

1968
JOSEPH L. BENNETT

Joseph L. Bennett's early Texas home was located in the eastern edge of the John Corner league of land¹ approximately one mile east of the town of Montgomery. In his memoirs, William P. Zuber, in speaking of preparations in 1842 to avenge Woll's invasion, speaks of "...Col. Bennett, who resides at the town of Montgomery...."²

The location of Bennett's home is more specifically located by Gustav Dresel in his journal in 1838 when he says: "The Senator's farm lay between trees on a little elevation in the acute angle between the Montgomery and Houston roads."³ (In a footnote, the translator and editor of the journal notes the inaccuracy of calling Bennett, "Senator".))⁴

In the Montgomery County section of THE 1840 CENSUS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS, Bennett's possessions are listed as 244 acres of land, seven work horses, and a silver watch.⁵

This Bennett family came to Texas in the spring of 1834 settling in what became Montgomery County.⁶ Bennett seems to have been a leader in the civic affairs of his own home area as well as a patriot in national affairs and frontier defense. The

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1. Land Ownership Map, Montgomery County Surveyor's Office
 - 2.. Zuber, William P., My Eighty Years in Texas, U. of T. Press, Austin, 1971, p. 113
 3. Freund, Max (ed.) Dresel's Houston Journal, U. of T. Press, Austin, 1954 p. 91
 4. Ibid, p. 144
 5. White, George, The 1840 Census of the Republic of Texas, Pemberton Press, Austin, 1966 p. 109
 6. The Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association, Austin, 1952, p. 147

residency and services of Bennett are further described by Worth Ray in Austin Colony Pioneers:

"That he resided in the municipality, and later, the County of Washington, is attested by the fact that when the Congress of the Republic passed an act establishing the County of Montgomery, he was one of the commissioners named therein to select the county seat of the new county."⁷

It may be noted here, Montgomery County was created December 14, 1837 with the town of Montgomery designated as the seat of Government of an area consisting of all of the present Montgomery, Grimes, and Walker Counties plus part of San Jacinto, Madison, and Waller Counties.⁸

Schools were in operation in and near Montgomery as early as 1839. The schoolmaster is identified by Dresel in his journal as one of the merry-makers who engaged in a "Yuletide Excursion" at Christmas in 1839. The group ended their excursion near midnight by arousing the Bennetts with three volleys from their guns: "...one for the patriotic representative of Montgomery County, one for the brave warrior, and the third for the charming daughter..." The first volley raised a general uproar in the interior of the cabin: the children cried, the dogs barked, and the Colonel, with his gun in hand, was in the courtyard in no time."⁹

The group was invited in by Bennett, the fire stirred, and the evening ended with a feast of stag's ham, maizecake, and egg-

7. Ray, Worth S., Austin Colony Pioneers, Ray, Box 1111, Austin, 1949 p. 60

8. The Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association, Austin, 1952 Vol. 2, p. 226

9. Fraund, Max, Gustav Dresel's Houston Journal, U. of T. Press, Austin, 1954 p. 91

nog made from the remains of the four jugfuls of "most wretched
bad spirits" that the merrymakers had brought with them. ¹⁰

In December of 1841, E. R. VanHorn proposed "...opening
a school in the vicinity of Bennett's to commence on the 1st
day of January, 1842 and continue twelve months at two dollars
per month...." Subscribers signing this agreement for a school
near Bennett's were:

H. G. Johnson-----2 students
Jos. L. Bennett-----2
Claiborne West-----2
Peber Cartwright-----1
Elisha Uzzell-----1
Appleton Gay-----2
Wm. Atkins-----4

They further agreed to "...bind ourselves to sustain him
on all his official duties and furnish wood etc. for the school. ¹¹

