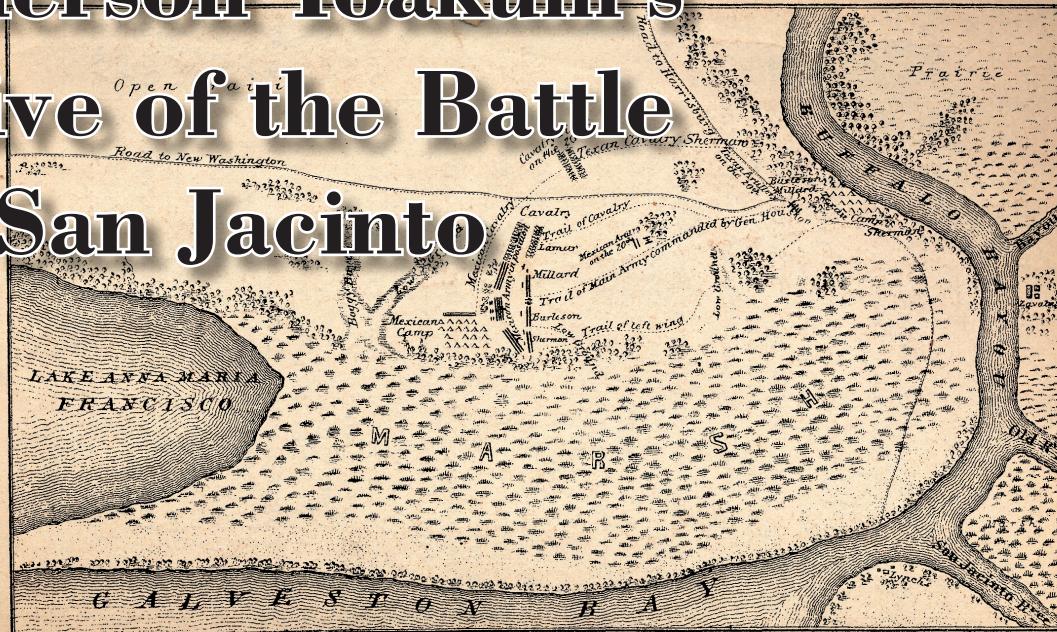


Henderson Yoakum's Narrative of the Battle of San Jacinto



With an Introduction and Annotation by Jeff Dunn

The dramatic story of the battle of San Jacinto has been told many times, but Henderson Yoakum's narrative, published in 1855 in his *History of Texas From Its First Settlement in 1685 to Its Annexation to the United States in 1846*, was the first to synthesize a large number of eyewitness accounts in a scholarly work.¹ Yoakum wrote his narrative at a time when many veterans of the battle were still alive. Although some of them objected to portions of the narrative, Yoakum's account endured to become a classic of Texas history and one of the most widely read versions of the battle by 19th century Texans. To give readers of this special edition of *Houston History* a general overview of the battle, the narrative is republished below with annotations explaining points of controversy.

Henderson King Yoakum was born in Tennessee in 1810. He graduated from West Point in 1832, and came to Huntsville in 1845 where he established a law practice. After serving in the Mexican War, Yoakum returned to Huntsville and became Sam Houston's lawyer and friend. In July 1853 Yoakum moved to Shepherd's Valley, seven miles from Huntsville. Here he wrote his *History of Texas* in two volumes, completing the first volume in July 1854 and the second in February 1855. The narrative of the battle appears in the second volume.²

Yoakum covered a broad swath of Texas history, but his narrative of the battle received considerable attention because it was published at a time when there was much controversy over Houston's role in winning the battle. Yoakum's work generally supported Houston's perspective of events, but was not overly critical of Houston's detractors. Instead, Yoakum tried to write a balanced account that

would be acceptable to all Texans. In a footnote, he wrote that he relied on "perhaps twenty accounts" of the battle, half of them published, and attempted "a fair deduction of the facts from them all."³ His narrative is considered of permanent value today because many of the unpublished accounts he used have since disappeared.⁴

Yoakum's attempt to be objective did not win over Houston's critics, but Yoakum never got a chance to respond to them. He died in 1856, and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Huntsville. Yoakum's *History of Texas* would be his first and only literary work. When Sam Houston died in 1863, he was buried next to Yoakum. Their grave markers can still be seen today side-by-side.

Yoakum's approach to the battle focused almost entirely on the Texan Army. He made little effort to portray the Mexican side in any great detail. Yoakum viewed San Jacinto as "retribution" and "revenge" for Santa Anna's "outrages" and "feast of blood" at the Alamo and Goliad. He does not justify the outcome as an Anglo-Saxon triumph, but he omits the role of Hispanics and blacks fighting on the Texan side at the battle. Despite these shortcomings, the narrative provides an entertaining and largely accurate factual account of the battle while opening a window on how San Jacinto came to be engrained in Texas lore as a symbol of good over evil.

The military campaign that led to the battle of San Jacinto lasted only forty-two days. The nucleus of Sam Houston's

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Mexicans Building Breastworks at night, April 20, 1836.

army, initially numbering less than 400 men, gathered at Gonzales in early March 1836 to relieve the besieged Alamo. Houston arrived on March 11 to take command. Two days later the fall of the Alamo was confirmed and Gonzales was evacuated and burned. The Texas Army marched eastward to the Colorado River and then to the Brazos, where Houston encamped on April 1 opposite Groce's plantation near present Hempstead. The Mexican Army under General Santa Anna pursued from San Antonio. The only other Texan force in the field, a command of 400 men under Col. James W. Fannin, was surrounded and captured by General Jose Urrea at the battle of Coleto Creek on March 20. Fannin and his men were shot at Goliad one week later.

