

From Georgia Through The Guadalupe Swamp To San Jacinto

I. CONTEXT

The most significant event in Texas history, the Texas Revolution against Mexico in 1835-1836, depended heavily on the participation of many volunteers from the existing United States. [1] James F. Fannin, Jr., a native of Columbus, Georgia, who had settled in Texas in 1834, wrote to a friend in Georgia in the summer of 1835 to request aid to support the Revolution. [2] Georgia newspapers reported the success of the Battle of Gonzales and reiterated the need for more funds and volunteers. Citizens responded and formed the Georgia Battalion, which eventually grew to four companies of 250 men. They brought with them to Texas a flag made in Knoxville, Georgia, by Joanna Troutman. (That flag, which had a single blue star on a white field, was later acknowledged as the origin of the Texas “Lone Star.”) From Fannin’s camp at Goliad, 120 men of the Georgia Battalion fought at the Battle of Refugio under William A. Ward. In retreating afterwards, at least sixteen men became separated from Ward, and he and his remaining eighty-five men finally surrendered and were later executed with Fannin and his other men at Goliad. Meanwhile, of those survivors who got separated during its retreat, eight men of the Georgia Battalion managed to hide in a swamp of the Guadalupe River near Victoria. [3] The untold story of making their way to San Jacinto and joining in the battle to win the independence of Texas is a stirring example for all Americans.

II. OVERVIEW

On March 10, 1836, Colonel Fannin sent a group of men under Captain Amon B. King from Goliad to Refugio to escort settlers away from the area as Mexican troops moved in. King

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asked for assistance, so Fannin sent Lieutenant Colonel William A. Ward as head of the Georgian Battalion to assist King. On March 13 Ward and 120 of his men made the twenty-seven mile march in six hours. The next day the men under King and Ward defended themselves at the Battle of Refugio. King and his men separated from Ward and were captured and executed by the Mexican forces. Ward and his men retreated during the night in an attempt to join Fannin at Victoria. Fannin and his 350 men surrendered to Mexican forces at Coleta on March 20. Ward and his men reached a swamp on the Guadalupe River at Victoria on March 21, where eight men got separated and stayed in the swamp. Ward and his remaining 85 men surrendered near Dimmit's Landing on March 22. [4]

The eight men in the swamp were Joseph W. Andrews, Reason G. Banks, Samuel G. Hardaway, Charles F. Hicks, Allen Ingram, John F. Lind, M.K. Moses, and James P. Trezevant. [5] Ingram, Lind, Banks, and Hicks made their way on their own to join General Sam Houston's army and fought with him at San Jacinto. [6]

Samuel Hardaway was sixteen years old when he wrote his narrative in June 1836, less than eight weeks after San Jacinto. His story is dramatic in its telling of how he, Andrews, Moses, and Trezevant reunited, endured privations, and reached General Sam Houston:

"I then returned to the swamp and kept it all day; that night went out and made my way up the [Guadalupe] river, until I reached a crossing place, and here I overtook three men that had made their escape from the enemy in the swamps 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 [sic]. . . . 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

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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. . . . 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 Gen. Houston's camp; . . . We then left that place, and the spies carried us to Gen. Houston's army, where we arrived, I think, on the 2nd 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 tears of compassion were seen to trickle freely on their cheeks. We here received all the kindness we desired, and remained with the army and fought under Gen. Houston in Capt. Baker's Company in the memorable battle of 21st April, in which Santa [Anna] was captured, half his men slain, and the other half taken prisoner." [7]

Hardaway's account, one of the most reliable eyewitness records of the Georgia Battalion, is reinforced by contemporary Texas historian, Stephen Moore, under his heading, "Fannin Survivors reach Baker's Detachment." [8]

Earlier Texas historian Harbert Davenport compiled brief biographical sketches of Fannin and his men in 1936:

"Joseph W. Andrews [Merriweather Springs, Georgia] was one of Ward's men, from

Bullock's Company, who separated from his command while in the Guadalupe bottoms on the night of March 21st, and succeeded later, in company with Moses, Hardaway and Trezevant, in

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making his way to the Texan army.” [9]

“M. K. Moses [Columbus, Georgia] separated from Ward's Command in the Guadalupe bottoms on the night of March 21st, 1836, and in company with Joseph W. Andrews, Samuel G. Hardaway and James P. Trezevant, made his escape to Houston's army at Groce's.” [10]

