

100 Years of History As Seen Through the Study of Two Beaumont Families

Lesson 4 - Tracing Ancestors

A Letter from the San Jacinto Battlefield

Born in 1819, William McFaddin was the eldest child of Anglo-Texas pioneers James and Elizabeth McFaddin. As a teenager William joined the Texian Army shortly before the War of Texas Independence began and served under Captain Andrew Briscoe at San Antonio. Later McFaddin joined Sam Houston's forces at Columbus and went with them to San Jacinto. Though he did not see action on the battlefield because of his age, he lent important support by guarding the provisions and wounded soldiers. Following this, he joined the army of Thomas J. Rusk in its pursuit of the retreating Mexican army of Filisola and assisted with the burial of victims of the Goliad massacre. He was discharged at Goliad on June 8, 1836, his seventeenth birthday.

On May 4, 1936, William sent a letter to his parents from the battlefield at San Jacinto. The original letter was destroyed when the William McFaddin home burned in 1905. Fortunately, a few years earlier, his daughter Mrs. W. C. Averill read the letter at a civic gathering and the contents were reprinted in the newspaper. What follows is from the March 8, 1901 Beaumont Daily Enterprise.

Questions:

1. List three items of historical interest in the letter.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. What were some of William McFaddin's concerns?

a. _____

b. _____

3. How is this letter preserved for us?

Transcription

AN HISTORIC LETTER

Yesterday was Texas day at the Twentieth Century club and one of the interesting incidents was the reading of a letter written on the battle ground of San Jacinto in May 1836. It was read by Mrs. W. C. Averill. It was dictated by her father to her grandfather. It is with much pleasure that The Enterprise prints such a letter as this, thoroughly appreciating the courtesy of the possessor:

Battle Ground San Jacinto, May 4, 1836. — Dear Father — I am well at present, and I hope these few lines may find you enjoying the same blessing. I have only received one letter from you since we parted. This is the first opportunity that I have met with to write you, and I have embraced it. I have the great satisfaction to inform you that we have had a glorious battle with the Mexicans and we have given them a shameful whipping and have taken General Santa Ana and Generals Cos and Almonta, and several other of Santa Ana's head men prisoners in the battle of the 21st of April, besides a great many under officers and privates. The total amount of them is between four and five hundred.

The other day about two hundred of our men made about three hundred Mexicans surrender themselves as prisoners of war and nine pieces of cannon at the same time, without firing a single shot. The day of the battle we took one cannon and a great deal of plunder, ammunition and provisions and about eleven thousand dollars in cash. We lost but a very few men in the battle.

There is probability of our having to march toward San Antonio, and I wish to hear from you very much before we leave here. I do not want you to be any ways uneasy about me nor look for me until you see me, as I intend to stay in the army until my time is up and get an honorable discharge with the rest of the company. Remember me to all our relatives and friends. Nothing more at present. I remain your loving and dutiful son.

William McFaddin