

A HISTORY OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS

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A HISTORY OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS

An Abstract of a Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of History

The University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

William Hawley Gandy

August 1952

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## ABSTRACT

Montgomery County, Texas, was visited early by the Spanish explorers and missionaries. At one time the county was a site for a Spanish mission and several of the early famous Spanish itineraries passed through its boundaries.

During the empresario regime in Texas, Montgomery County was settled by the empresarios Stephen F. Austin and Joseph Vehlein. Later their colonists took an active part in Texas' struggle for independence from Mexico. In the Consultation and Declaration of Independence conventions Montgomery County was well represented by men who later became her citizens. In combat with the Mexicans a whole company from Montgomery County served in Sam Houston's army in the battle of San Jacinto.

Montgomery County is the third county created by the Republic. It had its beginning by an act of the First Congress December 14, 1837. Ever since that date it has taken an active part in the making of history for Texas. Its towns and communities are among the oldest and most interesting in the state. Its churches, schools, lodges, and newspapers were among the first to be organized in Texas.

Throughout its existence Montgomery's citizens have taken a leading part in public affairs. During Adrian Woll's invasion of Texas from Mexico a company of Montgomery County's militia turned out to

aid General Somervell; again during the Civil War a group of the county's citizens formed a company which fought bravely in General Hood's famous Texas Brigade.

In industries Montgomery County is richly endowed with three of the most important that Texas affords: oils, lumbering, and ranching. Farming also played an important part in Montgomery's industrial expansion. At one time it was noted for its tobacco industry, and cotton, before the Civil War, was raised extensively throughout the county. Its railroads have been active in helping Montgomery to expand.

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, has been to present a story of the history of Montgomery County for the first time, showing in that story the importance of the county as related to the history of Texas. Since no continuous history of the important events of the county has ever been compiled chronologically, this study attempts to give to the reader a panoramic view, integrating the available information concerning the origin and progress of the county.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author is extremely indebted to Hart Addison for the use of his valuable collection on Montgomery County. To him the author dedicates this study. To all the others who so kindly assisted and gave encouragement, the author wishes to express his sincere thanks.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION  
I THE STUDY

Purpose of the study. The primary purpose of this study is (1) to give historical and unbiased facts concerning the county of Montgomery, Texas; (2) to present the events of historical significance as nearly as possible as they actually occurred; (3) to aid the people of Montgomery County, Texas, who are interested in the history of their county; and (4) to help preserve the historical data of the county.

Importance of the study. The study of history should begin at home. People of the United States today do not understand each other as they should, primarily because they are continually on the move and most of them know little or nothing about the locale in which they live. Actually, if they would stop long enough to acquaint themselves with their local history, it would help them to get along with their neighbors.

Since no continuous history has been compiled chronologically of the important events of Montgomery County, this study should be of importance to those who are interested in obtaining a general survey of the progress of the county through the years.

Another phase of importance, historically speaking, is that

this study should be of importance to those who are interested in Texas history.

Other studies. To the author's knowledge no other study has been written concerning the entire history of Montgomery County, Texas. A number of brief papers have been done about the early phase of the county's history and one research thesis was written about the history of the town of Montgomery by W. N. Martin.<sup>1</sup>

## II SOURCES OF DATA AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE

Source of data. Material for this study was obtained, whenever possible, from the original sources. Extensive research was made in the original papers, letters, documents, petitions, et cetera, at the Texas State Archives, University of Texas Archives, Archives of the Houston Public Library, original documents and records of the Montgomery County courthouse, and the personal archive collection of Hart Addison, Conroe, Texas. Much of the original material of the early history of the county was written in Spanish and has been translated; this was used in preference to the original, due to the time required for translation. Not only were the original documents used extensively, but also secondary source material from books, news-

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<sup>1</sup>W. N. Martin, "A History of Montgomery," (unpublished Master's thesis, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville, Texas, 1950).

papers, and magazines. Much of the data concerning the towns and communities was obtained verbally through interviews with old time residents of the various places.

Not much of the data of the area was found at any one place, except in the collection of Hart Addison of Conroe, and considerable time was spent cross-checking on small leads that usually led to non-usable material. It is the opinion of the author that much more material than was collected about Montgomery County remains uncovered, and will some day, no doubt, be brought to light by someone interested in the lore of the region.

Method of procedure. The method of procedure used in this study was as objective as possible. There was some controversy on how several of the communities acquired their names; therefore, enough data was collected on each community so that a hypothesis could be formed. One community in particular had two sides as to how the community had acquired its name; hence, several people from each faction were interviewed; an interpretation was reached and a hypothesis formed. A similar method was used in compiling the data of this thesis whenever contradictory evidence existed. Where primary source material in its original form and secondary source material known to be authentic were used, there was no need to check its validity.

The treatment of the conclusion was presented on as unbiased basis as was possible by the author.

### III ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

An organization of the history of a county whose background has been as varied as Montgomery's is quite a challenge in itself. The chapters are arranged as nearly as possible according to the chronological data with chapter one concerning the introduction and chapter two portraying the geographic nomenclature and the early inhabitants of the county. These two phases stress the location, description, land structure, Indians, missions, and early explorers of the county; the reign of Mexico with the establishment of settlements under the empresarios will comprise chapter three. Montgomery County was organized soon after Texas declared her independence from Mexico. Chapter four will contain the county's organization, naming, and early political development, which make this era of the county's history one of its most interesting.

The cities, communities, important events, and outstanding people fall into the next category with a brief description of the county's institutions, industries, and natural resources following. These headings will be included in chapters five, six, and seven, with the last chapter dealing with the summarization of the study.

It is the hope of the author that the reader will not get the im-

pression that this the history of Montgomery County but rather just one of many that could be written. Much material has been collected, but various limitations prevent a compilation of all the facts concerning the history of the county.

## CHAPTER II

### GEOGRAPHIC NOMENCLATURE AND EARLY INHABITANTS

#### I GEOPHYSICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL STRUCTURE

Montgomery County, Texas, lies in the southeastern central part of Texas, with its latitudinal and longitudinal directions being ninety-five degrees and thirty minutes latitude, and thirty degrees and seventeen and one-half minutes longitude.<sup>1</sup> Montgomery County is bordered on the north by Walker County, on the northeast by San Jacinto County, on the east by Liberty County, on the south by Harris County, on the southwest by Waller County, and on the west by Grimes County. Its geographical center is located thirteen and one-half miles southeast of the town of Montgomery and approximately four miles southwest of the city of Conroe; the center is located on the survey line between the L. M. H. Washington and John Bricker surveys.<sup>2</sup> The boundary line bordering on Harris County is a natural boundary, formed by Spring Creek; the line between San Jacinto and Montgomery Counties also is a natural boundary formed by Peach Creek. The other boundary lines of Montgomery County, i. e., those boundaries running between

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<sup>1</sup>The Texas State Highway Department, "General Highway Map of Montgomery County, Texas," revised January 1, 1950.

<sup>2</sup>Montgomery County Courthouse Deed Records, Book IX, p. 337.

Waller, Crimes, Walker, Liberty, and the northeastern part of Harris Counties, are surveyed boundaries.

Montgomery County has a land surface area of 1,017 square miles which encompasses three major soil types in the Lifkin-Susquehanna formation.<sup>3</sup> These three are differentiated, with many local variations, as black waxy prairies, postoak, and pine lands. A tongue of the Houston and Wilson soils, which are dark, calcareous soils, splits the Lufkin-Susquehanna formation in the north central part of the county.<sup>4</sup> The northwest and north-central section of the county with rolling prairie lands, which consist of the black waxy soil, is situated in what is known as the eastern tongue of the "Washington prairie." The eastern part of the county, except for the alluvial valleys, has a sandy surface soil and is known as the Magnolia soil belt. This belt is called the "Flatwoods" region and is comprised of the characteristic soils of the Caddo-Segno soil group. The extreme eastern portion is in the famous pine belt, and the no less famous "Big Thicket" occupies a part of this and the adjoining soil region.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> T. C. Richardson, edition, East Texas: Its History and Its Makers (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940), Vol. III, p. 1125. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Vol. I, p. 39

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

The altitude of the county ranges from 150 to 300 feet above sea level, with an annual rainfall of 49.17 inches and an average temperature of fifty degrees in January and eighty-three degrees in July.<sup>6</sup>

The county is well drained by the San Jacinto River, due to the stream's central location and its numerous tributaries. Some of the main tributaries are Peach Creek and Caney Creek on its eastern banks, and Spring Creek and Lake Creek on its western bank. Montgomery County also has many natural and man made lakes, of which the largest is a natural lake some two miles in length, known as Grand Lake.

This county is bountifully supplied with a good variety of both softwood and hardwood timber, and various classes of pine of the softwood variety, mainly the shortleaf and loblolly pine; and oak, gum, elm, ash, holly, hickory, magnolia, black walnut, and various others of the hardwood variety are found. In the river bottoms and semi-swamps of the lowlands, palmetto grows abundantly, while oak and hickory grow on the ridges at the other extreme. The northwest and northeast portions of the county are in part of the government forest reserve, and these sections are being administered under the name of the Sam Houston National Forest.

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<sup>6</sup>Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide, 1949-1950 (Dallas: A. H. Belo Corporation, 1949), p. 568.

Various types of wild edible fruits and nuts exist profusely in their natural environment, mainly the dewberry, blackberry, mayberry, mulberry, May haw, black haw, plums, mustang grape, muscadine, persimmon, pecan, hickory nut, chinquapin, and many others.

Montgomery County is a natural habitat for wild flowers which attain their greatest profusion and largest size in the moist lands of the county. Some of these are the bluebonnet, bluebell, Indian paintbrush, magnolia, dogwood, redbud, and the yellow jasmine.

Wild animals of many types and varieties exist throughout the county, such as various species of poisonous and nonpoisonous snakes, fox, bobcat, deer, squirrel, rabbit, raccon, opossum, armadillo, and numerous other undomesticated animals. Many birds and larger fowl maintain their home in the county throughout the seasons.

The various lakes and streams afford the county with an abundance of fish, such as catfish, trout, bass, crappie, various species of perch, buffalo, shad, and gar.

## II INDIANS

The first presence of homo sapiens in Montgomery Count is not known today, but with all probability some prehistoric men dwelt there, roamed its forests, and preyed upon its game. The earliest man who left any record of his inhabitance in the county was the American Indian.

The Orcoquisac (Arkokisas or Orcoquiza) tribe roamed through

the county in the early eighteenth century and established several camps along the banks of Spring Creek and the San Jacinto River. They used those camps as the center of their tribal activities for the outlying camps they had along the Trinity and lower San Jacinto Rivers. A good account given of their location and whereabouts is as follows:

The center or headquarters of the tribe seems to have been located on a western branch of the San Jacinto River called at this time Arrora de Santa Rosa de Alcazar. This stream has been identified on good authority as Spring Creek. A short distance below the junction of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa about a gunshot from the banks of the latter, was a village ruled by Chief Canos. This chief was a close friend of the French, whom the Indians generally designated as Canos; hence the name. Some twenty miles above was the village of Chief El Gordo (Fatty). . . . <sup>7</sup>

Another account which more definitely clarifies the location of the village of Chief El Gordo is given in the following account:

. . . El Gordo's village was located at the junction of two small branches joining the Santa Rosa, about ten leagues or perhaps twenty miles west of the San Jacinto -- evidently Mill Creek and Spring Creek. . . . <sup>8</sup>

Little is known about the habits and mores of the Crocoquisac tribes of early Montgomery County; however, some small details

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<sup>7</sup> Carlos E. Castaneda, Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936 (Austin: Von Beckman-Jones Company, Publishers, 1936), Vol. IV., pp. 49-50

<sup>8</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton, Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1915), Vol. III, p. 354.

were learned from the early traders, explorers, soldiers, and missionaries when they corresponded with their government after having spent sometime in or passed through the county. From the few accounts that were left, enough information was gathered to learn the associate tribes of the Arcoquisac and a little information about the tribal life.

These facts are recorded in the following passage:

. . . On the north the neighbors of the Orcoquiza (Arcoquisac) were the Bidai, and apparently, the Deadose (Agdocas, Doxsas); on the west, the Cocco; on the west and southwest, the Karankawa.

Although they went periodically back and forth, with the changes of seasons, between the coast and interior the Orcoquiza lived in relatively fixed villages. If they were like the Bidai, they remained inland during the winter. They practiced agriculture to some extent, raising what was called maize. They lived to a large extent on a fish diet, supplemented by sylvan fruits and game, among which deer and bear were prominent. . . .<sup>9</sup>

The Orcoquisacs seem to have been on friendly terms with the neighboring tribes, with the exception of the cannibalistic Karankawas. Racially they seem to have been closely related to the Attacapa, with whom they intermarried freely. The number of this tribe has been estimated between ten and fifteen hundred souls.<sup>10</sup>

No archaeological remains have been uncovered of the Orcoquisac Indians in the county. Their annihilation was probably due

<sup>9</sup> Herbert Eugene Bolton, Texas in the Middle Eighteenth Century (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1915), Vol. III, p. 351

<sup>10</sup> Castaneda, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 49

to some white man's disease, such as smallpox or typhoid; or perhaps when the larger Indian nations of the southeastern United States were forced to migrate across the Mississippi River they amalgamated with them, or were driven by them into other sections of the country.

The Bidai and Kickapoo tribes ranged north of the Crcoquisac in the locality of the present day Bidai Lake. These two tribes, the Bidai and Kickapoo, left their mark in the vicinity when the early settlers bestowed their names on several of the creeks and lakes of this region. At the time when the first settlers came to Montgomery they encountered several of these tribes, made friends, and traded with them. An account of their location and fraternization with the settlers is as follows:

. . . About six miles west of Montgomery on Caney Creek, the Bedai Indians had a village and burying ground. The Kickapoo Indians sometimes camped near the town. Arrowheads are still found where these old camps were. These were friendly tribes, and there was much trading between them and the settlers. They made baskets, wooden bowls, chairs of rattan and hickory, and covers for bottles, also of rattan. The white boys bought bows and arrows from the Indians and learned to shoot squirrels with as much skill as the Indians themselves. When the Indians carried their baskets to sell, they filled the baskets with whatever they wanted to buy, then emptied the contents into their laps and left the baskets in exchange. Indians from the Bedai village sometimes went to the Shannon home at milking time with wooden bowls. They sat on the fence until the Negroes finished milking, and when their bowls were filled, and they had drunk the milk, they walked off leaving the bowls as payment.

The Bedai village was almost wiped out by typhoid fever. The Indians treated this by putting the patients on high scaffolds and making a smoke under them. . . . <sup>11</sup>

The Bedai and Kickapoo stock quickly vanished after the white man's pestilence thinned their ranks almost into oblivion.

Other Indian tribes, besides the Coccoquisac, Bedai, and Kickapoo, visited Montgomery County. The Ceniz, known as the Tejas to the Spaniards, whose main pueblos were along the central part of the Trinity River, occasionally roamed through the county. <sup>12</sup>

### III EXPLORERS AND MISSIONARIES

Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, a French explorer, who perhaps miscalculated his bearing, had bypassed the mouth of the Mississippi River where he had intended to land and establish a colony. He was forced to land near Matagorda Bay, and it was here that he built his fort of Saint Louis and used this fort as a base for his treks into the interior of Texas, looking for the Mississippi River. It was on one of these excursions, beginning on the twelfth day of January 1686, that La Salle is believed to have crossed through the

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<sup>11</sup> Mary Davis, "Old Montgomery," (unpublished paper written for the Centre High School senior history class, no date), pp. 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> Castaneda, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 294

northwest corner of Montgomery County. <sup>13</sup> Upon leaving his fort of Saint Louis, an account of this trek is as follows:

Again, on the 12th of January, 1686, La Salle, with seventeen companions, started to the northeast.

. . . . .  
 . . . On the 21st they crossed the river of Canes, (Colorado, above Eagle Lake). Heavy rains delayed them, and they crossed the river of Sand Banks, (San Bernard) on the 26th. On Joutel's (La Salle's geographer) map are laid down successively, though under French names, Skull Creek, New Year's Creek, the Maligne, or Erazos River, the Eure (San Jacinto), River of Canoes, so called because in his former voyage, La Salle had to procure canoes to cross it (the Trinity), the Neches, the Angelina and the Sabine. . . . <sup>14</sup>

Another account which more clearly records La Salle's trip after he got to the Brazos River and Montgomery County is as follows:

. . . La Salle altered his course and following a more easterly direction, soon reached a thickly populated country, where the natives welcomed him with evident pleasure. This was probably in the vicinity of the Brazos River. Here they were delayed for a few days, awaiting the recovery of Naka, the faithful Shawanoe Indian hunter of La Salle, who had been bitten by a rattlesnake. Continuing the journey eastward, they found their path intercepted by a river which Father Douay called "La Riviere de Malheurs," the River of Misfortunes. This was a very swift stream in which La Salle and some of his companions who attempted to cross on a raft, were almost drowned. It is difficult to tell just what stream this was, as there are no swift rivers between the Brazos and the Trinity. There are, however, numerous creeks and small streams, which during the rainy season often assume the proportions of regular torrents, any of which might fit the description.

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<sup>13</sup>Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas From the Earliest Visits of European Adventurers, to A. D. 1879 (St. Louis, Mo.: N. D. Thompson and Company, 1879), p. 81.

<sup>14</sup>Loc. cit.

After crossing this stream with much difficulty, La Salle and his companions continued their march eastward and shortly thereafter, came to the rancherias of the Cenis . . . along the Trinity. <sup>15</sup>

This expedition into Texas by the French soon became known in Mexico, and measures to dislodge the colony were taken by the Spanish officials. <sup>16</sup>

The viceroy of Mexico appointed Alonso de Leon Governor of Coahuila and gave him explicit instructions to seek out La Salle's colony, destroy the fort, and check on other French activities in East Texas. With this done, and upon the recommendations of the viceroy to establish missions in East Texas, De Leon set out with the missionary priest, Father Massanet, to fulfill his obligations in keeping the French out of Texas. After the East Texas missions were established in the Tejas Indian territory De Leon laid out a route from the mission of La Bahia (Goliad) to the mission at Nacogdoches. This route became known as the La Bahia Road and according to Castaneda's map it intercepts the southwestern corner of Montgomery County and runs through the county in a northeasterly direction. According to this map it was blazed by Alonso de Leon in the year 1690. <sup>17</sup> It is believed by the author that this was the trail used by the old Houston, Montgomery,

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Castaneda, loc. cit.

Thrall, op. cit., p. 87

Castaneda, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 349.

and Cincinnati stage line.

The viceroy on December 7, 1716, proceeded to appoint Don Martin de Alarcon, Knight of the Order of Santiago and Governor of Coahuila, Captain General and Governor of the Province of the Tejas and such other lands as might be conquered to found missions in the San Antonio area and to check on and send supplies to the East Texas missions.<sup>18</sup> After establishing a mission and settlement on the San Antonio River he proceeded by the way of La Bahia, through Montgomery County, and on into East Texas. Alarcon was welcomed with much joy on his arrival at the East Texas mission, as the following shows:

. . . The governor at last departed for the Presidio de los Tejas. . . . With bells ringing, the missionaries and Indians of the Mission of Nuestro padre San Francisco de los Tejas welcomed the new governor with undisguised joy, on October 14, 1718, when he at last arrived in East Texas. . . .<sup>19</sup>

The viceroy appointed Pedro de Rivera as Inspector General of the presidios and missions of Texas, and when he was appointed he was given instructions to make a tour of inspection of all Spanish presidios, to check against fraud, and to make recommendations concerning their necessity. In the spring of 1727 the tireless and ever watchful inspector

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Vol. II, p. 78

<sup>19</sup> Castaneda, loc. cit.

arrived at last in East Texas.<sup>20</sup> Rivera arrived at the Nacogdoches mission first; inspected the Tejas missions, then proceeded on the La Bahia Road through Montgomery County to the Presidio de Nuestra Senora de Loreto de la Bahia del Espiritu Santo at Goliad.<sup>21</sup>

In 1745 Captain Joaquin Orobio y Basterra of La Bahia heard that rumors of the presence of French traders from Louisiana had penetrated into the Trinity region. In the same year he reported these rumors to the viceroy in Mexico.<sup>22</sup> The viceroy became suddenly apprehensive and immediately ordered an investigation to determine if the French had established a settlement, the number and character of the Indians in the vicinity, and to request any Frenchmen found already settled to leave at once.<sup>23</sup> Upon receipt of the orders, Orobio y Basterra, with a group of men, set out to make a preliminary reconnaissance. Orobio's investigation is represented in the following passage:

On March 6, 1746 he arrived at a place which he called Santa Rosa de Viterbo, where he found a settlement Bidai Indians near the Trinity. . . .

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Vol. II, p. 219

<sup>21</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Vol. IV., p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Loc. cit.

. . . After a few days rest and a long interview with the chief of those Indians he again set out, accompanied by a Bidai guide, crossed the Trinity River, and went thirty leagues west-southwest from Santa Rosa de Viterbo to a place which he called San Rafael, and which appears to have been on Spring Creek, west of the San Jacinto River. Here he found two Orcoquisac villages. . . .

Both the Bidais and the Orcoquisacs explained that the French visited them frequently. For six years traders, who lived in a place they called Pachina, near the Mississippi, had been coming by land. . . . No permanent settlement had been made, but last summer a party, who had come by sea, had chosen a site and told the Orcoquisacs to notify the Bidais, the Deadoses, and the Tejas to bring their bearskins, buckskins, and buffalo hides to this place to trade. The site chosen appears to have been on the San Jacinto, some distance from its mouth. The Indians explained it was on a stream between the Trinity and the Brazos which was a tributary of neither. The Orcoquisacs told Orobio that some Frenchmen had been recently lost among the Cujanes, who lived to the southwest. . . .

Curious to see the site chosen for the proposed settlement, Orobio went towards the coast some fifteen leagues and was shown the place where the French said they would establish themselves. This was on a stream which Orobio named Aranazau and which was in all probability the San Jacinto. There was no sign of habitation and in the opinion of Orobio no permanent settlement. . . .<sup>24</sup>

This visit of Orobio to the Orcoquisac Indians on Spring Creek was the beginning of a quarter of a century of Spanish activity in Montgomery County and its vicinity.<sup>25</sup>

Due to Orobio finding French activity around the Spring Creek area,

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<sup>24</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>25</sup>Bolton, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 332.

in January, 1757 the viceroy ordered the missionaries of the Nuestra Senora de la Luz mission in the neighborhood of San Augustine to move to Spring Creek, and to reduce there, at El Gordo's village, all the Orcoquisac bands and the Bidai tribe as well.<sup>26</sup> The Orcoquisacs were at first very tractable and friendly. They professed anxiety to enter upon mission life, built a house for the missionaries, and the first spring planted for them three acres of corn. A more detailed description and location of this mission is as follows:

The church, reported by Jacinto de Barrois y Jauregui (Governor of Texas) as already completed in June, was evidently a very temporary structure which was substituted afterwards by a somewhat better one, itself miserable enough. A complaint made two years later by Fr. Abad de Jesus Maria, who was then head minister at the place, to the effect that he could not get help from the soldiers to complete the mission, reveals to us the site and the nature of the newer buildings. He writes: "Fearful of what might result, I had to set about the mentioned material establishment . . . The two ministers having explored and examined the territory with all care and exactitude, we did not find any place more suitable or nearer the presidio than a hill, something less than a fourth of a league's distance to the east from the latter and on the same bank of the lagoon. This place, Excellent Sir, because of its elevation, commands a view of the whole site of the presidio and of a circumference to the west and south . . . as far as the eye can reach. Toward the east the land is a little less elevated. At a distance of a league enough corn might be planted to supply a large population. . . . All these advantages being seen, the mission was erected on this site. It is made of wood, all hewn, and beaten clay mixed with moss, and has

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Vol. III, p. 348

four arched portals. This building, because of its strength and arrangement, is the most pleasing in all those lands of the Spaniards and the French-- or it would be if your Excellency should be pleased to have completed its construction, which for the present has been suspended." 27

To select the site for the colony, the governor commissioned two surveyors, and each was to make an independent survey of the Spring Creek region, which they did in August 1756; and in October they both reported favorably upon three sites, but most favorably on the one near El Gordo's village at the junction of two small branches joining Spring Creek, about ten leagues or perhaps twenty miles west of the San Jacinto-- evidently Mill Creek and Spring Creek.<sup>28</sup> Governor Jacinto de Barrios y Jaurequi, happy about the reports made by the surveyors, reported to the viceroy in favor of Spring Creek, recommending three missions instead of one, and on January 7, 1756 this site was approved by the government and shortly afterward the viceroy ordered the presidio to be built.<sup>29</sup> To this point prospects seemed good for the beginning of a new civil settlement in Montgomery County, but due to inefficiency of the government and the changing of officials the project was abandoned.

27 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 349

28 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 351

29 Loc. cit.

## CHAPTER III

### EMPRESARIOS AND SETTLEMENT

During the latter part of the Spanish regime the missions and presidios of the vast province of Coahuila and Texas had almost fallen into decadence, because the corruptness of Spain's mercantile system had virtually sapped out the life blood of her colonies. Spain found it necessary to look for new lands from which to get new raw materials; therefore, she again expressed a desire for colonization in her undeveloped province of Texas.