Santa Anna arrived at San Felipe on April 7, less than twenty miles south of Houston's army. But instead of confronting Houston, Santa Anna turned south and managed to cross the Brazos near present day Richmond on April 12. Two days later, with a force of 700 infantry, fifty cavalry, and one cannon, Santa Anna left the Brazos and the rest of the Mexican Army in his rear, and headed to Harrisburg on Buffalo Bayou in an attempt to capture the Texan cabinet. Had he succeeded, the revolution might have ended with a Mexican victory, but the cabinet escaped to Galveston hours before he arrived. Santa Anna entered Harrisburg on the night of April 15 and ordered the cavalry under Col. Juan Almonte to scout Galveston Bay. Almonte managed to seize valuable supplies at New Washington, now Morgan's Point, on April 17. On receiving the news from Almonte, Santa Anna burned Harrisburg and marched his division to New Washington, arriving April 18.

Houston hurriedly crossed the Brazos when he learned that a portion of the Mexican Army had crossed below. He marched across present northwest Harris County and in a matter of days approached Harrisburg, not knowing what he would find. From here we begin Yoakum's narrative:

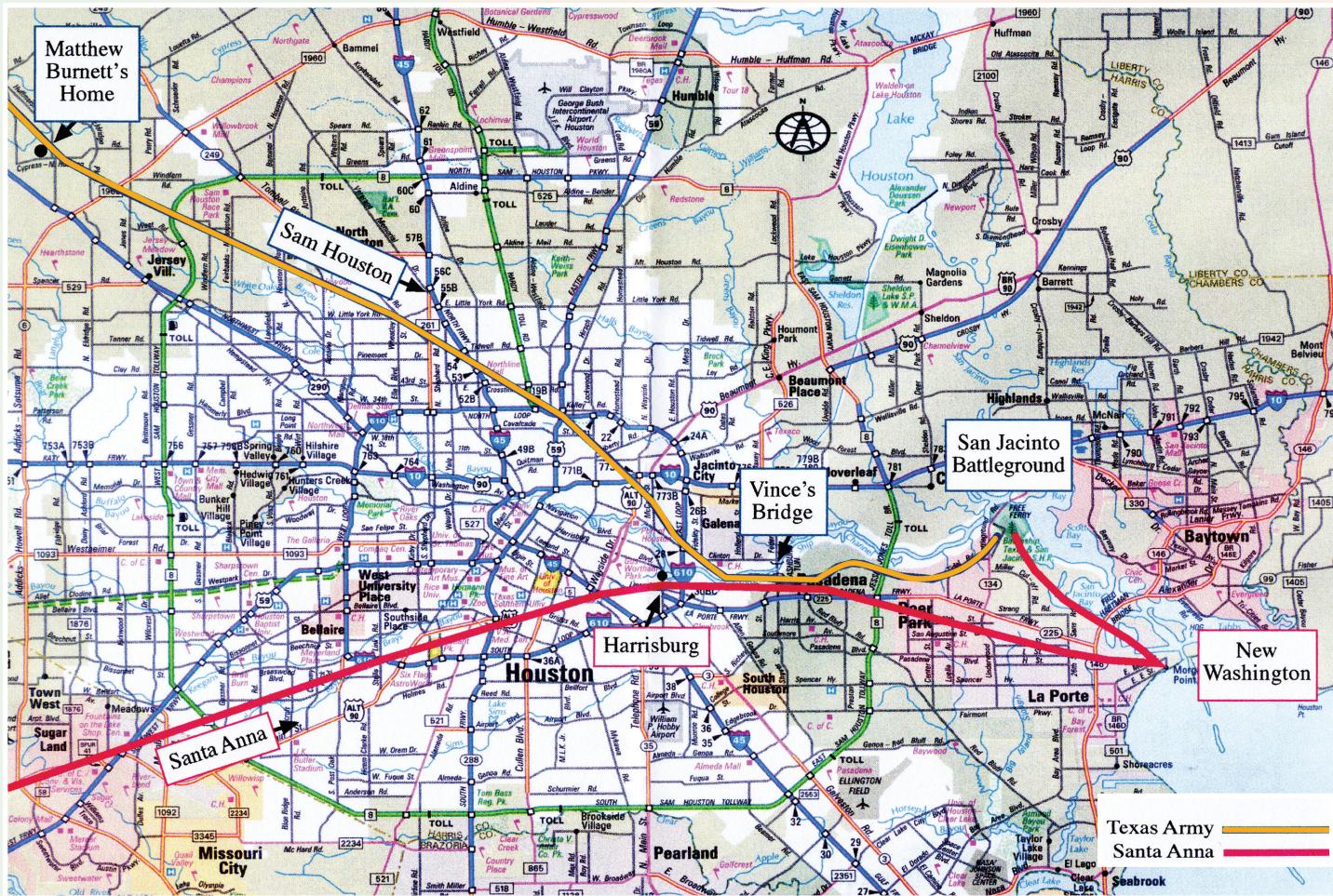


The [Texan Army] reached [Buffalo] bayou, opposite the town [of Harrisburg], on the 18th [of April], a little before noon. Here they remained that day, partly to rest—for they were greatly fatigued—and partly to procure information. Deaf Smith, [Henry] Karnes, and others, were sent over to reconnoitre. The former, about dark, brought into the camp two captives whom

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1. H. Yoakum, *History of Texas From Its First Settlement in 1685 to Its Annexation to the United States in 1846* (New York: Redfield 1855), in 2 volumes.
2. "Henderson King Yoakum," *Handbook of Texas* (Texas State Historical Association); Yoakum, *History of Texas*, Vol. 1, p.4, Vol. 2, p.4.
3. Yoakum, *History of Texas*, Vol. 2, p.145, note.
4. Eugene C. Barker in *The Life of Stephen F. Austin* (2d ed., Austin: Texas State Historical Association 1949), p.458; and John H. Jenkins, *Basic Texas Books* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association 1988), p.590.
5. There were three captives, including Captain Miguel Bachiller, a courier, and a guide. Moses Austin Bryan was the interpreter and read the dispatches brought by the courier. Bryan annotated the first reprint of Yoakum's *History of Texas* in Dudley Wooten (comp.), *A Comprehensive History of Texas, 1685 to 1897* (Dallas 1898), Vol. 1, p.276, n.1. A Texas historical marker located on Bellaire Blvd. at Second Ave. in Bellaire commemorates the capture of the Mexican dispatches.

