



Map of the Texas-United States Border in the Area of Shelby County



Primary
Source
Adventures:
Shelby County:
The Regulator
Moderator War

T.G. Bradford's
Republic of Texas
1836-1846 map



From John W. Middleton's
*History of the Regulators and Moderators and
the Shelby County War in 1841 and 1842*

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About this time a difficulty arose between Jo Goodbread and Charles W. Jackson. Goodbread had been waylaying Jackson. After this they met in Shelbyville, when the trouble was renewed and Jackson fired and killed Goodbread. Jackson surrendered to the authorities, moved his trial to Panola county and was acquitted. When he went to Panola a crowd also went for the purpose of assassinating him, but his guard was too great and the effort was a failure. The men who had gone with and protected Jackson, then went to the houses of Strickland and McFadgin, and not being able to capture the men, as they were absent, they removed the furniture from the houses and destroyed them by fire.



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The session of the District Court held at this time in Panola county by Judge Hansford was adjourned in consequence of the imminent danger arising from the presence of these two parties. It was after this time the trial and acquittal of Jackson took place.

The Freebooters now met and organized by the election of officers. Ned Merchant was elected captain, and one Judge Hawkins being called upon, gave them the name of Moderators. They watched for an opportunity to kill Jackson. As he was going from Shelbyville to Logansport he was met about 12 M. by Jonathan McFadgin and soon after by Berry Merchant, who gave information to Ned Merchant who raised a company of fifty-five men and went after him. Two days before M. F. Roberts and Emory Raines, candidates for representatives in the Texas Congress, addressed the people and passed the night at my house. Raines was uneasy that night and wished to see McFadgin and Strickland and offered to go to Josh English's, but was persuaded to remain. Next morning very early he went to English's. There he met in caucus with Jack Crane, 'Squire Humphreys, Jim Strickland, Harry Stfickland, Bill Bailly, John McFadgin, Sam Todd and — Bledsoe. They went to Logansport and waylaid Jackson. The party took three stands and placed themselves at the forks of the road between Shelbyville and Nacogdoches. A peaceable, quiet Dutchman, by the name of Lower, was in company with Jackson, and on account of his presence, the first stand was passed. As they approached the second Lower was shot and Jackson ran, but was fired upon and killed. This took place in 1841. As soon as Merchant arrived at English's, Raines, Merchant and the company of fifty-five men went to McFadgin's and guarded the place to protect the men who had killed Jackson and Lower. They hid themselves in a thicket and signified their wants or danger of discovery by signals.

At this time the Sheriff of Shelby county fearing danger to his life, went to Nacogdoches and remained two or three months, and I received an appointment as his deputy.



From John W. Middleton's
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During the progress of the trial I observed that a great many guns were brought up to the room in which the trial was had, and afterwards learned that an effort was to be made to take my life. A difficulty was to have been commenced and twenty-four guns were ready to be used against me alone. As I left the room I was accosted by a man whose business it was to begin or bring on the difficulty. Col. Morman drew his attention from me, and I was then accosted by a man named Clapp. These men, leaving us, ran across the street to Moor's tavern, and I mounted my horse standing at the door, and here also were my prisoners and guard, and by a concerted movement we wheeled our horses and placed the prisoners between us and the tavern where their friends were stationed, and went rapidly out of town. Immediately a crowd of sixty men assembled and followed, but we traveled faster than they;

Primary
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Adventures:
Shelby County:
The Regulator
Moderator War



From John C. Duval's
*The Adventures of
Big-Foot Wallace:
The Texas Ranger
And Hunter*

The appearance of a typical
combatant in the Shelby
County War.



Primary
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Adventures:
Shelby County:
The Regulator
Moderator War

From John W.
Middleton's
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We started to Shelbyville and on the way were met by a company of one hundred and seventy-three men who formed our escort to town. The prisoners were carried to the town of Shelbyville, and there, on Saturday at 12 o'clock, M. the citizens met in the Court House for their trial, in being the ninth day of October, 1841. Previous to this time, at the re-capture of the two men, they made full confession, and the third did the same, each confessing in the absence of the others and ignorant of what had been said by them. Each made the same statement and narrated all the circumstances of the killing of Jackson and Lower, and these confessions were afterwards repeatedly confirmed by them. On this testimony the citizens acted, and upon taking the vote one hundred and seventy-four were found to have voted for their execution and none against it. The men were then taken out and two of them executed, the third and youngest was spared upon his promise of reform and the earnest pleading of Henry Reynolds, a citizen, whose sympathy was strongly excited.

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In 1841, John M. Bradley and John Haley, both residents of Shelby county, went to Austin and there hired four men, viz: Seekers, Wills, York and Hines to go to Shelby county and kill seventeen men, and those the most prominent in the county. For the life of Henry Reynolds they were to receive six hundred dollars. This money was to be paid by Jim Hall, and he furnished a gun for the purpose. Bradley also supplied a gun.



