

# HOW ROUND TOP BEGAN

By HERBERT L. DIERS  
Editor

The beginning of a place, a village, a town or a community so often comes about with the development of a post office. The mail was so important to the men forging the Provisional Government of the Republic of Texas in 1835 that they established the mail system on October 23, 1835, by appointing John Rice Jones II postmaster general to take charge of the affairs and put them into operation.<sup>1</sup> In those days the mail, carried by horse and rider, was the only means of communication across the vast area of the developing Texas.

Emergence of "a place called Round Top" was no different from so many other communities or villages that were coming into being in the 1830s. Land grants were being issued by the State of Coahuila and Texas due to the Mexican Government's desire to populate and colonize the vast Indian territories to the north. Stephen F. Austin, the most noted of the impresarios, brought many of the settlers into the area referred to as the original "Old 300." This included the league of land granted to James Winn on March 31, 1831, on which Round Top began.<sup>2</sup>

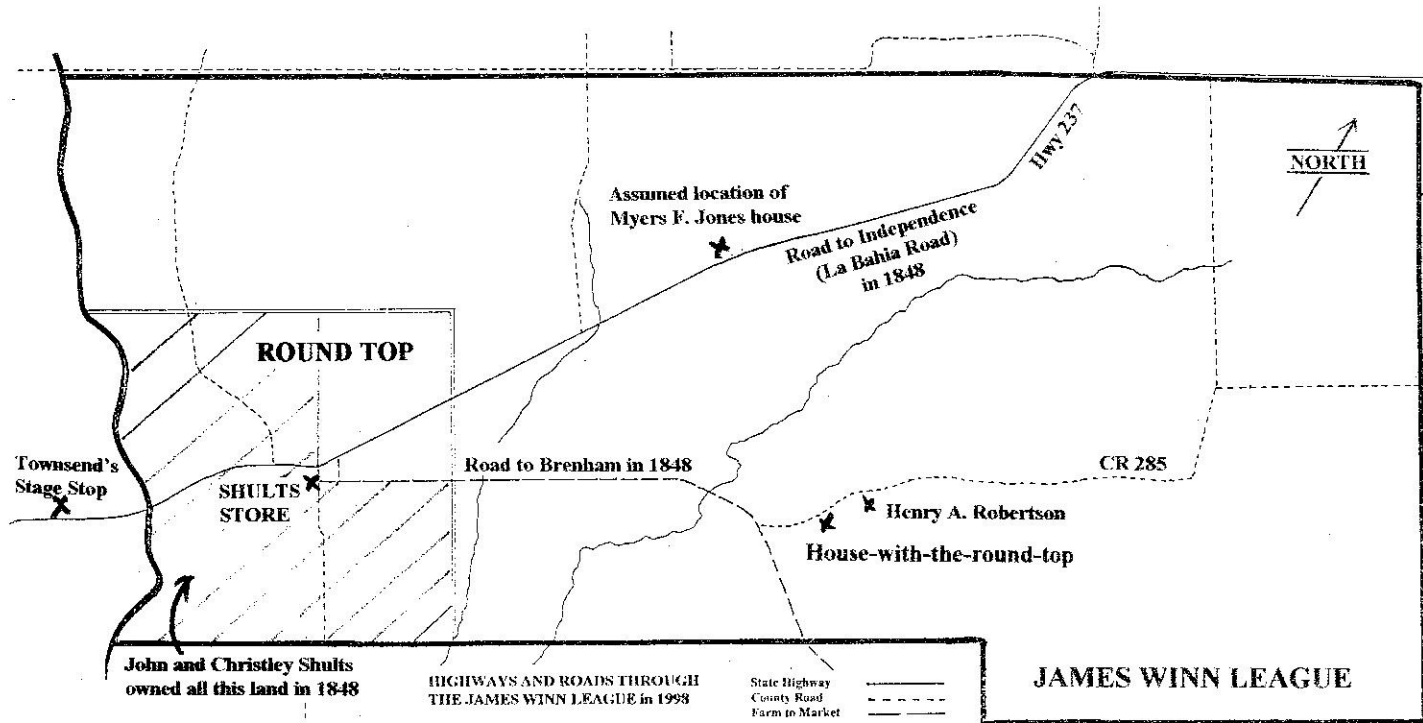
Samuel M. Williams and Horatio Chrisman purchased the Upper Two-Thirds of the James Winn League on July 10, 1835.<sup>3</sup> Samuel Williams

was Stephen F. Austin's secretary or "right hand man." Horatio Chrisman was a surveyor. It is supposed that they bought the land for speculation because no evidence has ever been located to show that either they, or James Winn, ever lived on the land.

