



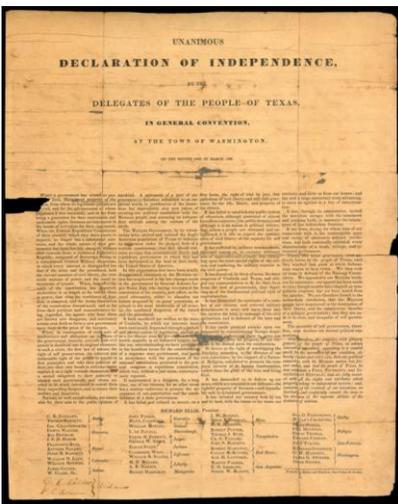
## RAMBLERS' RAMBLINGS

Vol XXVIII Number One SPRING 2019



## QUIRKY, QUARRELSOME AND QUACKS

BY SHELBY ROWAN



Quirky, quarrelsome and quacks might be a few words that describe some of the Signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence. And I've quoted words from two different nursery rhymes that also describe these 60 courageous men - butchers and bakers and doctors and lawyers and Indian Chiefs. And just to keep myself totally honest, let me tell you up front that the rest of this article is generously filled with words, phrases and sentences from an old article published by the Star of the Republic Museum, dated 'Winter, 1985.' I thank them very much for making this particular column much easier to write.

Let me set the scene for you quoting from William Gray, formerly of Virginia, and a witness to the signing. The town of Washington was a city of "about a dozen wretched cabins or shanties...no decent house...only one street. They will have to leave promptly to avoid starvation."

After the men had declared independence on March 2nd, 1836, they stayed on in bitter cold weather to write the Constitution despite the peril to their lives because Santa Anna and his Mexican Army were fast approaching. It was not until March 15<sup>th</sup> that the news of the fall of the Alamo was fully realized. But by midnight of the next day they finished the Constitution and as Charles Stewart said, they must now "prepare for desperate efforts."

These men were literally laying their lives on the line and even jeopardizing the lives of their families. Had the outcome been any less victorious for them they would have all surely been killed in battle or perhaps executed if captured alive. They were a diverse and unique crew of men. Lorenzo de Zavala was noted as being "the most interesting man in Texas." Robert Potter, although a great speaker, was known to also be a very violent man. Previous to coming to Texas, he had spent two years in jail for killing a man he mistakenly thought had been having an affair with his wife.

A good number of the Signers were soldiers and came ready for a fight. Both Bailey Hardeman and Sterling Robertson had served in the War of 1812. The majority of the 59 men saw some fighting action but Badgett, Caldwell (who was in the Texas Rangers), Edward Conrad (who was killed in battle), Grimes, Houston, Lacy, LeGrand, Moore, Parmer, Ruiz, Swisher, Thomas, Turner, and Waller, all have the word *soldier* included in their biographies. William Scates lived long enough to fight in the Civil War at age 62.

Many of the Signers were lawyers, Richard Ellis had been a supreme court justice in Alabama and George Childress has been called "the finest legal mind at the Convention." Thirteen others classified themselves as lawyers: Bunton, Collinsworth, Gazley, Hardeman, Houston, Kimble, Latimer, Maverick, Menefee, Navarro, Rusk, and Woods. That total means that one fourth of them had legal background and experience. Asa Brigham had practiced law at one time, but he is referred to as a "cornstalk lawyer." Shyster or quack are words we use today. Another handful were doctors, surgeons and druggists: George W. Barnett, Thomas Gazley, Benjamin Goodrich, Junius Mottley, and Charles Stewart. You may have noticed that Gazley was on the lawyer list as well. He had an extensive education.

Then there are some very interesting occupations reported in their biographies. Stephen Blount took advantage of a bacon shortage in Texas, secured a wagonload of salt pork and headed for Texas. He liked it there and stayed! John White Bower had a ferry service on the San Antonio River; William Clark owned a hotel; William Crawford was a Methodist minister; Samuel Fisher had a shipping business; James Gaines went to California during the Gold Rush (and died in California); William Lacy was a tanner and had a saddle shop; Michel Menard was a fur trapper and was elected Chief of a Shawnee tribe; (Houston lived with the Cherokees for some time); Sydney Pennington and William Scates were surveyors; Robert Potter was a sailor (hence he was appointed Secretary of the Navy); James Roberts was a saloon keeper.