Bennett's influence was more far-reaching than his immed-
iate home environment. As troubles with Mexico continued to in-
crease, Bennett organized a company of men from what are now
Montgomery, Grimes, and Walker and adjoining counties. On about
March 1, 1836 the company set out to join Travis at the Alamo.
Along the way, however, the group heard of ^{the} sad fate of the men
at the Alamo, They then changed their line of march and joined
the main army at Beason's Crossing. ¹²

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10. Ibid
 11. Petition and contract found in the Nat Hart Davis Papers
in the possession of his granddaughter, Margaret Davis
Cameron, 2310 Peckham St., Houston, Texas. Now deposited
in the Archives of the University of Texas, Davis Papers,
Austin, Texas
 12. L. W. Kemp Papers, Barker History Center, U. of T., Austin
Texas

On March 10, 1836, the Constitutional Convention which was meeting at Washington-on-the-Brazos, authorized Bennett to draw upon the government for any necessary funds to provision his company on their march to "whatever point they may be ordered¹³". They marched on toward SanJacinto and joined the main^{Army} at Beason's.

On April 8, 1836, the Texan Army re-organized. At this time, Bennett was elected Lieutenant Colonel of the Second Regiment of Texas Volunteers with James Gillaspie succeeding him in the command of his former company.¹⁴ ~~For his services at San Jacinto,~~ Col. Bennett was on April 27, 1838, issued Bounty Certificate for 320 acres of land for having served in the Texan Army from March 1, to June 1, 1836; on May 14, 1838, he was issued a Donation Certificate for 640 acres of land for having participated in the Battle of SanJacinto.¹⁵

The troubles with Mexico continued even after the Texan Army proved their freedom from Mexico by winning victory at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. Frontier troubles also continued to mount. On May 27, 1837, President Houston appointed Bennett Colonel of a regiment of Mounted Gunmen for the defense of the frontier.¹⁶ Bennett's services to the Republic continued further when he was elected to represent Montgomery County in the Third and Fourth Congresses, November 5, 1838 to February 3, 1840.¹⁷

13. Ibid
14. Ibid
15. Ibid
16. Ibid
17. Ibid

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Predatory raids made by the Mexican Army into Texas prompted President Sam Houston on October 3, 1842, to order Alexander Somervell to organize the militia and volunteers against Mexico. Joseph L. Bennett once more responded to the needs of the Republic. He joined Somervell with a batallion of men from Montgomery County.¹⁸ His group joined Somervell in San Antonio and marched on to Laredo capturing that city on December 8. On December 10, Bennett and 185 men returned home¹⁹ thus avoiding the fate of the men who^{re-} organized^{on the border} to choose a new leader, invade Mexico, and suffer hardships and death at Mier and Perote Castle.

In his Journal of the Texian Expedition Against Mier, Thomas J. Green says this of Bennett's men:

"To the energy and promptness of Col. Bennett, of the Montgomery Regiment, the army was principally indebted for the beef it obtained. He detailed men from his regiment and had three or four hundred beeves drove up, which were yet barely sufficient to last the army during its slothful march to Laredo."²⁰

Bennett's headright was surveyed in Navarro and Freestone Counties. In 1848, Bennett removed with his family from Montgomery to this property. On October 30 of this same year, he died and was buried in the Bennett Family Cemetery on his property a few miles from the present town of Streetman.²¹ His wife, Elizabeth, one son and four daughters survived him: Seaborn J., Julia Ann (m. Joseph Clark), Frances F. (m. B.F. Dwyer), Lillian (m. Kenneth Curry), and Adeline (m. Henry Epps).

