December 2025 Between Woke and Whitewash Issue 26

Tales of Texas NEWSLETTER

December 2025

This issue of Tales of Texas concerns "Christmas 1835"

The Christmas of 1835 was joyful and uncertain. For many, it would be their last.

Comments? Go to website listed below.

© 2025 Daryl Lott

Their Last Christmas

Have you ever sat with someone knowing it would be their last Christmas? Sadly, as we grow older, it happens more and more. The friends and family we've lost in 2025 who were here in 2024 form a long and heart-rending list. I will miss them greatly: especially at Christmas. Please keep these good people in mind as you read this newsletter. Our Texas roots require us to celebrate Christmas with the sacrifices of others in our collective memory.

The Road to Independence

Christmas is often remembered as a season of family, feasting, and faith — but for the men and women embroiled in the Texas Revolution of 1835–1836, the holiday arrived not with comfort, but with uncertainty. Their world was changing, their cause still in doubt, and many Texans spent the holiday far from home. Yet even in wartime, the Christmas season became a reminder of why they fought: land, liberty, and a better future for their children.

Victory in San Antonio December 1835

The Siege of Bexar concluded on December 9, 1835, when Texian forces defeated General Martín Perfecto de Cos and secured San Antonio de Béxar. For the first time in the conflict, Texas held a major city — and spirits soared. "We did feel as though the star of Texas was in the ascendant," said Noah Smithwick. That Christmas was a rare moment of celebration — campfires burned bright, and music and food were shared as a brief peace settled in.

Tales of Texas

Col. James Fannin
U.S. Military Academy

Christmas at Goliad — Under Colonel Fannin

While San Antonio celebrated, Fannin's troops at Presidio La Bahía were short on supplies and facing rumors of Santa Anna's imminent arrival. One volunteer wrote, "We had our little celebration… but our minds were on the enemy." Santa Anna was, indeed, on his way. He split his army to make better time and sent General Jose de Urrea to destroy Fannin's forces at Goliad.

Homesickness ran deep, and the coming fate of Goliad lay hidden in the new year ahead.

Christmas on the Texas Frontier

Not all Texans were soldiers. Families continued traditions as best they could:

- Cedar and mesquite decorations
- Cornhusk dolls and simple toys
- *Las Posadas* in Mexican homes
- Candlelit hymns in German settlements

Daily life persisted beneath a growing shadow of war.

Leaders and the Weight of Decisions

Texas leaders spent the holidays debating independence, military command, and diplomacy. Stephen F. Austin was in New Orleans seeking supplies, while Sam Houston rode across Texas urging unity. They celebrated little and planned much.

The same men who lit fires in victory at San Antonio would soon stand at the Alamo. Those sharing humble meals at Goliad would face tragedy in the spring. But at Christmas, there was still hope:

"May the next Christmas find us a free people."
— Texian volunteer's letter

My late friend, Vic, and me last Christmas.

Author at the Goliad Memorial

Why This Matters Today

Christmas in the Texas Revolution shows us timeless truths:

- Joy persists even in hardship
- Hope survives fear
- Freedom is worth sacrifice

The Republic of Texas would be won less than a year later — a gift long prayed for.

Christmas has a way of stirring both joy and ache at the same time. The lights seem to shine a little softer, the music sounds a little sweeter, and yet our hearts remember who is missing beside us. We feel the empty chair at the table, the silence where laughter once lived. Grief does not ignore the calendar; if anything, it presses closer during this season of love and memory.

But Christmas also speaks into that longing. It reminds us that hope was born into a weary world — a world not unlike ours, filled with tears and questions. The Child of Bethlehem came not only to save us, but to stay with us. Because of Him, love does not end when life on earth does. Those we miss are not gone from God's keeping. They are held in His presence, whole and unbroken, and their story continues in His grace.

So, we honor their place in our hearts. We light candles, we tell their stories, we smile at the memories that still bless us. And we lift our eyes to the promise that separation is not forever. The same Savior who came in a manger has prepared a home where all things are made new — where every tear will be wiped away, and reunion will be the sweetest celebration.

May this Christmas bring gentle peace to your spirit, comfort to your sorrow, and the steady assurance that hope still lives — and will carry you forward until the day joy and love are complete again.

Merry Christmas & God Bless Texas