

# San Antonio Express

June 9, 1936, Tuesday

## MEXICO'S LAST TRY TO REGAIN TEXAS IN 1842 UNSUCCESSFUL

While it is true independence of Texas was won at San Jacinto, April 21, 1836, and the present year is the Centennial of that victory, Mexico did not then admit defeat or recognize the new Republic. It took the war between the United States and Mexico to extract the admission of a 12-year old fact by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Just 8 years, lacking a month, after the San Jacinto victory General Rafael Vasquez and 1,000 Mexican troops suddenly marched into San Antonio and captured the town. This was in March 1842, and was the beginning of a series of tragic events, mistakes, over-enthusiasm, and bitter suffering for the Americans.

Vasquez' invasion was little more than a gesture. The Americans fled in panic but Vasquez remained in the town only two days and then retired to the Rio Grande.

The furor created by this invasion excited the Texans. Many declared that more Mexican detachments were on their way north.

To meet this threatened invasion of other troops, the Texans organized. More than 3,500 troops were assembled according to Yoakum. Even the state capital was ordered removed from Austin to Houston. An extra session of Congress was then called. A bill to appropriate 10,000,000 acres of Texas lands to defray the expenses of war was then proposed, and war was declared. But this proposal to take away 10,000,000 acres of Texas land was vetoed by President Houston. He was secretly hoping for assistance from the United States.

As soon as Congress had adjourned, it was learned that another Mexican invasion was under way, lead by Gen. Adrian Woll, with 1,400 troops under his command. So great was the secrecy which surrounded this invading army, that San Antonio was captured almost before the San Antonians had time to prepare for defense. At that time, the district court was in session. The entire court, to the number of 53 of the most prominent citizens of the town, were captured.

Among those captured were Judge Anderson Hutchinson, District Attorney George Blow, Attorneys W. E. Jones, Andrew Neill, James W. Cunningham, Citizens Isaac Allen, Samuel A. Maverick, John M. Bradley, John Twohig, James L. Trueheart, George Brown, Elly and Young.

Once again the Texans organized for defense. Almost immediately a

small army of 220 meet under the command of "Old Paint" Matthew Caldwell and the famous Texas Ranger Captain John C. Hays, gathered together on the Cibolo, just north of the Seguin and San Antonio Road, about six miles northeast of San Antonio.

The 220 heroes under "Old Paint" Caldwell added another laurel to the history of Texas. With careful strategy, Commander Caldwell had enticed Gen. Woll and a contingent of the Mexican troops into a prepared ambush. The Mexicans were defeated precipitately. This engagement is known as the Battle of the Salado, and its importance is far more than a mere military victory.

For the Battle of the Salado prevented the Mexican forces from marching on to Austin. Had they arrived there without resistance, they would have entirely destroyed all the land records and archives and thus added to the confusion of titles and other now priceless state records.

But this victory on the Salado is coupled with tragedy. Captain Caldwell never knew about it. Just as Caldwell and his men were swinging on to victory, Captain Nicholas Dawson and 53 of Captain Hays' men were surrounded by another detachment of Woll's men. Grimly history recorded another massacre.

The Mexican cavalry which had been unemployed during the Battle of the Salado was sent to capture Hays command. These mounted Mexicans now swarmed over the small detachment, dividing in two groups just beyond rifle shot of the Texans.

They brought up their cannon, fired with grape and canister. The Texans were helpless victims. When more than half of their number had been slain, it became obvious that either surrender or death was inevitable. Preparations for surrender were made, but just at this point, even after the surrender signals had been hoisted, the Mexicans charged this slim handful of Texans slaughtering half of the few which now remained.

The Mexican Col. Carrasco intervened as soon as he could, and had he not done so, all the Dawson men would have been annihilated. Three escaped. Of the 53 Dawson men, 35 were left dead on the battlefield. Fifteen were taken prisoners. Captain Dawson was among the slain.

That same evening, General Woll, accompanied by his cavalry and the 15 prisoners of the Dawson massacre, marched back to San Antonio, gathered the prisoners taken there, and with considerable amount of loot, swept back across into Mexico.

Caldwell and Hays immediately started in pursuit, but were delayed while waiting for reinforcements. However, upon their return to San Antonio, they found 300 volunteers under Col. Ed Burleson, who addressed his men under the very shadow of the Alamo.

Thus ended the Battle of the Salado and the Dawson Massacre, and

began still another dismal tragedy, the Mier Expedition.

More than 1,000 volunteers gathered in San Antonio, started for the Rio Grande. The first stop was Laredo. But there a dissension broke out. The undertaking seemed too large a project, even if ordered by Sam Houston. Six hundred of the men voted to return. But 300 heroically decided to carry on, invade Mexico, and show at least several victories in retaliation of the capturing of San Antonio.

These "Mier men," as history knows them, first marched toward Guerrero. They swam the river, pitched camp just outside the town, and from this point, they sent in their demand that the town surrender, and that the alcalde furnish some needed supplies. The alcalde humbly agreed, supplied what he could and surrendered.

The Texans then continued their march to the next town Mier. It was late December. Winter had set in, the grass scarcely provided enough sustenance for the horses. Outside of Mier, the Texans again pitched camp, and again leveled their demand on the alcalde that Mier surrender, and furnish more necessary supplies for the Texans.

The alcalde willingly agreed. Supplies were stacked on the public plaza. The Texans carried off all they could, and obtained the promise of the alcalde, whom they took along with them as hostage, that the balance would be brought to the Texans camp on the following day.

On Christmas Eve the Texans, 261 of them, stormed the old town of Mier and, following the strategy of Milam in San Antonio seven years before, took to the cover of houses and chopped their way from house to house. The Texans lost 16 killed and 25 wounded, the forces of the Mexicans on the plaza were in sight and then suddenly the Mexican waved a white flag. A messenger came forward with the news that Gen. Ampudia had arrived with 4,000 men and that further fighting by the Texans would be useless. If they surrendered, the messenger said they would be treated as prisoners of war and kept on the border until exchanged. Naturally the Texans did not agree at once. They remembered other Mexican promises and the results but finally the entire command surrendered.

Instead of being kept on the border the Texans were marched into Matamoros, and finally to Monterrey, which they reached Jan. 29, 1843. Thence they were marched to Saltillo and finally to Mexico City, where they were lodged by the notorious Perote prison.