

Massacre at Goliad--Samuel G. Hardaway's Account

From Texas and The Texans by Henry Stuart Foote 1841

.....a letter was received from Columbus, Georgia, containing the following statement from one of the survivors of the Goliad massacre. The writer of it is said to have been only fifteen years old when the occurrences described by him took place, and is just twenty-one now. I saw him a few weeks since, as I passed through the county where he resides, and found him a young gentleman of high respectability, and both successfully and extensively engaged in operations connected with the cotton trade--Henry Stuart Foote.

From the Macon Messenger. TEXAS. The annexed letter of Samuel G. Hardaway, we trust, will prove interesting to our readers. It is the only account that has been communicated for publication, of the leading events in the expedition to Texas under Major Ward. Although the writer cannot give an account of the final fate of our unfortunate friends, yet his last knowledge of them leaves them in such a situation that there can be no doubt of their capture in the manner as heretofore published. And from the statements and affidavits of those who escaped the treacherous and horrible massacre of Col. Fannin's battalion, their fate is beyond a question. Their friends are left with this only consolation, that they sustained the character of brave and determined soldiers: and that they rendered valuable services to the sacred cause of Freedom, during their brief career. Georgia will long be proud of furnishing such soldiers in such a cause, and Texas grateful for their aid.

Hardaway, the narrator, is a youth little over sixteen years of age, and son of James H. Hardaway, of this city. His statements may be relied on as strictly correct in every particular he relates, that comes within his personal knowledge.

Macon, June 6, 1836. Dr. Robert Collins Sir: As you were principally instrumental in sending out the company of Volunteers to Texas, under the command of Colonel Ward, and furnishing the means of the expedition, and as there is no officer remaining of the company to tell their fate, and being myself the last man of the Original company who made an escape from the enemy previous to the capture and massacre of the Georgia Battalion, I think it proper to give you a plain history of the expedition so far as I am able. It is known to you that we marched from here in the latter part of November of last year, and proceeded to New Orleans; by the usual route from there we embarked on the schooner Pennsylvania, and after being out eleven days, were landed at Velasco, a port of Texas on the Gulf of Mexico, about 400 or 500 miles from New Orleans. Here we remained about a month; nothing extraordinary occurring beyond the usual camp duty, there being at that time but few Mexicans in the country.

From here we sailed to Copano, which is another port still further on the coast towards Matamoros. There we landed and marched up to the Mission, as it is commonly called, 12 or 15 miles from the coast. Here we remained about three weeks, and then went up to Goliad, about 27

miles further into the interior. Here we took possession of the Fort and remained in it until the 13th March, when Colonel Ward and the Georgia Battalion were ordered to march in haste to the Mission to relieve Captain King, who, with about 30 men, was down there endeavouring to protect some families, but who had been surrounded by the enemy, and his situation had become desperate. We marched at 3 o'clock in the morning, and arrived at the Mission about 2 o'clock of the same day; and as we expected, found Captain King and his company in the Church and a large company of Mexicans in sight across the river. We succeeded in getting to the Church where we remained till night, when we crossed the river by fording it at a shallow place, and made an attack on them, and completely routed them, killing about 25 with no loss on our side. We then returned to the Church, and early next morning again went out to the Mexican camp, where we saw a few Mexicans endeavouring to carry off their dead, but they made their escape on our approach. From here we went about two miles to a ranch, and burnt the houses and provisions.

By this time the enemy began to reinforce so fast in our sight that we had to return forthwith to the Church, and at which we were very soon attacked by their whole force ; but having blockaded all the entrances with the images, benches, pews, &c., we had greatly the advantage in position: they came up bravely for a while, received our rifle balls, fell and were carried off, and others took their place, but after a while we could see that it was with great difficulty the officers could whip up their soldiers with their swords to make a charge. This continued until towards evening, when they retired a short distance, but not out of sight. We then started an express to Colonel Fannin to let him know that we were nearly out of ammunition, (having only taken 36 rounds from Goliad,) and were still surrounded by a large Mexican force. A Mr. Murphy and a Mr. Rodgers, both I think of Captain Wadsworth's company, were to carry the express, both of whom were pursued by the enemy's cavalry and taken, and I suppose shot. An express from Colonel Fannin to us was also taken. In this battle we got 3 wounded, none killed. The loss of the enemy was variously stated, but believed to be not less than 200, though it was reported more. Captain King's company whom we went down to relieve, had gone out early in the morning before the battle commenced, to a ranch, a few miles distant, and were taken by the enemy, and afterwards all shot but two, who made their escape. That night we made our escape from the Church, and after travelling through the woods and swamps, where the cavalry could not well pursue us, on the third day we reached St. Antonio river.