Several spent time in jail/prison, either for crimes committed or as political prisoners. Robert Potter, as I've already mentioned, deliberately killed someone; John Bunton and his wife were imprisoned in Mexico for three months when the ship they were on was seized in Galveston Bay in 1836; as one of the Texas Rangers after the Revolution, Matthew Caldwell, was captured and imprisoned in Mexico for two years; and Lorenzo de Zavala was imprisoned in Mexico for three years prior to the Revolution because he was a staunch advocate of democracy in government.

There were two sets of relatives, Jose Navarro, nephew of Jose Ruiz, and George Childress, nephew of Sterling Robertson.

They came from five foreign countries and all over the United States to find a new life in Texas. All but a few brought their families with them. Most of them died here and definitely not all from natural causes.

And the little interesting details just go on and on. I've bored you for five columns now with more information that you really wanted to know about this extended family that I've married into as the "keeper of their family trees" for the Star of the Republic Museum. Since signing on in the beginning stages of this descendant search project in 2010, I've talked to on the phone, e-mailed with, and delightfully, met in person some of the most interesting people. I believe that you've had enough about the Signers themselves, so unless someone asks me a specific question that needs answering, I'll tell you a bit about some of their descendants in the next column or two.

See you soon at a Ramblers meeting.

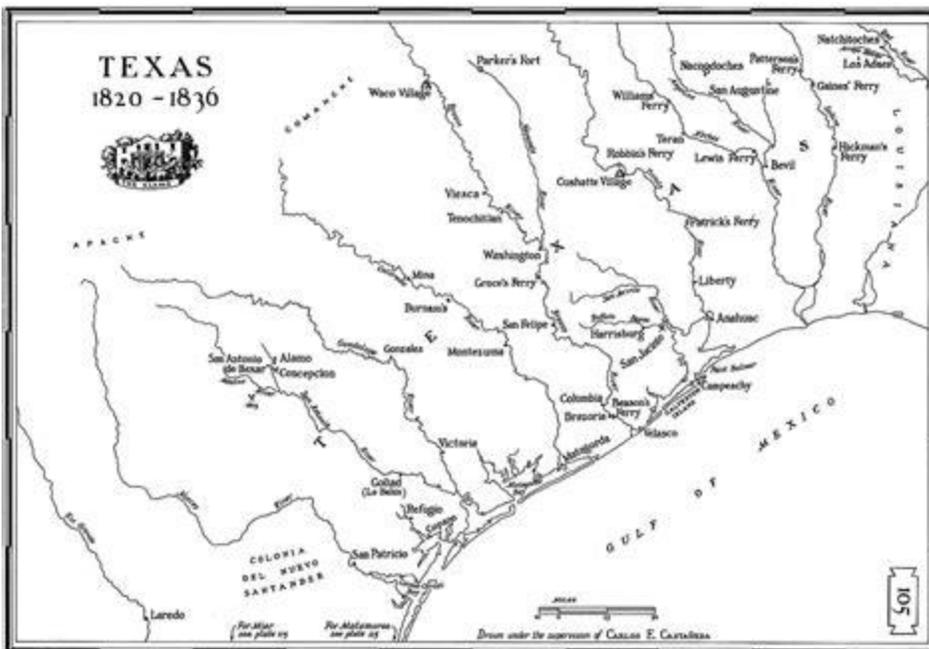


*Wait...just one more question about the Signers.....*

## HOW DID THE 59 SIGNERS TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON-ON-THE-BRAZOS IN 1836?

BY MARY JANE MILLENDER

Traveling between settlements in the 1830s in Texas was not easy. We may complain about road conditions when we travel today, but we do have paved roads. And highways. And GPS. When the 59 signers left their homes in February, 1836 to attend the Convention in Washington, there were no paved roads to complain about, just trails and foot paths and maybe the Camino Real if they were lucky enough



to live near it. The delegates from North and East Texas (the Red River, Nacogdoches, Sabine and Crockett areas) were among the "lucky ones" who could travel on the old Spanish Camino Real for miles until it was time to find an old Indian trail that led to the vicinity of Washington. The Camino Real bypassed Washington on its route toward South Texas.