Moses Austin of Missouri, had formerly been a Spanish citizen of Louisiana during the Napoleonic Wars when Spain had acquired Louisiana from France. He heard of Spain's desire for her frontiers to be colonized and in accordance took it upon himself in the year 1820 to visit the Spanish provincial government of Texas, which at that time was located at the town of Bexar (San Antonio).<sup>1</sup> At the time Moses Austin left, Texas was in that administrative division of Mexico known as the Eastern Interior Province, as the following quotation explains:

. . . . Texas, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Santander or Tamaulipas constituted the Eastern Interior Provinces. The commandant was both civil and military head of the

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<sup>1</sup> H. Yoakum, History of Texas (New York: J. H. Redfield Company, 1855), Vol. I, p. 210.

province. Each province had its own governor and military commandant and was subdivided, or could be divided, into departments, districts (partidos), and municipalities. Texas constituted one department, and in 1820 contained but two organized municipalities, Bexar and La Bahia, the present Goliad. The government of a municipality, which included not only the town but much of the surrounding country, was an ayuntamiento.<sup>2</sup>

The municipality of Bexar included the territory of what today is Montgomery County, and extended into East Texas. This division remained this way until January 31, 1~~8~~<sup>3</sup>31, when due to the influx of so many immigrants, the Legislature of Coahuila and Texas passed a decree creating another division, that of Nacogdoches. This new division also took in a part of Montgomery County. The decree read as follows:

The Congress of the State of Coahuila and Texas, considering the evils experienced in the political and financial administration of the department of Texas for the reason that the extensive territory thereof is comprised in one sole district, and populated mostly by foreign colonists, thinly settled therein; exercising the power conferred by article 8 of the constitution, decrees:

ART. 1. The department of Bexar shall be divided into two districts, and the following shall be the dividing line--commencing at Bolivar Point on Galveston Bay, thence running northwesterly to strike between the San Jacinto and Trinity rivers, following the dividing ridge between the said rivers to the Brazos and Trinity to the head waters of the latter, and terminating north of the source of the said Trinity upon Red River.

ART. 2. The territory situated east of said line shall

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<sup>2</sup> Eugene C. Barker, Texas History (Dallas: Turner Company, 1929), p. 103.

be called the District of Nacogdoches, and the town of the same name shall be the capital.

.....  
 Given in the city of Leona Vicario on the 31st of January 1831.<sup>3</sup>

While at Bexar, Moses Austin, with the help of his old friend the Baron de Bastrop, acquired permission from the Spanish government to settle three hundred families in the province of Texas.<sup>4</sup>

Moses Austin died before his plans for settlement could be completed, and his son, Stephen F. Austin, took charge of his father's unfinished work. In August, 1821 after the death of his father, Stephen F. Austin was recognized by the government as his father's successor and was authorized to explore the country and select a site which he wished to colonize.<sup>5</sup> When Austin had explored the land, he selected in the municipality of Bexar his reservation, and outlined its west boundary as the Lavaca River up to the Bexar-Nacogdoches road, and its east boundary the San Jacinto River up to the Bexar-Nacogdoches road.<sup>6</sup> The Western half of present day Montgomery County falls within the site which Austin selected at that time.

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<sup>3</sup> Laws and Decrees of Coahuila and Texas, (Publisher and date not listed), Decree Number 164.

<sup>4</sup> Yoakum, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Earker, loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 67

Before Austin could bring his colonists from the United States, Augustin de Iturbide, the Mexican patriot, issued on February 24, 1821 his plan of Iguala.<sup>7</sup> Practically all of Mexico rallied to his aid to help him throw off the tyrannical yoke of the Spanish who had goverened Mexico and her province since their triumphal capture by that illustrious conquistador, Hernando Cortes.

Due to these events, Austin had to wait until new colonization laws could be passed by the new government. They were passed, and after Iturbide's short rule, other colonization laws followed in rapid suit owing to the many coup d'etats in forming the Mexican government.

An explanation of Mexico's colonization laws is as follows:

. . . Mexico passed her first colonization law in January, 1823, while Iturbide was emperor. With his overthrow in March, 1823, and the repeal of the colonization law of 1823, it was then necessary for the Mexican Republic to formulate its colonization policy. On August 18, 1823, the central government passed the national colonization law. This laid down a few general regulations with reference to colonization within the nation, but left the undertaking largely to the state. In the first place each state was to pass a colonization law for the settlement of the unoccupied territory within its limits. However, only the federal government could grant permission to establish settlements within twenty leagues of the boundary of any foreign nation or within ten leagues of the coast. . . . .

(In the law of 1824 Mexico had reserved the right to repeal the law when enough colonists had arrived, and)

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Yoakum, op. cit., p. 214.

. . . Mexico took advantage of the provision and passed the law of April 6, 1830, by which she forbade the further entrance of citizens of the United States into Texas. . . <sup>8</sup>

With the national law of August 18, 1824 giving the state authority to pass their own colonization laws, the Legislature of Coahuila and Texas on March 24, 1825 passed a colonization law of more detailed nature, as the following paragraphs show:

The state colonization law granted to each married man who wanted to farm one labor, an equivalent of 177 acres. If he also desired to raise cattle, he could obtain twenty-four labors of pasture land or 4,251 acres. The total of farming and pasture land made one sitio or league, consisting of 4,428 acres. An unmarried man received one-fourth of this amount. If the colonist's occupation or capital was such that it would benefit the colony, he would obtain additional land.

The new settler was required within six years to pay a nominal sum to the state for this land. For each sitio of pasture land he paid \$30; for each labor of unirrigable land \$2.50; and for each labor which was irrigable he paid \$3.50. The government required no part of it to be paid until the end of four years. At the close of the fourth year one-third of the amount was due; at the end of the fifth year, another third; and when the sixth year closed, the last payment was to be made to the state. To acquire a title to his land the colonist had to occupy or cultivate it. <sup>9</sup>

Under this same law an empresario or contractor was to be in charge of all the colonization procedures. Each empresario made an agreement with the state to introduce a certain number of families

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<sup>8</sup> Baker, op. cit., pp. 86-87

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 88

within a limited time. He received a definite area in which to locate his immigrants. When he had fulfilled his obligations the empresario was entitled to receive for each hundred families introduced, a premium of five leagues and five labors of land. Thus, under these provisions Austin was appointed empresario and given instructions to settle his colonists.

The news of Austin's colony had spread rapidly in the United States and immigrants came in as fast as they could be settled. The receiving point for the immigrants was Nacogdoches and Austin appointed an agent to collect the families and send them on to his colony. E. C. Barker<sup>10</sup> gave the following concerning Nacogdoches as the induction center:

Fifty or more families from the vicinity of Nacogdoches had agreed to move to his grant in November and December (1820), he (Austin) said, and since he could not be there to receive them, he had appointed an agent to supervise them and prevent overlapping locations. He also appointed Josiah H. Bell, one of his former associates in Arkansas, to exercise temporarily in the settlement the duties of a justice of the peace. He found at Natchitoches nearly a hundred letters from Missouri, Kentucky, and other western states, and was convinced that he could settle fifteen hundred families as easily as three hundred. . . .

To take care of the influx of people coming into Texas, Mexico soon granted other men empresario rights. One of these empresarios was Hayden Edwards, who on April 18, 1825 obtained a contract to

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 67

to settle eight hundred families in Texas.<sup>11</sup> H. Yoakum<sup>12</sup> described

Edwards and the location of his grant as follows:

. . . He was a gentleman of high moral character, strict honor, and liberality. He had devoted much of his time in Mexico in forwarding the general colonization law. He had his colony greatly at heart, and had expended thousands of dollars in getting up the enterprise. The contract with the state was sufficiently liberal. It admitted him as an empresario under the general state law. The lands designated were bounded on the east by a line beginning twenty leagues from the Sabine and ten leagues from the coast; thence through Nacogdoches, and fifteen leagues beyond it; thence west to the Navasota; thence down this river to the San Antonio road, and with this road to the San Jacinto; thence down said river to within ten leagues of the coast; and along the coast, ten leagues from it, to the place of beginning. . . .

This grant that Edwards got from the government included the eastern half of present day Montgomery County.

The Mexican government selected for Hayden Edwards the lawless town of Nacogdoches as the seat of activity for his colony. Soon after his arrival an uprising occurred in December 1826, known as the Fredonian Rebellion.<sup>13</sup> This mutiny was caused by the agitation between the Mexican officials and Edwards' colonists. A good account of this rebellion was written in a letter by one of the future citizens of Austin's colony and Montgomery County. The letter is as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Yoakum, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 234-235

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 246

Gentlemen:

Sir, yours of the inst. inviting me as one of the early settlers, to give any incidents coming within my knowledge, that might go to the making up a correct historical account of the early setting of Texas. I settled on the Red Sandy near San Augustine in Nov. 1821; staid there 9 years; then moved to Montgomery where I have lived ever since.

Many of the incidents of those days are fresh in my recollection; but I am at a loss to know, what kind of incident would be useful or interesting to your society. It would afford me much satisfaction to aid the society on gathering scraps that might go to the making up a correct history of the early setting of Texas by the whites; and I believe that I could, if you were to direct my mind to anything I might know.

I will however, give one occurrence that took place at Nacogdoches in 1826 or 7; afterwards called the Fredonion War. Up to that time the Mexican government had kept troops stationd at Nacogdoches as much for the purpose of keeping his own citizens in subjection, as the keeping of the Indians from depudation on them.

The Alcalde, backed by the troops was not always guided by law and evidence nor equitable principles in making up his judical decisions; and particually when an ex-U. S. citizen was brought before his honor. This of course gave offence to many which was borne with, until an opportunity presented its self, as some of the leading spirits thought by which they could bring about a change of public affairs.

About this time, the troops was sent from Nacogdoches and stationd at some other place, (I think) Goliad.

Now being the time to strike, carriers were sent in every direction calling upon the men to meet at Nacogdoches fully armed on a certain day without letting them know the object of the call. Many thought it was to repel an expected attack from the Indians; others, of course knew the object. For fifty miles around every man that could, rallied to the call.

I rode forty miles. When I reached there, I found about 200 whites, Mexicans, and Negroes; all armed. The two leading spirits were Col. Edwards and Col. Parmer. One, (I do not recollect which) called on the men to form a line, which they did. We were then marched to where a flag was putting to breeze, and called the fredonian flag. I do not recollect the devices on it; but when we were halted under it speeches were made by Col. Edwards, and Parmer I think, explaining the object of the meeting, and telling of the wrongs and oppressions they had borne from the Government and the Alcalde.

After the speaking, patriotic songs were sung and we again formed into line. When Col. said to the men that all of those in favor of a free government and opposed to a tyrannical government, and that were willing to affect that change right then and there, to march eight paces in front; and those opposed to it, to remain fast. At the word march all marched forward but four. I being one of that number. When the others all turned to see who were left, I felt small and that I was in a small crowd. Some of my friends said to me that they were sorry to see me act so, yet I stood firm.

Amongst the braves, who had stepped so gallantly forward, I saw one whom I took to be green from the States.

He was gentlemanly dressed, having on a fine velvet coat, hat of beaver, pants to match and a fine beaded pr. of moccasins. Near him stood a drunken negro, and being as free and patriotic as any, and being anxious I suppose, to feel the fine texture of the strangers dress, staggered up against him in a very rude manner which of course gave offence. The stranger was about to shoot the negro, when others interfered to prevent it. I and my other companions, as much to off set the jeers we had received, charged for the negro who seemed not too much alarmed. I afterwards learned that the stranger was no less a personage than Henry S. Foote, who was then, not unlike yourselves now, hunting up material to write a History of Texas, which he did. And amongst the many untruthful stories he wrote of Texas, he gave

an account of this fredonian war, which was incorrect in many things; but to the thread of the story. After the difficulty between Mr. Foote and the negro had been settled the crowd were dismissed to meet again under the flag in a short time. In the interest the Alcaide was disposed.

After again meeting, and speeches and songs were made and sung, sufficient as the leaders thought to stir all to action, called them in line again. I and my three companions also being in line, Col. said that all those in favor of the mearures already taken, and that were willing to remain to inforce and carry out those things, to march eight paces in front. At the word march but one moved forward. It was Matthew Cartwright of San Augustine. I and those other three laughed. The leaders saw that it was no go, and all quietly dispersed and returned to our homes.

The troops in due time were sent back. The alcaide restored to the functions of his office, and troopers were sent out in search of the leaders of the fredonian war. The crossings on the Sabine were guarded day and night, but I do not believe they caught very many.

Thus ended the tempest in a teapot. <sup>14</sup>

The rebllion was squelched and Edwards' grant was revoked by the Mexican government. After the revocation of his grant the territory embraced in it was divided between the empresarios David G. Burnet, Lorenzo de Zavala, and Joseph Vehlein.

Joseph Vehlein, a German merchang of Mexico City, through

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 Letter of Col. Jacob Shannon to Messrs. Gray and Henderson, Treasurer and Secretary of the Texas Historical Society, October 13, 1870, in the Hart Addison Collection.

his agent, John L. Woodbury, made his contract with the government for three hundred families in December, 1826.<sup>15</sup> His colony was to be settled in the following boundaries:

Beginning at the Town of Nacogdoches: Thence South, leaving free Twenty boundary border leagues, parallel with the Sabine River to the intersection of the boundary line of the same, with that of the Ten coast border leagues, on the Gulf of Mexico. Thence west to the river San Jacinto: Thence up the said river with its left bank, to its source, and thence on a stright line North to the San Antonio raod leading from Bexar to Nacogdoches: Thence with said road to the town aforesaid, and previous to arriving at the River Trinity the line shall follow the road called Bull's hill road (Loma del Toro) crossing that river above the Military Post, and continuing on said road, until it unites with the road first mentioned and thence with it to the Town of Nacogdoches and place of beginning.

Vehlein's grant was in what had been the western part of Edwards' grant which consisted of the eastern half of Montgomery County. The San Jacinto River was the dividing line between Austin's colony and Vehlein's colony; therefore, the western half of Montgomery County was in Austin's colony and the eastern half in Vehlein's.

Vehlein's colony did not pan out well; therefore, having failed to carry out his obligations, he, with empresarios Burnet and Zavala, transferred his contract to the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company on October 16, 1830.<sup>16</sup> The Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company

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<sup>15</sup> Baker, op. cit., p. 92

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 93

converted the grants into a Wall-street speculation and issued scrip on the land. The scrip was worthless in Texas, where every immigrant was entitled to a league of land; but in New York it sold for one to two cents an acre.<sup>17</sup> This company selected the town of Anahuac for their headquarters; but when John Bradburn became commander at Anahuac, and exercised his despotism, the population fled, and the bubble of the "Galveston Bay Company" exploded.<sup>18</sup>

There were forty-two members of Austin's and Vehlein's colonies who got their land titles from the Mexican government, and settled in what today is Montgomery County. They and the date of their patents are listed as follows:

Those on the west side of the San Jacinto River and located in Austin's colony were: Archibald M. Alexander, October 5, 1835; William Atkins, April 18, 1831; Solomon Brown, April 16, 1828; William C. Clarke, April 10, 1831; John Corner, May 10, 1831; Mary Corner, April 7, 1831; Thomas Corner, May 28, 1831; John Cronkrite, June 6, 1831; John H. Edwards, April 13, 1831; William W. Ford, October 17, 1832; Noah Griffith, April 11, 1831; Paschal B. Hamblin, October 10, 1835; Archibald Hodge, April 3, 1831; James Hodge, April

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<sup>17</sup> Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas From the Earliest Visits of European Adventurers, to A. D. 1879 (St. Louis: N. D. Thompson and Company, 1879), p. 167

<sup>18</sup> Loc. cit.

8, 1831; Joseph House, April 13, 1831; William Landrum, April 10, 1831; Zacharia Landrum, April 10, 1831; Joseph Miller, April 16, 1831; James ~~Peer~~<sup>W</sup>house, April 7, 1831; William Rankin, April 10, 1831; Raleigh Rogers, May 6, 1831; Jacob Shannon, April 30, 1831; Owen Shannon, April 8, 1831; James Smith, May 13, 1831; Wiley B.D. Smith, April 5, 1831; Allen Vince, April 30, 1831; John T. Vince, May 4, 1831; and Ann White, May 12, 1831.

Those on the east of the San Jacinto River and located in Behlein's colony were: William S. Allen, June 2, 1835; Bennett Blake, August 27, 1835; Elijah Collard, April 29, 1835; Timothy Cude, September 15, 1835; Jose Marie de la Garza, November 4, 1833; Samuel Lindley, August 27, 1835; Joseph Lindley, April 6, 1835; Neal Martin, April 13, 1835; Jonathan C. Pitts, September 13, 1835; John Saddler, April 29, 1835; JohnB. Tong, July 24, 1835; and William Weir, August 17, 1835.<sup>19</sup>

Not much is known about these pioneers but most of them did not stay long enough to leave a trace of their activities; but some did, and the following is an account from W. N. Martin of some of those who did leave behind a mark of perseverance:

One of the original grantees was William Rankin. He and his wife Sarah came to Texas from Alabama in 1825. In June of that year they made application for a grant of

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<sup>19</sup>Land Abstracts, General Land Office, Austin, Texas, Vol. I.

one league of land lying between Lake Creek and the San Jacinto River, in what was then Washington County. On April 10, 1831, the Spanish granted this land. The Rankins had no children, but he was administrator for his brother's children for several years. He took an active part in the civic affairs of the county. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge, and at one time a member of the Commissioners Court. Rankin died on April 2, 1857, and was buried in the Montgomery cemetery.

A pioneer family that left little trace of its members was that of John Corner and his wife Prutia. They came to Texas from Alabama in 1825. They were received as colonist in the colony of Stephen F. Austin. In the same year of their arrival they contracted with the government of the state of Coahuila and Texas, through Stephen F. Austin, for a grant of one league of land. Having met the necessary requisites provided for by the law of colonization of 1825, they received their grant of land from the government on May 10, 1831. This land is situated on a stream called Atkin's Creek, a tributary of the San Jacinto River.

John Corner lived on his grant of land and developed much of it by clearing off the forests and putting in small farms. In 1838 he began to sell his land. He sold much of his league to Wm. W. Shepperd, a land speculator. So far as records show, Corner never took part in any civic affairs or public interests. It is known that he had two sons who lived in Montgomery until they were grown. The whole family left after selling their land to several other early settlers. Witnesses have been produced, however, who swore they knew that John Corner lived in Montgomery in the 1850's.

Not many of the original families of Montgomery were as eager to sell their land and leave the vicinity as the members of the Corner family seem to have been. Raleigh Rogers was one of the first pioneers of Montgomery, and a large part of his land was handed down to his descendants who still live on and own the land. He and his wife Polly came from Alabama about 1830. They were settlers in Stephen F. Austin's last colony. They made application for a league of land, and on May 6, 1831 the Mexican Government approved the grant.

Raleigh Rogers was a successful farmer and trader, and he owned much live stock and several slaves. He was a very active member of the community and associated freely with the other builders of Montgomery. The exact time of his death is not known, but he was buried in the family grave-yard on his land.

This couple had only four children, one boy who never married, and three girls. One of the girls, Mary Davis Rogers, married a Methodist circuit preacher, Pleasant M. Yell, who is the grandfather of two women still living in Montgomery on the old family grant. Mary and her husband lived on the Rogers land until they built their home on the present site of the Yell land. Pleasant Yell gave up preaching and became a successful farmer working several slaves. After emancipation most of his slaves left, but one family remained, whose descendants still live on the Yell land and work for descendants of Raleigh Rogers.

Another original family of Montgomery was William Landrum and his wife Nancy Gilmore, who came from Alabama in 1830. The Landrums were of old American stock, having come to America from England and Scotland in the early part of the eighteenth century. William Landrum's father and his wife's father were soldiers in the American Revolution. William Landrum was a member of Austin's second colony and received a grant of land from Mexico in 1831. Several hundred acres of land of the original grant are still in the possession of the descendants of William Landrum.

To this couple were born several children. Mary Landrum married Judge G. B. Gay and lived in Montgomery for the duration of her life. They have descendants living in Montgomery now. Melissa Landrum married I. C. Davis. Their descendants also live in Montgomery at the present time. One of the Landrum boys died without marrying.

Zachariah Landrum and his wife Letetia came to Texas in 1827. They made application for a league of land lying between Lake Creek and Atkin's Creek in what was then

Washington County. On April 10, 1831, this grant was given him by the Spanish Government.

This Landrum family came with a train of other settlers from Alabama. With them came two sons, William and John, and two daughters, Sarah and Kathrine.

Landrum became ill in 1838 and made his will, giving all his land to his wife, his two sons, and his two daughters. He died in 1844 and was buried in a private cemetery.

Owen Shannon and his wife Margaret came from Georgia, landed in Texas, and settled near San Augustine in 1827. Although they had much difficulty trying to get information concerning Austin's colony, they finally succeeded in getting into it in about 1830. The Shannons settled north of the present site of Montgomery. They reared a large family and lived on the land until his death in 1850.

Benjamin Rigsby and his wife came to Montgomery in 1828. They made application for a league of land which was granted April 14, 1831.

A land speculator, Thomas Taylor, furnished the money to finance Rigsby. In return for this service, Rigsby returned 2214 acres of land to Taylor. Rigsby sold the remainder of his league of land to different settlers and left Montgomery in 1837. There is no record of where he went.<sup>20</sup>

Although, Montgomery County has only forty-two grants of the original titles left today, it had included in its boundaries when it was created a total of three hundred and eighteen of the first colonists.

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<sup>20</sup>W. N. Martin, "A History of Montgomery," (unpublished Master's thesis, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville, Texas, 1950), pp. 11-17.

Gradually its boundary lines and original grants diminished as the new counties of Waller, Walker, Grimes, San Jacinto, and Madison were carved from it.

## CHAPTER IV

### ORGANIZATION AND EARLY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

After its declaration of independence on March 2, 1836 and its victory in the war with Mexico, the newly declared Republic of Texas set about the task of organizing its government and breaking down its large domain of municipalities into smaller workable units. For some time Texas had been divided into two departments, Nacogdoches and Bexar, which in turn were subdivided into municipalities. Prior to the declaration of independence, however, another department was created, the department of Brazos, which extended from the Lavaca River to the watershed between the San Jacinto and the Trinity.<sup>1</sup> All three of these departments were divided into twenty-three municipalities and by the formal adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Texas the twenty-three municipalities became counties with a new legal status, and their creation was, therefore, uniformly dated March 17, 1836.<sup>2</sup>

One of the new counties formed by the act of March 17, 1836,

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<sup>1</sup> Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas (Fort Worth: Wortham-Molyneaux Company, 1924), Vol. II, p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> T. C. Richardson, editor, East Texas: Its History and Its Makers (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940), Vol. II, p. 787.

was the county of Washington which had been a municipality in the department of Brazos. The newly created county of Washington comprised a vast extent of country on both sides of the Brazos below the old San Antonio road. The county seat was located at the city of Washington, and due to the vastness of its boundaries and the sparsely distributed population of certain sections of its domain, it was inconvenient for the citizens who lived on the east side of the Brazos to meet their obligations toward their government; therefore, soon after the county was organized the citizens east of the Brazos River began to petition the government to form a new county.

The first indication that a new county would be created from Washington County appeared in the Telegraph and Texas Register, July 8, 1837, advertising the sale of lots in the newly organized town of Montgomery. The article was written at Montgomery on the fourth of July, 1837, by W. W. Shepperd stating that, "It is expected that a new county will be organized, at the next session of congress, embracing this section of country. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

The first congress of the new republic convened at Columbia, but due to its instability and also the threats of the Mexican army, the government adjourned and moved its seat from Columbia to Houston. Growing impatient, some of the citizens from Washington

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<sup>3</sup> Telegraph and Texas Register (Houston), July 8, 1837.

County who resided east of the Brazos River petitioned the called session of Congress in Houston on October 13, 1837 to create a new county. The petition to congress from the Washington County citizens ran as follows:

We your petitioners, citizens of Washington County East of the Brazos River, being desirous for a division of said county do hereby petition your honorable body to make the Brazos River the dividing line between said new county so as to throw our new county seat out in the high healthy prairies; as for the arrangments of the new county after that is done we are willing to abide the justice of Congress in the honesty of our own citizens in fixing the other lines and locating the seat of justice. <sup>4</sup>

More than a month elapsed before Congress got around to considering the petition of the Washington County citizens. The First Congress commenced its regular session at Houston on November 6, 1837, and it was not until November 23 that the bill to create Montgomery County appeared on its agenda. Mosely Baker, representative from Austin County, and William W. Hill and W. W. Grant, representatives from Washington County, took the most interest in the Montgomery bill. The introduction and progress of the bill through both of the houses of congress was as follows:

Thursday, 10 o'clock, Nov. 23, 1837.

.....  
Mr. Baker, Chairman of the Committee on County

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<sup>4</sup> Memorial Petitions, October 13, 1837, in Texas State Archives, Number 10.

Boundaries, reported a bill accompanied by the petition of sundry citizens of Washington County for the creation of a new county to be called Montgomery County: read a first time.<sup>5</sup>

Then on Thursday, November 30, 1837 the bill creating the county of Montgomery was taken up on its second reading in the House and then passed on to the Senate chamber.<sup>6</sup> While the bill was in the Senate chamber the Senate saw fit to make some changes concerning the seat of justice and the lower boundary line; therefore on Thursday at one o'clock, December 7, a message was received to the House from the Senate informing the representatives that they had amended the bill creating the county of Montgomery.<sup>7</sup> At three o'clock on the same day the Senate read the amended bill and, " . . . the rule being suspended, it was read a third time and passed."<sup>8</sup> The bill went back to the House for the necessary changes and on Friday, December 8, the bill was reconsidered by the House as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> Journal of the House of Representatives of The Republic of Texas, called session of September 25, 1837, and regular session commencing November 6, 1837 (Houston: National Banner Office-Hiles and Company), p. 176.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 207

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 235

<sup>8</sup> Journal of The Senate of The Republic of Texas, first congress and second session (Houston: Telegraph Office, 1838), p. 102.

The bill creating the county of Montgomery, as amended by the Senate, was taken up, and on motion of Mr. Hill, the amendment relating to the Seat of Justice, was disagreed to, and the amendment relating to the lower line concurred in.<sup>9</sup>

When the House had threshed out its disagreement about the location of the seat of justice the bill passed back to the Senate for its reconsideration, and on Saturday at ten o'clock, December 9, a message from the Senate was received in the House informing its members that the Senate had concurred in ". . . the bill creating the county of Montgomery, with amendments, and request the House to concur therein. . . ." <sup>10</sup> The House concurred on the bill and on Tuesday, December 12, it made the following report:

Mr. Baker, from the Committee on Enrolled Bills, reported the following bills as having been examined and found correctly enrolled, viz.:

.....  
"An Act creating the county of Montgomery." <sup>11</sup> .....

When the bill had been signed by Joseph Rowe, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Mirabeau B. Lamar, the President of the Senate, it went to Sam Houston, the President, for his signature. On December 14, 1837,<sup>12</sup> just twenty-one days

<sup>9</sup> Journal of the House of Representatives, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 240

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 251

<sup>12</sup> H. P. N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897 (Austin: the Gammel Book Company, 1898), Vol. I, p. 1357.

from the time the bill was introduced in the First Congress of the Republic, Sam Houston signed the act creating Montgomery County.