On the second day after leaving the Mission, David I. Holt, of Macon, and a few others, left the company in search of water, and we never saw them again, but now understand they succeeded in getting in safe. That night we lay in the swamp: next morning crossed the river and made our way towards Victoria, and in the evening heard the firing between Colonel Fannin and the Mexicans, apparently distant about ten miles---we attempted to get to them, but night came on and the guns ceased to fire, and we could not proceed, but got into the Guadalupe swamp where we remained all night, and on leaving it and entering a prairie next morning, we were attacked by a force of 600 cavalry. We fired about three rounds at them when our powder gave out and we had not a load left; we then retreated back to the swamp, and every man was told to take care of himself. We there got scattered, and I never saw Colonel Ward or the company again, but understood that at night while I was asleep in the cane, that he rallied all the men he could, and made his way towards Dimmit's Landing, but was next day overtaken by the Mexican Cavalry, and having no ammunition, surrendered as prisoners of war, and was carried back to Goliad, and

all shot as has been heretofore published. In this battle Wm. L. Wilkinson, of this city, was supposed to be killed.

On awaking next morning I found myself alone in a swamp, in a country full of Mexicans, near 200 miles from the main army of the Texans, and thirteen or fourteen hundred miles from my home, then without a mouthful of provision for five or six days. nor was there any prospect of any, except a few wild onions which I could get in the swamp. I remained in this swamp all day and all night : next morning went out and took a small path which I discovered, and kept it for about two miles, came to a Mexican house where I saw several Mexicans in and about the house, but being forced by hunger, I determined to go in and ask for something to eat, let the consequences be what they might. On entering the house one of the men rose and offered me his chair: I asked a woman who was in the house for something to eat; she readily gave me some milk, cheese and dried beef. The men with their guns all looked astonished, and in a few minutes all left the house and appeared to be looking over the country in every direction, I presume expecting an attack from a large force, of which they thought I was the spy. As soon as they all left the house, the woman told me in broken English, that they were all Mexican soldiers, and I had better leave as soon as possible. In a few minutes we saw them returning towards the house, and the woman urged me to start; I did so, and ran towards a swamp which I saw 200 or 300 yards distant; as I run they fired 12 or 15 guns at me, but without effect: they pursued me to the swamp, but I escaped them. I kept in the swamp all day: that night I heard the drum beating at Victoria. Next morning I went near enough to see the Mexican cavalry; I then returned to the swamp and kept it all day, that night went out and made my way up the river until I reached a crossing place, and here I overtook three men that had made their escape from the enemy in the swamp at the same time I did, but whom I had not seen before since we retreated and scattered in the swamp: their names were Andrews, Moses and Tresvant. We here got some meal from a house which had been left by the enemy. We remained here all night, and next day made our way through the woods towards the Colorado river, and that night got to a place where the Mexican army had camped a night or two before: here we remained all night, and next morning we reached the river and crossed it on a bale of cotton which we found on the bank, and about two miles above where the enemy were crossing at the same time. We lay in the swamp that day--at night we heard the drum, but supposing it was the enemy, would not go to it.

Next morning Moses and myself ventured to go in sight of the camp to see who they were, and soon discovered they were Mexicans; we retreated, and in a short distance saw six horsemen charging towards us; we discovered they were Americans and did not run--they came up, and much to our relief, we found they were spies from General Houston's camp; their names were Cawmack and Johnson, from Tennessee, Shipman and Lapham, of Texas, and two others that I did not know. They were astonished to see us at that place, and when I say we were glad to see them, I but feebly express the feelings of my heart. I was then without hat or shoes, and only a few rags for clothing. While we were here narrating our adventure, and waiting for one of the company who we had got to go back a short distance after Andrews, we were attacked and fired upon by a small scouting party of Mexicans, but at such a distance as to do us no injury; but upon their seeing that we had got among some trees and were prepared to give them a fire, they retreated and left. We then left that place, and the spies carried us to General Houston's army, where we arrived, I think, on the 2d day of April, our appearance being such as to excite the sympathy of every soldier--and on meeting some gentlemen who had known us in this country,