How did these 59 or 60 men get to the 1836 Convention, which was located in an isolated area, a

"backdrop of fear and uncertainty"? Railroads were non-existent in Texas until the late 1840s-early 1850s so that eliminates trains. Stagecoaches would have been a popular means of transportation for the delegates; they had leather seats, were fast and even stopped for food along the way, but stagecoaches weren't in Texas until the winter of 1836.

Wagons pulled by mules or oxen would have been too slow, too cumbersome for narrow Indian trails. Did any of these men book passage on a small steamboat? Beginning in the 1820s there were several steamboats in Texas, delivering produce and building supplies to settlements on the Brazos River, but was there room for passengers aboard? And their schedules match their passengers' planned arrival time in Washington? Maybe.

So how did the majority of delegates travel to the Convention in that late February of 1836, a winter month that provided a freezing, cold front that not only accompanied them on their journey but stayed with them during the Convention? The answer has to be horses.

A horse can walk about two-three miles an hour, depending upon the terrain, but if that terrain has creeks to ford hills to climb and rough foot paths then horse travel is slower. And bad weather would also add more problems to a ride.

How far did the Convention delegates live from the small town of Washington (not to be called Washington-on-the-Brazos until after the Civil War)? Many in this elected group lived in districts over 250 miles away (much nearer in today's world of highways), others lived closer. They came from as far south as San Patricio and Refugio, from as far north as the Red River and the Nacogdoches Districts. Some rode through dangerous Indian territory, others made their way on trails made years earlier by the Spanish as they searched Texas for sites to build their Catholic missions.

But finally, shivering, dirty and travel-tired delegates rode into the small town of Washington on horseback, one, two or three at a time, ending their long ride into Texas history. What a miserable journey these strong dedicated men had to make in order to fulfill their appointed duty.

Another question: What did the delegates find when they entered Washington? Only about 100 inhabitants, a few houses and several taverns plus their cold, uncomfortable meeting place, an unfinished building with an open space for a door and open spaces for windows. Several local businessmen who were so thrilled to have Washington selected as the Convention site paid the rental fee.

After the signing, all the delegates remained in Washington to write a constitution for the new Republic of Texas. They adopted it on March 16, 1836. Early the next morning all the delegates and all the local townspeople quickly left Washington as news had reached them that Santa Ana's army was beginning to head east following its victory at the Alamo. The delegates were facing death if Santa Ana arrived while they were still in Washington. They joined hundreds of other Texans on the Runaway Scrape toward the Sabine River...and safety. Not long after, they rejoined their families *back home again!*



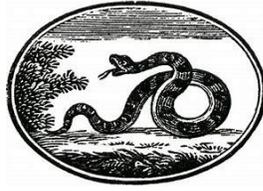


## Trivia Question....

WHO WAS THE THOMAS JEFFERSON OF TEXAS?

(answer on a following page)

### A SNAKE BITE REMEDY?



For a snake bite or spider sting, take the yolk of a good egg, put in a tin cup and add as much salt as will make it enough not to run off. Spread the plaster and apply to the wound.

*Reprinted from "The Athens Herald", Athens, Limestone County, Alabama on May 9, 1856*



## MAPS IN GENEALOGY, Part I

BY MARY ANN THOMPSON

There are different kinds of maps that can be useful to genealogists.

### A. Boundary Maps

These identify boundaries of a particular area. A landowner map is a special type of boundary map that shows the parcels of land and who owns them. They sometimes include other helpful details such as churches, cemeteries, schools and roads. Historical maps are especially useful for finding communities that no longer exist. One thing to remember when searching for your ancestors' locations, county boundaries may have shifted over the years.