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Base roadmap (c), army routes drawn by Hunter George. Courtesy Texas Department of Transportation.

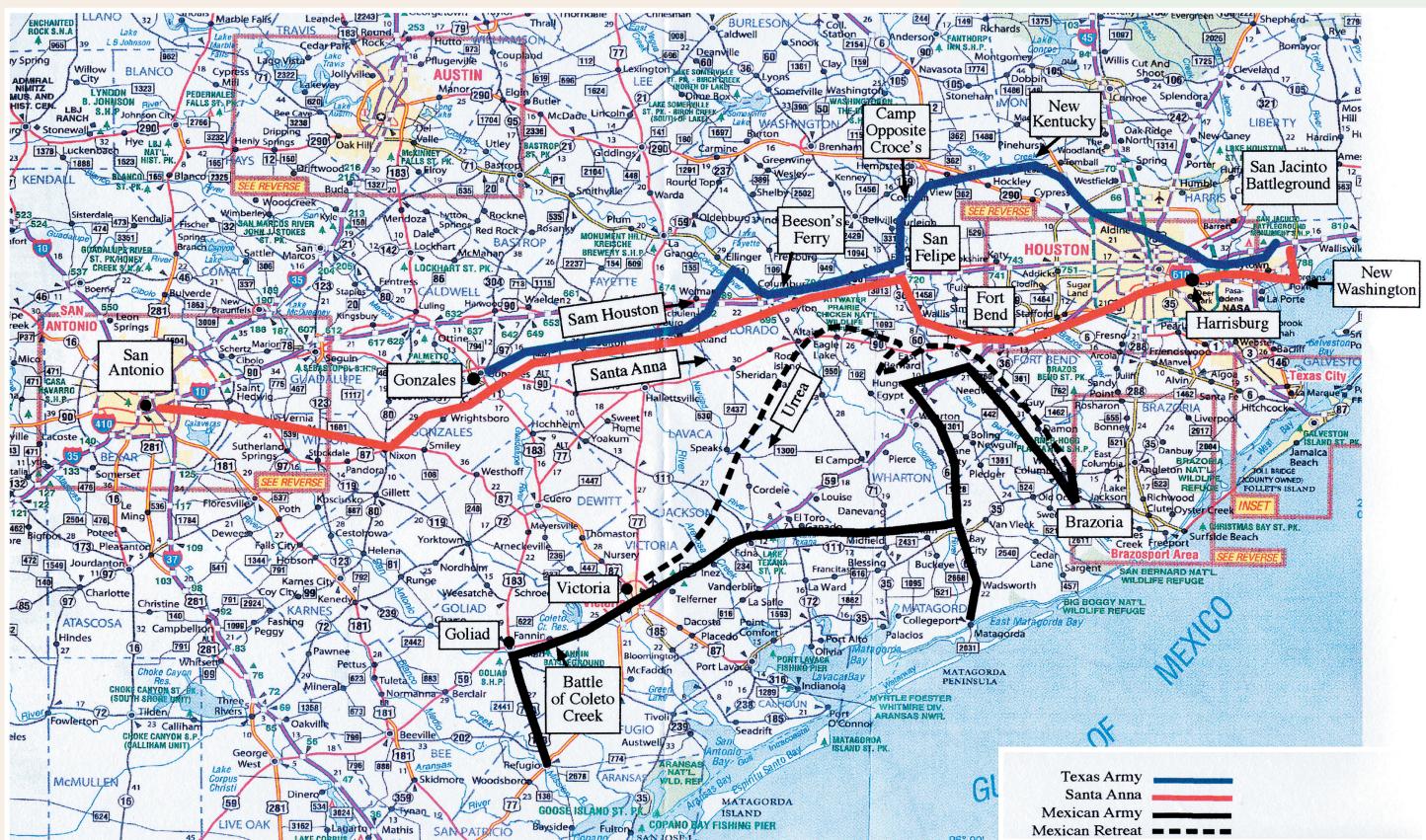
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6. While Santa Anna was at New Washington (Morgan's Point) with 750 men, over 1,400 Mexican soldiers were assembling on the Brazos near present Richmond under Santa Anna's second in command, General Vicente Filisola, and another 1,165 men were under Urrea's orders in Columbia and Brazoria. Vicente Filisola, *Evacuation of Texas* (Waco: Texian Press, 1965), p.30.
7. William P. Zuber, who was with the camp guard, said that 150 men were left to guard the camp baggage and care for "50 men prostrate with measles." William P. Zuber, *My Eighty Years in Texas* (Austin 1971), p.85.
8. Raguet was head of the Committee of Vigilance and Safety at Nacogdoches. The letter to Raguet was dated April 19. David G. Burnet sarcastically noted in 1860 that the letter had become "renowned as the *veni vidi vici* letter of the great Caesar," and produced as evidence that "Gen. Houston was not compelled into the battle of San Jacinto." Burnet claimed Houston had a different motive in writing this letter. Day, *The Texas Almanac*, p.331 (emphasis in original). Raguet's daughter, Anna, was romantically involved with Houston during the time of the campaign of 1836.