the noble tear of compassion was seen to trickle freely on their cheeks. We here received all the kindness we desired, and remained with the army, and fought under General Houston, in Captain Baker's company, in the memorable battle of the 21st April, in which Santa Anna was captured, half his men slain and the other half taken prisoners. Incredible as it may appear, this battle was fought with only about 700 effective men, while the enemy had double that number. The loss on our side was only 6 or 7 killed, and about 20 wounded; among the latter was our Captain and General Houston. The fight commenced in the afternoon about 3 or 4 o'clock, by two six pounders on our side, and a long twelve pound brass piece by the enemy: but by some fortunate shot at the very beginning we silenced their big gun, and pressed down upon them, continuing the fire from our artillery, and receiving the fire from their small arms which was doing us no injury, as they seemed to shoot above us. When we reached within about fifty yards of them we fired two or three rounds from our deadly rifles, which seemed to produce a tremendous effect, and at this moment a charge from all quarters was ordered, and our men rushed upon them with fury and desperation, and with pistols, guns and cutlasses, the destruction of human life was speedy and immense. As soon as we had time to look we saw the white flag was hoisted and the Mexicans had thrown down their arms, and were running in every direction. As soon, however, as the call for quarters was heard and the white flag seen by the commanders, the work of death was stopped, and the balance taken prisoners. Santa Anna himself made his escape that evening, but was taken next morning in a common citizen's dress, about 10 miles from the camp; he was not recognized until he was brought in, but when the prisoners saw him they tipped their hats and exclaimed in their own language, " Santa Anna is alive." The appearance of the battle-ground can better be imagined than described. Piles and clusters of their dead and dying lay in every direction: indeed the ground was literally covered. But the recollection of the dreadful massacre of our brave companions at the Alamo and Goliad in a great manner relieved our feelings from the horrors of the scene.

On the 30th April I left the camp under a furlough from General Houston, for four months, and proceeded over land to Natchitoches, where I arrived after eight days travelling on foot; from there I took the usual route by steamboats, via New Orleans and Mobile, to Montgomery, Ala. There I understood that a war had broken out with the Creek Indians, and that it would be extremely dangerous to attempt to pass on the stage route through the nation to Columbus; but being anxious to reach home, and finding there a party of about fifteen others who wished to come through, we determined to make the attempt. On Sunday evening, the 15th May, we left there in two mail stages, passed on that night, and next day early reached Tuskegee. There we got breakfast, and learnt there was great trouble with the Indians: we then passed on to the next stand and found that it had been plundered. As we continued on, we found every house and place plundered or burnt, and some burning, until we reached **Thorn's Starld**, about 20 miles from Columbus; there we saw the houses in flames, and after we had got a short distance off, no injury was done. Our drivers then put whip to their horses and run **flying** nearly half a mile, when we came upon the stages that had been taken the day before, so piled up across the road, with the dead horses and one dead white man, that we could not pass, and the stages were therefore stopped, and we saw the Indians in close pursuit; the drivers and passengers loosed the horses from the stages, and as soon as possible, all who could get on them, mounted and made a start, but in a few minutes they were fired upon by a considerable party of Indians, who seemed to be coming in upon all sides.

Not having been so fortunate as to get horses, myself, a Mr. Hallet of New York, a Mr. Williams, **Hainil and** Lackey, were all on foot running after the horses. The two latter were killed, and the moment after they were shot I ran directly through where the Indians were that had fired, and as I passed two or three others fired at me, but without effect. I made the best of my way towards a swamp, which I saw distant 300 or 400 yards, and discovered I was pursued by two Indians. Just before I reached the swamp I turned and discharged my musket at the foremost, who was within 40 or 50 yards of me; I saw him fall, but before I entered the swamp, I saw him rise again. The skeleton of this Indian was found after the war was over. The other Indian ran up to him and stopped a few minutes, during which time I had got in the swamp and reloaded my gun: he then came down to the swamp and appeared to be searching for me, and while he was in the act of parting the cane, I shot him in the body, not more than 15 or 20 yards distant: he fell dead. I remained in this swamp three days, living on green whortleberries, going out every night, but could not find any road until Thursday night; I got into the road near where the stages were left, and travelled all night back towards Tuskegee, and arrived there on Friday morning about sunrise. Here I was received by General Woodard and treated kindly. I remained here two days, and then went back to Montgomery, and from there, in company with two gentlemen, took the upper route through the nation, on horseback, and on the third day crossed the Chattahoochee, and again set my foot on the soil of Georgia. Very respectfully, Your most obedient servant, SAMUEL G. HARDAWAY.

The writer of this was a boy of 15 years of age when he entered the army with Captain Ward's company. He will be 21 sometime this month. ROBT. G. HARDAWAY, February 1, 1841. Uncle of S. G. Hardaway.

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