The bill in part is as follows:

AN ACT Creating the county of Montgomery.

SEC. 1. Be it enacted, by the senate and house of representatives of the republic of Texas in congress assembled, That all that part of the county of Washington lying east of the Brazos, and southeast of the Navasota rivers, shall constitute and form a new county to be known and designated by the name of Montgomery county.

.....

SEC. 3. Be it further enacted, That James Mitchell, Pleasant Gray, William Robinson, Elijah Collard, Charles Garnett, Joseph L. Bennet, B. B. Goodrich, D. D. Dunham, and Henry Fanthrop, be, and they are hereby appointed commissioners, with power and authority (any five of them concurring) to select a proper place for the seat of justice for said county, and to obtain by purchase upon the faith and credit of the county, or receive by donation such quantity of land as will be sufficient for the erection of public buildings, and for defraying such other expenses of said county as said commissioners may deem expedient and that the land so purchased or donated shall be under the superintendance and control of the board of commissioners of said county.

SEC. 4. Be it further enacted, That the said county of Montgomery, shall be entitled to one representative in congress, and that the counties of Washington and Montgomery shall constitute a senatorial district. . . . .

SEC. 6. Be it further enacted, That the lower line of the county of Montgomery shall commence at the mouth of Lake Creek, thence in a direct line to the head of Pond Creek, and thence in a direct line to the mouth of Deason's Creek, thence up the Brazos river to the mouth

ot the Navasota river. <sup>13</sup>

Another petition that Congress seriously considered along with the Montgomery petition, was a petition from Washington County citizens wanting the new county to be called Travis. Congress seriously considered this petition, as is verified in the following congressional report:

An act to form a new County to be named Travis.

The committee on County boundaries have had under consideration the petition of sundry inhabitants of Washington County residing on the East side of the Brazos River praying to be formed into a New County to be named "Travis" ask leave to report the following Bill:

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Texas in Congress assembled:

That that part of Washington County lying on the East side of the Brazos River and bounded as follows, to wit:

Beginning at the place where the San Antonio road crosses the Navasoto thence with said road eastward to where the said road crosses the Trinity River thence with down the said Trinity River to the Colette village of Coshatee Indians thence on a straight line to the Brazos River to the mouth of the Pond Creek, thence up the Brazos River to the mouth of the Navasoto thence up the Navasoto to the place of beginning to be formed into a New County to be called "Travis." <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Bills of the First Congress, December 1837, in Texas State Archives. Number 900.

The bill was engrossed in December, 1837, the same month that the Montgomery bill was passed, and it was signed by Jesse Grimes, Chairman, R. A. Iron, and J.S. Lester; therefore, Montgomery County was almost named Travis County.<sup>15</sup>

Montgomery County was the third county created by the Republic of Texas, with Houston County and Fannin County preceding it. Although it ranked third in the order created by the Republic, it ranked twenty-sixth when added to the twenty-three original counties plus Houston and Fannin Counties.

The county of Montgomery took its name from the town of the same name, because the town was named before the county was created, as is shown in the following article dated July 4, 1837:

#### MONTGOMERY

Situated in the county of Washington, sixty miles northwest of the city of Houston, thirty five miles east of the town of Washington, and six miles west of the San Jacinto River, in the center of a high, beautiful and undulating district of country, distinguished for health, good water, and soil.

It is expected that a new county will be organized, at the next session of congress, embracing this section of country, in which event, the town of Montgomery from its central position, must be selected as the seat of justice.

The San Jacinto affords an excellent keel boat navigation to this point. The most direct route from the city of

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<sup>15</sup>Loc. cit.

of Houston to Robertson's colony and Red River settlements, and from Bevil's settlement to Washington, pass through this town. The great extent of good land lying contiguous, and its increasing and enterprising agricultural population, cannot fail of making this one of the most flourishing inland towns in this republic.

Sale of lots at auction will take place in the town of Montgomery, on the first Monday in September ensuing, and continue for three days.

Terms of sale, six, and twelve months credit. Notes with approved security will be required. Good titles will be made upon the payment of the first notes. <sup>16</sup>

Due to the above article stating that ". . . a new county is expected to be created . . .", and also due to the fact that have previously been stated, that Montgomery County might have been named Travis, one might conclude that the citizens of the new county did not know in advance what the county would be called; therefore, the county must have taken the town's name.

There is still difference of opinion concerning the origin of the name of the town. Some of the citizens and historians contend that Montgomery got its name from a Richard Montgomery, who was born in Ireland, and settled at King's Bridge, New York, in 1773. He served as a delegate to represent Dutchess County, New York in the first New York Provisional Assembly in 1775, and in the same year he appointed Brigadier General. He was killed in a battle at

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<sup>16</sup>Telegraph and Texas Register, op. cit.

Quebec December 31, 1775.<sup>17</sup>

It is the more popular belief by the citizens and old timers, however, that the town of Montgomery was named from the family name of Margaret (Margret, Margart, or Margit) Montgomery Shannon, wife of Owen Shannon. Owen Shannon and Jacob Shannon, his son, came to Texas in November 1821 and settled near San Augustine. They stayed there nine years before they were accepted in Austin's fourth colony, and in 1830 they moved to Montgomery County.<sup>13</sup> Both father and son got a grant of land from the Mexican government. Jacob's grant of land was located where present day Dobbin now stands. He established a trading post on his grant which became known as Shannon's and its locality known as Shannon's Prairie.

Owen Shannon and his wife, Margaret, settled on their grant of land which was located northeast of the present town of Montgomery. They likewise set up a trading post to trade with the Indians and settlers in that area. This trading post was established on a creek, later known as Town Creek, and since his son Jacob had named his post Shannon's, Owen named his store from his Wife's maiden name, Montgomery.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> S. T. Fulmore, History and Geography of Texas, As Told in County Names. (Austin: The Steck Company, 1935), p. 64

<sup>18</sup> Letter of Col. Jacob Shannon to Messrs. Gray and Henderson, Treasury and Secretary of the Texas Historical Society, October 13, 1870, in Addison Collection.

<sup>19</sup> Personal interview of the author with Lulu Shannon, Dobbin, Texas, June 10, 1952.

Owen did not live long to operate his Montgomery trading post, for it is known that he died in late 1833 or early part of 1834.<sup>20</sup> Jacob Shannon became the executor of his father's will and estate, and for some time he continued running his father's trading post; but probably due to the expense of keeping two trading posts going, he abandoned the Montgomery post and kept his own at Shannon's Prairie.

When the new town of Montgomery was plotted by W. W. Sheppard and C. B. Stewart, its organizers, the site chosen was located about one-half of a mile from the banks of the creek where the post had been, to its present site, a higher and more healthy location.

Another local story has it that Montgomery took its name from William Montgomery, a surveyor and widower, who came to Texas in 1822 with his sons, John, Andrew, and Eddy Montgomery. In 1830 he settled some seven miles southwest of the town of Montgomery in what is present day Grimes County. Later two of his sons, John and Andrew, enlisted in Captain James Gillaspie's Company in 1836 and fought in the battle of San Jacinto. It is claimed by the descendants of these two brothers that the county was

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<sup>20</sup> Montgomery County Courthouse Records, Deeds, Vol. B, p. 321.

named for the surveyor William Montgomery.<sup>21</sup>

It is the belief of Mrs. A. W. Fowlkes, a local genealogist, that the families of Margaret Montgomery and the families of William Montgomery are direct descendants of Richard Montgomery.

Since the act creating Montgomery County had authorized commissioners to select a seat of justice, the citizens of Montgomery County, on December 30, 1837, petitioned the newly appointed commissioners court to build a jail and courthouse in the town of Montgomery by subscription; but due to the time required for building a courthouse, immediate need for a building, and probable lack of finances, the commissioners declared the petition void.<sup>22</sup>

At a meeting of the commissioners held on March 1, 1838, Martin P. Clark proposed that a committee be appointed to let contracts for purchasing or erecting the necessary public buildings needed for the county business. He further proposed that the courthouse and jail should not exceed the cost of one thousand dollars each.<sup>23</sup> The court then appointed B. B. Goodrich, William Rankin, and William

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<sup>21</sup> Personal interview of the author with J. L. Montgomery, Richards, Texas, July 20, 1951.

<sup>22</sup> Montgomery County Courthouse, Minutes of the Commissioners Court 1838-1845, p. 78

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 3

C. Clark on the committee, and in turn this committee proposed that one Lemuel Smith, draftsman and mechanic, be requested to draft a plan for the public buildings.

The commissioners did not wait for Smith's plans because, pressed for the immediate need for a courthouse, they obtained a dwelling from W. W. Shepperd. In obtaining this house from Shepperd, the commissioners were to have paid him the sum of eight hundred dollars, provided that the commissioners kept the house permanently; but if they decided to move within the year, they agreed to pay Shepperd a reasonable rent for the time the building was occupied as a courthouse. These facts are recorded in the commissioners' minutes as follows:

. . . The House purchased by the commissioners on the part of the county for a Court House in the Town of Montgomery for the sum of eight hundred dollars shall not be paid for as per contract within one year from the date hereof, then and in that case the house shall revert to W. W. Shepperd and that he shall be entitled to reasonable rent for the same for the time it shall have been occupied as a Court House.<sup>24</sup>

In the next commissioners court meeting which was held on April 4, 1838, the committee, having already obtained a courthouse, proceeded as follows on a motion concerning the construction of a jail:

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 19

On motion, Resolved that the Committee heretofore appointed for that purpose be and they are hereby authorized to contract for building a Jail, provided that amount shall not exceed the proceeds of the Sale of Public lots in the Town of Montgomery, after deducting the amount appropriated for building the courthouse, and further provided that the expense of building the Jail shall not exceed the sum of Two thousand five hundred dollars which was adopted. . . .<sup>25</sup>

In the October term of court the commissioners proceeded to pay Lemuel Smith two hundred dollars for his work in renovating the house into a courthouse. The commissioners court records stated Smith had made a ". . . bar, judges seat, jury boxes, et cetera as per contract with the commissioners appointed for that purpose at the March term . . . ." <sup>26</sup>

This was the first permanently established courthouse and jail that Montgomery County had, and their location was about three-fourths of a mile north of the present community center site. At the time of their establishment the main portion of the population of the town of Montgomery lived on the north side of Town Creek; therefore, the courthouse and jail were placed in that area. It was not until the new section of town--the present site of Montgomery--was bought from W. W. Shepperd and developed by James McCown, that the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 15

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 18

courthouse was moved.<sup>27</sup>

On October 21, 1839, William W. Shepperd and his wife, Mary Steptoe Shepperd, sold to James Alexander McCown, for eight thousand dollars, their interest in the town of Montgomery.<sup>28</sup> To develop the new part of the town, which was south of Town Creek and on a hill, James McCown persuaded the Commissioners Court to move the courthouse to that section, as the following quotation shows:

Ordered by the Court that the proposals and contract of James Alexander McCown, agent for the proprietors of the town of Montgomery to move the Court House to the hill and to erect offices for county purposes. . . .<sup>29</sup>

The necessary government buildings were procured by McCown for the new site, and on April 3, 1843. James McCown re-deeded to Montgomery County the public square -- the one previously deeded to the county by W. W. Shepperd -- with the public buildings intact as shown:

. . . I James McCown of the Republic and County aforesaid in consideration of a donation made by the court of county commissioners of the county aforesaid to one hundred acres of land being the same which William W. Shepperd of the county aforesaid donated as a site for the county Seat of said county of Montgomery,

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<sup>27</sup>Commissioners Court Minutes, op. cit., p. 76

<sup>28</sup>Montgomery County Courthouse, Deeds, Book E, p. 184.

<sup>29</sup>Commissioners Court Minutes, loc. cit.

do hereby relinquish all my right title, claim and interest in and to the following described tracts of Land (viz) one tract of three English acres for a public square . . . together with the Court House and two offices one for the county clerk - the other for the district clerk. Situated thereon, with all the furniture and appurtenances thereunto belonging - also one half acre of land . . . for a jail. . . .<sup>30</sup>

Apparently this courthouse and other buildings, that McCown had erected, were temporary, for on May 24, 1845, a contract was let to Joseph Rhodes by Lemuel G. Clepper and Richard Willis to construct a new courthouse of a more detailed nature. The description of the new building as it was to be constructed is as follows:

. . . That the said Joseph Rhodes shall and will within the space of seven months from the date thereof, in good and workman like manner, build and finish a Court House in the Town of Montgomery on the Public square, of the dimension and the following to wit: Said Court House to be thirty feet long and twenty feet wide, two stories high, the lower story to be nine feet high, the upper seven feet in the clear, to have folding doors at one end and three steps to the same, the doors to be seven feet six inches by four feet, and sunk panelled, to have six windows with shutters on each side, three above and three below, and four windows with shutters at one end, two above and two below, the doors and windows to be faced, whitened and beaded, the doors to have good inside locks and bolts, the shutters to have each a short bolt on the inside. In the lower story to be a Judges bench pannelled and a Clerks Desk pannelled, in front of said Clerk two jury boxes on the left hand side of the Bench, large enough to contain six people each, and corresponding seats on the right hand side of said Bench for Witness seats and a table for Lawyers, and a railing extending the width of the House, so as to include

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<sup>30</sup> Deeds, op. cit., Book F., p. 602

the bar, with a grate in the middle, also a stair case with a hand rail attached, and a hand rail on the top of the stairs, the upper flooring to be tongued and grooved, the lower to be, "to be" squared, the plank the usual width and thickness, all the scantling to be sawed, all the heavy timber to be of oak, all the balance of pine, the House to be weather boarded with sawed stuff to be on the outside. . . .<sup>31</sup>

The agreement included, also, the description of the roof, type of singles, block, corner post, sills, sleepers, et cetera. For payment for the work done Joseph Rhodes agreed to the following:

. . . In consideration whereof the said Joseph Rhodes is to receive the subscription to be paid either in Money or property as now subscribed to the amount of four hundred twenty four and one-half dollars, and one hundred seventy-five and one half dollars in par funds, to be paid at the completion of the building. . . .<sup>32</sup>

Joseph Rhodes soon finished construction on the courthouse and the deed records of the county show that:

. . . On the 1st of September 1846 the said L. G. Clepper and Richard S. Willis as trustees appointed by a meeting of the subscribers for the purpose of building a Court House in the town of Montgomery did certify that they had on the day, 1st Sept. 1846, received the Court House of Joseph Rhodes, the contractor and undertaker of said Court House. . . .<sup>33</sup>

In January, 1848, this courthouse had to be remodeled because it was insufficient for the safe keeping of the county records. The

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, Book K, p. 230

<sup>32</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Book L, p. 398

lower room was divided into three partitioned rooms for office space, and the upstairs was used for the courtroom.<sup>34</sup>

By February 22, 1853, the citizens of the county were asking for a new courthouse to be built. They petitioned the commissioners court and the court consented to build the house. Their sanctioned report is as follows:

On this day was presented to the Court the petitions of divers citizens praying the erection of a new court house with suitable offices etc. . . . .  
 On motion resolved that the county of Montgomery aided by voluntary private subscription will build a Court House, on the public square in the town of Montgomery in said county two stores high with suitable offices in Lower story and the sum of three thousand dollars, shall be . . . appropriated. . . .<sup>35</sup>

Before the new building was begun the commissioners had to call a special meeting March 30, 1853, for reasons explained in the following:

. . . The present Building heretofore used as a Court House of this (Montgomery) County is unsafe and otherwise not suitable for the remainder of the present session of the Hon. District Court, now in session for said county. . . It is therefore considered ordered adjudged, decreed, and declared that the Baptist Church in the Town and County of Montgomery be and the same is for the time being the Court House of the County of Montgomery. . . .<sup>36</sup>

This article also stated that the commissioners got the consent

34 Minutes of the Commissioners Court 1845-1848, p. 195.

35 Ibid., 1848-1854, p. 156.

36 Ibid., p. 160

from the Baptist Church trustees to use the church as a courthouse, provided that they would pay for the damages done, and also for cleaning and scrubbing the chapel. This church was used as a courthouse for almost two years while the construction was under way on a new building.

Since the old courthouse was so dilapidated, Montgomery County was once again in need of a government building; so, the county commenced construction on a new house. This house was a two story building like its predecessor, and it was also considerably larger. Its dimensions and description was given as follows:

. . . The present court house, is about 50 feet by 50 feet with a 15 feet hall and 4 rooms on the basement story 25 by 17 feet, 2 rooms on each side of Hall and on 2nd story one main hall or Court Room. All ceiled and weatherboarded with plain Box finish. . . .<sup>37</sup>

This new courthouse was almost finished by February, 1855, because one of the citizens of the town in a letter to his wife explained, ". . . I have just returned from dinner via the court house, it is same except some extra fixing on the top; a very pretty house and quite snug. . . ."<sup>38</sup> This was the last courthouse that the town of Mont-

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<sup>37</sup> Memorial Petitions, 1873, in Texas State Archives, Number 194.

<sup>38</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, February 11, 1855, in Addison Collection.

gomery built. It was used until April 1889, when the seat of government was voted to be moved to the town of Conroe.

Soon after the act creating Montgomery County was passed, an election was held with the following people elected to occupy their respective offices. They were: G. B. Barnet, Senator; Joseph L. Bennett, Representative; Jesse Grimes, Chief Justice; Joshua Robbins, Sheriff; Abraham Suber, District Clerk; and Gwyn Morrison, County Clerk.<sup>39</sup>

Not long after the selection of the county seat, many of the citizens discovered that the town of Montgomery was a great distance from the places where they resided; therefore they began to petition congress to break Montgomery down into other counties. One of the first petitions to form a new county from Montgomery that was received by Congress was signed not long after the county of Montgomery was organized. On January 18, 1838 the people asked congress to form a new county to be called Bowie, and for it to be bounded as follows:

. . . Beginning at the junction of Kickapoo Creek with the Trinity River, Thence a Direct course to the Mouth of Big Sandy Creek on the San Jacinto thence to the mouth of Little Sandy on the West Side of San Jacinto hence up the little Sandy to its head, Thence North 30 degrees west to the Old La Bahia road thence

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Election Register 1836-1840, in Texas State Archives, Number 225, p. 365

along said road to the Trinity River including Mrs. Robbin's House; from thence down the Trinity to the beginning. . . . This will free some of them from the trouble and expense of traveling near eighty miles to attend court at the present seat of justice for this county.<sup>40</sup>

These dimensions included the northern portions of present day Walker and San Jacinto Counties. Congress did not consider this proposal, because it was not until 1842 that congress saw fit to make a division of the county, but congress did pass an act on January 25, 1840 to define the boundaries of Montgomery County, which are as follows:

. . . . Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Texas, in Congress assembled, That from and after the passage of this act, the boundaries of the county of Montgomery shall be as follows, viz: Beginning at the mouth of Beesair's Creek; thence to a point now established at the head of Pond Creek; thence to the head of Spring Creek; thence with its meanders, to San Jacinto; thence north fifty degrees east to the western line of Liberty county; thence along said line to the northwestern line of Liverty county; thence along said line to the northwest corner of said county; thence, eastwardly with said northern line of the same, to the Trinity River; thence up said river, on its right bank, to the crossing of the old San Antonio Road; thence, westwardly with said road to the Navasota; thence, down the Navasota, on its left bank, to its mouth; thence down the Brazos, on its left bank, to the place of beginning.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Memorial Petitions, January 18, 1838, in Texas State Archives, Number 17.

<sup>41</sup> Gammel, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 396.

By these limits, Montgomery County extended east and west from the Trinity River to the Brazos River and north and south from the city of Madisonville to Spring Creek. This included the territory of the present day counties of Grimes, Walker, San Jacinto, and a portion of Madison and Waller Counties.

In an act dated February 2, 1842 and passed by the Sixth Congress at Austin, the first portion of territory of Montgomery County was cut off to form a part of Madison County.<sup>42</sup> The boundary for Madison County encompassed all of the portion of land which had belonged to Montgomery east of the San Jacinto River. The line of the boundary extended from the Harris County line, north up the San Jacinto River to its source. Later Madison County was recreated to its present bounds, and Montgomery County again got possession of the territory east of the San Jacinto River.

The next division of the county took effect on April 6, 1846, and in the acts that were passed by the First Legislature at Austin two counties were formed consecutively. They were Grimes County and Walker County. Grimes County composed of the following boundaries:

. . . . All that portion of the territory of the county

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 763.

of Montgomery, comprised within the following limits, shall be known by the name of, and styled the county of Grimes, to wit: Beginning at the southwest corner of the county of Walker; thence, in a southwardly direction to the north-east corner of a league of land granted to W. Montgomery; thence, to the southeast corner of the same; thence, due south to the Harris county line; thence, with said Harris county line, to the head of Spring Creek, and from the head of Spring Creek to the head of Pond Creek; thence, by a straight line to the mouth of the Navasoto, and up the Navasoto to the crossing of the San Antonio road; thence, with said road to the north-western boundary line of Walker county, and down the said Walker county line to the place of beginning.<sup>43</sup>

The boundary of Walker County was established as follows:

. . . That a new county be established to be known and distinguished by the name of Walker, the boundaries of which shall be as follows: Beginning at Robbins' ferry on the Trinity, where the San Antonio road crosses the same; thence, with the said road to the north-east corner of a survey of land in the name of L. G. Clepper; thence, in a straight line to the South Bedai Creek, to a point where the La Bahia road crosses the same; thence, in a straight line to the north-west corner of a survey of two-thirds of a league of land in the name of J. H. Collard; thence, in a straight line to a point on San Jacinto River, three miles below the mouth of East Sandy Creek; thence, east to the line of a new county to be called Polk; thence, with the lines of said county to the Trinity River; thence, up the middle of said river to the place of beginning.<sup>44</sup>

These two counties cut off the western and northern sections of Montgomery County. As each new county was formed each was

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 1356.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 1357.

required to pay its portion of the debt of the mother county. At the same time in which they were organized, an act was passed requiring Grimes and Walker to pay to Montgomery such proportion of the debt due, and the debt was to be apportioned in a manner which the county courts of the respective counties should determine. The Grimes County line was not surveyed until February 1855. In a letter to his wife a prominent citizen of Montgomery writes, "The line dividing this and Grimes County was run by Joe Brown, received and approved by the Court; we get Austin's settlement. . . .<sup>45</sup>

No other counties were cut off from Montgomery County until after the Civil War. In January 1869, the county of San Jacinto, which was in the original bounds of Montgomery County was established. The new county was created by a declaration of the Constitutional Convention which was held in Austin for the purpose of drafting a new constitution. The declaration which established San Jacinto County reads as follows:

Be it declared by the representatives of the people of Texas, in Convention assembled, That the territory comprised within the following boundaries be, and the same is hereby erected, into a new county, to be called the county of San Jacinto.

. . . . Beginning in the channel of Trinity river, at a point opposite the mouth of Carolina Creek, in Walker

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<sup>45</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, February 18, 1855, in Addison Collection.

county, running in a due line from thence to the head of the east branch of Peach Creek, in Montgomery county, thence down the channel of said Peach Creek to a point parallel with the thirtieth parallel and twenty minutes north latitude, in said Montgomery county; thence on a due line through same point where the present southern line of Polk county crosses the channel of said Trinity river; from thence up the channel to said Trinity River with its meanderings to the place of beginning.<sup>46</sup>

The last county to obtain a portion of territory from Montgomery County was Waller County. In April, 1873, the Thirteenth Legislature passed an act to create a new county from portions of Montgomery, Grimes, Austin and Harris Counties.<sup>47</sup>

After the counties of Madison, Grimes, Walker, San Jacinto, and Waller were cut off from the original county of Montgomery, the remaining part of the county encompassed a total area of 1,017 square miles.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Gammel, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 78.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 501

<sup>48</sup>Richardson, op.cit., Vol. III, p. 1125.

## CHAPTER V

### CITIES, TOWNS, AND COMMUNITIES

Through its history Montgomery County has had its share of towns and communities. Some are now ghost towns, while others live only in the minds of the old timers who remember something once said about them. And too, a few have been sawmill towns which lived as long as the timber which made them lasted. Some failed to survive because a railroad or highway by-passed them, or because an industrial change occurred. But for these reasons, for every community that became extinct, another seemed to spring up in its place.

Within the original bounds Montgomery County had such historical towns as, Cincinnati, Huntsville, Waverly, Robbin's, Old Trinidad (Spanish Bluff), Groce's, Fanthrop's, Navasota, Cold-spring, Swartout, Point Blank, and many others. These towns were separated from Montgomery County when the new counties in which they were located were formed from Montgomery, but even after Montgomery was divided she had many communities left. Some of these communities, many of which are extinct today, are as follows: Boggy, McRae, Dobbin, Bobbin, Hartley, Peach Creek, Lake Creek, Bethel, Mink, Pleasant Grove, Caney Station, Newleaney, Morrisville,

Bear bend, Longstreet, Oklahoma, Lost Cane Brake, Hunters Retreat, Deckers Prairie, Goodson Prairie, Mount Pleasant, Panther Branch, Brantley, Presswood, Danville, Waukegan, Honea, Ada, Esperanza, Union Grove, Tamina, Rose Hill, Clinesburg, Beach, Willis, Timber, Montgomery, Conroe, Magnolia, Tharp, Youens, Butlersburgh, Pools, Dacus, Fostoria, Cut 'n Shoot, Pinehurst, Karen, Jackson, Bobville, Rayford, Porters, Security, Midline, Splendor, Boy, Four Corners, Granger, Wigginsville, New Caney, Cowl Spur, Bunn, Leonidas, Keenan, Bays Chapel, and Venturea. Only a few of these communities will be considered in this study, though it is with regret that the author can not give an account of each. Several are treated including the important towns of today, an early town, a ghost town, a sawmill town and some communities of unusual interest.

