

Nestled deep within the bowels of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin, is a document few have examined, or even know about. It is a narrative sketch of William Barret Travis by his law clerk, J. H. Kuykendall. This reminiscence, contains details about Travis's character and personality that no other source reveals. Find below some of my observations concerning this rare source—and the full text of Kuykendall's recollections.

## J. H. Kuykendall's Recollections of William B. Travis

Pioneer, poet, and soldier, Jonathan Hampton Kuykendall<sup>1</sup> (pronounced Kirk-en-dahl) was also one of the ablest chroniclers of early Texas. Born in Kentucky about 1820, he was the son of “Old Three Hundred” settler Abner Kuykendall. The family moved from the Bluegrass State and lived for a time in Arkansas before coming to Texas in 1821. While still in his teens, Hampton traveled to Chihuahua, where he became fluent in Spanish. He later put his knowledge of that language to good use when Abner arranged to have his son apprentice in the San Felipe de Austin law office of attorney, William Barret Travis. Yet, the lad demonstrated little passion for the legal profession.<sup>2</sup>

War, not law, determined young Kuykendall's destiny. By 1836 he had returned to the Mexican interior where he learned that Generalissimo Antonio López de Santa Anna was leading a centralist army to quash the Texian rebellion that had erupted in October 1835. Hampton rushed to warn fellow Texians of the impending threat. On February 16, 1836, he arrived in Goliad and informed the rebel garrison commander, Colonel James W. Fannin, of the enemy's approach. Kuykendall then traveled to San Felipe. There he joined a company commanded by Captain Robert McNutt, the “Mill Creek Volunteers.” The unit participated in the “Runaway Scrape” and the triumphant battle at San Jacinto. Kuykendall subsequently wrote one of the best primary accounts of the campaign.<sup>3</sup>

Kuykendall also saw action during the Mexican war. In that conflict he reportedly served as an aide to General Zachary Taylor, but his memoirs do not recount such an appointment. Indeed, lack of funds compelled him to accept the “very humble and very uncongenial avocation” of teamster. Nevertheless, he continued to regard himself as a gentleman and his journal reflects a highly egalitarian attitude toward the high-handed discipline of U. S. regulars. On April 6, 1847, he had an altercation with a Captain Webb, a neophyte quartermaster. That day's entry gave full vent to Kuykendall's indignation:

I can neither brook nor obey any command delivered by any person with imperious tone and insulting pomposity. . . . Whether from pride or perversity, Capt. Webb, you little Jesuitical-looking old scamp—I refuse, rebel—backout—disobey. Now, use your “little brief authority” when and how you please.<sup>4</sup>

With many friends south of the Rio Grande, Kuykendall was aghast at the disregard many U. S. soldiers had for Mexican civilians. Colonel Caleb Cushing of the Massachusetts Regiment arrested

a teamster for killing a Mexican citizen in Matamoros. With tongue firmly fixed in cheek, Kuykendall's April 16, 1847, entry records feigned umbrage:

Col. Cushing will make himself unpopular by his rigid course—Does he not ken that a “free and enlightened” American has an “inalienable right” to commit robbery, rape, & murder, provided he confine his operations to the conquered foe! Out upon you [,] Caleb, for marring the “delicate sport” of the humane magnanimous sons of Washington—Aye, blush you degenerate!<sup>5</sup>

He saw further service with the Confederate cavalry throughout the War Between the States. Although he never left Texas, he saw extensive service along the Rio Grande. True to pattern, he maintained a journal. When a majority of Texas fighting men left their state to confront Yankees further east, the Comanche and Lipan marauders renewed their raids against isolated outposts. On August 10, 1862, Kuykendall recorded that “Noland & Spencer’s companies have received orders to report to San Antonio by the 10<sup>th</sup> of next month. The supposition is, they will be sent against the Indians who have been committing depredations upon frontier settlements. It is to be hoped,” he noted, “that they will succeed in chastising them severely and thus teach them that though many thousand brave spirits have left our state, there still remains Texicans enough to protect our frontier against their insolence.”<sup>6</sup>

Documents provide little information concerning Kuykendall’s education, but he was obviously well read for his writing is replete with classical and literary references. In 1851, he became the editor of the *Texas Monument* at La Grange. He revealed a genuine talent for producing clear and detailed history and published several articles for newspapers and periodicals, including the *Texas Almanac*. In 1857, he compiled and transcribed the reminiscences of several pioneer Texians. The editors of the *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* published these in volumes VI and VII in 1903.<sup>7</sup>

In 1881, Aransas County employed Kuykendall to translate a number of old Spanish documents at Refugio; the following year, he died there while performing that task. The Mission River was in flood and thus prevented his burial in the Protestant cemetery. Officials, therefore, laid the old soldier and man of letters to rest in an unmarked grave outside the north fence of Refugio’s Roman Catholic cemetery.<sup>8</sup>