1. **Atlas of Historical County Boundaries**

<https://publications.newberry.org/ahcbp/>

This site is a good way to understand how shifting county boundaries might have affected the whereabouts of your ancestors' records. It lets you pan and zoom and overlay yesteryear's borders onto modern geography.

2. **My Genealogy Hound**

<http://www.mygenealogyhound.com/maps/state-county-maps.asp>

Historical state and county maps to help locate the numerous small settlements within a county. The site states: "These historic maps also show the location of railroad lines and major waterways which were important routes of travel in the early days."

3. **Historical U.S. County Boundary Maps**

<https://www.randymajors.com/p/maps.html>

4. **Gazetteer for Scotland**

<http://www.scottish-places.info/>

A vast geographical encyclopedia, featuring details of towns, villages, bens and glens from the Scottish Borders to the Northern Isles. The first comprehensive gazetteer produced for Scotland since 1885, it includes histories of family names and clans, and descriptions of historical events associated with Scotland.

5. **National Library of Scotland - Maps**

<https://www.nls.uk/collections/maps>

This map collection is the largest in Scotland and one of the largest in the world. It covers all parts of the globe and includes early atlases and manuscript maps to current digital mapping.

6. **Arphax Publishing Company (a subscription site you should know about)**

<http://www.historygeo.com/>

This is a leading historical reference publisher specializing in original land-ownership maps has published original and owner map books for 500 U.S. counties since 2005. There is now a First Landowners Project containing over 12.3 MILLION LANDOWNERS among 30 states (all 29 of the public land states in the Continental U.S., plus Texas). The site includes training videos for the Project, a First Landowners Cheat-Sheet and a Frequently Asked Questions list. At this writing the annual subscription was \$59.00.

**B. [Topographic Maps](#)**

These show the lay of the land: the changes in elevation, waterways, etc. They can help genealogists see why their ancestors moved in certain ways or why they did (or didn't) do certain occupations.

1. **USGS Historical Topographic Map Explorer**

<http://historicalmaps.arcgis.com/usgs/>

2. **Maps of the Past**

<https://www.mapsofthepast.com/topographic-maps.html>

3. **GISGeography**

<https://gisgeography.com/download-usgs-topo-maps-free/>

C. **Transportation Maps**

Transportation maps include things like major roadways, railroads, and canals. This makes envisioning possible migration paths so much clearer.

1. **Library of Congress Railroad Maps, 1828-1900**

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/railroad-maps-1828-to-1900/about-this-collection/> Contains 623 maps chosen from more than 3,000 railroad maps and about 2,000 regional, state, and county maps.

2. **Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum**

<http://hoosiervalley.org/history/maps/>

Historical railroad maps and files.



**Traveling with Henry Hanson.....**



**ON HIS GENEALOGY TRAILS**

One Saturday a couple years back, Nancy and I were invited to drive out to Edge General Store (that's about 24 minutes from Bryan, TX) on a Saturday afternoon to get hamburgers and listen to some C&W music performed by a live local band. The band consisted of five seniors who loved C&W and were very good. When the band took a break, our friends introduced us to a couple we had seen at Women's Basketball games but we had never met. The husband of this couple was the lead vocalist of the band.

During the break and after all the introductions, it was mentioned that my hobby was *genealogy research*, and following a joke or two, it was mentioned that if you thought you had criminals in your family Henry could find out.

The next time Nancy and I saw this local band, they were performing at Chriesman Community Center in Chriesman, Burleson County, Texas. During the break that night Bill, the lead singer of the band, told me he had recently met with his siblings and they were discussing their maternal family and had wondered

where their grandmother's family had come from. So I asked a few questions about Bill's family, which would clearly indicate that I had already started looking at his family tree.

Upon confirming what I had found, Bill asked me where I found this information and I shared with him the online site *familysearch.com*. I then asked him for his email address so I could send him whatever family records I might find. What I found was that Bill's mother was a Gretchen Carletta Broun. Gretchen was English ancestry on her father's side, but Gretchen was Danish on her mother's side. That mere fact sparked my interest because of my own Danish ancestry.

