

THE CAPTURE OF SANTA ANNA

An item of Texas history that seems little known by so few people pertains to the capture of Santa Anna after the Battle of San Jacinto April 21, 1836. Because of the historical significance, placing the captors as residents of the Round Top area, it seems most appropriate to include it in this first issue of

the Society's newsletter. Reproduced here is the letter written by Santa Anna's captor, Joel W. Robison, as he wrote to William Carey Crane who published "Life and Literary Remains of Sam Houston" when he was president of Baylor University at Independence, Texas, in 1884.

LETTER OF JOEL W. ROBISON.

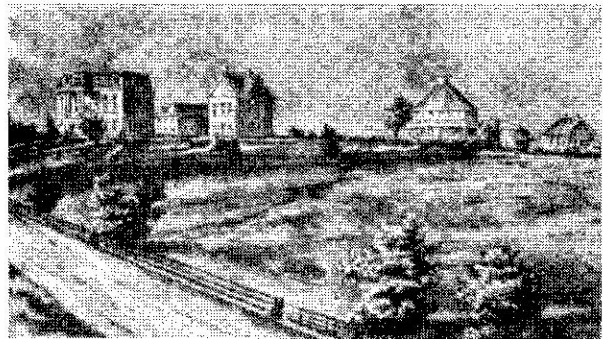
"Roundtop, August 5, 1881.

"I have received a letter requesting me to give you the particulars of the capture of Santa Anna in 1836. It was as follows: On the morning of the 22nd, the day after the battle, a party was detailed and sent out under command of Gen. Burleson. This party proceeded in the direction of the bridge on Vince's Bayou. One object was to pick up any Mexicans we could find who had fled from the battle the evening before, and particularly to search for Santa Anna and Cos. When we reached the bayou we divided into squads of five or six persons in each, and went in different directions. The party I was with consisted of six, all privates, so far as I know. Their names were as follows: Miles, Sylvester, Thompson, Vermillion, another, whose name I do not recollect, and myself. From the bridge we started down the bayou. After traveling about two miles, we saw a man standing on the bank of a ravine, some five or six hundred yards from us. He, no doubt, saw us first, for when we started towards him, he sat down on a high place and waited till we came up. It proved to be Santa Anna. I was the only one of the party that spoke the Mexican language. I asked him if he knew where Santa Anna and Cos were. He said, he thought they had gone to the Brazos. I asked him if he knew of any other Mexicans that had made their escape from the battle. He said he thought there were some up the stream in a thicket. I told him we would take him to the American camp. He was very willing to go, but complained of being very tired. I asked if he was an officer. No, he said; that he belonged to the cavalry and was not accustomed to being on foot; that he was run very close by our cavalry the day before and was compelled to leave his horse. When we started with him one of our party dismounted and went up the ravine to look for the Mexicans spoken of by Santa Anna, and Santa Anna rode his horse some two miles up the road. The man that went up the road, finding no Mexicans, then came and told Santa Anna to dismount. He refused to do it, and the man then leveled his gun at him, when he dismounted, and asked me how far it was to camp. I told him eight or nine miles. He said he could not walk so far. The young man then wanted to kill him, and I told him so. He then said he would try and walk, but would have to go slow; and so we started for camp, and the man got behind and would prick him in the back with his spear and make him trot for some two or three miles. Santa Anna then stopped, and, appealing to me, said if

he wanted to kill him to do so, but he could not walk any further. I then took him up behind me and carried him to camp, some five or six miles further. After he got up behind, we entered into a general conversation. He asked me if Gen. Houston commanded in person at the battle; how many we killed, and how many prisoners we had taken, and when they would be shot. I told him I did not think they would be shot; that I had never known Americans to kill prisoners of war. He said the Americans were a brave and generous people, and asked me what I thought would be done with the prisoners. I told him that I did not know, but the Americans would like the younger ones for servants. He said that would be very kind. He asked me how many were in our army at the battle. I said, some six or seven hundred. He thought I was mistaken; that there must be more. I said, No; and that two hundred Americans could whip the whole Mexican army. 'Yes,' said he, 'the Americans are great soldiers.' I asked him if he was not sorry he had come to fight the Americans. 'Yes,' he said, but he belonged to the army, and was compelled to obey his officers. I asked him, if he was back in Mexico if he would come to Texas any more. He said, No; he would desert first. This brought us to camp, when the Mexicans immediately announced his name. He asked to be taken to Gen. Houston, and was taken to him. If you think these facts of sufficient interest, you can put them in such shape as you think best. I am yours

Very respectfully,

JOEL W. ROBISON.



Baylor University at Independence. Sketch made probably in the 1880's.

After Santa Anna was brought to General Sam Houston he requested of the General to allow him to visit with the soldier that brought him. General Houston granted the request and summoned Joel Robison. As a sign of gratitude for letting him ride

behind his horse Santa Anna gave Robison a small bundle he carried. It was later discovered to be Santa Anna's gold brocaded vest. It became the fad in those days for young men to get married in the vest. Through this lending the vest became lost.

Thought for Today:

"There is no incident on record in which an individual or a nation advanced socially, culturally, politically, economically, morally or scientifically without the vital ingredient of optimism. To strive for improvement in any endeavor requires optimism. A philosophy of pessimism has never in the history of mankind achieved one single positive thing.

The philosophy of optimism transcends race, creed and economic station. It conflicts with no religion yet enhances the value of all religions. It is both simple to comprehend and difficult to define. With optimism an individual, a community or a nation can accomplish that which seemed impossible. Without it the struggle is lost before it begins."

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