The town of Montgomery is the oldest in the county. It has already been stated in this study how it was thought the town of Montgomery got its name. Prior to 1837, Montgomery had been a trading post established by Owen and Margaret Shannon, and located north of Town Creek. The new part of the town was plotted by W. W. Shepperd, a land agent, who bought the land from John Corner to establish the new part of the town. The first mention of the new part of the town appeared in the Telegraph and Texas Register, July 8, 1837. The article that was in the paper was written by W. W. Shepperd on the

fourth of July, 1837, and gave the location of the town and advertised the sale of town lots. The sale of the lots was to be held in auction at Montgomery the first day of September, and the auction was to continue for three days. However, a plat of the new town was not drawn by Shepperd until January 1, 1838.<sup>1</sup> Two months later, Shepperd through his agent and son-in-law, C. B. Stewart, gave to the county thirteen town lots and a site for a courthouse. At the same time a more definite procedure was given as to how the sale of the town lots was to be carried out. These facts are explained in the following article:

The president placed before the court the written act of donation of William W. Shepperd to the county of Montgomery of an equal undivided half interest in the town of Montgomery and sixty acres of pine land adjoining donated for county purposes. And it being put to the question whether said donations should be accepted. It was unanimously received and the question being also, whether the place of the town presented by C. B. Stewart as agent for W. W. Shepperd should be received. The same was also unanimously received and adopted.

Motioned that a sale of town lots of the town of Montgomery be made on 4th Monday in April next for the purpose of raising funds to defray in part county expenses. It was ordered unanimously that a sale should be made on that date. Three previous advertisements being made in the Telegraph etc. etc. Question being made upon what terms and the time of credit given or to be given purchasers of town lots, It was ordered that sales be made for

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<sup>1</sup> W. W. Shepperd, Map of the Town of Montgomery, January 1, 1838, Addison Collection.

one fourth cash, one fourth payable in three months, one fourth within six months, and the remainder fourth 12 months. Purchasers giving liens upon lots until final payment receiving certificates at the time of purchase and giving the notes for respective amounts and on respective time.

W. W. Shepperd having made certain improvements in the town of Montgomery by his agent C. B. Stewart, claimed the selection of thirteen lots giving an equal selection of thirteen lots to the County Commissioners and registered the action of the Court in relation to the instruction of the donation to Wit, of an equal undivided interest in the town proposing that when the county or its agent should have sold thirteen lots to counter balance the thirteen selected by W. W. Shepperd. All sales of other lots the proceeds thereof should be equally divided between the county and the said W. W. Shepperd after each and every sale.<sup>2</sup>

On October 21, 1839, W. W. Shepperd sold his interest in the town of Montgomery to James McCown for eight thousand dollars.<sup>3</sup> James McCown influenced the development of the new part of the town and through his inducement it became one of the most progressive towns in the Republic. Montgomery prospered from the start, because it was the county seat and main trading town of the county. As conditions improved Montgomery received a generous share of the tide of immigrants. Places of business were established, professional men located their practices there, and soon Montgomery became one of the most im-

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<sup>2</sup> Extract from the minutes of the Commissioners Court, March 1, 1838, Addison Collection.

<sup>3</sup> Montgomery County Courthouse Records, Deeds, Book E, p. 184.

portant towns in Texas.

Two of the first professional men to arrive in Montgomery to contribute to the advancement of the town were Dr. E. J. Arnold and Dr. J. H. Price.

In 1836, Dr. E. J. Arnold came to Texas and in 1837 formed a partnership with Dr. James H. Price of Houston. These doctors practiced both in Washington and Montgomery, going from Washington to Montgomery in about the year 1839. Dr. Arnold was joined by his wife sometime during his earliest years in Texas, and in the early 1840's they bought land and built a small home. In the early 1850's this first home was replaced by a handsome one in which one of his grandsons, R. O. Simonton, lives today.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Arnold was very popular in Montgomery and took part in almost every movement for civic improvement. He and C. E. Clepper donated land for the Montgomery Academy, and later, Dr. Arnold offered a site for the construction of a female college, but this dream was never realized. When he died in 1860, he was buried in Montgomery, but in 1880 his body was disinterred to be buried beside that of his wife in Willis, Texas.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> W. N. Martin, "A History of Montgomery," (Unpublished Master's thesis, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville, Texas, 1950), p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 20

The other physician, Dr. James Howe Price, arrived in Galveston in May 1837 on a steamer sailing from New Orleans. He continued his journey to Houston, where he arrived on May 25, and in his diary he recorded the following:

Found myself in what they call a Cut-throat town that afforded me not a single friend and scarcely an acquaintance -- without a particle of experience in my half acquired profession -- no medicine, no instruments -- nor no office or books.

In Houston Dr. Price formed a partnership with a Dr. Matthews who had had some experience and had been practicing there. Dr. Price set up practice after the necessary equipment was obtained on credit, and for several months he found Houston a very good place for a doctor's business.

In April of 1837, Dr. Price decided to visit his home in Tennessee; so he left his practice in the hands of a friend and departed on a steamer for New Orleans. In the fall of that same year he decided to come back to Texas, and on the way overland he was joined by two more men who were also riding through the country on horseback. They were several weeks on the road, traveling through swamps, forests, and over almost impassable trails. They came through Arkansas, Louisiana, and into Texas, entering by the way of Natchitoches, Louisiana. They came on to Houston by way of old Cincinatti on the Trinity River, and

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 Diary, Dr. James H. Price, Sam Houston Memorial Museum, p. 1.

then to Montgomery, where Dr. Price spent several days with the Worsham family. The account of this in his diary is as follows:

July 3, 1838.

. . . The Trinity at Cincinatti is the most beautiful stream I have seen in Texas. Got this evening to Hadleys. No corn or oats had to hopple out. Wed. 4th. Left this morning after breakfast. Stopped at McDonalds, no person at home, gave our horses a feed of corn. . . Came this evening to Lindleys and stayed all night. The people were celebrating the 4th of July all over the country at Crockett, Montgomery, etc. etc. July 5. Stayed at Johnsons--came on to Mr. Worshams. . . . Fri. 6. Concluded this morning to stay all day, we are much pleased with the family, fine lady, etc. Sat. 7. This is my sick day (had a chill) we have concluded to stay all day again. I have been well all day, went to Montgomery today. Returned this evening to Mr. Worsham. Sun. 8. Left this morn after breakfast for Houston, got this evening to Wynns. 30 mi. and horses are out.<sup>7</sup>

Upon his arrival in Houston, Dr. Price found that the doctor he had left to take charge of his practice while he was gone had taken his business. It was on account of this incident that he decided to come back to Montgomery.

In Montgomery he met Dr. E. J. Arnold, and formed a partnership with him. Dr. Price was not only a successful physician, but also he was a successful farmer. He owned much land and many slaves, and was very prosperous both as a farmer and a trader.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 23.

In addition to the professional men, the town of Montgomery drew men of a business nature. They established mercantile houses which caused Montgomery to advance commercially. Two of these early business men were the Willis brothers, Peter J. and Richard S.

In 1836 Peter J. Willis landed in Nacogdoches, where he stayed about one year and then went to old Washington-on-the-Brazos, where he stayed another year before coming to Montgomery. He married Caroline Womack of Montgomery, and they had two sons and four daughters, the youngest daughter dying at Montgomery when a child. Peter Willis built a small log house when he first arrived; soon, however, he was able to build a fine new home furnished with the best furniture that he could buy. He bought his furniture in Galveston and had it shipped to Montgomery on ox-drawn wagons. He had the grounds about his home landscaped, and the whole place, when completed, was one of the very finest homes in Montgomery. The home, with the furniture, still stands today and is owned by Mr. Raymond Weisinger.

Peter Willis was a personal friend of Sam Houston, and it is said that Houston spent many visiting hours in Montgomery in the Willis home.<sup>9</sup>

When Mrs. Willis dies in 1863, Mr. Willis closed his store and his house and left two old Negro servants as caretakers. After a few

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

years, however, he sold his home and moved to Galveston. The last surviving child of Peter Willis was Mrs. George Sealy of Galveston, who died only recently. Her name was Magnolia, and it was from her that the Magnolia Petroleum Company took its name, since she was one of its largest stock holders.<sup>10</sup>

Richard S. Willis, a younger brother of Peter J., and a boy of sixteen, came to Montgomery in 1837, a year later than his brother. He joined partnership with his brother, and, after getting started in the mercantile business, the two brothers established the Willis Brothers General Mercandise Company.<sup>11</sup>

Business prospered and so did the town as more people moved into Montgomery. In the early 1840's Dr. J. H. Price established a grist mill at Montgomery; and, some years later, he built a gin on his property about three miles west of the town. Another industry that started was a pottery which was located on a farm south of the town. It was established in the late 1840's and the remains of the old kiln and a few broken pieces of pottery still mark the location where it stood. It was short-lived, but to this day, the stream that furnished water for the pottery is called Juggery Creek. Most of the pottery was sold to a nearby whiskey still for whiskey jugs and to local house wives for bowls

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 27

and churns. Many crudely molded jars from the pottery are in the hands of several citizens today.<sup>12</sup>

Another industry which made Montgomery progress was a tannery started by Antony Martin in 1843. He purchased a bark mill from P. J. Willis and installed a tannery on Martin's Creek about three miles east of Montgomery. He operated the tannery until the Civil War, when it was abandoned. Hides were purchased from local settlers and tanned into leather which was usually sold to the local shops in Montgomery.<sup>13</sup>

By 1845 Montgomery had grown large enough to have a newspaper, a Masonic lodge, a telegraph station. The newspaper published by John Marshall Wade was the Montgomery Patriot, and the first regular issue appeared on April 26, 1845.<sup>14</sup> The Montgomery Patriot of July 2, 1845, advertised the places of business of M. O. Dimon, General Merchandise; B. F. Duncan, Fashionable Tailor; M. Shaben and Bros, Merchandise; Lem. Smith, Cabinet Manufacturer and Upholsterer; and P. J. Willis and Brothers, General Merchandise. In one of the advertisements James McCown advertised: ". . . Will sell cheap, and on accommodating terms, a pair of first rate STILLs,

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 43

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 42

<sup>14</sup> Montgomery Patriot, July 2, 1845, Sam Houston Memorial Museum.

together with all the apparatus to carry on a distillery." Also in the same issue James McCown advertised the sale of town lots, and in the advertisement he gave a good description of the prosperity of the town, which is as follows:

. . . The lands surrounding Montgomery, known as the Lake Creek Settlement, being of such a rich and fertile character, and having a rich and industrious population, it is destined to be, in a short time, a town of considerable importance.

Montgomery is the county site of the most flourishing, populous and intelligent county in the Republic. It is situated on an elevated ridge, which divides the waters of the San Jacinto River and Lake Creek--In point of health, Montgomery is not inferior to any place in the world, lying in the same latitude.<sup>15</sup>

The Masonic Lodge Number 25 was organized April 25, 1845 in Montgomery. The minutes show that some of the people who helped organize the lodge were W. H. Grand Master B. Gillespie, John Gillespie, L. G. Clepper, Sam Houston, Buford Oliphant, and others.<sup>16</sup>

The first telegraph line was built through Montgomery in 1845 and it added to the prestige of the town. The line extended from Houston to Huntsville by way of Montgomery. The line traveled the old Stage Road, and even today old insulators can be found on the trees along the old road.

<sup>15</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 68.

Besides being the center of government and industry, Montgomery was the center of school and church activities for the county. The Methodist as early as 1838 held meetings in the town, and in 1842 the first Methodist parsonage of Texas was erected there. The Baptists in the town organized a church in 1850.<sup>17</sup>

Montgomery was one of the leading town in the state for the advancement of education. An academy was organized in 1848 for the purpose of educating its youth. The school was called the Montgomery Academy.<sup>18</sup>

Montgomery advanced so rapidly that by 1848 an act was passed by the Legislature to incorporate it as a town. The act in part is as follows:

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas, That the citizens of the town of Montgomery in Montgomery county, be, and they are hereby, declared a body politic and corporate, under the name and style of the Corporation of the Town of Montgomery, who shall have the power of suing and being sued, pleading, and being impleaded, and to hold property real and personal within the limits of said corporation, and at their pleasure to dispose of the same.

Be it further enacted, That the corporate limits of said town shall extend one half mile in every direction from the center of the public square.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> H. P. N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas 1822-1897 (Austin: The Gammerl Book Company, 1898), Vol. III, p. 379.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Vol. III, p. 361.

The act also designated the duties of the town officials, their term of office, and the days of election. The first mayor after the act was passed was Nat Hart Davis. His first duty was to clean out the town well.

Nat Hart Davis was one of the most prominent lawyers and distinguished citizens of Montgomery. In the spring of 1840 he came to Montgomery from Madison County, Alabama and applied for his Texas citizenship.<sup>20</sup> He set up a law office in the town and when his business was established he went to Mississippi and married Sarah Elizabeth White. He brought his bride back to Montgomery, where the two lived until their deaths. During his lifetime Nat Davis not only had the honor of being the first mayor Montgomery, but also he had the honor of holding many other positions. He held the position of Justice of the Peace and District Judge for many years, and it is said by the old timers that no one in the county since his death has excelled Nat Davis in the art of handling the procedure of civil law.<sup>21</sup> Today, a portrait of Nat Hart Davis hangs in an honored position in the District Courtroom of the Courthouse.

Montgomery prospered, and it became one of the most im-

<sup>20</sup> Deeds, Book A, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Personal interview of author with Hart Addison, Conroe, Texas, April 10, 1952.

portant trading centers in Texas. Long teams of oxen from up country around Crockett passed through the town drawing loads of cotton, lumber, and other products. They plodded their way slowly to Houston and Galveston, the nearest markets. These wagons on their return trips brought back all kinds of merchandise shipped from New Orleans, New York, and other places.<sup>22</sup>

Montgomery was on the main stage line from Houston to Huntsville and from Washington to Bevil's on the Trinity River. The stage coaches brought both passengers and mail, and the arrival of the stage coach was the most exciting event of the day. As it came up the stage road, the driver blew his musical horn so that it might be heard by the citizens in town long before the stage drew up before the Price Hotel.

The stages usually met at the Price Hotel, which was erected in 1858 by Dr. J. H. Price, and as they arrived from different directions the passengers exchanged news. Then they rested or ate while the horses rested or fresh ones were hitched to the coach.<sup>23</sup>

In 1854 one of the local citizens who had been away from Montgomery on a visit wrote a letter in which he said, ". . . The town is greatly improved in buildings but not in morals--liquor is

<sup>22</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 73

still retailed by Gay and Hooker, and Gafford--and gambling is going on. Our town and county are quite healthy. . . ." <sup>24</sup>

The town continued to grow until the opening of the Civil War. Around 1857 a new school was started to replace the Montgomery Academy which had been discontinued. This new academy was established by Charles L. S. Jones and it was called Jones Academy. It was a very popular institution and lasted until Mr. Jones' son and many of the larger boys of the community enlisted in the Confederate army. <sup>25</sup> In the Texas Almanac of 1857 Montgomery is described as ". . . a village of considerable size occupying an elevated situation and containing many tasty residences, and other evidences of refinement. . . ." <sup>26</sup>

By 1860 Montgomery had reached its peak of development, when the Civil War broke out it drained the town of its able bodied citizens and wealth. In 1864 a Confederate soldier who was passing through Montgomery on patrol duty described the place in his diary as follows:

. . . Thence through a country of timber to Montgomery, in the suburbs of which we camp. This is my first visit to the Montgomery of Texas. It is a very small town.

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<sup>24</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, December 16, 1845, in Addison Collection.

<sup>25</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> Texas Almanac for 1857 (Galveston: Richardson and Company, 1856), p. 77.

Public buildings, an academy, church, Court house and jail; and these of very ordinary qualities. The war has dried the little place up--not a door open in it.<sup>27</sup>

Montgomery never recuperated from the Civil War. The war had sapped its life blood and before it could regain its strength the reconstruction era came and brought it back to its knees. Then too, the coming of the railroads caused an industrial change and many of its businessmen and other citizens moved to the new railroad town of Willis.

Montgomery's population had diminished so much by 1873 that Montgomery had a feud with the town of Willis over the site of the county seat. Willis claimed she had a larger population and that she was nearer the center of the county; but Montgomery kept the honor of being the capitol city until 1889, when by popular vote the county seat was moved to the new railroad-sawmill town of Conroe.

The maneuver of Willis awakened Montgomery to the fact that she needed a railroad or an industry to keep her citizens from leaving; so in 1877 the citizens of the town decided to build their own railroad. Substantial contributions were made by the people in the form of land, money, labor, and materials. The right-of-way was donated and a

<sup>27</sup> H. C. Medford, "Diary", Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Volume XXXIV (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1930) p. 138

charter was granted to the Central and Montgomery Railroad on December 31, 1877. In return for the aid given by the people of the town, the railroad company agreed to maintain a depot for passengers and freight service in the town within a distance of not more than a thousand yards from the courthouse.<sup>28</sup> The railroad was built and only recently it was abandoned.

Montgomery has not changed much since the courthouse was moved to Conroe. Today (1952) it has a population of five hundred and twenty people.<sup>29</sup> A citizen of the town in 1950 wrote:

. . . The character of the town has not changed greatly; that whenever possible, the old families have kept the lands of their forefathers in family hands; that new industries will continue to be discouraged because the citizens dislike the stepped-up tempo and often undesirable population shift that come with certain industries. It is the desire of the present inhabitants that the population in general will continue to have a high regard for culture; that the town will not grow greatly but will strive to keep its churches and lodges among the most highly respected and its schools as progressive as the scholastic census will permit.

It is noted that all those who have once been of Montgomery continue to love and respect the old town and at every opportunity return and visit with the friends of their fathers and mothers.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Martin, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

<sup>29</sup> Texas Almanac 1949-1950 (Dallas: A. H. Belo Corporation, 1949), p. 568.

<sup>30</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 84

Danville is one of the extinct town of Montgomery County. It was located about five miles northwest of the present-day town of Willis. Not much is known about the old town today, because it has been gone for over eighty years. It had its beginning not long after the town of Montgomery, because in the Telegraph and Texas Register of April 8, 1846, it was listed as one of the towns of Montgomery County for election returns of that year.<sup>31</sup> During the 1850's, Danville, like Montgomery, had a building boom. Many plantation owners with their slaves from the Old South moved to the vicinity, cleared land, and built their mansions. One of these plantation owners was Judge Goldthwait, who came to Danville in 1854 and brought with him about two hundred slaves. In a letter to his wife, Nat Davis wrote:

. . . Judge Goldthwait of Alabama bought the H. G. Johnson place at little over \$5.00 per acre and has some 100 Negroes on it, and about as many over on the San Jacinto. . . .<sup>32</sup>

Then in the next year, 1855, Nat Davis wrote to his wife and said, "I saw some fine cotton when I went over to Danville on the 3rd at Goldthwait's plantation on the San Jacinto."<sup>33</sup>

Another plantation owner was General A. J. Lewis from

<sup>31</sup> Democratic Telegraph and Texas Register (Houston), April 8, 1846

<sup>32</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, December 16, 1854, in Addison Collection.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., July 10, 1855.

Virginia, who built a grand three story home with a ballroom on the third story. The brick used in the house were shipped from Holland and the wooden beams were fastened together with wooden pegs whittled out by his slaves. He called this grand house Elmwood, and it stood until 1940 when it was torn down and the lumber used for a new and modern home.<sup>34</sup>

By 1856 Danville had reached a population numberinf about three hundred inhabitants,<sup>35</sup> and in the next year the Texas Almanac described the place as ". . . a small village some fifteen miles north of Montgomery, its trade being from the surrounding country, which is rich and productive."<sup>36</sup>

In January 1860 Danville had grown large enough to seek incorporation; therefore, by an act passed by the Texas Legislature it was incorporated as a town.<sup>37</sup>

Danville, at its peak of prosperity, supported about fourteen business houses; however, they were short lived, because like Montgomery, the Civil War and the coming of the railroads caused Danville and its business houses to decline.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> T. C. Richardson, East Texas: Its History and Its Makers (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940) Vol. III, p. 1126.

<sup>36</sup> Texas Almanac 1857, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>37</sup> Gammel, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 82.

When the Houston and Great Northern Railroad was clearing its right-of-way toward Houston, the railroad officials asked the Danville citizens for permission to run the railroad line through the town. The majority of the citizens did not want the railroad because they were afraid that the type of people that a railroad would bring into their town would be undesirable; therefore, the railroad passed about five miles east of the town, and it was not long until the citizens of Danville saw their mistake. All of the business houses moved to the railroad at the newly established town of Willis, and today all that remains of Danville is a few broken bricks in an open field.<sup>39</sup>

Willis came into being as one of the towns of Montgomery County in 1870. It was named Willis by the Houston and Great Northern Railroad, the predecessor of the International and Great Northern. The town was called Willis in honor of the Willis brothers, Peter J. and Richard S., who had been citizens of Montgomery and were at that time owners of the P. J. Willis and Brothers firm in Galveston. The Willis brothers had rather large land holdings and timber interests near the townsite; therefore, they decided to the Houston and Great

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<sup>38</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 7

<sup>39</sup> Personal interview of author with Lula Dukes, Willis, Texas, May 12, 1952.

Northern Railroad a place for a townsite along the railroad.<sup>40</sup>

Construction for Montgomery County's first railroad was completed in 1872. When the trains began to move on the new railroad, Willis began to prosper. Most of the business houses from Danville and many residents moved to the new town near the railroad. Others from Montgomery and Old Waverly also located in the new town.<sup>41</sup>

By 1873 the population of the town had grown so much that an agitation to move the county seat to Willis was begun; then on September 7, 1874 a called election was held and Willis by a majority of one hundred and forty-two votes was chosen as the county seat.<sup>42</sup>

In 1875 the Willis Observer, a newspaper in the town, gave an account of the town's merchangs and the newly organized Grange.

The article explained as follows:

. . . The merchants of this place have good stocks on hand, and are selling more goods than we thought could be sold these hard times. They sell principally for the cash--though some little "trusting business."

The "Grangers" are doing very well here, and are increasing in number every meeting. They have opened in this place a Grange store, upon a small scale, which

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<sup>40</sup> Conroe Courier, April 8, 1932.

<sup>41</sup> Anna Davis Weisinger, "History of Montgomery County," Historicade Program, October 25, 1949, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> Montgomery County Commissioners Court Minutes, Book A., p. 56

is destined to become of great benefit to the farmers; we are told that its effect is being felt already. The Store is under the management of Col. Israel Worsham, kept in the building occupied by F. J. Williams. . . .<sup>43</sup>

In the same paper an advertisement gave the tuition rates for the newly organized Willis Male and Female College. The advertisement stated that Willis was instituted for males and females and that the exercises for the institution were resumed August 1, 1875 and that they would continue for ten months. Tuition rates were two dollars and five dollars a month; a student taking music was charged five dollars extra. The expense of the student, including board, need not exceed one hundred seventy-five dollars for the entire season.<sup>44</sup>

The Willis Male and Female College plant consisted of three buildings, the main building, dining room and kitchen, and one other building. The third floor of the main building was used for laboratories and rooms for boarding students, and at one time housed the dining room and kitchen. At one time there were about two hundred fifty students who boarded in the college and in several houses located on the street to the west of the grounds and in nearby homes or boarding houses. The curriculum of the college provided for the study of

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<sup>43</sup> The Willis Observer, April 20, 1875.

<sup>44</sup> Loc. cit.

ancient languages, history, mathematics, literature, science, vocal and instrumental music, art, and physical culture. The administrators of the college were Reverend S. N. Barker and wife, George W. Stovall, F. P. Crowe, J. A. Kooken, John W. Hoke, M. A. Kline, and Cyril M. Jansky.<sup>45</sup>

A practice at one time of the college was that at a certain hour each week day evening the janitor of the main building would ring a bell which was in a cupola atop the building. The ringing of the college bell was the signal for all boarding students to retire to the study hall of the college for supervised study of two or three hours and those in the homes and the out-in-town boarding houses were supposed to go to their respective study tables and study for a like period of time.<sup>46</sup>

By 1886 Willis had the requisite number of inhabitants to incorporate as a town. Upon a petition of forty-nine resident citizens asking for an election to be held to incorporate the town, the County Judge declared an election to be held in the town of Willis at the Market House of R. B. Roach on March 16, 1886. The election was held and by a majority vote of fourteen, the

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<sup>45</sup> Personal interview of author with Hulon N. Anderson, Conroe, Texas, July 22, 1951.

<sup>46</sup> Loc. cit.

citizens voted against incorporation.<sup>47</sup>

Willis continued to grow rapidly, because in the 1890 census it had almost as many people as its rival town, Montgomery--832 and 921 respectively.<sup>48</sup>

In the 1890's Willis had a building boom. Many new stores and residents were constructed. Some of the places of business there at the time were T. W. Smith's General Merchandise, Carson and McKibbin General Store, Sandel's Store, Powell and Walker's Drug, Leslie's Erick Yard, First and Last Chance Saloon, and Pearl Saloon. An opera house was constructed by T. W. Smith in 1893. The local newspaper wrote the following about its construction:

Through the courtesy of its owner, Capt. T. W. Smith, an Index representative, was shown through the neat and attractive public hall and Thespian temple, which he has recently had fitted up in the second story of the Caldwell building, at the end of Stewart street. The interior is handsomely painted and comfortably seated with benches of an improved pattern, thereby insuring the unstinted praise of all who may patronize it. The stage is of modern design, and a handsome drop curtain and scenic appurtenances of a suitable character will soon arrive and be put in place. The room on the south side of the building answers most admirably as a dressing boudior, without encroaching upon the space of the main hall, and an additional seating capacity is the result. Some kind of an entertainment will probably be given upon its completion, in order that the citizens of Willis may be formally introduced to what they have long sadly missed--

<sup>47</sup> Commissioners Minutes, op. cit., Book B, p. 235.

<sup>48</sup> Richardson, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 1128.

a pleasant and an attractive public hall.<sup>49</sup>

Willis attracted much attention around 1895 because of the tobacco industry started there. In the latter 1890's Willis had developed this industry so well that it became a very much advertized little town. Fine grades of tobacco were grown in the vicinity and T. W. Smith and son, Cwen Smith, encouraged the industry by building a large brick cigar factory and employed more than one hundred men and women to roll the tobacco into cigars. At its peak Willis boasted of seven cigar factories. A large number of big tobacco buyers from the various eastern points would come to Willis each season to buy their tobacco. They claimed that the Willis tobacco had a flavor that could not be found elsewhere. The farmers grew the celebrated "Vuelta Abago" variety of Cuban tobacco and they sent to Cuba each year for fresh seed.<sup>50</sup>

The tobacco industry was very successful at Willis until the United States Congress lifted the tariff on Cuban tobacco, which had a very devastating effect on the industry at Willis, due to the fact that Cuba, with cheaper labor, could raise tobacco more cheaply than Willis.