18. The Handbook of Texas, Vol 2, p. 637
 19. Ibid
 20. Green, Thomas J. Journal of the Texian Expedition Against Mier, Facsimile by Steck Co. Austin 1935 p. 44
 21. Ray, Worth S. Austin Colony Pioneers, Privately published 1947, p. 60 (Also, Kemp Papers, U. of T., Austin)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. Davis, Nat Hart, Papers -Barker History Center, University of Texas, Austin
2. Freund, Max (ed.) Gustav Dresel's Houston Journal, University of Texas Press, Austin 1954
3. Green, Thomas J., Journal of the Texian Expedition Against Mier, etc., The Steck Company, Austin 1935
4. The Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association, Austin 1952
5. Kemp, L. W. Files, Barker History Center, University of Texas, Austin
6. Map, Montgomery County Surveyor's Office, Montgomery County Courthouse, Conroe
7. Ray, Worth S., Austin Colony Pioneers, Privately published, 1949
8. White, George, The 1840 Census of the Republic of Texas, Pemberton Press, Austin, 1966
9. Zuber, William P., My Eighty Years in Texas, University of Texas Press 1971

27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker
Montgomery County - 3-29-68 - N site of Hwy. 105, 1½ mi.
E. of Montgomery, in rest area

BENNETT'S EARLY HOMESITE

PLACE OF RESIDENCE OF AN EARLY GREAT LEGISLATOR
AND CIVIC AND MILITARY LEADER.

JOSEPH L. BENNETT SETTLED HERE IN 1834. SERVED AS
COLONEL IN TEXAS ARMY DURING WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE.
ATTEMPTED TO REACH THE ALAMO IN MARCH 1836 TO AID
IN THAT BATTLE. LATER JOINED GEN. SAM HOUSTON'S ARMY
AND COMMANDED 2ND REGT., TEXAS VOLUNTEERS, AT BATTLE
OF SAN JACINTO. HE RECEIVED BOUNTY CERTIFICATES IN
1838 FOR 960 ACRES OF LAND FOR REPUBLIC OF TEXAS
MILITARY SERVICE. WAS APPOINTED IN MAY 1837 BY
PRESIDENT SAM HOUSTON TO COMMAND A REGIMENT OF
MOUNTED GUNMEN FOR DEFENSE OF TEXAS FRONTIER. HE
ALSO CARRIED MAIL FROM HOUSTON TO MONTGOMERY.

REPRESENTED MONTGOMERY COUNTY IN REPUBLIC OF
TEXAS CONGRESS NOV. 5, 1838-FEB. 3, 1840. PARTICIPATED
IN 1842 IN SOMERVELL EXPEDITION, A REPUBLIC OF TEXAS
CAMPAIGN TO PUNISH MEXICO FOR THREE DESTRUCTIVE
RAIDS MADE IN TEXAS. FOUNDED NEAR HERE IN JAN. 1842
ONE OF COUNTY'S EARLIEST SCHOOLS.

LIVED HERE UNTIL 1848 WHEN HE MOVED TO NAVARRO
COUNTY TO SETTLE ON HIS HEADRIGHT SURVEY WITH HIS
WIFE ELIZABETH, SON SEABORNE, AND DAUGHTERS JULIA
ANN, FRANCES, LILLIAN AND ADALINE. HE DIED LATER THAT
YEAR. BURIED IN FAMILY CEMETERY NEAR STREETMAN.

Washington County.....	132	Fort Bend County.....	66
Bastrop "	132	Harris "	66
Fayette "	132	Gonzales "	66
Montgomery "	132	Matagorda "	66
Robertson "	66	Colorado & Ward.....	66
Milam "	66	Jackson & Victoria.....	132
Austin "	66	Bexar, Hays & Manchaca.....	66
			<hr/>
	792		528
			<hr/>
			792
			<hr/>
		Total.....	1320
		Lepans and Tonkeways	100
			<hr/>
		Aggregate.....	1420

It will be of the utmost importance that concert of action should take place, and to give efficiency it is proper that the troops should not be detained at the rendezvous any longer than they can be organized. Discontent perhaps would be the consequence, and the prospect of achieving something of importance to the Country by the campaign would be lost.