he had taken on the road leading west from Harrisburg—the one a Mexican courier bearing despatches to Santa Anna, the other a guard.⁵ From the spies it was ascertained that the Mexican advance had marched down Buffalo bayou, crossing Vince's bridge; and, having burnt Harrisburg, had passed down in the direction of the bay. From the Mexican courier they obtained the mail directed to Santa Anna, from which they learned the important fact, before suspected, that the dictator himself was with the advance, and that they had him cut off from the main body of his troops.⁶ By reference to the topography of that locality, it was seen that he must necessarily return by Vince's bridge, or cross Buffalo bayou, just below the Texan camp, at Lynch's, at the mouth of the San Jacinto. In either way he was cut off from the main body of his army. The Texans derived the further information that Santa Anna was requested, by the

government at home, to give protection with his troops to the surveyor and commissioner, appointed on the part of Mexico, to run the boundary-line between Texas and the United States, according to the treaty between the two nations, and for which purpose Colonel Pedro Garcia Condé was appointed surveyor, and Colonel Almonté commissioner. A letter from General Filisola to Santa Anna gave the information that the chief's order as to the disposition of certain forces was received, and would be obeyed. This was supposed, as afterward proved to be the fact, to refer to reinforcements ordered by Santa Anna.

These despatches being read, General Houston determined to cross the bayou early on the morning of the 19th, and go in pursuit of the enemy. Orders were consequently given to Colonels [Edward] Burleson and [Sidney] Sherman to have three days' rations prepared, and like orders for



Base roadmap (c), army routes drawn by Hunter George. Courtesy Texas Department of Transportation.

repairing a boat two miles below, on the bayou. The troops were formed on the morning of the 19th, and addressed by the commander-in-chief and the secretary of war. The presence of Santa Anna with the enemy's advance was also made known to them. The baggage and wagons, and two or three hundred sick and non-effectives were left in charge of Major [Robert] M'Nutt, on the left bank of the bayou.⁷ Houston then despatched a letter to Henry Raguet, advising him that they were about to meet Santa Anna; that they had looked in vain for help from eastern Texas; that it was then the part of wisdom, growing out of necessity, to encounter the enemy; that no previous occasion justified it; that they were going to conquer; that the troops were in fine spirits, and, through the odds were against them, they would use their best efforts to fight the enemy to such advantage as to gain the victory.⁸

The army proceeded on its march, taking only the cavalry-horses, and those needed for the "Twin-Sisters" and an ammunition-wagon.⁹ The

measles having broken out in the camp, caused the large number of sick that were left behind. Advancing to the ferry, they found the boat not repaired, notwithstanding which they proceeded to cross. Thirty pioneers, under Captain [William] Wood, first passed over. The commander-in-chief went with the second boat. Colonel Rusk remained to assist in the crossing, and none labored more ardently to effect that object. A raft of plank was used to facilitate the passage. The horses were caused to swim across the bayou below the ferry. Before sundown the whole force had passed over without accident, and took up the line of march down the right bank of the bayou, and on the enemy's trail.¹⁰

After advancing twelve miles, the Texans halted at one o'clock on the morning of the 20th, at a beautiful spot in the prairie.¹¹ At this time they were aware that the Mexicans had not crossed the San Jacinto, but it was not known exactly where they were. In fact, they had passed near the ferry at Lynch's on the 16th. The Texans, being

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9. The "Twin Sisters" artillery were two matched field pieces, said to be either four-pounders or six-pounders, sent to Texas as "hollow ware" by a committee of prominent men of Cincinnati, Ohio. See generally, E.W. Winkler, "The 'Twin Sisters' Cannon, 1836-1865," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* (July 1917), p.61.
10. The army crossed Buffalo Bayou a few feet east of the mouth of Sims Bayou. A Texas Centennial granite marker placed in 1936 on Lawndale St., about two miles west of Rickey St. in Pasadena, and 3000 feet south of the site, commemorates the crossing on April 19.
11. This distance is exaggerated. The army marched two miles before reaching Vince's bridge over Vince's Bayou and about one and a half miles further before resting.

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12. Burnet's family lived east of the San Jacinto River in what is now Burnet Park in Baytown, located at Burnet Drive and Hillcrest Lane.
13. Burnet and his family reached the schooner *Flash* and landed safely in Galveston. Several of Col. James Morgan's servants and others were captured by Mexican cavalry under Almonte. Almonte later said he could have killed Burnet and everyone else in the boat, but did not allow his men to fire because he saw ladies in the boat. Accounts of George Patrick and Moses Austin Bryan, in Wooten, *Comprehensive History of Texas*, Vol. 1, pp. 277-78, n.1.
14. Texan and Mexican scouts under Col. Sidney Sherman and Capt. Marcos Barragan, respectively, spotted each other early in the morning on April 20 near the home of James Routh, who lived between Lynch's ferry and New Washington. This incident is mentioned in Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, "Manifesto Relative to His Operations in the Texas Campaign and His Capture," in Carlos E. Castaneda, *The Mexican Side of the Texan Revolution* (Austin 1970), p.75 (hereafter *Manifesto*), and Day, *The Texas Almanac*, p.332.
15. In a footnote, Yoakum wrote: "It was said that the boat had been constructed by some recreant Americans for the enemy." Yoakum, *History of Texas*, Vol. 2, p.137, note.
16. This incident occurred near Lynch's ferry. Moses Austin Bryan said the flatboat only contained flour. Wooten, *Comprehensive History of Texas*, Vol. 1, p. 279, n1. The Texas Army camp on April 20 was established within the boundaries of the present San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site along Buffalo Bayou.
17. Houston stated in his battle report on