Gretchen's mother was Carletta Gydesen; Carletta's father was Carl Frederick Gydesen; her mother was Marietta Christina Faye Gammel. My search went cold until I clicked on *findagrave.com* and I read that Marietta's father was Hans Peter Nielsen Gammel.

On the *findagrave* site, someone linked a short biography on Hans Peter Neilsen Gammel. The information I read there prompted me to see what information I could find in the "Handbooks of Texas" and this is what I found: Hans Peter Neilsen Gammel was well-known in Texas for the rescue, compiling and publishing of ten volumes called *The Laws of Texas, (1822-1898)*, which became an essential item in the law libraries of Texas.

Born in Denmark in 1854, Gammel migrated to Chicago in the mid-1870s where he stayed with his sisters. Gammel and his brother left Chicago and came to Texas, attracted by a few Scandinavian settlements near Austin. His wife, Marie, and daughter, Marietta, joined him in Texas at the end of the 1870s. Gammel rented commercial space at Hickory (now 8<sup>th</sup> Street) and Congress Avenue, opened a book shop and moved into an apartment in the back.

Tragedy struck the Gammel family in 1880, when both he and his wife got sick. They sent Marietta to stay with friends, Hans spent six weeks in the hospital and Marie died. Once Hans regained his health, he sent Marietta to school during the day at St. Mary's Convent so he could reopen his book store. In 1881, he married Josephine Ledel, a Swedish immigrant, at a Pflugerville church.



And it was while in his shop in 1881 that he saw the Texas Capitol building on fire and then witnessed workers throwing paper and books out the windows to save them, but the combination of fire, rain and wind "wreaked havoc" on the papers and the building superintendent wanted the damaged papers hauled away. Fortunately for Texas law, this Danish bookseller saw an opportunity for preservation and for a business venture.

**Hans Gammel** Hans Peter Neilsen Gammel wrote, *"I got permission from the authorities to do this job. It meant extra money! That night I lay awake thinking of what I would do with all the rubble. I did not have much knowledge—especially about law books—but the beginning of my love of books had become rooted, and the fact of knowing that all the knowledge and records in those papers would be lost preyed on my mind. I wondered if any of them could be salvaged.*

*"The next morning I put on my hip boots, armed myself with a pick and a shovel, and waded and worked in the slush for days hauling all the rubble—wagonloads of it—to my little house on 8th Street. Mrs. Gammel was not happy about it but she helped me to dry out anything that was not burned to a crisp. We used up all the clothes lines in the yard and strung rope between the trees and on the porches. Then I sorted the papers out the best I could and stacked them in bundles—for why I did not know. I just knew they should not be destroyed."*

Nearly a decade later in 1892, Gammel bought a print shop and established the Gammel Book Company. Gammel's primary ambition, however, was to obtain a contract from the Texas House and Senate to print legal documents. His daughter, Dorothy Gammel Bohlender, recalled "It was not by accident that his 'place of business' always was near the capitol building. His 'locality in Austin,' as he said, gave him a chance to be in touch with events affecting all of Texas, and he wanted to be as close as possible to the men participating in those events."

In 1898, Gammel published the first of what would be a ten-volume set, *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897*. An introduction inside one volume states, "These volumes are in the nature of original evidence for the student of our jurisprudence, and that nowhere else can it be so well studied as to its origin, character, successive changes, and its present status as a blended system of the Roman Civil Law and the Common Law of England." Gammel stayed in Austin and died there in 1931.

The above is what I found while researching my friend Bill's family. I attached it to an email and sent it to him adding a few comments. Later when I saw Bill at another music venue, he told me he had shared this information with his siblings and that I had started something. He continued that now his sister-in-law wants me to research her family!



## AN 1849 IRISH LETTER WRITTEN IN COUPLET FORM

SUBMITTED BY JANE MAGILL



This is page 1 from a 4-page letter written by Samuel Ruddell, a distant ancestor living just outside Dublin, Ireland to his brother Joseph in Esquesing, Upper Canada (present day Ontario) in 1849. Samuel regularly wrote his letters in this rhyming couplet form.