Davenport's sketch of James P. Trezevant [Darien, Georgia] also follows the Hardaway narrative. [11] After San Jacinto, Trezevant joined Henry Karnes' Spy Company, progressing in three months from private to lieutenant to captain and finally to brevet major. During the summer and into the fall of 1836 he served as commissary and quartermaster at the port of Velasco. He resigned his commission in the Texas army on his twenty-first birthday in November 1836, eventually settling in Mississippi and Louisiana. [12]

After San Jacinto, Samuel G. Hardaway returned briefly to Georgia and then settled in Montgomery, Alabama. [13] In 1885 he wrote an affidavit to support the governor and legislature of Georgia in their claim to Texas seeking compensation for the arms from the Georgia arsenal seized by the Mexican army after Goliad. The two states finally agreed, with the understanding that the monies would be used to erect a monument to the Georgia Battalion at Goliad. No monies were ever paid and no such monument was erected. [14]

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The spirit of the Georgia Battalion, its fate, and the personal dedication of a few of its survivors became a paradigm of much that characterized the Texas Revolution. Most of the large army of young, inexperienced volunteer fighters were from outside of Texas. They were subject

to the discretion of their commanders. As soldiers in a foreign land they faced the possibilities of desertion, abandonment, death in battle, capture, and execution. Many suffered personal

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deprivations. Hundreds of men gave their lives for the rights they believed in, fulfilling the words on the Troutman flag, "Liberty or Death." Texans will always remember their sacrifice at the Alamo and Goliad. [15] Of the few men who remained from the Georgia Battalion, only eight lived to vindicate their compatriots by fighting for victory at San Jacinto. [16]

The most lasting and visible contribution of the Georgia Battalion is the "lone star" on the Texas state flag. It arrived in Texas on the Troutman banner, which flew over the Battalion until its demise. In 1913 the legislature of Texas officially recognized the blue star on the Troutman flag as the origin of the Lone Star of Texas. [17]

[1] Harbart Davenport. "The Men of Goliad: Dedicatory Address at the Unveiling of the Monument Erected by the Texas Centennial Commission at the Grave of Fannin's Men." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 43 no.1 (1939-1940): 4.

[2] Jewel D. Scarborough. "The Georgia Battalion in the Texas Revolution: A Critical Study." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 64 no. 4 (1960): 513.

[3] Robert S. Davis. "Georgia Battalion in the Texas Revolution." *Central Georgia Genealogical Society Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1985): 64-69.

[4] Samuel G. Hardaway. "With the Georgia Battalion--Samuel G. Hardaway's Account." *Sons of DeWitt Colony Texas*. Edited for web by Wallace L. McKeehan. 1997-2001. Web. <<http://www.tamu.edu/faculty/ccbn/dewitt/goliadframe.htm>>.

[5] Davenport. "The Men of Goliad." 31-32.

[6] Harbart Davenport. *Notes from an Unfinished Study of Fannin and His Men 1936, with biographical sketches*. Edited by David Maxey. 2002. Web. <<http://www.tshaonline.org>>.

[7] Hardaway's account.

[8] Stephen L. Moore. *Eighteen Minutes: The Battle of San Jacinto and the Texas Independence Campaign*. Dallas: Republic of Texas Press, 2004. 157.

- [9] Davenport. *Fannin and His Men*. "M. K. Moses."
- [10] Davenport. *Fannin and His Men*. "Joseph W. Andrews.
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- [11] Davenport. *Fannin and His Men*. "James P. Trezevant."
- [12] Texas General Land Office. Republic and State Land Grants. "Trezevant," "Trez%vant."
Web <<http://www.glo.texas.gov>>.
- [13] Davenport. *Fannin and His Men*. "Samuel G. Hardaway."
- [14] Scarborough, "The Georgia Battalion." 515-519.
- [15] Claude Elliott. "Georgia and the Texas Revolution." *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 28, no. 4
(1944): 1-19.
- [16] Robert S. Davis. "Georgians at San Jacinto." Robert S. Davis Collection. Hargrett Rare
Book and Manuscript Library. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia. 1986.
- [17] Davis. "Georgia Battalion." 65.

