



Tales of Texas

NEWSLETTER



August 2024

This issue of Tales of Texas concerns the aftermath of the Battle of San Jacinto.

“Insubordination and Dancing Shoes”

The headline art above is of the Lynchburg Ferry. Photo taken by author at the San Jacinto History Museum.

Comments? Go to website listed below.

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Lynchburg Ferry

General Sam Houston raced Santa Anna to the Lynchburg Ferry, knowing whoever controlled the ferry, controlled the peninsula. Houston won the race and took the ferry. The maneuver trapped Santa Anna with his back to a marshy bog and water on three sides. A couple of days later, Houston launched his famous attack in the afternoon when Santa Anna thought it was too late in the day for an attack. The rest is history, right? Not so fast!

Insubordination?

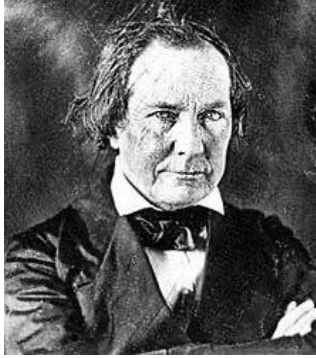
During the battle, Spanish-trained gunners, aimed for mounted officers, directing their guns toward charging horses before them. In one case, they hit their target, killing the horse and wounding General Houston. He had to mount another horse and continue the charge. Houston was wounded by Mexican fire that hit his lower leg/ankle area. The wound was painful as readers can imagine.

After the battle concluded and Santa Anna surrendered the next day, Houston was nearly delirious with pain. The army surgeon, Dr. Ewing, said Houston needed immediate medical attention, but such attention was not available in Texas. The doctor notified Interim President David Burnet that he would accompany the general to New Orleans so that surgeons there could treat the wound.

The steamship *Yellow Stone* was on the scene supporting the Texas army and loaded Burnet and the cabinet on board for the trip to the gateway city of Texas – Galveston.



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David G. Burnet

As the doctor and General Houston boarded the ship, Burnet blocked their entry. He did not want the doctor and general on board the *Yellow Stone* and ordered them to stay on the banks of the bayou. The doctor was dumbfounded as was everyone else, including the prisoner, Santa Anna. The captain of the ship said he wasn't leaving without Houston. Burnet yielded but charged Houston and Dr. Ewing with insubordination.

New Orleans

In Galveston, Houston was again denied passage on a steamer. He boarded the sailing vessel, *Flora*, and wallowed in the Gulf for a week with his fever rising every day. Steamboats made the journey in two days.



Steamship
Yellow Stone

Word quickly spread that the "Hero of San Jacinto" would dock in New Orleans and a sizable crowd showed up to support the general. Disbelief swept the crowd as the decrepit little *Flora* arrived. Houston tried to stand and wave, but he blacked out. The crowd soothed itself, admitting the general came directly from the battlefield.

One young woman standing on the dock looked upon the wounded general and fell in love with him. He was at death's door. In the age before simple antibiotics and pain relievers, a blister could kill someone. The young woman instantly believed Houston would recover and marry her.

Surgeons were not as confident as the young lady. They took him into their clinic and operated on his ankle. It was shattered, dirty, and infected. They removed forty-three (43) bone fragments from Houston's lower leg/foot. They had hope because his body had fought off a similar infection in a shoulder wound suffered in the Creek War under General Andrew Jackson.



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Houston's Boots and Spurs



19th Century
Dancing Shoes

Recovery

Houston spent time in New Orleans and fought the infection off. He returned to San Augustine, Texas and continued his lengthy rehabilitation. It was here where letters flowed in from the United States. There were congratulatory letters, but most were from families whose loved ones were missing.

The letters had a common theme: loved ones served under Travis and Fannin, and they couldn't be located. Could General Houston help them find their husbands, fathers, and sons?

These letters, now sacred as anything in Texas, became the foundation for identifying the Heroes of the Alamo and Goliad.

Houston invited the family members to apply for special land grants as this was the only way the new country could compensate widows and orphans. Consequently, it was through these applications that we know most everyone's name who gave his life for Texas liberty.

Houston was elected the first president of the republic. In those days, evening balls and dances required gentlemen to wear their "dancing shoes." These were special shoes designed not to scar polished dance floors. Houston was an accomplished dancer and veteran of many balls in Nashville and Washington. He could no longer wear his dancing shoes. With his splintered lower leg and ankle, he depended on boots to support him for the rest of his life. Yet, he managed, as most people understood why he was the only gentleman on the floor wearing boots.

What about the young lady on the New Orleans dock? He married her. She was the love of his life and the mother of his children: Margaret Lea Houston.