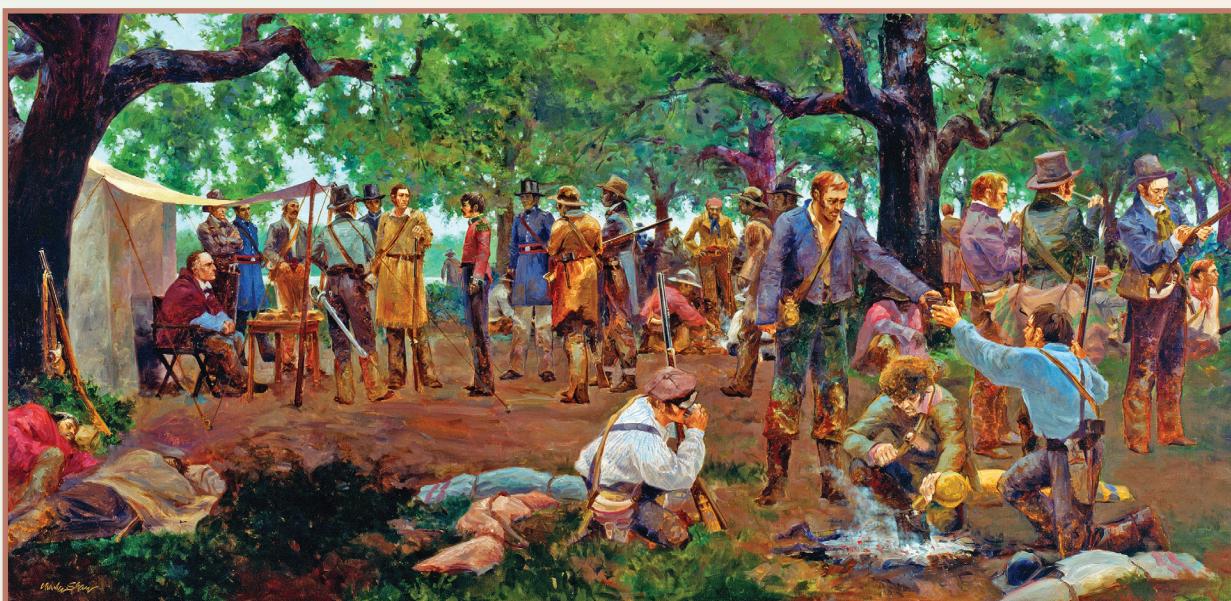
greatly exhausted by incessant labor and marching, threw themselves on the ground without refreshment, and slept.

We must here notice the narrow escape of President Burnet. On the 13th, as has been stated, he left Harrisburg, to provide for the safety of his family.¹² On the same day he brought them to New Washington, below Lynch's, on the bay, with a view to facilitate their passage, if necessary, to Galveston. On the next day the president set out on horseback for Harrisburg; but learning on the way that the Mexicans were there, he returned on the morning of the 16th, in the steamer "Cayuga," to New Washington. It was understood that the boat, which was crowded with families, and bound for Anahuac, was to return the next morning to take off those at New Washington. On the morning of the 17th, after breakfast, and while they were preparing for the steamboat, the Mexican cavalry came suddenly on them. They hastily got into a small boat, and had not rowed more than forty yards from the shore, when the enemy dismounted; but they fortunately made their escape.¹³

At dawn of day, on the 20th, the Texans were aroused by a tap of the drum – for *reveille* was forbidden – and resumed their march down the bayou. After proceeding about seven miles, they halted for breakfast. While it was in preparation, the scouts came in,

and announced that they had given chase to those of the enemy, until they discovered his advance coming up the bay.¹⁴ The Texans, without taking breakfast, made a forced march down the bayou, in order to arrive at Lynch's ferry before their opponents. An advance of thirty or forty of the Texans proceeded rapidly to the ferry, where they arrived by ten o'clock in the forenoon, and found a like number of the enemy there, with a substantial new flat-boat,¹⁵ loaded with provisions for the Mexican army. It was doubtless some of the plunder of Harrisburg or New Washington. The enemy's guard fled at the approach of the Texan advance; the boat and provisions were taken, and sent up the bayou, three fourths of a mile to the rear of the Texan camp, which was established there, along the right bank of the bayou, in a skirt of timber. The supply of provisions was most fortunate, as the Texans had no other during that and the following day.¹⁶

The Texan camp was protected by the timber, and a rising ground running parallel with the bayou. The camp extended some five hundred yards, and about its centre the skirt of timber reached nearly to the top of the rise in front. On either side of this centre the summit of the elevation was composed of prairie. The infantry, about two hundred, under command of



The Texan Camp Before the Battle, April 21.



Texans Fighting and Dying, April 21.

Lieutenant-Colonel [Henry] Millard, were stationed in this neck of timber, extending toward the top of the rise; and the "Twin-Sisters," under Colonel [James] Neill, were placed on the elevation, immediately in front of Millard. The first regiment of riflemen, under Colonel Burleson, formed the right wing; and the second, under Colonel Sherman, composed the left. The cavalry was stationed in the centre, and in rear of the infantry. In front of the centre of the Texan camp, some three or four hundred yards distant, was a cluster of timber; also in front and to the left of the centre, about one hundred yards distant, was another cluster of timber. Elsewhere in front the field was prairie.

The Texans, having established their camp, formed for battle. While they were doing this, the Mexican artillery (one twelve-pounder),¹⁷ having advanced to the first-named cluster of timber, opened upon them. After firing about an hour, without doing any other damage than wounding Colonel Neill, the enemy sent forward a detachment of infantry, armed with *escopetas*, into the nearest wood. Being discovered there, Colonel Sherman applied for

leave to charge on them with the Texan cavalry, in all eighty-five men. Permission was given, and the charge made; but, as the Mexicans were in the wood, nothing was effected, and the cavalry returned without damage.¹⁸

Shortly after this, a large portion of the enemy's forces advanced rapidly, in column, from the point occupied by their artillery to within a hundred and fifty yards of the Texan cannon: the latter opened on them, when they wheeled and fell back precipitately. This retreat was answered by a shout from the Texan ranks that would have alarmed less timid spirits. The Texans did not pursue them, but the "Twin-Sisters" kept up a fire on them till they got out of danger, doing them some damage. The enemy withdrew to a position near the bank of the San Jacinto river (or bayou, for it was below their junction), about three fourths of a mile from the Texan encampment, where they commenced to fortify.¹⁹

In the evening, about an hour before sunset, Colonel Sherman asked permission of the commander-in-chief to take the cavalry and reconnoitre. The general at first objected, but on reflection consented, ordering him

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April 25 that the Mexicans had "one double fortified medium brass twelve pounder." Yoakum, *History of Texas*, Vol. 2, p. 499. But Santa Anna claimed his cannon was a six-pounder. Santa Anna, *Manifesto*, p.74.