Owen Smith, owner of one of the cigar factories, told a local

<sup>49</sup> - - - - -  
The Willis Index, October 20, 1893.

<sup>50</sup>  
Conroe Courier, June 30, 1933.

citizen that the reason the cigar factories closed was because the Cuban employees who worked them wanted to form a union. The union activities were squelched by the employers and thus making the Cubans angry they rolled up gun powder and asafetida in the next shipment of cigars. When the reports came in from the buyers the tobacco industry ceased to exist in Willis.<sup>51</sup>

After the tobacco industry faded away the lumber industry appeared in Willis to keep it alive. Today, it has several sawmills and planers that employs much of its population and is the main source of its wealth. It is a quite respectable little village with about nine hundred people who go about their daily tasks while they think of the days when someone styled their town as the "Athens of Montgomery County." <sup>52</sup>

The city of Conroe is the infant municipality of Montgomery County. Although it was not named until sometime later, it had its beginning January 1, 1881 when Isaac Conroe purchased the Joshua G. Smith tract of land. Previous to the year 1881 Isaac Conroe operated a sawmill at Haltom south of Conroe on the International and Great Northern Railroad, and after purchasing the timber land

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<sup>51</sup> Personal interview of author with Ilanon Moon, Willis, Texas, June 10, 1952.

<sup>52</sup> Personal interview of author with Hulon N. Anderson, Conroe, Texas, July 22, 1951.

from J. G. Smith, in October he moved his sawmill to the center of the Smith survey. This location was about two and a half miles east of the railroad, at which is the site of present-day Beach. After the mill was constructed a tram was built from the mill to the International and Great Northern Railroad track. The tram was made with wooden rails and spiked with wooden spikes, upon which tram cars were drawn by three mules harnessed in single file. The mules were driven without lines, the leader being trained to keep in the middle of the road and all that was necessary for the driver to do was to sit upon the load of lumber with his foot on the brake and use an eight foot whip which was attached to a stock about six feet long. Some of the drivers became so expert with the whip that with little effort they could knock a horse fly off a mule at one crack.<sup>53</sup>

The opening of Isaac Conroe's mill brought new people to the vicinity who were employed by the mill. They settled around the mill and along the tram and at its junction with the main railroad. About 1885 J. K. Ayres built a sawmill near where the Santa Fe section house now stands.<sup>54</sup> This mill also brought to the vicinity more people who settled at the junction of the tram and railroad.

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<sup>53</sup> Conroe Courier, July 28, 1922.

<sup>54</sup> Conroe Courier, June 30, 1933.

On June 15, 1882 the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe purchased a right-of-way through Montgomery County, and in the latter part of the 1880's the railroad was finished. This line connected with Conroe's tram and crossed the International and Great Northern at that point; therefore the point of the crossing of the two railroads became an important prospect for future industrial expansion.<sup>55</sup>

It was after the completion of the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe, that is about the year 1886, that Conroe acquired its name. Before that time, the local area was unnamed and the vicinity was just a number of houses about the mills and along the railroad tracks. In an article written by W. M. Conroe, son of Isaac Conroe, the following was related concerning the naming of Conroe:

Our home was in Houston and Father made trips to Houston every Saturday or Sunday, and to catch the train it was necessary to flag it at night with a lantern and in the day time with a white handkerchief. It was on one of his return trips from Houston that a Mr. Hoxey, an official of the road at that time, happened to be a passenger and sat with my father. Father approached him on the matter of making a regular stop and Mr. Hoxey was favorably impressed with the idea, and arranged with my father to sell or have tickets sold for short trips over the I. & G. N. Mr. Hoxey asked father if he had named the place, and the reply was that he had not.

Mr. Hoxey then said why not call it Conroe's switch? Which of course was satisfactory.

<sup>55</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 16.

Mr. Hoxey is really the man who named the town.

Soon after the above incident, tickets arrived and on these tickets was printed, "From Conroe's To \_\_\_\_\_."

The post office department a little later established a post office, Father being the post master, and the place was named Conroe's. All maps and postmarks prior to 1889 carried the name Conroe's. Soon after 1889 the 's was dropped by the post office department and the name Conroe appeared. I wrote the railroad company myself, as they were carrying the name Conroe's which was on the sign at the depot was changed to Conroe, hence this is the way Conroe got its name.<sup>56</sup>

In another article written by W. M. Conroe it was declared that the town site of Conroe, at the beginning of its history, was a dense forest so thick that one might get lost if not familiar with the lay of the land. The area was thickly inhabited by wolves, bear, deer, wild cats, and nearly all manner of wild life. In the article Mr. Conroe claimed he subsisted on venison meat rather than beef.<sup>57</sup>

By 1889 Conroe had grown to be a town of probably two hundred fifty or three hundred people.<sup>58</sup> While most of the population of the county was west of the San Jacinto River, the citizens petitioned the court to hold an election for moving the county seat to Conroe. On April 27, 1889 the election was held and with the combined vote of Conroe, Willis, and the mill population of Leonidas

<sup>56</sup> Conroe Courier, July 28, 1922.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., April 8, 1932.

<sup>58</sup> Weisinger, op. cit., p. 16.

near Conroe, Conroe with a majority of sixty-two votes won the election.<sup>59</sup>

Conroe profited from Willis' mistake, because she did not waste any time obtaining temporary buildings for the county offices. On May 14, 1889 the Commissioners Court met and passed on the following in regard to a temporary courthouse and having the county records moved from Montgomery:

A contract for temporary public buildings was made with Capt. Isaac Conroe, and his residence on lot 8, in block 4, was secured for county offices. A large district court room, forty feet square, is to be erected on the north end of the lot, as well as a commodious room for the accommodation of the county's safes and records, and the upstairs of the residence is to be fitted up as a grand jury room. For the rent of all this property the county is to pay \$25 for the first month, and \$50 per month so long as it occupies it thereafter.

The contract for removing the county safes, records, courthouse furniture, etc. was awarded to W. H. Jones for \$172.59; and that for building a temporary jail and moving the cages from Montgomery to Conroe and placing them in it was taken by A. L. Austin for \$269.<sup>60</sup>

The records were moved by W. H. Jones from Montgomery to the new location in Conroe on May 17, 1889.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 17

<sup>60</sup> Commissioners Minutes, op. cit., Book B, p. 473

<sup>61</sup> Note of Nat Hart Davis, May 17, 1889, in Addison Collection.

The question of the permanent location of the courthouse and jail was settled by accepting the proposition of Captain J. K. Ayres of his donation of block eight for the courthouse site and block ten for the jail site.<sup>62</sup> This location was in the Ayres Addition of Conroe, which was laid off on the west side of the International and Great Northern track, and north of the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe track. The main business and residential part of the town was on the east side of the tracks and the citizens on May 14, 1889 protested to the court against the location; they claiming that the site chosen was too much of a thicket and undeveloped. To the dismay of the people, the court ignored the protest and on the same day accepted Mr. Ayres' offer. The court ordered advertisements to be placed in the newspaper to architects for plans and specifications for the necessary buildings.<sup>63</sup>

The advertisement appeared in the newspaper soon after and it read as follows:

NOTICE TO ARCHITECTS

Notice is hereby given to all parties concerned that the county commissioner's court of Montgomery county, Texas, will receive plans and specifications for the erection at Conroe, Texas, of a brick court house not to exceed an estimated cost of Ten thousand dollars.

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<sup>62</sup> Commissioners Minutes, op. cit., Book B, p. 480.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 503

Said plans and specifications should be filed with the clerk of the county court of Montgomery county, at his office in the town of Conroe on or about 10 o'clock A. M., of the second Monday and 10th day of June, A. D. 1889, at which time they will be opened and considered by the court.<sup>64</sup>

On August 6, 1889, the court gave a contract to Moodie and Ellis of Greenville, Texas to build a brick and steel courthouse and jail for the amount of twenty-five thousand two hundred ninety-five dollars.<sup>65</sup>

The brick for Conroe's first courthouse were made from clay which was dug close to the Santa Fe railroad tracks. While the building was under construction W. M. Conroe related the following situation:

. . . While the present court house was built a deer was shot on the corner of the square by one of the men then engaged in work on the structure. He also says that in those early days of the city of Conroe one could not blow a hunting horn in the city limits without having hounds come a yelping from every direction. Packs of wolves howled so loud and vociferously at night that the citizens could hardly sleep. Hunting for all kinds of game was the sport of sports in that day and Mr. Conroe states that he kept primed for the trail and enjoyed it to his heart's content.<sup>66</sup>

Due to the ideal industrial set-up of Conroe, with the location

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<sup>64</sup>Scrapbook, Newspser clipping, in Addison Collection.

<sup>65</sup>Commissioners Minutes, op. cit., Book B, p. 503.

<sup>66</sup>Conroe Courier, April 8, 1932.

of the county seat, two railroads, and numerous sawmills, it is no wonder that it became the leading city in Montgomery County. By 1898 Conroe boasted twenty-four business houses--three of which were saloons, and three hotels, all doing a good business.<sup>67</sup> By 1900 Conroe led all other towns in the county with a population of 1009 people.<sup>68</sup>

Like all fast growing towns, Conroe has had its share of epidemics and disasters. In October, 1897 Conroe had a yellow fever epidemic. The fever became so alarming that the state health department quarantined the whole county. So many people were sick and dying that there were hardly enough well people to bury the dead and attend the sick. When the quarantine was lifted an article appeared in the local paper expressing the following sentiments of the local citizens:

All hands and the cook were made to feel extremely glad Sunday, when the bulletin board announced that the quarantine was raised to all Texas. It had been on for a week, and our people had been hemmed in without mail, freight or communication of any kind, neighbors being almost afraid to visit each other. Business had grown so tame, that there was hardly anything for sale. Another week of quarantine would have sent all to the country and the town would have become depopulated. If Dr. Guiteras had been in town the boys could have

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., December 9, 1898.

<sup>68</sup> Richardson, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 1128.

had fun furnishing a coat of tar and feathers.<sup>69</sup>

On November 15, 1904 J. T. Rucks, County Judge, issued a declaration for an election to be held in the Seller's Building in the town of Conroe on the 10th day of December, 1904, to determine whether or not the inhabitants of the town of Conroe wanted to be incorporated as a municipal corporation.<sup>70</sup> In December the election was held and the result was as follows:

. . . The returns of an election held on the 10th day of December 1904, to determine whether or not the inhabitants of the territory herein after mentioned and escribed, should be incorporated for municipal purposes in accordance with the general laws of the State of Texas in reference to towns and cities of more than one thousand inhabitants and examination thereof, and otherwise that said election was in all things held and conducted in accordance with the laws of the State of Texas, in reference thereto, and it further appearing from said returns that there were cast at said election in all 105 votes of which 87 were cast in favor of incorporation and 18 against giving a majority of 69 in favor of incorporation.

It is therefore rendered, adjudged, decreed and declared that the inhabitants of the hereinafter described and designated territory are incorporated as a municipal corporation and for municipal purposes the name of which said corporation shall be "The City of Conroe" . . .<sup>71</sup>

On January 25, 1905 an election was held to determine the election of the city officials. Those that were elected were Doctor

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<sup>69</sup> Conroe Courier, October 22, 1897.

<sup>70</sup> Commissioners Minutes, Book 1902-1907, p. 384.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 349.

J. F. Collier, Mayor, R. C. Herbert, City Marshal, W. N. Urquhart, D. C. Tharp, Pete West, John Wahrenberger, and J. Llewellyn, Aldermen.<sup>72</sup>

In June 1901 a fire swept through Conroe and practically all of the business portion of the town was destroyed. The town had hardly been rebuilt when another fire visited it on February 22, 1911. Sixty-five places of business were destroyed.<sup>73</sup> It has been stated by those who remember the fire that about four buildings were all that remained of the business section of town. They claimed that while it seemed quite a hardship then, it has proven to be one of the best things that ever happened to Conroe, for out of the ashes of the calamity the determined citizens built a new city of brick business houses, concrete walks, and a perfect water supply.<sup>74</sup>

The people of Conroe had voted bonds in 1910 to erect a new school building for twenty thousand dollars. The contract had been let before the fire had destroyed the town, and on the morning after the fire the contractor of the new school got off the train at the depot and to his dismay looked across the smoldering ashes where Conroe had been. It is stated by one of the citizens that the contractor asked

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 350.

<sup>73</sup> Conroe Courier, June 26, 1913.

<sup>74</sup> Loc. cit.

if they still intended to build the school building. He was told by the citizens that they did; therefore a new brick school went up right along with the new business houses.<sup>75</sup>

This building was the first brick school built in Conroe. It was named the J. O. H. Bennette Building in honor of J. O. H. Bennette who had served the school district as president of the Board of Trustees for seventeen years. During his long tenure he contributed thousands of dollars of his own money to help equip and finance the school system of Conroe.<sup>76</sup> This building stood at the site where the present day community center is now located.

In 1914 the Delta Land and Timber Company built a mill in Conroe which was the second largest lumber manufacturing plant in the South, and it was the most modern sawmill plant in Texas.<sup>77</sup> Another industry of Conroe along about this time was a box factory organized by O. L. Alexander. Conroe also had several cross-tie mills, and when these mills were operating in full blast and the cross-ties were piled high at the intersection of both railroads a

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<sup>75</sup> Personal interview of author with Hart Addison, Conroe, Texas, May 11, 1952.

<sup>76</sup> H. N. Anderson, "History of the Conroe High School" (unpublished paper, Hulon N. Anderson Collection), p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Conroe Courier, June 30, 1933.

view from the air revealed in Conroe a huge cross.<sup>78</sup> These local mills kept Conroe alive until oil was discovered in 1931.

Conroe's industry stayed much the same from after the first World War up to December 13, 1931 when George Strake, a young oil operator from St. Louis, struck oil on the Theodore Slade survey about three and half miles southeast of the town.<sup>79</sup> A report of the discovery was written in the local paper as follows:

Oil excitement hit Conroe full force last week following movements at Strake well east of Conroe that have been interpreted by oil men as opening a new oil field, size and extent of which is to be determined.

Mr. Strake has drilled a hole about 5,100 feet deep on the Theodore Slade survey and has set casing, assembled tools and he says he is preparing to try the test by Saturday or Sunday.

Oil men from Houston swarmed into Conroe and they broadcast information that oil sand of at least 35 feet had been struck, that a gas well of several million feet capacity is practically sure and a new oil field is a strong probability.<sup>80</sup>

Strake's well did more for Conroe than anything that had happened in the history of the town. Overnight it became a thriving metropolis of wealth, resembling more a busy scene on the Stock Exchange floor, than a village supported chiefly by the farming and

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., April 8, 1932

<sup>79</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>80</sup> Loc. cit.

lumbering industries. Literally thousands of oil men came to Conroe from all parts of the country, all eager to get a slice of the rich find that Strake had made. In a short time the population of Conroe had grown from 2500 to a number estimated variously from five to fifteen thousand people.<sup>81</sup> Every facility of the town was taxed far beyond capacity. Tent cities and mushroom additions were built over night. Hotels were crowded and hundreds were turned away to seek shelter in Houston and other places.

The streets of the town were thronged, parking space was not to be had in the down town area, and at times it was very difficult to walk along the sidewalks in the business section. "Lease hounds" by the hundreds plied their trade and did a lucrative business. Representatives of major oil companies came, saw, and bought an interest in Conroe's field. Farmers who did not, under normal circumstances, come to town over twice each month, were seen from early morning until sunset in town, shopping. Money had been placed in their hands by the leasers so suddenly and unexpectedly, that many of them were at a loss to know what to do with it. So many oil men were searching out old deeds, land tracts, titles, and surveys that the courthouse was swamped and people looking through records had to stand in line and wait their turn. Hoarding in Conroe

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<sup>81</sup> Loc. cit.

was a thing of the past, for all those who had anything to hoard took it and bought some royalty or a lease. Within a short time it was hard to find a tract of land within ten miles of the Strake discovery well that had not changed hands at least three times.<sup>82</sup>

Conroe, unlike many of the other oil towns, did not let the taxable oil property and newly acquired wealth slip through her fingers. Immediately her civic-minded citizens took the opportunity to better their community. New business houses, schools, post office, courthouse, community center, and streets were built. Today Conroe boasts of having more paved streets than any other city of its size in the United States. It has a population of seven thousand three hundred thirteen, and unlike some of the other towns of the county, Conroe seems destined to be here to stay.<sup>83</sup>

Security, Texas, was a sawmill town, and about all that remains today is the name. It is a community that has suffered untold difficulties. Prior to 1910 Security was called Bennette's in honor of J. O.H. Bennette who owned a sawmill along the Santa Fe railroad track. In 1910 the Security Land Company bought Bennette's holdings and the community was renamed Security in honor of this

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<sup>82</sup> Conroe Courier, loc. cit.

<sup>83</sup> Texas Almanac 1950, op. cit., p. 568.

company.<sup>84</sup>

The Security Land Company desired to develop the vicinity, so the company sent land agents up North to sell to prospective immigrants, sight unseen, land in the new community. The agents, John Booth, W. E. Wrenn, and J. G. Hannagen traveled through the northern states and parts of Canada, selling the land to almost a hundred families. The agents had a patented sales talk, for they described the Security area as a Garden of Eden or a Hanging Garden of Babylon. The agents stated to the Northerners that about Security wild oats grew shoulder high, wild cabbage two feet across, and a profusion of luscious citrus fruits, grapes, and wild figs could be picked the year around. These agents produced pictures which had been cut from magazines and enlarged, to give evidence to their stories. Each prospective immigrant, upon purchasing land, was given a map and a picture of his tract.<sup>85</sup>

The land agents also described to the immigrants what to expect of the old settlers at Security. The agents pictured them as being unfit neighbors and advised the immigrants not to associate with them. They stated that the men were so lazy that they sat on

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<sup>84</sup> Personal interview of author with Lawrence Mann, Security, Texas, June 12, 1952.

<sup>85</sup> Personal interview of author with Dora Powers, Security, Texas, June 13, 1952.

their front porches most of the time; and, occasionally, went out and killed a deer or bear for meat. Thus the immigrants formed the opinion that the Texans were quire rugged people.<sup>86</sup>

In the winter of 1912 the new comers arrived at Security on a long train with all their household belongings loaded in box cars. All the old settlers were gathered around the depot with the intention of welcoming their new friends to be, but to their surprise the crowd that got off the train seemed to be in a very haughty mood. With their maps and pictures of their land in hand, they scattered about the country side searching for their "Garden of Eden," but to their disappointment all they found was a low, grassy swamp in a button willow thicket.<sup>87</sup>

One man had brought his dairy of fifty fine milk cows with the intention of grazing them on the wild oats, but he found no oats to graze. The woods had burned off the previous fall and his cows almost starved that winter for lack of green foliage. Dora Powers, a citizen of Security who came as one of the immigrants, stated that many thought of turning the train around and going back North that very first day.<sup>88</sup>

It might have been well if they had departed immediately,

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<sup>86</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>87</sup> Mann, loc. cit.

<sup>88</sup> Powers, loc. cit.

because at the end of the next year and after suffering untold hardships, due to their lack of familiarity with the new environment, they pooled their money and caught the train back North.

The local citizens say that there was much contention between them and the "Yankees". Both sides were as insulting to each other as they could possibly be. The citizens laugh today in telling how they played a trick on the Yankees, by harvesting a part of their sweet potato crop early and causing the Northerners to lose all of theirs. The Yankees watched the settlers closely, because they did not know the farming methods of the area. Having followed the example of the local farmers by digging their potatoes, that winter the newcomers saw their crop destroyed by rotting.<sup>89</sup>

Security at its zenith had one hotel, several business houses, a barber shop, ice cream parlor, post office, school, depot, and a population of several hundred people.<sup>90</sup> After the timber in the area was exhausted the sawmills shut down, and when state highway 105 was constructed through the county, it by-passed Security about two miles, causing most of the residents to move, and today only a very few of the citizens are left.

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89 Loc. cit.

90 Loc. cit.

The community of Cut 'n Shoot, Texas is located in the northeastern-central part of Montgomery County. It had its usual beginning and acquired its peculiar name in July, 1912. Prior to 1912 the Missionary Baptist, Hardshell Baptist, and Methodist citizens of the Cut 'n Shoot community went together and built a combination church and school house. They erected the structure with the understanding that all denominations were privileged to preach there except the Mormons and Apostolics.<sup>91</sup> This building was called the Community House, because it was the place where all the people of the community met for their church and social activities.

In July 1912, it happened that a Preacher Stamps of the Apostolic belief appeared in the community, and some of the local brethren invited him to hold a meeting at the Community House. Preacher Stamps seemed not to have been a very reputable person, since it was claimed by some of the citizens that he occasionally visited saloons and went dancing. When the people heard of Preacher Stamps' intention the community immediately paired off into two sides, those who thought the Community House should be used for all denominations, and those who thought it should be

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 Personal interview of author with Frank Plunk, Cut 'n Shoot, Texas, June 11, 1952.

closed to the Apostolics. The ones who thought the house should be open to all and who wanted to have Preacher Stamps hold his meeting were the families of George A. King, L. J. Powell, Joe Thompson, Malcome Foster, and W. A. Gandy, The ones who were opposed to the meeting were the families of R. B. Mann, R. C. Mann, and A. J. Walker. Each side declared their intentions; one claimed that it was going to have the meeting and the other claimed that the meeting would not be held.<sup>92</sup>

On July 20, 1912, the day before the meeting was to take place R. B. Mann sent his son, Clark Mann, to the home of Archie Vick, who was one of the school trustees, to get the keys, so that the doors of the building could be locked. When the Apostolic element heard of this move they quickly informed the opposite side that they would break the doors down if necessary, to gain entrance to the building; whereupon R. B. Mann saddled his horse and rode through the community and notified the people to bring their guns to the Community House the next day. The opposite side heard of this gesture and Joe Thompson saddled up and rode through the community to tell the people who were sympathetic to-

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<sup>92</sup> Personal interview of author with Charles Atkinson, Cut 'n Shoot, Texas, June 12, 1952.

ward his side to do the same.<sup>93</sup>

On the morning of July 21 the group who wanted to hear Preacher Stamp gathered at the Community House. They had come in their wagons and buggies and had brought their lunches with the intention of staying and having an all day preaching and a dinner on the ground. Under their wagon and buggy seats they had their guns and knives rolled up in quilts. On their arrival they found the door of the building locked, and soon after the anti-Apostolic group arrived with their weapons. This faction immediately inspected the door and declared that the lock had been jammed, whereupon all grabbed their guns and a hot argument pursued between the Kings and Manns. While the accusations of both sides flew back and forth, Jack King, an eight year old son of George King, became frightened at the disturbance and said, "I'm scared!" "I'm going to cut around the corner and shoot through the bushes in a minute!"<sup>94</sup>

Thus the name of Cut 'n Shoot was coined.

Actually no cutting or shooting occurred that day. The arguments continued, however, and finally to avoid a shooting scrape the followers of King withdrew to some shade trees and

<sup>93</sup> Atkinson, loc. cit.

<sup>94</sup> Personal interview of author with Jack King, Conroe, Texas, June 12, 1952.

Preacher Stamps delivered his sermon standing on the ground while the citizens sat in their buggies and wagons. After that a brush arbor was built near Joe Thompson's house and Preacher Stamps held a protracted meeting there for the rest of the summer. Thompson's house was near the Mann's residence, and it has been stated that the preaching was loud enough so that the Manns could hear.<sup>95</sup>

The next day after the threatened outbreak of violence at the meeting house, on July 22, both sides appeared in Conroe and indicted each other at the Justice of the Peace Court for disturbing the peace, assault, and the use of obscene language. Both R. C. Mann and George King were tried and fined.<sup>96</sup> The dispute was carried on between the Kings and Manns for over a year, each indicting the other on the smallest pretense.<sup>97</sup>

In one of the trials Archie Vick was a witness, and upon being asked by Judge C. T. Darby where the fuss had taken place, Mr. Vick, who had not been at the scrape and not knowing what to call the community, since it did not have a name, replied, "I suppose you would call it the place where they had the cutting and

<sup>95</sup> Plunk, op. cit.

<sup>96</sup> Montgomery County Courthouse records, Justice of the Peace Criminal Docket 1912, p. 119.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

shooting scrape."<sup>98</sup> This was the first indication that the new community might be called Cut 'n Shoot. At any rate, the name Cut 'n Shoot stuck to the community, partly through the jests of C. P. Thomas, who always enjoyed telling his friends about the incident that had occurred there.<sup>99</sup>

New Caney, Texas was settled by Captain John Robertson in 1866. He built a grist mill, steam cotton gin, and a general store on the banks of Caney Creek. Robertson's settlement grew and soon he petitioned to the post office department for a post office and sent in the name of Caney for the place. There was already a Caney, Texas; therefore the post office department added the New to Caney and the community took the name of New Caney. Today, New Caney is a sawmill town of considerable size.<sup>100</sup>

Fostoria, Texas, formerly known as Clinesburg, is a mill town named for the owner of the Foster Lumber Company. In the late 1800's the Arnold and Perkins Company built a sawmill and soon they were bought out by the Foster Lumber Company. Fostoria

<sup>98</sup> Personal interview of author with Archie Vick, Cut 'n Shoot, Texas, July 10, 1952.

<sup>99</sup> Atkinson, op. cit.

