

UNDER THE WHITE STAR

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The Texas Mexican Frontier, 1842.

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After the Battle of San Jacinto things were still unsettled in Texas. Word was received that an invasion of San Antonio was under way by the Mexican army. Troops were mustered from various Texas counties to squelch the invasion.

Among those being mustered to battle were the Montgomery County Militia gathered by Colonel Joseph L. Bennett on November 10, 1842. Montgomery countians numbered in enlistment as 132 calvary and 128 infantry. A total of 260 men mustered by Joseph L. Bennett were enlisted at Montgomery, Texas on Monday, June 27, 1842. Some farmers were unable to leave home so they outfitted young idle men with full army gear. Young ladies urged husbands and brothers to enlist for the on-coming battle. The same ladies gladly took their place behind the plow and scythe. Houston merchants threw the doors wide open to freely supply the rousing militia.

They marched by way of Travis County to uphold the capitol and the archives therein. From the southern counties of Brazoria, Colorado, and Matagorda, troops marched by way of Victoria. From the north came troops of Harris, Montgomery, Brazos, Robertson, and Milam Counties. These north counties were held in reserve and ordered to be ready in case of need. The city of Houston and Harris County troops were called by General Sam Houston to San Antonio by direct route.

Information filtered through about the ensuing occupation of San Antonio by the Mexican army, so the President of the Republic sent a special courier to Colonel Joseph L. Bennett. March immediately to the western frontier with all available men of the Montgomery County militia without waiting for the whole force, was the extent of the order read by Colonel Joseph L. Bennett. Then, Montgomery County included the present day Walker, Grimes, and a majority of San Jacinto County, thus it was the most populated county of the Republic. Like orders were issued to Colonel Jesse McCrocklin at Hickory Point of Washington County's Second Regiment of the First Brigade of the Republic. The text of Bennett's and McCrocklin's orders encompassed two-thirds of the Washington and Montgomery County troops. Complaints were rampant among the abandoned ladies of draftees who remained to tend the farms and household affairs.

Spontaneously, the troops were mustered and advanced on San Antonio. On October 9, 1842, Colonel Bennett took an advance segment of sixty men through Washington County. The following day, Monday the 10th, two hundred men followed his command, bearing a large blood-red flag with a single white star and the motto Independence etched on it, arriving at the

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at the temporary capitol.

Colonel Houston spoke with the troops and rallied them to cross the Rio Grande and fight to the finish no matter the odds. One hundred more Montgomery County troops passed through the capitol the next day, with another two hundred expected to follow from that same county within a few days.

The Texas militia at San Antonio numbered 1,200. Four hundred and fifty of those men were from the First Regiment of the First Brigade of Montgomery County, commanded by Colonel Joseph L. Bennett and assisted by Colonel R. J. Gilesie and others. The regiment was compiled of six companies under the commands of Captains William Barrett, William Bowen, M. G. McGuffin, Levi Manning, Richard Williams, Z. Wilson and Israel Worsham. It is not known if the last captain listed was a separate command.

Reports on the spirits of the troops differed on November 8. Some say they were in good spirits and satisfied with their officers. Other reports told of the dissatisfaction among the drafted men who wanted to return home to their families. The volunteers, however, were headstrong in forging the Rio Grande.

Encompassing the San Jose Mission in October, the supplies began to diminish with the daily arrival of more troops. Forty of Colonel Bennett's troops deserted and were ordered to return by General Somervell. Others deserted two days later. Many of those drafted from Montgomery County and Washington County deserted and returned home November 18. Seventy of Colonel Bennett's men remained. Discipline was poor and arrests were frequent. Following the 18th the entire army was reduced to 760 men. Those remaining were informed they had a choice of returning home and those choosing to do so were placed under the command of Bennett. Later in the day the order of command was canceled and Colonel McCrocklin was made commander of the returning troops. They left San Antonio and marched by way of Gonzales to Washington and were given honorable discharges.

Many of the surnames listed on the muster rolls under the command of Colonel Joseph L. Bennett reads like a present day telephone book for Montgomery, Grimes, Walker, and San Jacinto Counties. The descendants of those militiamen of the First Brigade of the First Regiment remain rooted in the boundaries of the original Montgomery County.

Concluded

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