18. Moses Austin Bryan's critique of Yoakum concluded that this initial charge never happened: "There was no attack [by Sherman] after the morning attack by the Mexicans until Sherman made the attempt to capture the Mexicans' twelve-pounder long brass cannon [that evening]...." Wooten, *Comprehensive History of Texas*, Vol. 1, p.279, n.1. But Sam Houston affirmed Yoakum's account of this initial charge, calling it a "failure," and quoted from a letter by Joseph L. Bennett to Sam Houston, September 17, 1841, describing the charge as Yoakum did. Sam Houston, "Sketch Refuting Calumnies Produced and Circulated Against His Character as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Texas," a speech delivered in the U.S. Senate, February 28, 1859, published in William Crane, *Life and Select Literary Remains of Sam Houston* (1884), pp.578, 587 (hereafter "Houston's 1859 Senate Speech").

19. Moses Austin Bryan commented on this incident: "I have always thought that if our cannon had not been opened on the enemy too soon, and they had been permitted to come within rifle shot, that we would have brought down one-half of Santa Anna's force the first fire. But Col. Neill opened on them with the Twin Sisters, which caused



Sherman's Men Attack, April 20.

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the enemy to halt and finally to fall back, as they evidently did not expect to encounter cannon. Here was another disputed point between the General and Col. Neill – Houston saying he had not ordered the cannon to fire, and Col. Neill alleging that he had – whether it was ever settled in the lifetime of Col. Neill, I know not." Bryan to Sidney Sherman, July 2, 1859, in *Defence of Gen. Sidney Sherman Against the Charges Made by Gen. Sam Houston, In His Speech Delivered in the United States Senate, February 28th, 1859* (Houston, 1885), p. 29.

20. This incident, known as the "cavalry skirmish" of April 20, became the source of a life-long dispute between Houston and Sherman regarding Houston's verbal orders to Sherman. In a footnote, Yoakum cites Henry Foote's account of this affair, which placed Colonel Sherman "in the attitude of attempting a ruse, by which to bring on a general battle, contrary to the wishes and orders of the commander-in-chief" Yoakum concludes that "[t]his charge of insubordination and deceit is unworthy of Colonel Sherman." Yoakum, *History of Texas*, Vol. 2, p.140. See Henry Stuart Foote, *Texas and the Texans* (Phila. 1841), Vol. 2, pp.298-304. In 1859, following Houston's assertion in his Senate speech that Sherman committed a direct violation of orders, Sherman responded to what he called Houston's "unscrupulous ... slanders" by collecting and publishing testimonials in his defense. Sherman wrote: "There has been a general misunderstanding in relation to my object in making the attack on the 20th April. The enemy's only field piece was in sight from our camp, and had been annoying us during the day. Late in the evening, I proposed to General Houston to allow me to call for volunteers and capture their gun. He

strictly not to go within musket-shot of the enemy, or provoke a conflict, but to advance as near as he otherwise could to ascertain their position: and for this reason – that the precipitate retreat of the enemy after their charge that day had infused the finest feeling into the Texan army, and he was unwilling that any disaster in a partial engagement should disturb that feeling.

The cavalry set out, and continued to advance, receiving a volley from the left of the enemy's infantry, and after a sharp recontre with their cavalry, retired. In the meantime, the infantry under Colonel Millard, Colonel Burleson's regiment, and the artillery, had advanced to aid the cavalry, if necessary. In this affair, the Texan cavalry acquitted themselves handsomely; and among the most distinguished of their number was Mirabeau B. Lamar, who, joining the army at Groce's, fell into the ranks, and soon earned an enviable reputation as a soldier. The Texans had two wounded, one mortally and other severely; they also lost several horses. The loss of the enemy was doubtless more considerable.²⁰

Both armies having retired to their quarters, the evening passed off, and with it the excitement of the day. The Texans, being hungry and fatigued, after eating, obtained a refreshing sleep. The enemy in the meantime completed his breastwork of trunks

and baggage. Thursday, the 21st of April, was a clear, fine day. Early in the morning, the Texan commander-in-chief directed Colonel [John] Forbes, the commissary-general, to furnish Deaf Smith with one or more axes, and to have them at a certain place. At the same time, he sent for Smith, and directed him not to go out of the line of sentinels that day without special permission, as he had particular business for him of a secret character.²¹

About nine o'clock that morning it was discovered that a considerable force, under General [Martin Perfecto de] Cos, was advancing from the direction of Vince's bridge, toward the enemy's camp. As it was seen by the Texans, it was believed to be a reinforcement to Santa Anna. The commander-in-chief, although his spies had brought information of the arrival of the reinforcement, not caring that it should be at that time known, suggested that it was a *ruse* of the Mexicans; that they had marched round from their left wing, and were returning, with a view to make the impression that they were reinforced.²²

About noon, or a little before, the commander-in-chief was waited on by several of the officers, suggesting a council of war. He assented to the proposition, and it was informally held immediately, consisting of Colonels Burleson and Sherman, Lieutenant-Colonels Millard, [Alexander] Somerville, and [Joseph L.] Bennett, and Major [Lysander] Wells. The question was laid before them, "Whether they should attack the enemy in his position, or await an attack from him in theirs." The two last-named officers were in favor of an attack on the enemy in his position: the others were in favor of awaiting an attack from him. The reasons given for the latter opinion were – that the Texan camp was admirably situated for defence; that the Mexicans were fortified in their encampment; that it was defended by veterans, well disciplined; and that an attack upon them through an open prairie, with undisciplined militia, armed mostly

with rifles, was unprecedented. The council was then dismissed.