<sup>100</sup> Vick, op. cit.

is still the site of one of the largest sawmills in the country.<sup>101</sup>

Splendora, Texas, in the 1880's was known by the name of Section Four. It acquired this name from the narrow gauge Houston, East and West Texas Railroad. The initials for this railroad were H. E. W. T. and the local citizens interpreted them to mean "Hell Either Way You Take It", and the frequency of stations along its track caused the line to be designated the "Cottontail Limited", because it was claimed that the train stopped behind every stump just like a rabbit. The name, Section Four, was changed to Splendora by C. C. Cox, when he petitioned the post office department for a post office.<sup>102</sup>

Magnolia, Texas which is located in the western part of Montgomery County, had a hard time in getting a name that would stick. In the 1850's the town went under the name of Mink, since the particular site of the town was in the early days known as Mink's Prairie. In 1902 the Ft. Worth division of the International and Great Northern was built through the western end of the county and the name Mink was changed to Melton, in honor of Jim Melton, who at that time had rather large land holdings in the western part

101 Loc. cit.

102 Loc. cit.

of Montgomery County. Soon this name was found to be frequently confused with that of Milton, Texas, causing considerable difficulty in routing the mail. Officials of the railroad and the post office department discussed the matter with the residents of Melton, and a decision was reached to call the town Magnolia, due to the fact that a great many magnolia trees grew in that vicinity.<sup>103</sup>

Other active towns and communities of Montgomery County today are Porters, Dobbin, Keenan, Wigginsville, Granger, and Pinehurst.

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<sup>103</sup> Conroe Courier, April 8, 1932.

## CHAPTER VI

### IMPORTANT EVENTS, ISSUES, AND PEOPLE

Montgomery County contributed her share of participants in the early struggle for the independence of Texas. In November, 1835, the municipality of Washington, along with the municipalities of Austin, Columbia, Matagordia, Harrisburg, Mina, Gonzales, Viesca, Nacogdoches, San Augustine, Bevil, and Liberty, sent seven delegates to the Consultation Convention for the purpose of forming a provisional government.<sup>1</sup> Three of the delegates from Washington, Jesse Grimes, Elijah Collard, and William Shepperd, later became citizens of Montgomery County.

As for the Consultation, Montgomery County was well represented by the future citizens at the writing and signing of the Declaration of Independence of March 2, 1836. Four of her prospective citizens, namely, Charles B. Stewart, Jesse Grimes, George W. Barnett, and B. B. Goodrich signed the document. Charles B. Stewart had the honor of being the first signer of the famous document. Stewart had, in 1834, served as Secretary of the Supreme Court of Mexican Texas; in 1835 he had served as Executive Secretary and Clerk of Enrollment of the permanent council of the provisional

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<sup>1</sup> Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas (Fort Worth: Wortham-Molyneaux Company, 1924), Vol. II, p. 403

government which was held at San Felipe.<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1836, after the signing of the declaration of independence, the newly appointed commander-in-chief of the army, Sam Houston, sounded his call for the men of the Republic to rally together to repulse the advancing army of the Mexican President-General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. Montgomery County's citizens were among the first men to answer Houston's summons. They joined his army and followed his leadership to and through the battle of San Jacinto.

Some of the men who were in Houston's army and had fought at the battle of San Jacinto, and who later became citizens of Montgomery County, participated in practically every category of his army. Serving in the artillery corps were John M. Wade, Joseph Floyd, George Cumberland, and Seneca Legg. John M. Wade had the honor of helping fire the famous Twin Sister cannon. It was Wade's gun which carried away the water bucket of the Mexican's long-nine.<sup>3</sup>

The men from Montgomery county who served in the

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<sup>2</sup> W. M. Martin, "A History of Montgomery," (unpublished Master's thesis, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville, Texas 1950), p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Texas Almanac for 1872 (Galveston:Richardson and Company, 1873), p. 99.

cavalry corps under Mirabeau B. Lamar were Benjamin Fort Smith, Hugh Henderson, William S. Taylor, and George W. Mason.<sup>4</sup> Matthew W. Cartwright served under Lamar in the cavalry corps until his horse was killed under him in a skirmish with the Mexicans the day before the main battle. He then joined the company that had organized from Montgomery County, led by Captain William Ware.<sup>5</sup>

In the First Regiment, Texas Volunteers, commanded by Colonel Edward Burleson, the men who served from Montgomery County were William H. Wood, Captain of Company A, James Greenwood, James R. Pinchback, and Joseph Rhodes, privates.<sup>6</sup>

Enlisted in Company C of the same regiment were privates Jefferson Barton and Thomas P. Davy, and in Company K, privates James Connor and E. B. Halstead from Montgomery County.<sup>7</sup>

All of the Second Company of the Second Regiment, Texas Volunteers were from Montgomery County. Joseph L. Bennett was Lieutenant-Colonel; William Ware, Captain; Jacob S. Collard, First Lieutenant; George A. Lamb, Second Lieutenant; Albert Gallatin,

4 Wortham, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 437-440.

5 Texas Almanac 1872, loc. cit.

6 Wortham, op. cit., p. 441.

7 Ibid., pp. 441-443.

First Sergeant; William C. Winters, Second Sargeant; John F. Winters, James W. Winters, Cristoval Edenburg, Lewis Cox, Matthew W. Cartwright, G. W. Robinson, G. W. Lawrence, William Cartwright, John Sadler, James Wilson, James Deritt, Matthew Moss, and Jesse Thomas were privates in the Second Company.<sup>8</sup>

H. R. Williams and Edward Gallager served as privates in the Third and Fourth Companies of the Second Regiment, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

The men in the Sixth Company, Second Regiment from Montgomery County were James Gillaspie, Captain; Matthew Finch, First Lieutenant; John Montgomery, Andrew Montgomery, Alphonzo Steele, Robert Henry, and Elijah Votaw, privates.<sup>10</sup>

James Collard, Jonathan Collard, Ben C. Franklin, Phillip C. Martin, and James Powell from Montgomery County were in unidentified companies.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after Montgomery County was created congress took into consideration the need for a permanent location for the seat

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 444-445.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 445-446.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 447.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 448.

of government. On Wednesday May 9, 1838 in an adjourned session of the Second Congress which had met at Houston, the president of the Senate appointed William J. Russell, J. D. Rains, and Albert C. Horton on a committee to inform the House of Representative that the Senate would meet them in the representative hall that evening at half past three o'clock in compliance with their resolution for the purpose of selecting a suitable site for a permanent location of the seat of government.<sup>12</sup> After the committee from the Senate informed the House the Senate proceeded, at the time agreed upon, to the hall of the representatives and went into a joint session with the House to select a site for the future seat of government.

When the question was put before the meeting, motions were in order for the suggestions and the procedure began. George Sutherland suggested Eblin's League on the Colorado River.<sup>13</sup> J. W. Burleson suggested the town of Bastrop on the Colorado River. Robert Wilson suggested Black's Place in Montgomery County. Thomas J. Gazley suggested the city of Houston in Harrisburg County. Anson Jones of Austin County suggested the town of

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<sup>12</sup> Journals of the Senate of The Republic of Texas, Adjourned Session of the Second Congress (Houston: Telegraph Power Press, 1838) p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

San Felipe on the Brazos River. John Boyd suggested the town of Nacogdoches in Nacogdoches County. Robert Wilson suggested Groce's Retreat in Montgomery County. S. H. Everitt suggested the town of Comanche on the Colorado. Anson Jones suggested the Mound League in Washington County. Thomas J. Gazley withdrew his suggestion for the city of Houston. <sup>14</sup>

After the suggestions had ceased a vote was taken to determine the choice for the capital site. When the ballots were counted it was found that Eblin's League on the Colorado River was first with nineteen votes and Black's Place in Montgomery County was second with five votes. The rest of the votes were scattered for the other suggestions. The whole number of votes cast were forty-three, but the necessary majority for a selection had to be twenty-two. <sup>15</sup>

The speaker declared that Eblin's League did not have a majority of votes, so he declared that there was no choice and the two houses proceeded to a second vote. At the end of the second count Eblin's League was first again with twenty-seven votes and Black's Place second with ten votes. <sup>16</sup> Eblin's League on the Colorado River had the majority; therefore it was selected over

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<sup>14</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup>Loc. cit.

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

Black's Place in Montgomery County. The speaker announced that Eblin's League was duly chosen as the site for the future location of the seat of government.<sup>17</sup>

The political importance of Montgomery County was indicated the fact that two places from Montgomery County were suggested for the capital site, one of which ranked second in the voting. It is also noteworthy that Montgomery County had one of the most thickly populated areas in the Republic at this time.

Another important event that Montgomery County took part in was the expedition against General Adrian Woll in 1842. Mexican forces had been giving the new Republic of Texas considerable trouble ever since Texas had won her independence. Previous to Woll's invasion, a father from Alabama, in 1840, wrote to his son at Montgomery and expressed gladness that Mexican depredations had ceased for that year. He also asked for information concerning Texas. Part of his letter is quoted as follows:

. . . I am glad to find as your health improves, the Rawhead and Bloody bones in Texas vanish, and I shall not be surprised if in your next letter you say, "Pa come ahead and don't wait 12 months longer as here is a fine prospect for you to make your fortune and enjoy your health and better, far better society

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<sup>17</sup>Loc. cit.

for intelligence at least than can be found around Pond Mountain."

. . . Self government by our recent example is fully guaranteed to Texas and thousands of our most virulous and honorable citizens will soon find their way into that most inviting Republic. By this time you ought to know what counties are increasing fastest in wealth and population and where I would have the best chance to school my children. I am induced to think La Grange in Fayette County will be a thrifty town.

. . . Read the Constitution of Texas carefully and compare it with our U. S. or Alabama constitution and say if it smells of Liberty as it should, or whether the land monopolists will have sufficient influence to convert it into an African Colony as our own unfortunate states are. GOD FORBID. Suffer none but bonifide emigrants to bring in slaves and it will be the happiest country under the sun. The profits of capital would soon be invested in railroads, manufactories, and the creation of towns, the invariable symbols of wealth and independence. In your next speak of the towns at the mouth of each of the three principal rivers and how far boats can and run up each of them. I must live the balance of my time near some lively trading town where I can get papers to read and men, not fools to talk with . . . Everybody is giving Texas the preference over all other new countries. . . .<sup>18</sup>

The "rawhead and bloody bones" had not disappeared entirely, for within the next two years the Mexicans dealt Texas a lot of trouble. Things came to a head, however, when on September 11, 1842, while the district court was in session at San Antonio,

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<sup>18</sup> Letter of Nathaniel Davis to Nat Hart Davis, November 15, 1940, in Addison Collection.

General Adrian Woll and a force of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, about fourteen hundred strong, appeared before the town and demanded its surrender.<sup>19</sup> News of the intrusion soon reached the executive, Sam Houston, and orders were issued by him to the Texas militia west of the Brazos River to repair to the point of attack and to the militia east of that river to hold themselves in readiness until further instructions. Brigadier-General A. Somervell, the senior officer of the western militia was ordered to report to the frontier and take the command.<sup>20</sup>

On October 13, while the Mexicans still stayed in Texas, a further and special order was issued to General Somervell directing him to select an eligible point for a rendezvous, and proceed to the organization and drill of all such volunteers as should report to him. He was further directed to establish his camp some distance from San Antonio and if necessary to cross the Rio Grande to pursue the Mexicans.<sup>21</sup>

To increase the army for this expedition to Mexico, President Houston ordered out two regiments of militia east of the Brazos River. One regiment from Montgomery County was under

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<sup>19</sup>Wortham, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 96.

<sup>20</sup>H. Yoakum, History of Texas (New York: J. H. Redfield Company, 1855), Vol. II, p. 364.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

Colonel Joseph L. Bennett, who had been in the battle of San Jacinto, and another from Washington County was under Colonel Jesse B. McCrocklin. Both groups in due time proceeded to Gonzales, the rendezvous point.<sup>22</sup>

The order calling out the Montgomery County militia is quoted as follows.

3rd. Regiment Attention !!!

Head Quarters, East Bank Guadalupe  
Gonzales, October 15, 1842

Additional Order

Maj. R. Smithers:

Dear Sir: - You are hereby commanded to order into service the remainder of the 1st and 2nd classes of the Regiment of Montgomery County forthwith, to join my command now rendezvoused one mile north-west of Gonzales, but will march in a few days for some other point west. You will take command of, and march the troops in haste. You will get such supplies of beef as the hospitality of the good citizens will furnish, and receipt for the same.

Every confidence is assured me that the expedition will be carried on with that discipline and subordination so anxiously wished for, and recommended by his Excellency Sam Houston, to remunerate the tried patriotism and promptness of the citizens of Texas.

Ammunition will be furnished--news from every quarter of the country assures us that the enemy is collecting rapidly on the waters of the Nueces, and that spies

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J. H. Brown, History of Texas (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), Vol. II, p. 233.

under Woll's command have lately been recognized in the town of San Antonio.

To be successful it will require a force of 1800 or 2500 men. The citizens of this section of the country are kind and hospitable and rejoice on our arrival, Beef in abundance. We shall take up the line of march in 12 days for the enemy.

Dispatches of an earnest character have already been delivered to the counties of the West and South of Montgomery; and be assured that the law with all my influence will rest on the shoulders of all the defaulters. I am fully satisfied there is a formidable enemy East of the Rio Grande.

You will be required to report to me immediately on your arrival at Headquarters--and particularly all deserters. On your arrival at the town of Montgomery E. W. Cawthorn, who is acting and aiding the march of the 3rd Regiment yet in the rear, under my order of 23rd of Sept., 1842, will report to you the number forwarded, those sick and wholly unable to bear arms and the No. of the Beat of their present residence.

You will require all to furnish themselves with 5 days provisions, and 100 rounds of ammunition if possible.

J. L. Bennett, Col. Commanding,  
3rd. Reg. 2nd Brig., Texas M.

Endorsed: Sam Houston  
Washington, 18th October, 1842.

The remainder of the troops of the 1st and 2nd classes of the 3rd Regiment, Montgomery County, are hereby commanded to report at Whiteside's near the Brazos, and be ready to march from that point for the West, on Thursday morning, the 27th inst. in accordance

with the above order.

R. Smithers, Major,  
3rd Reg. 2nd Brig. Texas M  
Montgomery Cty., Texas, Oct. 19, 1842.<sup>23</sup>

The men from Montgomery County under Major Smithers reported to Colonel Bennett at the place which had been designated. After reporting the men had to wait some time before the other companies arrived. Due to waiting for the other volunteer companies, getting them organized into a regiment, and electing of regimental officers, there was considerable delay. Many of the men grew impatient and the militia regiment of McCrocklin, and the greater portion of Bennett's militiamen, under various excuses and pretenses, returned home.<sup>24</sup>

The command to march was finally given by General Somervell, and Colonel Bennett along with the men left from Montgomery County, proceeded to the Rio Grande in chase of the Mexican forces. They reached the Rio Grande and after much dalliance on the part of General Somervell, many of the men became disgusted with Somervell's leadership, and contention ran high to go home. Somervell felt the dissatisfaction among his men, so on December 11 the

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<sup>23</sup> Original order of Colonel J. L. Bennett to Major R. Smithers, commander of Third Regiment of Montgomery County, Texas Militia, October 15, 1842, in Sam Houston Memorial Museum.

<sup>24</sup> Brown, op. cit., p, 234.

following actions were taken:

. . . Next morning Somervell paraded the men and said, all who desired to return home could honorably do so; but that he desired all who were willing to follow him down the river and that he would cross below and chastise the enemy who had so devastated our frontier. The result was, no one having much faith, that Col. Bennett and a few men yet following his lead with Captains Jerome E. and E. S. C. Robertson, with their companies, in all about two hundred men, returned home via San Patricio and Victoria, . . .<sup>25</sup>

The regiments from Montgomery County returned home; therefore they did not suffer what befell the men who stayed and fought at the battle of Mier.

Montgomery County took an active part in the annexation issue of 1845. Early in the year the town of Montgomery held a mass meeting for the purpose of annexing Texas to the United States. An outline of the meeting follows:

Montgomery, Texas, May 10, 1845.

Dr. E. J. Arnold presided at a mass meeting held here to annex Texas to the United States.

J. M. Wade acted as secretary; Dr. Charles B. Stewart delivered the principal address.

On the resolution committee were: Ben Rigby, N. H. Davis, H. McGuffin, G. W. Mason, J. M. Lewis, Willis Landrum, B. J. Rankin, Charles B. Stewart, and Raleigh Rogers.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>26</sup> Newspaper clipping, May 10, 1845, in Addison Collection.

The annexation resolution passed the United States Congress and the notice of this action was received by President Anson Jones of Texas. On May 15, 1845 Jones called a convention of sixty-one delegates to meet at Austin on July 4 to decide what response the people of Texas should make concerning annexation and a new constitution.<sup>27</sup>

The number of delegates sent from each county was based upon the number of votes cast in the recent election. Each county was entitled to at least one delegate. The counties entitled to more than two delegates were: Montgomery four, Harris three, Nacogdoches three, Red River three, Harrison three, and Washington three.<sup>28</sup>

The convention met on July 4 and remained in session until August 27, during which time it framed a new constitution for the State of Texas and accepted the terms of annexation offered by the United States.<sup>29</sup> One of the four delegates sent to the annexation convention by Montgomery County was Charles B. Stewart.<sup>30</sup>

While the necessary procedures for annexation were being

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<sup>27</sup> Dudley G. Wooten, History of Texas (Dallas: Texas History Company, 1899), p. 305.

<sup>28</sup> T. C. Richardson, East Texas: Its History and Its Makers (New York; Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940), Vol. I, p. 139.

<sup>29</sup> Wooten, loc. cit.

<sup>30</sup> Louis W. Kemp, The Signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence (Houston: The Anson Jones Press, 1944), p. 334.

carried out, Sam Houston, a great advocate for statehood, was busy lobbying and scouring about the different states while making speeches for annexation. In Greensboro, North Carolina, Sam Houston made a speech and a brother of one of Montgomery's citizens described the speech in a letter. The letter was delivered to Montgomery by Sam Houston, himself, and is quoted as follows:

A favorable opportunity presents of writing you by Gen. Houston. He has this day made a speech here on the subject of Texas. He is a happy speaker and impressed us all very favorably of his talents and also of his motives on the annexation of Texas. I am a strong believer now in annexation, at least so far as feeling is concerned. If there be such a thing as destiny and coming events cast their shadows before, me thinks that state will be my abdicating place. Several gentlemen of this neighborhood speak of visiting Texas this winter. If the company is made I think I shall join them. I am not fit by situation to get along by the side of wealthy men who will buy the best lands at big prices, thus excludes me who have not the cash and who wont run in debt. . . . Heard Gen. Houston today and he is enthusiastic for Texas. . . .

P. S. I recd. your letter of Aug. John McDaniel wants to know if you know anything of Douglass who ran from this country with property and leaving debts minus some hundreds and is since reported dead. How long after a man moves to Texas before he can be compelled to pay debts to foreigners? <sup>31</sup>

On October 13, 1845, the voters of Texas approved both the terms of annexation and the state constitution. The constitution was accepted by the United States Congress, and President Polk on

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<sup>31</sup> Letter of Stephen Davis to Nat Hart Davis, September 17, 1845, in Addison Collection.

December 29, 1845, signed the act that made Texas one of the United States of America.<sup>32</sup>

Shortly after the reconstruction period, following the Civil War, a feud between the town of Montgomery and Willis occurred, which lasted sixteen years. The issue grew out of an attempt on the part of Willis to get the county seat moved from Montgomery to its site. Willis had newly become a railroad town with a rapid increase in population. It had mushroomed up over night by taking the business of the near by town of Danville and many of those from Montgomery. Since Willis had increased in population so much many of its civic minded citizens thought that if the county seat could be moved to Willis it would be in a short while the leading town in the county. Another reason given was the claim by the people of Willis that Montgomery was not near enough to the center of the county to make it convenient for the citizens on the east side of the county to transact county business. Montgomery looked upon Willis' efforts to get the county seat as a radical reconstruction movement, a rape of an institution which had been her birthright, and a plain front for a few to get rich by the business that a county seat would bring.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Wooten, op. cit., p. 306

<sup>33</sup> Personal interview of the author with Mrs. J. B. Addison, Montgomery, Texas, July 8, 1952.

The beginning of the feud was in 1873 when the citizens of Willis petitioned the governor regarding the removal of the county seat to the town of Willis. The petition sent by the people to the governor read as follows:

. . . We reply further that the present court house is about 50 feet by 50 feet with a 15 feet hall and 4 rooms on the basement story 25 by 17 feet, 2 rooms on each side of Hall and on 2nd story one mail hall or Court Room. All ceiled and weatherboarded with plain Box finish--has been erected near 20 years--and is much worn.

The jail is only about 5 years old. A complete failure, insecure as we are ready to prove. Every criminal who expects to be hung or go to the penitentiary, unless closely guarded, goes out, to wit: Alexander Baugh for murder and Brunnan for murder and others. The protestants say \$25,000 or \$30,000 will be needed to remove Court house and jail, archives etc. from Montgomery to Willis, The great object of this is to inflame the mind of the People on the subject of taxation and expense and the financial ruin of the county.

We answer further, that the Town of Willis has 2 blocks donated by the Houston and Great Northern Rail Road, a beautiful location and for which Blocks said company could readily realize the sum of \$2,000. . .<sup>34</sup>

By the middle of the next year the matter had become serious for the people of Montgomery because the citizens of Willis petitioned the Commissioners Court in July for an election to be held to determine if the courthouse should stay in Montgomery or be moved to Willis. The court considered the petition and announced that an

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<sup>34</sup> Memorial Petitions, 1873, in Texas State Archives, Number 194.

election would be held on August 25, 1874.<sup>35</sup> When the election was held and the returns counted by E. A. Linton, the presiding justice, he found that there had been six hundred forty-six votes cast for Montgomery and seven hundred eighty-eight votes cast for Willis.<sup>36</sup> Linton declared that Willis did not have the two-thirds majority necessary to carry the election; therefore, he certified that the county seat remained at Montgomery.

When the opposite side heard of this clever maneuver by those supporting the cause of Montgomery, they immediately claimed that a two-thirds majority was not needed but merely a majority, so they acted accordingly:

That on the return day of said election and after the Presiding Justice, Linton, had fairly inspected, estimated, counted, recorded, determined, and declared the result of the election, and given the certificate in favor of the town of Montgomery, one A. Richards, D. A. Wiggins, and B. H. Nash being three other justices of said county, without warrants of law and without said Presiding Justice, illegally assumed and pretended to meet together as a County Court, and issued a pretended certificate in favor of the town of Willis, and issued an order for the removal of the county seat of said county from the town of Montgomery to Willis, together with the records, etc., by the 14th of September, 1874. . . .<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Montgomery County Courthouse Records, Commissioners Court Minutes, Book A, p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> Montgomery v. s. Willis in the Supreme Court at Galveston, January term, 1875, booklet owned by T. W. Crawford, Conroe, Texas, p

<sup>37</sup> Loc. cit.

The citizens of Montgomery protested bitterly over the methods used by the unauthorized presiding justices. They considered that the election was a fraud and decided to let the courts determine the outcome; so the citizens filed charges against Willis. The case finally went to the Texas Supreme court which had convened in Galveston.

Willis disregarded this procedure and went ahead to make plans to transfer the county records and to select a courthouse site. By September 30, 1874 some of the county officials, those who were citizens of Willis, were meeting at the new location. The commissioners court met without the records, because Montgomery had refused to give them up, and made plans to select a site in Willis for the courthouse. The following action was recorded in the minutes:

Whereas, it having come to the knowledge of the County Court of Montgomery County now in session in the Town of Willis the County Seat of said County through Mr. J. E. George Attorney for the I & G. N. R. R. Co. that said Co. proposed and agreed in event of the County Seat of Montgomery County being removed to the town of Willis to donate and convey to said County certain Blocks or parcels of land within the corporate limits of the Town of Willis (to wit) Blocks 21 & 22 and such other lots as said Co. may see proper to convey for their purpose of erecting Public buildings, etc.<sup>38</sup>

Enough of the records were stolen from Montgomery to carry on the County's business in Willis, and by October the commissioners

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<sup>38</sup> Commissioners Court Minutes, op. cit., p. 6.

made plans for constructing a courthouse. They authorized the pro tempore presiding justice, A. Richards, to receive plans, proposals, and estimates for the building of a courthouse in the town of Willis to be not less than fifty feet square and two stories high. <sup>39</sup>

Matters had become so involved by the end of the year that the Texas State Legislature had to pass a special act to designate where the district court would be held for the coming year. The act that the Legislature passed is as follows:

Whereas, Litigation is now going on to determine whether the town of Montgomery, or of Willis, is the county site of Montgomery county; and Whereas, The records of said county have been moved from the town of Montgomery, heretofore the county site of said county, to Willis; and Whereas, It is proper to remove all doubts about the validity of judicial proceedings, had in said county during the pendency of the litigation or controversy about the county site thereof; therefore,

Section 1. Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas, That the sheriff of Montgomery county is authorized and required, and it is made his duty, to immediately move or cause to be moved, all the records of said county from Willis to the town of Montgomery, and to deliver, or to cause them to be delivered to the proper and legal custody of the officers entitled to them.

Sec. 2. That the terms of the district and county courts of said county shall be held at, and all officers (offices) required to be kept at, and all sales required to be made at county sites, shall be made at the town of Montgomery, until it is legally determined that some other place is the county site of said county.

..... 40 .....  
 Approved January 29, 1875.

In compliance with the act, on April 15 the records were moved back to Montgomery, and the Willis paper reported the incident as follows:

The County Records were moved from Willis back to Montgomery, on Monday last. Judge Masterson, dissolved the injunction, restraining the Officers from removing the records in accordance with an act of doubtful constitutionality worded through the Legislature by Dr. C. B. Stewart, just before that body adjourned; notwithstanding the matter was pending before the Supreme Court.<sup>41</sup>

In May 1875 the court had disregarded the act and continued to hold its session in Willis, for, E. A. Linton, Chief Justice, filed a protest against the court being held in Willis.<sup>42</sup> The feud went on through the years 1876 and 1877, each town insisting that it had the right to be considered the county seat. The county records were changed back and forth so often that some of the officials got them and guarded them in their homes.<sup>43</sup>

The case which had been pending in the Supreme Court was finally reached on its agenda and the decision was decided in

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<sup>40</sup> H. P. N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897 (Austin: The Gammel Book Company, 1898), Vol. VIII, p. 605.

<sup>41</sup> Willis Observer, April 20, 1875.

<sup>42</sup> Commissioners Court Minutes, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>43</sup> Addison, loc. cit.

Montgomery's favor. The people of Willis immediately circulated another petition for another election.

One of the Willisites who held the office of the County Judge wrote a friend concerning the controversy and pending election. The letter is quoted as follows:

. . . As to the subject matter of your letter I think you have been misinformed.