On the sixth day of last month my dear brother Joe/ I received your kind letter by  
this you may know  
And from Joe McElroy on the very same day/The first one from him since  
I saw him away  
But from him I heard in a letter to Dublin/How he lived in Palermo  
with nothing to trouble him  
I am pleased you received them with such hospitality/When a friend is in need  
'tis an excellent quality  
And they should not forget your friendly assistance/ No matter what time  
or how great their distance  
I can't but admire your poetical style/ And the impressive description  
you give all the while

Of diminishing strength and hair turning grey/ Undeniable signs  
of nature's decay  
And comparing your Life to a Bark on the Ocean/ is beautiful too and  
a seamanlike notion  
Mothers frail bark still weathers the storm/ She leads our fleet yet and  
keeps us from harm  
The girls are all living in happiness single/ Yet I don't know the day  
they may give us a jingle  
But notions prolific have been in the wane/ Since times have grown bad  
the people refrain  
And marriages now don't often take place/ Sure I know you will say  
'til quite a disgrace.

Transcribed by Betty Brownridge, Mary Gladwin and Marg Brown



### Answer to Trivia Question:



## George C. Childress

(Reprinted from the Copana Bay Press)

Did you know that the same man who wrote the Texas Declaration of Independence is also the father of our Lone Star? It's true and you've probably never heard of him, which is a shame.

George C. Childress was from Nashville. A lawyer and a newspaper editor. He came to join his uncle, Sterling Robertson, who was founding Robertson Colony .

**GEORGE C. CHILDRESS** In fact, it was probably written and in his vest pocket, since the document was presented to the convention and passed the following day. The Texas Declaration of Independence can't have been the result of an all-nighter.

Ten days later, Childress offered a resolution providing that "A single star of five points be adopted as the peculiar emblem of this republic." That passed, too.

The next few years where not kind to Mr. Childress. He tried to establish a private law practice, first at Houston and then at Galveston, but there was not enough business to support him.

Early in 1841 Childress wrote to President Mirabeau B. Lamar seeking a position as private secretary to write all his personal correspondence. In that letter he states, "I write mechanically, with dispatch, and have been somewhat in the practice of correspondence." Later that year, despondent because he could not bring his wife to Galveston from Nashville, he sank a Bowie knife into his gut...six times.

Dr. Ashbel Smith, his close friend, rushed to his side and asked him why he had done it. Childress responded, "It is the effect of an over sensitive mind." The father of the Lone Star was dead three hours later. He was 37.

The "over sensitive mind of" of George Childress left us a treasure in the Texas Declaration of Independence. Senator Dorsey Bailey Hardeman said it best: "If Texans, be they native born or adopted sons and daughters, should know anything, surely it should be this declaration--its fearlessness, its determination, its simple direct and courageous language and its scholarly beauty."

On March 2, 2019 Texas celebrated the 183<sup>rd</sup> birthday of the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence.



BY JERRY NELSON

APR 2019 - "Fate of American Loyalist" - Quincy Adams

MAY 2019 - "German Migration" - Walter Kamphoefner -

JUNE 2019 - "County Digitizing Process" - Mark Hamlin



## GENEALOGY COMPUTER USERS GROUP

BY JERRY MARKOWICH

17 APR - "Photography, Storing, Fixing, Changing & More" - Darrell Davis

15 May - "Ancestry.Com"- Shelby Rowan

19 June - "Family Tree Maker" - Jerry Markowich

\*\*\*Note: The May, June and July programs will be in the Bryan Public Library on the Second Floor.



## HISTORY WRITERS GROUP

BY JANE MAGILL

**MAY 8 2019** - "The King's Daughters" - Pam Johnson

\*\*\*\*\***Reminder:** Meeting will be held upstairs in the Bryan Public Library.



Genealogy: An account of our descent from an ancestor who did not particularly care to trace his own.



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