Deaf Smith and a companion whom he had been directed, in the morning, to select, were now sent for, and secretly dispatched, with the axes, to cut down Vince's bridge, and burn it – the commander-in-chief saying to Smith, as he departed, that the grass, which he then beheld before him so beautiful in the prairies, would be crimsoned before his return, unless he was speedy.²³

Bray's bayou runs into Buffalo bayou at Harrisburg, on the right bank. Five miles farther down toward the bay, over Vince's bayou, is Vince's bridge. It was crossed by both armies on their downward march, and was the only passway by land, especially at that season of the year, to the Brasos. After the main body of the Mexican reinforcement under General Cos had passed Bray's bayou, and while the rear-guard was crossing over, the wagoners and some others of the Texan camp-guard near Harrisburg, hearing the noise, paraded under the command of Wagon-master Rhorer [*sic* – should be Conrad Rohrer], made a forced march to the bayou, and gave them a volley, which so alarmed them, that they turned and fled toward the Brasos, scattering and leaving their baggage in on the road. The wagoners hereupon crossed over, and gathered quite a supply.²⁴

It is proper to state here, that, so soon as the reinforcement under Cos was seen to come in, Karnes and Smith had been sent to their last place of encampment, to ascertain, from the number of camp-fires and other signs, the probable strength of the auxiliary force. They returned and reported privately, as they had been directed, about five hundred and forty men.²⁵

Shortly after the departure of Smith and Reeves to destroy the bridge, Lieutenant-Colonel Bennett was sent through the camp to ascertain the state of feeling among the troops. He reported them all enthusiastic, and in fine spirits. It was now nearly three o'clock in the afternoon. The Mexicans

were dull and heavy, the higher class of them enjoying their *siesta*. Santa Anna admits that he himself was asleep.²⁶ Houston, having formed his plan of battle, submitted it to the secretary of war [Thomas J. Rusk], who approved of it. He then ordered the troops to parade, which they did with alacrity and spirit. The locality of the Texan camp afforded ample opportunity to form in order of battle without being seen by the enemy. Burleson's regiment was placed in the centre; Sherman's on the left wing; the artillery, under Millard, on the right of the artillery; and the cavalry, under Lamar (whose gallant conduct the day before had won him this command), on the extreme right. The enemy's cavalry was on his left wing; his centre, which was fortified, was composed of his infantry, with his artillery in an opening in the centre of the breastwork. He had extended his extreme right to the river, so as to occupy a skirt of timber projecting out from it.

The Texan cavalry was first despatched to the front of the enemy's horse, to draw their attention; while the remainder of the army, which had advanced in column to the cluster of timber three or four hundred yards in front, was deploying into line. The evolution was quickly performed, and the whole force advanced rapidly and in good order. The secretary of war, at the request of the general-in-chief, took command of the left wing.²⁷ While the Texans were thus advancing, Deaf Smith rode at the top of his horse's speed to the front, and informed Houston that Vince's bridge was destroyed. The general announced it to the line. The "Twin-Sisters" now advanced to within two hundred yards of the Mexican breastwork, and opened a destructive fire with grape and canister. Sherman's regiment commenced the action upon the Texan left. The whole line, advancing in double quick time, cried "*Remember the Alamo!*" – "*Remember Goliad!*" – and, while approaching the enemy's works, received his fire, but withheld their own until within pistol-shot.

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consented, and proposed himself to order out Colonel Millard's regulars to support me, and gave orders to that effect ... The idea of reconnoitering simply is a maggot of his own brain." *Defense of Sidney Sherman*, p.7.

21. Yoakum, *History of Texas*, Vol. 2, p. 140 (citing "Statement of Colonel John Forbes").

22. *Id.* (citing "Statement of Colonel George W. Hockley").

23. This incident was later disputed. Alexander Somerville said the idea of burning the bridge came from Deaf Smith, not Houston. Yoakum said that Smith's companion was "[u]nderstood to be Mr. Reeves," but Moses Austin Bryan said that Smith's sole companion was Moses Lapham. Wooten, *Comprehensive History of Texas*, Vol. 1, p. 281 note. Y.P. Alsbury, who claimed to be among the party, said he and six others destroyed the bridge. Y.P. Alsbury, "Burning of Vince's Bridge," in Day, *The Texas Almanac*, p. 435.

24. For a different version of this incident see J.H. Kuykendall, "Kuykendall's Recollections of the Campaign," *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* (April 1901), pp. 304–06.

25. Santa Anna wrote he was reinforced on the 21st with 400 men, after Cos left 100 men at a bad crossing near Harrisburg (Sims Bayou). Santa Anna, *Manifesto*, p. 476.

26. Santa Anna recalled: "My sleep was interrupted by the noise of arms, and upon awakening I saw with astonishment that the enemy had completely surprised our camp." Santa Anna, *Manifesto*, p. 24. A different version is recorded by an English traveler, William Bollaert, who came to Texas in 1842. Bollaert quoted in his journal a portion of a letter written by Sam Houston to a friend: "The battle of San Jacinto was probably lost to the Mexicans, owing to the influence of a mulatto girl (Emily) belonging to Col. Morgan who was closeted in the tent with g'l Santana, at the time the cry was made 'the Enemy! They come! They come!' & detained Santana so long, that order could be restored readily again." William Bollaert Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago. Bollaert's journal entry was not published until the 1950s. Texana columnist Frank X. Tolbert in 1961 linked Emily to the song "The Yellow Rose of Texas," but there is no historical evidence to support that association. Col. James Morgan hired a mulatto woman named Emily D. West, who came to Texas in 1835, lost her "free papers" at San Jacinto, and sought a passport to leave Texas in early 1837. See generally James E. Crisp, *Sleuthing the Alamo* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 188–195.