1st. I know of no probable candidates (democratic) for any important county office, and if there is any such beast in existence I know not what trail it will follow in this courthouse matter. I have no political affiliation with that party, nor ever expect to and then for I am in the dark as to any of their ultimate designs, except as to those in your delictable little village and there as I have been informed, will cling, in all events, to their bulldozing tactics.

2nd. Mr. Harrell and myself are not hoping anything, at least I am not. When this movement began we both agreed that if we took any active part in the matter the damned, infernal, disgraceful old war-whoop of the Montgomery bulldozers would be shouted forth over the country "down with it, it is a d----d radical trick etc. etc." And so I have done nothing so far except to sign the petition for an election and perhaps casually converse with a friend in quiet manner about the subject.

Of course an election will be had at no distant day, but as I am not one of the managers I have made no calculations in figures as to the probable results, nor do I know what those are which may have been made by gentlemen who can speak of the matter with more impurity than I can. If the colored people of your precinct and the white Greenbackers unite and vote together for the B. S. i. e., Montgomery, it will be a clear race, or if the mass of the colored people either stay at home and not vote at all, or go and poll their ballots for right and justice, then Willis will have an easy go of it. But

how all this will be when the time comes to test it I know not. I could canvass your precinct and Willis precinct in 3 or 4 days and come pretty near guessing the result, but oh my God! I have no idea of such an adventure; I would just as soon undertake to canvass the hunting grounds of the Ute Indians.

Yourself, Lintons, Dan Womack, John Ferguson, Dave Garrol and friends that you may be able to gather around you will, which ever way you go, if you work together and are active, in my opinion, control the result, for that will be taut amount to an absolute consolidation of the colored vote west of the San Jacinto river and give the mud hole another five years lease of rascality unwhipped.

To be candid with you, the center has been and is now my individual preference and I would readily untie with any party in an effort to get the county seat there. 1st. it is the place where, is justice to all the people of the county and the county seat ought to be. 2nd. and therefore no reasonable person could object to it. 3rd. I would put an ever lasting quietus on this disagreeable and unprofitable contentiousness between Montgomery and Willis, and would not we be glad of that? 4th. the necessary buildings could be erected at less cost etc; and many others.

But nothing can be done in that direction without cooperation with Montgomery.

However, one thing is certain that, whoever has any aspirations to any county office at the next election, had better keep his eyes open, and damned wide at that, for if every county convention which may be held this year "aint" chock full of bolters it will surprise me. Another thing is certain, if the Greenbackers stick together with this special motto "Fair election-no intimidation" they can easily elect their entire ticket. Division on any subject will render reorganization impossible. . . . 44

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 Letter of J. M. Lewis to J. R. Davis, January 5, 1880, in Addison Collection.

The petition was considered by the court and an election was called to be held on April 2, 1880. Both towns solicited every possible vote and all methods known to politics and politicians were used in an endeavor to win the election. Many non-resident voters were brought in by both towns from other counties to ensure victory. When the votes were counted they were watched closely by the officials from both towns. To the chagrin of Willis, at the end of the enumeration of the ballots Montgomery had 1,308 votes and Willis had 1,243 votes.<sup>45</sup> Montgomery had a majority of sixty-five votes which again enabled her to snatch the county seat away from Willis.

Willis did not give up the fight, however, for she waited anxiously for nine more years before she again saw her chance to get even with her old rival, Montgomery. By 1889 there was a new town in the county which was becoming rather important. The railroad-sawmill town of Conroe, like Willis, wished for the county seat. Through the instigation of Willis, Conroe circulated a petition for an election. On May 6, 1889 an election was held and with the combined vote of Conroe, Willis, and Leonidas; Conroe won the election by a majority of sixty-two votes.

Willis did not get the county seat but her vengeance was

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Commissioners Court Minutes, op. cit., p. 366.

satisfied in that Montgomery did not keep it. Today there is still a feeling of contention between the old residents of both towns, each side claiming that the other used illegitimate tactics in the elections.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Most of the following biographical sketches of men of Montgomery County represent veterans of the Battle of San Jacinto. It is to be regretted that numerous individuals who played a prominent part in the history of this section had to be omitted for many could not be included due to limitations imposed by the scope of this thesis. Those

H. Richard Williams who lived near Danville was a native of Georgia. He came to Texas about 1834 and was in the whole of the Bexar campaign in 1835. He was in Captain John M. Bradley's company, and was severely wounded by a canister shot which struck a pistol at his side, thus saving his life. His accident occurred in what is known as the Grass Fight which happened just in sight of San Antonio, near the old grave yard west of the city. William remained until the city was taken, and he was ready for duty again by the time of the battle of San Jacinto. He fought in

the third company of the second regiment while in the San Jacinto battle. He was also in another campaign subsequent to the battle of San Jacinto.

In 1842 he marched with volunteers from Montgomery against Adrian Woll's Mexican forces, but due to a severe attack of sickness he was delayed along the way and therefore escaped the fate that fell to the Mier prisoners.<sup>46</sup>

Jonathan, Jacob, and James Collard came to Texas in 1834 and settled near Danville. They were born in Missouri, and Jonathan was the oldest son of Colonel Elijah Collard, who was a member of the Consultation that convened in San Felipe in 1835. Jonathan, Jacob, and James served in campaigns prior and subsequent to the San Jacinto battle.<sup>47</sup>

Matthew Cartwright was a native of Alabama, and removed with his father and family to Texas about the year 1833. He was, for a time, a mess mate of J. H. Shepperd in the campaign at Bexar in 1835 while serving in Captain Joe L. Bennett's company. The army at Bexar was under the command of General Austin. When the call was made for volunteers to make a reconnaissance up river, and look out a place for the troops to encamp nearer the enemy, Cartwright turned out and was one of eighty-two raw

<sup>47</sup> Loc. cit.

Texans who, under Bowie and Fannin, severely drubbed the Mexican infantry and cavalry by killing and wounding a hundred and twenty and inflicting a defeat that dampened Mexican courage for the remainder of that campaign. Cartwright was compelled to return home before Bexar fell, and his next service was in Captain J. M. Wade's company in 1836 until that company was incorporated with others before the battle of San Jacinto. He joined the cavalry which was commanded by Lamar and in an engagement on the evening before the battle of San Jacinto he had his horse killed from under him. He joined the second company which was made up of Montgomery County men and fought in the battle as an infantry-  
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 man.

John Marshall Wade was born in New York in 1815. His mother was a blood cousin to the renowned Irish orator, Henry Grattan. Wade came to Texas in 1835 and resided at Montgomery until the call was made for volunteers to meet the invaders under Santa Anna. Wade immediately got up a small company in Montgomery and joined Sam Houston at Gonzales. Most of his men disbanded, or were incorporated with other commands, but he continued with Houston's army during the retreat. He joined the artillery and with kindred spirits worked one of the Twin Sister

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 48 Loc. cit.

cannon at San Jacinto. It was his gun that carried away the water bucket of the Mexican long-nine and did other damage.

John Wade came home a few weeks after the battle, but he again got up a company around Montgomery and joined the Texas army, then under Rusk, at Victoria. After the Mexican army had made its exit from Texas, Wade returned home ready to respond to the call of his adopted country. He turned out again in 1842 against Woll, but fortunately he did not cross the Rio Grande.<sup>49</sup>

In the 1872 Texas Almanac John Marshall Wade gave the following account of himself:

I came to Texas in 1835 from the Western Creek Nation, being advised so to do by Gen. Houston. I came when he made his second trip to Texas, on the 11th of October, 1835. I joined troops going from Nacogdoches to Bexas, (Rusk's company), was taken sick and remained in San Felipe, and the present site of Montgomery, until the meeting of the Convention at Washington, when I joined Capt. Ware's Company; heard of the fall of the Alamo and hastened to the Colorado; was under Sherman at the upper encampment until the retreat; Gen. Sherman will remember me. At Groce's I was detailed, by Gen. Houston, with Dick Scurry, Ben McCulloch, Tom Green, T. O. Harris, and others to man the Twin Sisters, which the lamented J. N. Moreland was appointed to command; staid with the Twin Sisters till after the battle of San Jacinto; rejoined Ware's company, and was discharged on the 11th of June, 1836.

Gen. Rusk hearing he Mexicans were rallying on the

Rio Grande, called for men. I was elected captain of a company on the 4th of July, 1836; reported to Rush at Victoria; was assigned to duty with my company in the regiment of Col. Ed. Morehouse; served three months, the term of enrollment, and discharged my company. I then went to Columbia and worked as a compositor on the Telegraph; came around to Houston with Cruger & Moore, opening of the Land Office in 1838. I then returned to Montgomery and was appointed to the office of Deputy Surveyor; elected Surveyor when that office became elective by the people, and was elected Colonel of Militia at its first organization. I started the Montgomery Patriot in 1845, moved it to Huntsville, and with the assistance of George Robinson published it one year and sold out. I returned again to Montgomery in 1854, and have been Surveyor until displaced by Gov. Davis.

Matthew Cartwright, R. Martin and myself, are the only survivors of the battle of San Jacinto, in this county.

I am a native of the city of New York, and 56 years old; have set type beside Horace Greeley and George Kindall when a mere boy.<sup>50</sup>

J. H. Shepperd was a native of North Carolina and he came to Texas in 1831. He first stopped in Austin's colony, twenty miles above San Felipe at Colonel Jared Groce's settlement. In 1832 he made his first campaign as a lieutenant in Captain Abner Kuykendall's second company when the colonists rose to relieve W. B. Travis and P. H. Jack from the clutches of the tyrant, John Blackburn, at Anahuac. His next campaign was at Bexar in 1835, when he was

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<sup>50</sup> Loc. cit.

in all the battles and skirmishes around there. The Powder House Fight, Grass Fight, and Concepcion were some of these, and he stayed at Bexar till the place surrendered.

He was first lieutenant in J. L. Bennett's company, and when the latter disbanded, Shepperd joined another company. He was not in the battle of San Jacinto for the reason that on the day the army crossed the Brazos River at Groce's, Sam Houston sent him with an express to the Coshattie Indians who lived on the Trinity River near where Swartwout was located. Sam Houston had heard this tribe of Indians would come to his aid with a hundred warriors, but Shepperd told him they would not take part in the contest on the side of Texas, and the result of this mission confirmed Shepperd's assertion, for, after endeavoring for several days to get the chiefs to hold a council, he had to return to his home at Montgomery. He was thus deprived of the honor of participating in the battle of San Jacinto. In the campaign after the battle of San Jacinto he was stationed at Southerland's on the Navidad as a bearer of expresses from headquarters at Victoria to the seat of government at Columbia. It was he who bore the dispatch from Sam Houston, then in eastern Texas, countermanding the taking of Santa Anna to the army, as per vote and determination of the army.

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The following is a biographical sketch from L. W. Kemp's book, The Signers of the Declaration of Independence, of C. B. Stewart who was one of Montgomery's most prominent citizens.

Kemp wrote:

Charles Bellinger Stewart was born in Charleston, South Carolina, February 18, 1806, son of Charles and Adrianna (Bull) Stewart. In 1827 he resided in Columbus, Georgia, and owned an interest in a drug store. For a few months in 1828 he conducted a business in Cuba. Later he was commission merchant in New Orleans. He came to Texas in 1830 and ran a drug store in the town of Brazoria. In June, 1832, he entered Francis W. Johnson's command, raised to attack in Mexican fort at Anahuac. Although he was not a member of it, the first Convention of Texas at San Felipe, on October 5, 1832, appointed him, John Austin, Charles D. Sayre, George B. McKinstry, and Warren D. C. Hall members of a subcommittee to Safety and Vigilance for the District of Victoria (Brazoria). Their duties were to keep up a regular and stated correspondence "on all subjects relation to the tranquility of the interior." On November 21, 1834, Judge Thomas J. Chambers appointed Ira R. Lewis prosecuting attorney and Stewart secretary of the judicial district of Brazos.

Stewart moved to San Felipe prior to July 17, 1835. On that date he was secretary of the delegation from the jurisdiction of Austin, composed of Wyly Martin, president, Alexander Somervell, John R. Jones, and Jesse Bartlett, which met at San Felipe with delegates from the jurisdictions of Columbia and Mina, "to take into consideration the state of the country and the alleged outrages against Mexico, 'namely William B. Travis' capture of twenty Mexican soldiers under Captain Tenorio at Anahuac'." The Committee of Safety and Correspondence for the Jurisdiction of Columbia of which Dr. Branch T. Archer was chairman, and William T. Austin secretary, at Velasco on August 19, 1835, wrote to Stewart that they, reposing the fullest

confidence in his seal, energy, fidelity, and ability, had appointed him as confidential Agent to act within the Jurisdiction of San Felipe for the purpose of obtaining a Consultation of all Texas through her representatives, conformably to the plan contained in the address of the committee which is herewith forwarded to you.

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 On October 11, 1835, Stewart was elected secretary of the Permanent Council, a body organized to conduct matters of state until the meeting of the Consultation. Upon the recommendation of Governor Smith who had been elected November 12. the General Council, on November 18, appointed Stewart secretary to the executive and enrollment clerk. . . . .

On February 1, 1836, Stewart, Thomas Barnett, and Randal Jones were elected to represent Austin Municipality at the Constitutional Convention. Stewart and Barnett were seated March 1. Jones did not attend. In Washington, Stewart had business additional to the Convention. On March 8, James Hall, Primary Judge of Washington Municipality, authorized "W. W. Sheppard of Lake Creek to celebrat a contract of Marriage between Chas. B. Stewart and Julia Sheppard and to give to it the said contract the necessary formality before attesting witnesses." The ceremony was performed March 11.

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 Following the Revolution, Stewart moved to the town of Montgomery, formerly seat of Montgomery County, where he practiced medicine. On March 5, 1840, Judge A. B. Shelby appointed him district attorney pro tem of the county, and on May 11, 1841, President Lamar appointed him notary public. He represented Montgomery County at the Constitutional Convention which convened at Austin, July 4, 1845, and at the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Legislatures. While serving in the Fourteenth Legislature in 1874-75, his address was Danville, Montgomery County, and he represented Montgomery and Harris Counties.

Toward the end of his life Dr. Stewart became almost totally deaf. His letters to Moses Austin Bryan indicate he was a profound believer in spiritualism. In a post-script to a letter dated August, 1883, he predicted that he

would die in about seven years. He passed away, however, in less than two years, on July 28, 1885. He is buried in a marked grave in the cemetery at Montgomery. In 1936 the Commissioner of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations erected a marker at the site of his former home one mile from the town of Montgomery.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kemp, *op. cit.*, pp. 330-335.

## 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 a <sup>bank when</sup> 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.

## CHAPTER VIII

### INSTITUTIONS AND INDUSTRIES

Throughout the history of Montgomery County there have been two main churches, the Baptist and the Methodist. The first Baptist Church in the county was organized in 1838 with the Elder Allen Samuel as its pastor. Elder Daniel Parker, the organizer of one of the first Baptist Churches in Texas, visited this church in 1840 and wrote in his church journal the following words:

. . . I proceeded to Montgomery County, where I found a church with about 20 members of the sound Regular Baptist faith and order who had constituted by the best authority in their reach some time in the year 1838 with Elder Allen Samuel their Pastor. . . . This Church is known by the name of Mount Pleasant Church of the Regular Baptist faith and order Your Humble Servant in Christian Love.<sup>1</sup>

The next report of Baptist activities and a church being organized was in 1844 reported by Reverend Z. N. Morrell. His report contained the following:

. . . Elder R. E. B. Baylor, then residing at La Grange, accompanied me to Colonel Richard Jarman's, some seventeen miles south-east, where we preached for several days and organized a church. . . . Greatly encouraged with the prospect, religiously, west of the Brazos, my mind was impressed strongly that my labors were in demand in the county of Montgomery, which then

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<sup>1</sup> "The Records of an Early Texas Baptist Church", The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, Vol. XI (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1907), p. 117.

extended from the Brazos to the Trinity River. . . .

I visited, as rapidly as I could, a number of the most important points in this region of country, the present locality of Anderson, Colonel Shannon's, Montgomery, Danville, and Huntsville, inquiring after Baptists, and considering the facilities and difficulties relative to a general organization. The country was being rapidly settled, and large congregations met us at every point.

Seven miles west of the town of Montgomery, another monthly appointment was steadily filled, and on the twenty-fifth day of November, 1844, the Post Oak Grove Church was organized, with six members. The presbytery consisted of Elders Wm. M. Tryon and Z. N. Morrell.

On the same day the organization was formed, sister Aaron Shannon, and my son A. H. Morrell related their experiences, and were baptized by brother Tryon.<sup>2</sup>

Another early Baptist Church was organized in the town of Montgomery, December 28, 1850. In this church the renowned R. E. B. Baylor, whose name later became affiliated with Baylor University, held many meetings. In 1855 one of the citizens of Montgomery wrote that:

. . . I took my pen in hand to say a few words about preaching etc. Well, Baptist Church was filled up. Judge Baylor made a very pretty and feeling discourse. A quo si funeral for the late Rev. M. Chilton. The text "Jesus wept" was appropriate. Baylor was not probably the ableist that Chilton had, but his sermon had more of the gospel, simplicity, and wisdom of heart about it. . . .<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Z. N. Morrell, Flowers and Fruits From the Wilderness; or; Thirty-Six Years in Texas and Two Winters in Honduras (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1872), pp. 197-208.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, February 11, 1855, in Addison Collection.

Again in 1855 he wrote about a Baptist revival in which he stated:

. . . The Baptist are now trying to get up a revival meeting; commenced Friday night and yesterday and last night, again this morning and at night, and tomorrow at 9 A. M. they propose to meet. Men, women, children, and servants all keep it as a day of fasting and prayer, and then how much longer the meeting is to last I suppose depends in the excitement. I attended the two past nights and may go again tonight. . . .

In 1838 Methodist affairs in Texas were under the supervision of the Mississippi Conference. In 1838 it was arranged by this conference that centering at the town of Montgomery and including all the territory between the Trinity River and Brazos River the Reverend Isaac L. G. Strickland would be in charge. In 1838 Strickland, a circuit missionary, proceeded to Montgomery, where he made his headquarters and organized the first Methodist Church in the country. Services were at first held for this church in the home of a member.<sup>5</sup>

Since Montgomery was made the center of Methodist activities of such a large area -- from the Brazos to the Trinity -- and since it was the only sizeable town in that area, it was apparent that the Reverend Strickland would establish his residence at that place. In 1842 through the contributions of the local carpenters and cabinet

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<sup>4</sup> Letter of Nat Hart Davis to Betty Davis, July 15, 1855, in Addison Collection.

<sup>5</sup> W. N. Martin, "A History of Montgomery," (unpublished Master's thesis, Sam Houston State Teachers College, Huntsville, Texas, 1950), p. 66.

makers, and through subscriptions of the local citizens, the first parsonage in Texas was erected. <sup>6</sup>

This parsonage was replaced by a more modern building in the 1880's, which is still in use; however, it is on a different site from that on which the original building was erected. A monument marks the spot where the first building stood.

In 1850 the Methodists erected a new church on the site of the first church. The church bells, then an innovation in new Texas towns, were given by Peter and Richard Willis, pioneer merchants of Montgomery. At the dedication of this church held on July 27, 1851, it was christened Alexander Chapel. The following describes the dedication ceremony:

In the flourishing village of Montgomery, Methodism seems to be permanently established. At an early period in the exploration of Texas by the missionaries of the Methodist Church, this place was visited, but of the success of their labors here for several years, we are not prepared to speak definitely. But in our visit to this town on last Sabbath we found a church of some thirty odd members, most of whom are truly devoted Christians and te-to-talists. They have evinced their Christian enterprise in sustaining a stationed preacher, and in the erection of a neat and commodious chapel, which was dedicated to the worship of Almighty God on last Sabbath.

.....  
 It was our pleasure to conduct the dedicatory service of the new chapel, which is to be called Alexander Chapel, in compliment of Rev. R. Alexander, the Presiding Elder, of Ruterville District, who has preached there

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<sup>6</sup> Loc. cit.

frequently for His work's sake.

In the delightful services we were assisted by Rev. Bros. Rottenstein and Alexander -- the former offered the first prayer and the latter administered the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper at the close of the sermon.

.....  
 Rev. Bros. Ogletree, Johnson, and John were present to assist in the subsequent exercises of the meeting. Our first impressions of Montgomery were quite favorable. We learned that a Baptist Church has been organized in this town, and that a handsome subscription for a church edifice has been obtained and that the edifice will be erected forthwith.<sup>7</sup>

Schools played an important part in the early history of the county. In 1837 Doctor E. J. Arnold and C. E. Clepper bought a lot and gave it to the town to be used jointly by the Masonic Lodge and public school. It was not until 1848, however, that a charter was granted and a building constructed for a school. In 1848 the state legislature passed the following act for incorporating an academy at Montgomery:

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas, That the institution for the educating of youth, now located at the town of Montgomery, in the county of Montgomery, shall be, and the same is hereby established at said town, by the name of the "Montgomery Academy of Montgomery County."

Be it further enacted, That C. B. Stewart, Jacob Shannon, R. F. Oliver, W. M. Rankin, Benjamin Rigly, J. H. Price, R. B. Martin, M. O. Dimon, J. Wamack, and

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<sup>7</sup> C. Richardson, "Dedication of Alexander Chapel, Montgomery, Texas, "The Texas Methodist Historical Quarterly, Vol. I (Georgetown, Texas: Texas Methodist Historical Association, 1909-1910), p. 236,

E. J. Arnold, the President and Trustee of said Acadmey be, and they are hereby constituted and incorporated a body politic in deed and in Law, by the name and style of the President and Trustees of the Montgomery Academy of Montgomery County, and by the name they and their successors may, and shall have succession and exercise the privileges herein granted them, be capable of suing and being sued, of pleading and being impleaded, of holding property real and personal, and mixed, and of granting, selling, and conveying the same at pleasure, of having a common seal to be changed at their pleasure, of establishing a Female Department, and such other dependent institutions as they shall deem necessary, and of doing and performing whatever else they may deem proper and necessary for the advancement of said institution, in as ample a manner as persons of bodies politic or corporate can or may by law.

.....  
 Be it further enacted, That said institution shall be open to all denominations of religion, and that this act takes effect from and after its passage.

Approved, March 11, 1848.<sup>8</sup>

The building was a two story house fifty by a hundred feet and the lower story was used for the academy, while the upper story housed the Masonic Lodge. The frame work of the building was of hewn white oak logs weather-boarded outside and later ceiled inside. A partition was removed and the school became coeducational. A fireplace at either end of the building furnished the heat. The window panes were painted red and blue, thus making the light very poor except when the windows were raised. As the panes became broken they were re-

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<sup>8</sup> H. P. N. Gammel, The Laws of Texas 1822-1897 (Austin: The Gammel Book Company, 1898), Vol. III, p. 379.

placed by clear ones and soon enough light crept through.<sup>9</sup>

A blackboard on a stand ran the length of one long wall. This was made of boards painted black with a chalk trough where the pupils carefully put the lumps of chalk with which they wrote. The pupils who could afford it brought a chair and either a desk or table from home. The desks usually had hinged tops which could be opened or locked. The less fortunate children sat on long benches facing the teacher and when writing time came they had to march up to a special writing desk. This desk was a long table down the middle of the school room with the top divided into two tilted surfaces where the pupils seated themselves facing each other.<sup>10</sup>

The first teachers of the Montgomery Academy were J. J. Patton and a lady who taught there before, during, and a short time after the Civil War. These two were followed by E. C. Chambers and a Miss Ames, who taught until the first free school was started in 1872.<sup>11</sup>

Besides the Montgomery Academy there was another school that lasted for a number of years. It was built and taught by

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<sup>9</sup> Dora Davis, "The Development of the School in Montgomery, Texas," (unpublished paper, 1933), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Loc. cit.