The Executive has great reliance upon the zeal of his countrymen and their willingness to pursue such a course as will give protection to our South Western frontier for the future. And he is satisfied, if this expedition can be carried into effect, that the country has much to hope from its results — As soon as it may be organized and marched, it will be indispensable to maintain the strictest subordination — In entering an enemies territory, constant vigilance is necessary; and men who expect to maintain their safety must always be on the alert— By caution we prevent disaster— and vigilance will never permit us to be surprised.

The troops will be permitted to remain in the enemies[sic] country, until our independence is recognized— An armistice concluded, or until it might be deemed wise for their safety to recross the Rio Grande — The Government will have opportunities of intelligence which may not be within the knowledge of the commander of the troops, and he will be at all times, subject to the orders of the War Department—

When emergencies arise in the prosecution of the campaign detached as the army will be in its Situation, the commanding officer will have to exercise a Sage discretion in relation to the

Subject, which safety and Su flag, and the l to his orders, a claims to the and the Gover

P. S. One C elected.

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¹Original in Photostat copy

²Joseph L. Bennett what is now W joined the Tex; Bounty Certifica Colonel Bennett reaching the Co continued the n army at Beeson Captain Bennett Texas volunteer Jacinto. On M; reg:ment of mo Bennett served fourth congress as representativ for the Somerve the conduct of reached the Rio battalion comm member of the

shall rumor or base artifice ever influence my opinions or my feelings.

Sam Houston.

¹*Executive Record Book, No. 40, p. 132, Texas State Library. See Houston to Colonel L. M. H. Washington, April 1, 1842.*

TO WILLIAM G. CRUMP¹

Executive Department, City of Houston, July 26, 1842.

To William G. Crump, Esq., Acting Secretary of the Treasury:

Sir,— You will issue twelve thousand dollars, or the amount of the unexpended balance, of the Naval appropriation of twenty thousand dollars for the current year.

It may be best to have as much as possible signed of the one hundred dollar notes, or of the largest size on hand.

Sam Houston [Rubric]

[Endorsed]: President, July 26th, 1842, Authorizing the issue of the unexpended balance of the Naval Appropriation.

¹*Comptroller's Letters; also Executive Record Book, No. 40, p. 132, Texas State Library.*

TO JOSEPH L. BENNETT¹

Executive Department, City of Houston, July 26th, 1842.

To Col. Joe L. Bennett²

Sir — The Executive has always had it in contemplation to retaliate upon Mexico, for the late outrages upon the persons and property of Texan citizens. To accomplish this, he must rely upon voluntary service alone. The chivalry and patriotism of his Countrymen, when well directed— can accomplish much. He is determined that nothing shall be wanting on his part to effect the object in view. For its effectuation, he proposes to receive upward of a thousand men to be mounted equipped and prepared at their own expense for the proposed campaign.

The Government will furnish nothing but authority to march, and such supplies of ammunition, as may be needful for the cam-

paign. They must be remunerated. The SPOILS. They v Texas will accor the requisite num to march from Es the men and hors family use; and Those who are e sufficiency of pro they are interdict the point of Rend at the Sulphur S prepare the requi to sustain them a authority to cross ized and honorat with our commo the Several Coun as soon as organi forthwith report as possible ther rendezvous, and they will elect th practicable they time, however, o gesting the gene the circumstance

As no regular by relying wholl pressed in the d that many were our whole force to tender the op The citizens of named, will con men—exclusive the commanding any excesses of

1846

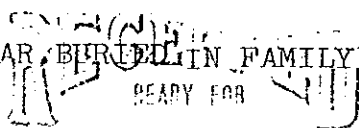
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MAR 2: 1958

SOUTHWELL DORR
TEXAS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

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1/2" lettering
1/4" lettering

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. Earnet, Senator; Joseph L. Bennett, Representative; Jesse Grimes, Chief Justice; Joshua Robbins, Sheriff; Abraham Suber, District Clerk; and Gwyn Morrison, County Clerk.³⁹

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

³⁹ Election Register 1836-1840, in Texas State Archives, Number 225; p. 365