 8, 1952.

disappeared and was soon replaced by another who taught for a few weeks. One morning the Negro children went to school and their teacher did not arrive. Finally someone reported that the professor had been found drowned in Town Creek. The Negroes were told that the man had slipped from a footlog while crossing the stream and drowned. Other reports were that he was murdered and thrown into the creek by local citizens who resented a Yankee teaching the Negroes.<sup>44</sup>

William McGrew, county attorney for two years and his half-brothers, John and Bob Oliver, and a Charles Brown (alias Tex Brown) were shot to death by the people of Montgomery in "necessary defense". McGrew was found to be a Ku Klux Klansman at night, a Republican appointee by day, and a horse thief in between. The Oliver boys would ride their horses into the stores, fire their guns, terrify the inhabitants, and commit robbery at will. Tex Brown was a lawless desperado of more renown. All four bodies were dumped on Mrs. Oliver's porch. They were the first ones to be buried in the new cemetery, because they were refused burial in the Methodist grave yard.<sup>45</sup>

Another Federal appointee who did not stay long after he was appointed was R. B. Rentfro. He was appointed County Judge, but soon resigned for reasons set forth in a letter quoted herewith:

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<sup>44</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 62

<sup>45</sup> Anna Davis Weisinger, "History of Montgomery County," Historicade Program, October 25, 1949, p. 16

Dear Sir:

Did you know one R. B. Rentfro, a lawyer and politician living in Montgomery Co. in 1878? What was his reputation politically and socially? He is now a candidate for congress from this district and I have been referred to you. Did Mr. Rentfro have to leave Montgomery Co. and for what? Will you please give me all the information at your command. Was an attempt made to hang him by mob and for what? Reports are conflicting as to Mr. Rentfro's record in Montgomery Co. and I want to get something reliable. Did Mr. Rentfro make threats about burning the town of Willis and taking Montgomery, and that he would not be responsible for the lives of women and children? I trust you will pardon my troubling you and consider me under many obligations for an early reply.<sup>46</sup>

In reply to the letter the following was written:

Dear sir:

Herewith find a copy of a telegram lately wired to you in reply to you, it substantially answers much of your letter of 1st inst.

I did know Mr. R. B. Rentfro, lawyer and politician living in Montgomery County in 1878. It was prudent for Mr. Rentfro to leave Montgomery County. His life would not have been safe here had he attempted to remain till fall election. His offense was "Radicalism" and being incautious in language. His first personal unsafety was in August 1878 at a Barbecue and speaking at Bethel, a Baptist Church some miles North of Montgomery. And I understand "ropes" were talked about. I arrived there after Mr. Rentfro had left. But from what men told me on the road and from what I saw and heard after I got there I think it maybe turned a "mob." Some of whom doubtless proposed ill-treatment to two active Republican candidates viz: Judge Polk Yell and Mr. Rentfro.

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<sup>46</sup> Letter of Oswald Wilson to Nat Hart Davis, October 1, 1884, in Addison Collection.



I never heard that Mr. R. made threats about burning the town of Willis. There was a report that he said the town of Montgomery might be taken and that he would not be responsible for the lives of the women and children. This was greatly deversified of its offensiveness when the real language used by Mr. R. came out. Nor is it likely that it induced the treatment of Rentfro at Bethel. Some week or two or a month after the Bethel affair (or I was told) a small crowd of men in (not citizens of) the town of Montgomery apparently wanted to shoot Mr. Rentfro. My recollection is that this was the P. M. of the Saturday that armed men rode into the town of Montgomery to hear a Democratic speech in the Methodist Church. Still later in the year some persons in or at the town of Willis -- as I have heard -- gave Mr. Rentfro notice that he could not stay there.

Thoughtful, prudent, quiet, men did not desire Mr. Rentfro to remain in this County.

The latter half of 1878 and the early part of 1879 were times of bitter strife in Montgomery County.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Oswald Wilson, October 8, 1884, in Addison Collection.