The La Bahia Road, which began as an early Indian trail, passed through the length of the league. James Winn sold the Lower One-Third League to John York on July 10, 1835.<sup>4</sup>

It is known that Myers Fisher Jones, after arriving in Texas from Missouri in 1838, came to live on the land as early as 1840. It was on January 15, 1840, that he was appointed postmaster of a place called Jones' Post Office by his brother, John Rice Jones II, the Postmaster General of the Republic of Texas.<sup>5</sup> It is not known exactly where M.F. Jones established his post office, but it can be reasonably assumed that it was in his house. The population in the area in 1840 would have been quite small. In the first year of its existence, 1840, the Jones' Post Office collected \$87.87 in revenue.<sup>6</sup>

Myers F. Jones was involved in the several military campaigns and expeditions from 1840 to 1845, so the business of the mail must have been conducted by his wife while he was away. There is no record of anyone other than M.F. Jones being postmaster in the area, or any name change for the post office, up to the time of Texas' annexation when President Polk signed



the act on December 29, 1845. It is commonly recited that Texas joined the Union in 1846.

It was not until May 22, 1846, that the first post offices were established in Texas under the United States Postal System. On December 28, 1846, a postmaster was appointed for a place called "Round Top."<sup>7</sup> He was Henry A. Robertson and he owned fifty acres of land which today would be situated on Leonhardt Road about a half mile off FM 1457.<sup>8</sup> So, again, it is not known whether the post office was in Robertson's house or a stage stop. The area was becoming known as *Round Top Place*; however, no evidence suggests anything existed there other than a stage stop. The stage stop had an octagonal shaped top and this gave the stage driver the reason for yelling out.....

....."ROUND TOP"..... upon approaching. This stage stop was at the junction of two stage lines that came from the

east and south. The confluence of the stage routes would have been near the crossing of Rocky Creek. A landmark today would be the Richter Cemetery on FM 1457. The stage stop would have been on the high hill north of Richter Cemetery about one-half mile on what is now County Road 285 (Leonhardt Road). John G. Banik related at a post office dedication in 1968, "By the early 1840s three routes of travel converged upon this area from the north and east. One came from Old Washington-on-the-Brazos and another route came here from Houston and Brenham, by the way of Winedale. These two stage routes stopped at the house-with-the-round-top about one and one-half miles northeast of town on what in 1968 is known as the Zuehlke's place, and across Cummins Creek at Townsend's."<sup>9</sup>

---

Thus, the birthday of Round Top is November 30, 1848, when John Shults named the post office ROUND TOP at this new location.

---

A Mr. L.H.W. Johnston was appointed postmaster on June 15, 1848, and only about one month later, on July 19th, John Shults was appointed as postmaster. On that same date John Shults moved the post office onto his land and renamed it "Shults Store." This location was about one and one-half miles west and it was near Cummins Creek. At that time, John Shults and his father, Christley W. Shults, owned most of the land on which the town of Round Top is situated today. Although there has been no written evidence ever located that suggests any loud outcry from the few citizens of the area, there must have been some kind of political persuasion because on November 30th John

Shults renamed the post office ROUND TOP.<sup>10</sup>

From that day on our Round Top of today, which began almost where the town hall and square stand in testimony, has survived and prospered.

Round Top became home for many German immigrants to the degree that the nationality pervaded and established the tradition and culture that continues today. Thus, the birthday of Round Top is November 30, 1848, when John Shults named the post office ROUND TOP at this new location.

The most notable and enduring tradition was begun in 1851 when Round Top celebrated its first recognition of United States Independence.<sup>11</sup> That celebration on July 4th began what is now the longest, continuous observance west of the Mississippi of the most important date in United States history.

<sup>1</sup> W.L. Newsom, "The Postal system of the Republic of Texas," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XX, No. 2 (1917), 103.

<sup>2</sup> Fayette County Deed Records, Vol. 4, P. 542. Also, Texas General Land Office, Book 8, P. 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. D, P. 267.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. D, P. 267 and Vol. E, P. 2.

<sup>5</sup> James M. Day, *Post Office Papers of the Republic of Texas, 1836 - 1839* (Austin, Texas: Texas State Library, 1966), p. 67.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> National Archives, Washington, D.C., *Postmaster Appointments, Fayette County, Texas*.

<sup>8</sup> Fayette County Deed Records, Vol. C, P. 448.

<sup>9</sup> Hon. J.J. Pickle, "Congressional Record," *Round Top, Texas, Post Office Dedication*, Vol. 114, No. 101 (June 13, 1968), p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> National Archives, Washington, D.C., *Postmaster Appointments, Fayette County, Texas*.

<sup>11</sup> John H. Dancy, "Celebration of the 4th of July at Round Top," *The Texas Monument*, 1 (July 16, 1851), 1.