From John W. Middleton's
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On information of the death of Reynolds the trail was taken next morning by Steve Reynolds, Frank Hooper, David Winburn and another. Wills' gun was found and his trail followed to Lotus', in the direction of Natchitoches about twenty-five miles from the place of murder. Here Wills was found, and after some demonstrations of resistance on his part, he surrendered. He was taken to Matthew Brinson's four miles east of Shelbyville, and there the guard was increased to twelve men. Parson Blackburn was employed to erect a gallows on the square in the town, and the next day the prisoner was conveyed to the place of execution. He made a full confession of the crime, who had employed the gang, and what pay was to be received. After which the execution took place in the presence of a large crowd. Nothing definite was ever after learned of the man Seekers. Hall's gun was recovered, having been pawned to pay the ferrriage of Seekers across the Sabine.

A writ of arrest of the twelve men who had executed Wills was caused to be issued by John M. Bradley and John Doyle. The writ was placed in the hands of Llewellyn the sheriff and his deputy Jeff Cravens. They summoned three hundred men to their assistance and went into camp. The twelve refused to be arrested, but said they would attend the District Court and submit. The friends of the twelve men sustained them in their decision, and in two days enough men were gathered for their protection, and the sheriff was then notified that they were ready, and if a fight was desired they were prepared. An armistice of two days was obtained by the Sheriff, and during that time an agreement was entered into that a committee of twenty-four men should decide the matters of difference between the parties, and that the committee should be composed of men belonging equally to both parties, that is to say, twelve men from each side. They met and after deliberation rendered their decision that the Sheriff Llewellyn and his deputy, together with twenty-three others of the most prominent of that party were to leave the Republic and never become citizens again. They were given two months to wind up their business and permitted to return temporarily on business matters, but could not become citizens. Messengers were sent to notify them. These were often attacked, some wounded and some had their horses killed. Instead of leaving the Republic, as they were directed, these men went to work to raise forces, and at the expiration of the two months they were ready to commence fighting. It was planned that at the same hour of the night, seventeen citizens, who had been selected, were to be killed, and afterwards the members of the committee were to be disposed of in the same way. To raise their



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From John C. Duval's
*The Adventures of Big-Foot Wallace:
The Texas Ranger And Hunter*



Shelbyville Combatants on Patrol.

University of North Texas Libraries

Primary
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Adventures:
Shelby County:
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Squads were near the house of every marked man at the same hour of the same night, in pursuance of the original design, to murder all the selected men at the same moment, but they failed in every instance. Then all got together, two hundred strong, armed and fully equipped, and charged into the town of Shelbyville making all the show and intimidation they could. They swore to kill the committee first, sent Alfred Truit to Louis Watkins' to kill him; the mouth of his lane towards town was waylaid with thirty-three men. Watkins started to town and before he got through the lane was shot and fell from his horse. News of this went out, and next morning thirty-five or forty men had assembled at Jerry Beecham's, three miles northwest of town.

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The thirty-five or forty men were called regulators; they were protected by an unfinished house and a yard fence. Over this fence on the west side was leaning the planks to put on the house, and these supplied some protection. In this fight the casualties were, Bill Hansbury, moderator, killed; Wm. Price, shot in the mouth; Jim Graham, regulator, shot in the mouth; Geo. Sanford, arm broke; Eph M. Dagget had his pants cut, but was unhurt. The regulators sent for me, and I gathered the men around me and went next day.

* * *

During the fight at Beecham's the regulators deceived the moderators by falling at every fire, and believing they had killed many, so reported, and were enabled to procure re-inforcements until they soon numbered 230 strong.

The whole force of moderators now went into the neighborhood of my residence and searched the whole country for me. We had ladies out all the time acting as spies for us, watching the movements of the moderators. These ladies were Mrs. M. T. J. Johnson, Helen Daggett, Elizabeth White and Mrs. Nathan Matthews. The moderators then moved up to Dave Strickland's, four miles south of Hilliards. We found they were there, and being scarce of ammunition had sent for more, but concluded to go and fight them with what we had. This was in 1842.



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At a meeting of the regulators I made a motion that the different counties of the Republic be notified of what was going on with us and advised to organize, arm and protect themselves. The letters were written by Colonel Morman and C. T. Hilliard, and being received by these counties had a strong effect. Upon this action the moderators called upon General Houston, president of the Republic, and urged him to call out the militia, and stated that their numbers had been reduced from two hundred and thirty to sixty-five and that was their number when surrounded by the regulators in the thicket, after the battle at Hilliards. General Houston anticipating the approach of Santa Anna, and believing the discord between the citizens would enable Santa Anna to overrun the country, called out the militia, and placing them, to the number of 1500 men, under the command of General James Smith, sent them to Shelby county, when upon their arrival, the citizens laid aside their arms and went home, and ended the war between the regulators and the moderators.



GEN. SAM. HOUSTON.

From Homer S. Thrall's
*A Pictorial History of
Texas, from the earliest
visits of European
Adventurers, to
A.D. 1879*