Charles L. S. Jones and was known as the Jones Academy. It had both boarding and nonboarding pupils and taught all subjects. Jones was assisted by his son and daughter who built this up to be a very popular school. When the Civil War came on Jones' son with most of the older boys of the village left for the war and the father was compelled to close the school. After the war was over the building was rented out to two returned soldiers to open a school. These two men were T. J. Peel and Alexander Boyd, both being graduates of Austin College, then located at Huntsville, Texas.<sup>12</sup>

The first public school was built in 1895 on the same spot where the other schools had been located. The house was planned for a school and lodge and when built it adequately housed the Masonic Lodge in its upper story. The downstairs consisted of two rooms, each twenty-four feet square, a twelve foot wide hallway, and two doors at each end.<sup>13</sup>

The pupils for this school were separated into groups of primary and grammar grades, the few who pursued the more advanced studies sat in the room with the grammar school students. The curriculum varied, but more attention was devoted

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

to mathematics and grammar. Latin was usually given two years to the most advanced pupils. English was taught though grammar and spelling were stressed throughout the school. The dictionary was the favorite textbook and classes were combined so that the entire school above the primary spelled from the dictionary. After 1875 the "Blue Back Speller" was a favorite. <sup>14</sup>

Some of the teachers of the early schools of Montgomery became prominent men. Doctor John T. Moore, who later became a prominent doctor in the Medical Arts Building in Houston, was one time principal teacher at Montgomery. Doctor W. B. Bizzell, later president of Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College held this humble office. Doctor C. P. B. Martin, charter professor of Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College who taught agricultural chemistry there was a teacher at Montgomery. Doctor Frank Calcott, professor of the Department of Spanish at Columbia University, was at one time Superintendent of the school at Montgomery. <sup>15</sup>

Some of the school trustees who served nearly a quarter of a century as members of the board of trustees were: Doctor Charles B. Stewart, succeeded by his son Edward Stewart,

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 9

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

Doctor F. A. Young, Jim Riley, succeeded by his son John Riley, Jim Sanders, succeeded by his sons Willie and Robert Sanders. Lester Peel was president of the board for fourteen years and W. B. Gay was an active member for more than fifteen years.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1920's the Montgomery schools were consolidated into an independent school district through the influence of Mildred Price, then a member of the school board, by interesting her brother, Representative Robert A. Powell, in securing the passing of a special act of the State Legislature to create the Independent School District of Montgomery.<sup>17</sup>

The Conroe schools began in 1886 when a one room rough lumbered house was constructed at Isaac Conroe's Mill. It had hand-made benches for desks and its first teacher was Miss Ione Burns (later Mrs. J. A. Knight). This school only lasted five months of the year. The next school house was also a one room affair and was located in the southeast part of Conroe where Jim Traylor lived. In 1894 another room was added and also another teacher. At the time of this school's organization Conroe was under the community system of public schools. Under this system the public schools were organized by the County Judge who actes as

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

<sup>17</sup>Loc. cit.

ex officio school superintendent. He appointed three trustees in each neighborhood, who organized a school, gave it a name and number, then furnished the County Judge a list of all the children of scholastic age that would attend school. Tax money would then be appropriated accordingly.<sup>18</sup>

In 1899 a new building was built, having four painted rooms. This building was situated on the block of ground south of the present site of the William B. Travis Junior High School Building. At the time of its organization there were only ten grades in the plan, and the three last were designated the high school. Honorable D. A. Frank, now a prominent attorney of Dallas, Texas, was the first Superintendent of schools. The first high school graduating class of the school was composed of one young man and three young ladies who received diplomas of graduation at the close of the scholastic year 1901-1902.<sup>19</sup>

The class of the year 1906-1907 was composed of four young men and eleven young women. The plan still carried only ten grades and Hulon N. Anderson had been the superintendent since 1905, as well as the teacher of all high school subjects except Latin, which was taught by J. T. Terry. In 1909-1910, the class in the

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<sup>18</sup> Hulon N. Anderson, "History of the Conroe High School," (unpublished paper, no date), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Loc. cit.

tenth grade graduated twelve people and during this year under the superintendency of W. C. Hanner, arrangements were perfected for the addition of the eleventh grade.<sup>20</sup>

In the mid-term of the scholastic year 1911-1912 the entire school was moved into the first brick building built in Conroe. Later this building was named the J. O. H. Bennette Building in honor of J. O. H. Bennette who served the district as president of the Board of Trustees for seventeen years. During his long tenure he contributed thousands of dollars of his own money to help equip and finance the school system of Conroe.<sup>21</sup>

In January 1927, the high school was given a separate building -- the central unit of the present David Crockett High School Building -- and the elementary school was housed in the J. O. H. Bennette School Building. The teachers and pupils of the high school group moved most of the furniture and furnishings, including the library books, by carrying them by hand from the old building to the new school.<sup>22</sup>

In 1927 some new additions were made at the Bennette Building -- among which was a wooden building to house a Free

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Loc. cit.

Kindergarten; this had been moved from the old school site to the lots now occupied by the new Education Building of the First Baptist Church, and the six room Jessie W. Harris Home Economic Cottage, planned and built under the teacher and by the boys of the Industrial Arts classes, occupied the former site of the Kindergarten or "Addison-Kiddy-Koop," named in honor of H. C. Addison, a long time member of the Board of Trustees. He had contributed freely of his means in construction of the Kiddy-Koop and in providing shop equipment and mechanical drawing supplies for the Industrial Arts classes in the basement of the Bennette Building.<sup>23</sup>

The scholastic population grew slowly until the oil boom came to the district in 1932. The following year the scholastic population was doubled and the school's enrollment increased proportionally. Temporary "shacks" were built and it was on October 11, 1935, that K. G. Schafer, President of the Board of Trustees, turned the first shovel of dirt in a ground breaking ceremony which was the beginning of the additions and new buildings and construction of the athletic field, a plant which now comprises the quarters of the David Crockett High School. Since 1935 the entire system has been advancing and improving in building, equipment, organization, administration,

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<sup>23</sup> Loc. cit.

curriculum enrichment, qualifications of teachers and administrators.<sup>24</sup>

Montgomery County has had several newspapers. The first one was called the Montgomery Patriot and was published by John Marshall Wade in 1845. The first regular copy appeared April 26, 1845. In one of the first copies of this paper the following advertisement appeared:

PROSPECTUS of the MONTGOMERY PATRIOT,

"Let all the ends thous aim'st at, be thy Country's thy God's, and Truth's"

The undersigned proposes publishing in the Town of Montgomery, a NEWSPAPER of the above title, as soon as a sufficient number of subscribers can be obtained to justify the proprietor in the undertaking:--and, in order that a perfect understanding may exist between the public and the Editor, we deem it expedient to issue the present number, as a specimen of what may be expected from us.

Although we do not arrogate to ourselves those high, classical, or literary attainments claimed by many of the editorial corps, yet we feel a confidence that our humble endeavors will contribute to the support of the institutions of our country generally, and the interests of our country particularly, and that at all times we will be governed by a respect for the maintainance of right, justice, freedom and humanity.

Feeling almost certain of sufficient patronage from our fellow-citizens, we venture to promise that our first regular number will be published on Saturday, the 26th day of April next, and appear regularly thereafter, on every Wednesday morning.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

TERMS: For each volume of fifty-two number if paid in advance -- Four dollars. If paid within three months -- Four dollars and a half. At the end of the year -- Five dollars.

J. M. Wade, Proprietor  
Montgomery. March 29, 1845.<sup>25</sup>

Soon after organizing the paper Wade moved to Huntsville, where he published the paper for a year and then sold out.

Some of the other newspapers are as follows: Montgomery Register, published in 1870 in Montgomery; Montgomery Press, published in 1871 in Montgomery; Willis Observer, published in 1889 in Willis; Conroe Enterprise, published in 1893 in Conroe; Willis Progress published in 1908 in Willis. Montgomery County has two live papers at the present time. They are weekly newspapers and are called the Montgomery County News and the Conroe Courier. The Conroe Courier was first published in 1892.

The industrial development of Montgomery County was very slow in the first ten years of its history. The first settlers who came began to develop their lands by clearing away the forest and putting fields into the cultivation of cotton and corn. Due to primitive conditions, a period of slow development resulted through the late 1830's.

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<sup>25</sup> Montgomery Patriot, July 2, 1845, in Sam Houston Memorial Museum.

Conditions improved after independence was won. Montgomery received a generous share of the tide of settlers who poured into Texas in the late 1880's and early 1850's. These settlers were mostly well-to-do planters, and some of them were large slave owners. About that time the first settlers began to reap the reward of their early labor. Their potential wealth in cattle, lands, and timber could not be turned into money as the new settlers came.

Montgomery was the only town in the county of any importance. It soon became one of the most important trading centers in Texas. Long teams of oxen, drawing loads of cotton, lumber, and other products, plodded their way slowly to Houston, the nearest market, sixty miles away. These freight wagons brought back all kinds of merchandise which were shipped from New York, New Orleans, and other distant points by way of Galveston.<sup>26</sup>

With the increase of wealth, the crude life of the pioneers was replaced by one of a more comfortable existence. Professional men and their families -- late comers from the old states -- lawyers, teachers, and doctors brought into the county the culture of the Old South. A few Northerners, full of the energy and initiative that characterized them, came also.

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<sup>26</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 39.

Some of the early industries which had been necessary to the pioneer of Montgomery County gave away to modern factories and later to mass production. In the first days there were grist mills and cotton gins which began to be installed as farming became the chief money crop. It was to these gins and mills that the people carried their cotton and corn to be ginned or ground.

One of the first gin and grist mill that was operated in Montgomery was owned by Dr. J. H. Price. It was built in the early 1840's and was situated about nine miles northwest of the town of Montgomery.<sup>27</sup>

Another gin was an old horse-power gin operated by George Dean. It was situated across Lake Creek on Ford's Lake. The exact date of the establishment of this gin is not known, but it operated for several years prior to 1845. It was abandoned later when steam gins came into the county.

Another cotton gin and grist mill in the county was owned and operated by John Robertson. This gin and mill was a steam type and was located at New Caney around 1866; and another gin in this area was established by William Campbell Copeland in the 1850's.

An early industry in Montgomery County that did not survive the Civil War was a tannery establishment by Antony Martin in

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 43

1843. This tannery was operated until the middle of the Civil War, when materials became scarce and Martin was forced to close.

Another short-lived industry was a small pottery located on a farm south of the town of Montgomery. It was established in the late 1840's. The remains of the old kiln and a few broken pieces of pottery still mark the location.<sup>28</sup>

One of the first sawmills in Montgomery County was run by George Dean. It was located on Ford's Lake about seven miles south of Montgomery. The steam boiler was brought from Galveston, Texas, in the 1860's. It is said that this boiler came out of a steamboat, the famous Harriett Lane, that was sunk by the Confederates in the Civil War. The boat was raised and the boiler removed and brought to Montgomery on ox carts. This first mill was a crude affair. It is said that the saw had only two teeth. There is no definite information concerning the closing of this mill. It is known that it was run for several years at its original site and was later removed to another part of the county.<sup>29</sup>

Because of the abundance of excellent timber, there were numerous other mills which operated in the county through the years. In the last quarter century of the history of Montgomery

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>29</sup> Loc. cit.

County there have been numerous small mills which would move from one forest to another, some successful, but most failures. Some of the successful ones were the Grogan Lumber Company, located at Magnolia; Foster Lumber Company, located at Fostoria; Hunt Lumber Company, located at Willis; Delta Land and Timber Company, which was located at Conroe. Other mills of considerable size are located at Porters, New Caney, Willis, and Conroe.

Giving place only to the oil industry in this county in rank of importance is the timber and lumber business. For many years the principal source of revenue came from the forests that until a very few years ago covered this area. Millions of feet of lumber and hundreds of carloads of cross-ties were shipped from this county annually. The people were educated in lumber; they talked and lived lumber. Even the smaller lads could look at a pine tree and give one a fair estimate of the amount of lumber it would produce.

No doubt the lumber industry has been and will continue to be one of the chief industries of the county. There is a large National Forest Reserve situated in the northcentral part of the county. The timber is carefully selected and sold to mills that pay the highest price. In later years the pulp-wood industry has developed along with the lumber industry. The small mills buy the rights to

cut off the trees suitable for lumber, and the pulp-wood men purchase the rest of the same lease for pulp-wood.<sup>30</sup>

The oldest industry of Montgomery County is farming. The soil was rather fertile in the beginning and the rainfall and temperature favorable for agriculture. As the early settlers cleared away the forests and began to farm, they found that almost any food crop grew well. Small fields of cotton were planted in the early 1840's. Just as the first gins began to appear, more farmers planted cotton for their money crop. Corn, potatoes, cane, and vegetable crops were planted for home use and local trade.

During the late 1840's a steady stream of settlers came into the county with their families and slaves. It was in the 1850's that cotton really became a source of income. Cotton was hauled to Houston and Galveston on wagons and ox-carts and sold or traded for other commodities. After the Civil War started, an increased demand for cotton raised the price until most farmers were planting almost all that they could possibly harvest. Almost every plantation eventually built its own cotton gin.<sup>31</sup>

After the Civil War and during the Reconstruction Period conditions in Montgomery County became very hard for the farmers.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>31</sup> Loc. cit.

The price of cotton was so low that it was almost worthless. The freeing of the slaves caused many of the large farmers to dispose of their farms. After the Negroes were emancipated, the labor situation became such that the farmers could not continue to plant a large acreage of cotton. They had to plant just about what the family could grow and harvest. The feeling between the freed slaves and their former masters was not always friendly. Many of the former slaves left the farm and sought relief from the different government agencies that were organized to aid them.

After the Reconstruction period farming continued somewhat as it did before the Civil War. In addition to the cultivation of cotton, many families in the central part of the county resorted to the cultivation of tobacco. The center of this industry was located at Willis, and it is said that Willis boasted of having seven cigar factories in 1895. A large number of big tobacco buyers from the various eastern states would come to Willis each season to buy their tobacco, claiming the Willis tobacco had a flavor that could not be found elsewhere. The United States Congress lifted the tariff on Cuban tobacco, which had a very devastating effect on the Willis tobacco industry. Due to the fact, that Cubans, with cheaper labor, could raise tobacco more

cheaply than the farmers around Willis, the industry soon vanished.<sup>32</sup>

In the last half century, farming has given way to the lumbering of second growth timber and to ranching. Today there are very few large farms in the county. The chief crops are corn, watermelons, and garden truck. The soil has been exhausted by poor farming methods. It is only through heavy fertilization of the soil that any crop can be grown with much satisfaction.

In the beginning, ranching in this region was very unsatisfactory. The land was covered with heavy forest and underbrush. There were very few prairies, and the early settlers found that cattle could be grown only where the forests had been cleared. Very few cattle were raised until after World War I. The people have now found that the land is better adapted to ranching than farming. It has been proven that the wornout soil in the vicinity can be terraced, fertilized, and prosperously mowed so that almost any kind of grass good for cattle can be grown. Where proper pasture practices are being used, there is probably no place in the state more suited for ranching.<sup>33</sup>

For more than thirty years before the discovery of oil in the county there had been talk that it was there. As far back as

<sup>32</sup> Conroe Courier, June 30, 1933.

<sup>33</sup> Martin, op. cit., p. 50.

1900 shallow tests were made in the county and evidence of a major field developed, but for one reason or another the tests were abandoned before striking the productive oil sands that underlie vast areas in Montgomery County. Thousands of dollars were spent by wildcatters in a vain effort to pierce the rich pools, but either the wells were abandoned before reaching the pay sand or they missed the pools entirely. <sup>34</sup>

The drilling of a deep water well for the Santa Fe Railroad more than a decade ago occasioned a slight flurry in oil circles. A small showing of oil was made by the well, or at least that was the report that was circulated. Evidently little or no credence was given the prospects of finding oil in paying quantities as the excitement soon subsided and the matter was dropped almost entirely with the exception of an occasional reference by some of the old timers to the subject.

Some shallow tests were made in the now productive area but drill bits never penetrated to a sufficient depth to disturb the ageless tranquility of the lakes of "black gold" under the dunes south and east of Conroe. Stirring tales were told of fortune seeking gentlemen who staked their last dollar on a hope of finding the

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<sup>34</sup>Conroe Courier, April 8, 1932.

precious fluid. Divining rods, seismographs and all the paraphernalia used in the locating of hidden treasure were brought into use.<sup>35</sup>

It remained for George Strake, a young oil operator from Saint Louis, Missouri, to make the find that changed the history of this county. Strake came to Conroe in the spring of 1931. Nobody paid much attention to him, as there had been dozens of promoters in the field before and at that time several wild cat tests were in operation. Wild rumors and conflicting reports were in the air and all had amounted to naught in so far as striking oil was concerned. The Kelley-Baker well west of town was going down at that time and it was being watched with considerable speculation by local people and a few oil men; hopes were high but the well was abandoned.<sup>36</sup>

Strake got very little consideration from local people but he stuck to his theory that oil was to be found if drilled for at the right place; so he rambled through the woods and sand dunes south of Conroe for months. He accumulated a block of leases with an area of eight thousand acres and selected the spot to spud in his well. He staked everything on his judgment that he had

35 Loc. cit.

36 Loc. cit.

selected the right spot and with the courage of youth and the determination of a veteran he set about the business of proving his convictions. He was unable to interest others in financing his wildcat, borrowed money on his life insurance to the limit, burned wood under his boilers because it was cheaper than fuel oil, and after many weary days of drilling, Strake, On December 11, 1931, got the first indication of oil. On December 13, he brought the well in, the first in Montgomery County.<sup>37</sup> Today the county has several thousand natural producing wells. The Conroe area at one time was considered the third largest oil field in the United States.

Other industries of importance in Montgomery County are the several gasoline refineries, a carbon black plant, and two creosoting plants.

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<sup>37</sup> Loc. cit.

## CHAPTER IX

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to give a general outline of the role played by Montgomery County in the history of Texas. The importance of the county's contribution has long been overlooked by historians of this state. Additional research is needed to fill in the spaces which still remain in the story of the county's past. Although the author of this study could not find any definite proof in the short time he searched, it is the generally understood belief of many of the old timers of the county that Doctor C. B. Stewart, not George C. Childress, was the author of the Declaration of Independence and writer of the first Constitution of Texas. He was certainly one of the most learned men at the convention and had served as secretary to practically every important meeting prior to the declaration convention. Further study on this matter by some interested person will no doubt give an interesting new outlook on this phase of Texas history.

A reason why the history of Montgomery County has been overlooked lies in the fact that practically all of the early history is concentrated around the town of old Montgomery, a place which due to close ties and relationship of its citizens, resent

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and shun outsiders.

In preparing this study the author has spent several years doing research. He knows that many interesting and important details were overlooked, but he did his best with the information he had gathered to give as complete a history as possible. The largeness of the original county compelled the author to try eliminate material facts concerning the counties which were later disjoined, and in doing this some material concerning Montgomery County was unintentionally omitted.

For the early phase of the county's history the author used extensively H. E. Bolton's and Carlos E. Castaneda's books concerning the translated documents of the early Spaniards. In these books information was obtained concerning the explorers, missions, and Indians of the county.

The chapter on the early settlement of the county which included the Mexican rule and the empresarios and their colonists, the Spanish archives of the General Land Office and the books by Eugene C. Barker, Louis J. Wortham, H. Yoakum, and Homer S. Thrall proved helpful. In this chapter an effort was made to give to the lay reader who is not familiar with the early methods of settlement and empresario system a general panorama of how the settlement was carried out. The names of the empresarios

and their colonists were given. Although the San Jacinto River was used as the dividing line in the county to divide Austin's colony and Vehlein's colony, the reader must realize that the early settlers, in many instances, disregarded boundary lines; therefore; some of Austin's colonists settled in Vehlein's territory and some of Vehlein's colonists settled in Austin's territory.

Montgomery County was the third county created by the Republic of Texas in the First Congress. Its organization was by an act passed by the First Congress of the Republic. The material used by the author for writing this topic was obtained in the Texas State Archives which contained the original petition and bills passed by the First Congress. This congress had convened at Houston.

How the county got its name is still a matter of controversy. Although the author made this as one of his main objectives to establish, it is with regrets that a definite conclusion could not be reached and only a hypothesis formed. In order to find a definite answer more time was spent on this one particular phase than any other of the entire study.

Gammel's Laws afforded much information on provisions for the division of the other counties from Montgomery. The original petitions of the citizens from the county in the State

Archives also provide a greap help for this topic, and while writing about the establishment of the county seat and courthouse, records in the Montgomery Coun ty Courthouse were used extensively.

An attempt was made in the chapter on the cities and communities to give a variety of the places which represent the county in municipal life, e. g., oldest town, one of unusual circumstances, a ghost town, sawmill town, and the ones most leading. The history of each town included the naming, organization, and the most important events that have occurred in them. The communities that were included were done so because they so richly contributed to the interest element of the study, besides being a part of the history of the county. Much material for this chapter was obtained from the private collection of Hart Addison of Conroe, Texas, and from interviews with the local citizens of each community by the author.

The next chapter concerned the important events, issues, and people of the county. Although these three categories occur in other chapters of this study, this chapter was written separately to bring out the major importance of certain particular events, issues and people. Montgomery County's participatance in the early conventions, battle of San Jacinto,

Woll escapade, Civil War, Reconstruction, and Willis versus Montgomery affair, and a biographical sketch of some of Montgomery County's most illustrious men were included in this chapter. Because of the length of the phases of the Civil War and Reconstruction period these two heading were written into a separate chapter. The Civil War era included slavery, secession, and participation in the war, while the Reconstruction era included a general panorama of some of the atrocities of that period.

In the chapter concerning institutions and industries, the churches, schools, newspapers, and a line of industries were described in some detail. The early history of the Baptist and Methodist Churches were the only two religious institutions included for the reason that they were two of the earliest in the county and most of the population today belong to these two denominations. The schools included the earliest scholastic institutions of the oldest and youngest towns, which made up the systems of Montgomery and Conroe. The town of Willis at one time had an important school, historically speaking, by the name of Willis Male and Female Academy. This school was not included in this particular chapter because it had been described in the chapter on the cities and communities.

The industries included in the last chapter were the

earliest industries, farming, ranching, lumbering, oil and some of the newer ones which have been recently established in the county. The earliest and the oil industry were stressed.

In the way of conclusion the author wishes to say that the purposes of this study have been fulfilled in that a chronological history of the important events of the county have been compiled which may serve as a medium for people of Montgomery County who are interested in their county's history, and the purpose also has been fulfilled in that this history will preserve some of the important facts concerning the county.

## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

### THE MONTGOMERY BARBECUE

We had the pleasure of attending the splendid barbecue given on the 15th inst., in honor of Gen. Houston, in old Montgomery. We are glad to say it was a pleasant affair, and passed off most harmoniously, to the gratification, we believe, of every one present. About fifteen hundred people were on the ground.

There was a grand procession, in which everybody was invited to participate -- the ladies being the chief attraction. Pretty soon after the procession reached the place of speaking -- a beautiful grove in the suburbs of town -- OLD SAM himself arrived. As he ascended the stand, the cannon thundered, and the Montgomery Brass Band struck up some beautiful national airs, which thrilled through the soul. Col. Wade, the Marshal of the day, then introduced to the audience Mr. Goree, who, in a very eloquent manner, read to the assembly letters from the invited guests -- Gov. Pease, Hamilton and Wilcox. Mr. Porter was then introduced, and read an appropriate portion of Washington's farewell address,

Gen. Houston was then presented to the people by Col. Branch, and entertained them in a speech of an hour and a half -- a synoptical and very imperfect report of which will be found in another place. After the General, Cols. Crawford and McAdoo addressed the people in short and appropriate speeches. Then came dinner -- the ladies and invited guests taking a position inside of the tables, and the gentlemen on the outside. Among the meat and substantials, we noticed a profusion of cake -- one of which was built up in pyramidal form, with wreaths of green, with a small, beautiful white silk flag standing in the center, with the name of SAM HOUSTON worked in red upon it, and other devices. The flag was presented to Andrew Jackson, Gen. Houston's little son, who held it with great pleasure, and seemed to be very proud of it.

After feasting sumptuously, the people dispersed, very much delighted with the speaking, the dinner, the music, and good order, preserved throughout the entire occasion.

In the evening, Mr. Wilbur sent up his balloon. At night "there was a sound of revelry," and Montgomery "had gathered her beauty and chivalry," and "bright lamps shown over fair women and brave men," engaged in the delightful sport of smiling Terpsichore. Gen. Houston and Lady honored the ball with their presence for a short time. Not being able to enter into particulars, we here draw a dash, by thanking most cordially the gallant people of old Montgomery, for their kind attentions shown us and our friends while in their midst. --- Colorado Citizen.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Standard (Clarksville, Texas), October 15, 1859.

## APPENDIX B

## ROLL OF COMPANY H, FOURTH TEXAS REGIMENT, HOOD'S

## TEXAS BRIGADE

Men From Montgomery, Walker, and Grimes Counties.

## Officers

Captain P. P. Porter  
 First Lieutenant James T. Hunter  
 Second Lieutenant Tom M. Owens  
 Third Lieutenant Benton Randolph  
 First Sergeant C. E. Jones  
 Second Sergeant S. Y. Smith  
 Third Sergeant J. S. Rudd  
 Fourth Sergeant Nels A. Meyer  
 Fifth Sergeant J. W. Lawrence  
 First Corporal H. T. Sapp  
 Second Corporal Z. Landrum  
 Third Corporal C. L. P. Reed  
 Fourth Corporal A. C. Morris  
 Musician, J. R. P. Jett

## Privates

B. F. Bullock	A. Faulkner	G. W. Keyser
O. W. Bell	Howard Finley	G. W. Kipps
Henry Barzo	D. D. Farrow	W. C. Kerr
G. F. Bascom	Richard Fox	S. P. King
Thomas A. Brent	Green Griggs	F. G. King
Jacob Beck	J. H. Gillham	John Long
E. W. Cartwright	J. H. Hall	J. W. Lemon
F. B. Chilton	L. B. Hatch	W. J. Landrum
James Connelly	C. S. Howard	James L. Lewis
W. E. Copeland	N. F. Howard	Clint Lewis
C. M. Conrow	A. C. Holt	William Loper
R. C. Dawson	A. Hahn	J. M. Lackland
Adam Damm	J. C. Hopkins	W. L. Martin
J. E. Edminson	D. Harrison	L. A. Mathews
W. S. Fisher	M. C. Holmes	A. J. McCown

Y. L. McDaniel	R. R. Stratton	R. L. Tyler
M. F. Myers	J. M. Sanderlin	C. M. Waltrip
T. G. May	Ed. Savage	J. M. Wallace
D. G. May	J. E. Stewart	W. A. Watson
W. C. May	R. H. Stewart	T. W. Wilcox
R. M. May	J. H. Sharp	G. A. Wynne
William Milliken	A. B. Seay	J. A. Wynne
William McGraw	Thomas Seargent	T. C. Wilkes
D. E. Nevill	J. S. Spivey	F. H. Wade
T. T. M. Petty	Henry Travis	
William Peacock	D. J. Tucker	
G. A. Peasley	R. J. Tedford	
J. P. Rogers	E. C. Thigpen	
Ben Reynolds	G. C. Thigpen	
J. D. Randolph	Alex. Taylor	
R. W. Ransom	J. Thomas	
J. R. Seward	J. Taliaferro	

#### Private Recruits Received in 1862

B. Anders	R. D. Gafford	John I. Smith
W. L. B. Bryant	M. W. Jeffers	James B. Sergeant
L. C. Cartwright	J. A. Kirby	C. B. Sanders
B. H. Cathey	Henry Keyser	Bob Rankin
William Cude	William Lewis	J. C. Talley
L. C. Clepper	Louis Le Vanture	Reuben Talley
T. C. Dillard	Jacob I. Town	C. T. Taylor
B. C. Dowdey	M. Leach	T. A. Wynne
G. W. Dale	T. J. Meyers	S. W. Wynne
A. H. Collier	T. R. Mitchell	B. B. Wilkes
Jack Ellis	J. Steussey	H. C. Watson
A. Faulkner	M. Steussey	R. Quigley

#### Private Recruits Received in 1863

Jim Conklin	Ed. Keeble	H. T. Sapp
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#### Substitutes Received in 1863

John Smith	John Stanfield <sup>1</sup>
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INDEX

A HISTORY OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS

BY

William Harley Gandy - Abstract of Thesis 1952

Indexed by

Mrs. Vera Meek (Scott F.) Wimberly  
22 Wingedfoot Drive, Conroe, TX 77304

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