27. In a letter from Mirabeau B. Lamar to Sidney Sherman, dated September 24, 1857, Lamar disputes this claim: "I can answer without



Mexican Cavalry and Infantry.

Notes

hesitation, that I have every reason to believe the statement [in Yoakum] to be utterly false, and that the historian had no other foundation for it, than the assertion of General Houston himself." *Defense of Sidney Sherman*, p.6. Houston's report of the battle states that Rusk "was on the left wing where Colonel Sherman's command first encountered and drove the enemy." John H. Jenkins (ed.), *Papers of the Texas Revolution*, Vol. 6, pp. 75-76.

28. This area, known as the "boggy bayou," can still be seen today in the south end of the state park.

29. Thomas J. Rusk to David G. Burnet, April 22, 1836, published in Jenkins, *Papers of the Texas Revolution*, Vol. 6, p.10.

30. For a different version of the cavalry pursuit after the battle, see William S. Taylor's account in Day, *The Texas Almanac*, p.537.

31. All of the Texan dead were buried near each other in what is now known as San Jacinto Cemetery, located in the state park and marked by a marble shaft placed in 1881 at the site. Yoakum's aggregate estimate of Mexican participants (1,568) is 418 more than the number accompanying Santa Anna from the Brazos (750) and reinforcements from Cos (400), according to Santa Anna's account.

32. The Texan reinforcements numbered in the hundreds, not thousands.

The effect of this fire on the enemy was terrible. But the Texans made no halt – onward they went. On the left, they penetrated the woodland: the Mexicans fled. On the right, the Texan cavalry charged that of the enemy: the latter fled. In the centre, the Texan artillery advanced to within seventy yards of that of the Mexicans, but ceased to fire, for Burleson's regiment and Millard's infantry had stormed the breastwork, took the enemy's artillery, and were driving them back.

In fifteen minutes after the charge, the Mexicans gave way at all points, and the pursuit was general. Some of them fled to the river, some to the swamp in their rear, others toward Vince's bridge, but the largest portion perhaps to a clump of trees not far to the rear, where they surrendered. Such was their consternation, and so sudden their defeat, that their cannon was left loaded, and their moveables untouched; those that were asleep, awoke only in time to be overwhelmed; those that were cooking their dinner, left it uneaten; those that were playing *monte*, left the game unfinished. The morass in the rear and right of the enemy's camp, and into which so many

of the fugitives fled, presented an awful scene.²⁸ Men and horses, dead and dying, formed a bridge for the furious pursuers. The Texans, having no time to load their guns, used them as clubs. So with their pistols; they then had recourse to their bowie-knives and finally to the weapons of the fallen enemy. It is said that Deaf Smith, after announcing to Houston the news of the destruction of the bridge, threw himself into the midst of the enemy, and, after breaking his own sword in combat, coolly took another from one he had slain, and continued the work of death. "The commander-in-chief," says the secretary of war in his report, "acted with great gallantry, encouraging the men to the attack, and heroically charged, in front of the infantry, within a few yards of the enemy."²⁹ It was here that he received a severe wound in his ankle, and had his horse shot two or three times.

The pursuit of the enemy's cavalry continued to the site of Vince's bridge. Karnes led in this pursuit. He discovered in advance of him a Mexican officer in a splendid uniform, and mounted on a beautiful black charger. Being well mounted himself,

he had a desire to capture him, and went in pursuit. Perhaps such a race was never before seen in Texas. Karnes, unable to gain on the fugitive, supposed he would take him at the destroyed bridge. The officer, reaching the bayou, saw that the bridge was gone, but, making no halt, plunged down the steep descent into the water; and, as Karnes rode up on the right bank, to his utter astonishment he saw his foe climbing the almost perpendicular wall on the other!³⁰

At dark the pursuit of the flying enemy ceased. The prisoners taken were conducted to the Texan camp, placed under guard, and supplied with provisions. A suitable guard was also left at the Mexican camp. The wounded of both armies were as well provided for as the circumstances would permit. After the excitement of the battle had somewhat subsided, Houston found that his wounded limb had swollen; his boot was cut off, and such attention paid to the wound as could be procured to alleviate the pain.

The main body of the prisoners were taken that night. At their head was the cheerful and philosophical [Col. Juan Almonté. With him it appeared only a scene in life's drama. Conversing fluently in both English and Spanish, he threw a charm over all with whom he came in contact. At a time so trying to his comrades, he proved himself a true descendant of the brave Morelos, and worthy of a better fate than that accorded to his noble sire.

The aggregate force of the Texan army in the battle was seven hundred and eighty-three; that of the enemy was perhaps twice the number. The Mexicans lost six hundred and thirty killed, two hundred and eight wounded, and seven hundred and thirty prisoners; besides a large quantity of arms and great numbers of mules and horses taken, together with their camp-equipage, and the military chest, containing twelve thousand dollars. The Texan loss was only eight killed and twenty-five wounded!³¹

[THE PORTION OF YOAKUM'S NARRATIVE RELATING TO THE CAPTURE OF SANTA ANNA ON APRIL 22 AND HIS INTERVIEW WITH HOUSTON IS OMITTED]

The 22d day of April was the first *free* day in Texas. Before then, her people had declared their independence, but now they had won it in a noble contest. The victory was physically and morally complete. The blow was given at the proper time, and in a vital part. In looking back at the events of the campaign, we can see no time when it could have succeeded so well. Providence seemed in every way to favor the result. It was a full retribution for past outrages. Santa Anna had presided over a feast of blood at the Alamo; he had ordered a second at Goliad; and he was made to behold another at San Jacinto. The Texans had their revenge. At that time, a thousand troops were on the way to reinforce their army; but it was so ordered that they should do the work themselves.³² *

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