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### Kuykendall and Travis

The Kuykendalls had many dealings with the young lawyer William Barret Travis. In 1834, Abner granted his consent for the seventeen-year-old Hampton to work for the attorney as his office boy and copier, no doubt in hope that he would master the profession. That hope was forlorn. J. H. demonstrated little interest in the law and, by his own admission, “imperfectly digested” the legal texts that Travis assigned him to read. For a time, young Kuykendall even shared lodgings with Travis.<sup>9</sup>

Misfortune struck on June 18 of that year. The San Felipe ayuntamiento (municipal council) ordered the elder Kuykendall, then serving as regidor (community representative), to run out of

town ne'er-do-well and hard case, Joseph Clayton. While Abner was in the performance of that duty, a row ensued and Clayton stabbed and killed him. Officials tried, convicted, and hanged Clayton—the first recorded judicial execution in Stephen F. Austin's colony. Travis handled Abner's probate proceedings in the "Court of the First Instance" at San Felipe before Judge David G. Burnet. The documents of these proceeding are clearly in Travis's handwriting and Judge Burnet signed the orders entered into the estate.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly following his father's murder, Hampton ceased clerking for Travis. By April 1835, J. H. was preparing to return to the Mexican interior. At this time he chanced to meet Travis, who had recently received custody of his six-year-old son, Charles Edward. Kuykendall and Travis rode together until they reached Elizabeth Powell's boarding house in present-day Fort Bend County. It was there that Hampton bid Travis farewell and continued his journey toward the Rio Grande. It was the last time he saw his old mentor<sup>11</sup>

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### Kuykendall's Sketch of Travis

While researching the San Jacinto Campaign, the current editor examined the J. H. Kuykendall Papers in the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. There he uncovered, quite unexpectedly, Kuykendall's narrative sketches of several pioneer Texians. Although earlier scholars mined portions of the collection, Kuykendall's sketch of Travis has never before been published.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, students of Travis and early Texas seemed unaware of the Kuykendall sketch. Amelia Williams overlooked it during the preparation of her doctoral dissertation on Alamo defenders. Ruby Mixon did not cite it in her 1930 thesis, "William Barret Travis, His Life and Letters." In fairness to Williams and Mixon, one should note that the University of Texas did not acquire the Kuykendall Papers until 1936. Consequently, these scholars had no opportunity to examine them before the completion of their studies. Yet, neither did Walter Lord for his landmark 1961 examination of the Alamo battle, *A Time to Stand*. Nor did Martha Anne Turner in her 1972 biography, *William Barret Travis: His Sword and His Pen*. Even Professor Archie P. McDonald failed to employ the source in his 1976 biography, *Travis*.<sup>13</sup>

No scholar employed the Kuykendall sketch until 1998. That year saw William C. Davis publish his monumental tri-biography, *Three Roads to the Alamo: The Lives and Fortunes of David Crockett, James Bowie, and William Barret Travis*. Davis carefully mined the sketch and his portrayal of Travis greatly benefited from the nuggets he extracted.<sup>14</sup>

Kuykendall's sketch of Travis is important on several levels. The narrative provides insights to one of the state's most controversial figures by one who not only knew him, but knew him well. It provides a corrective to the commonly accepted view of Travis as a petulant prig. Travis's "proclivity to indulge in practical jokes," is an aspect of his personality that had remained hidden and refutes numerous popular culture depictions. It is, for example, difficult to imagine the aloof, almost ascetic, martinet portrayed by Laurence Harvey in the 1960 John Wayne film exhibiting any sort of levity.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the sketch provides a glimpse into the nature of frontier humor. By 1830, Texas already had a reputation as a refuge for a wide assortment of rowdies and shady characters. The coarseness and brutality of frontier life frequently horrified newcomers. Texians, of course, enjoyed teasing the uninitiated by exaggerated demonstrations of their primitive folkways. Although modern sensibilities deem them cruel, such displays were not entirely in pursuit of a laugh at another's expense. They functioned as a test: a rite of passage. Texian society, while tolerant of many human foibles, made no place for the coward. The foreign or eastern dude who could not, or would not, adapt to the rigors of frontier life became a stock comic character. Texians ran or whipped some knaves out of town, but most found themselves laughed out by the derisive chuckles of the locals. Kuykendall's sketch provides new evidence for Professor William Ransom Hogan's observation: "The Texas reputation for toughness in the eighteen thirties and forties, whether deserved or not, repelled timid prospective immigrants, and many were rejected in the usual process of frontier selectivity."<sup>16</sup>

The Travis of this narrative bears little resemblance to the one represented in the flowery panegyric of nineteenth-century accounts, but also the bitter diatribe that has become fashionable among some historians of the "Race, Class, and Gender" school. Typical of the earlier view is that of L. T. Pease, who in 1837 proclaimed: the "patriot soldier who would form himself upon the most perfect model, need not look beyond the letters and the example of Travis." Contrasting such laudatory assessments, Colorado writer Jeff Long found the Alamo commander an "impetuous and overly passionate" boy-rebel, the "quintessential Craze-orian." Yet, Kuykendall recalled his old mentor as thoughtful and temperate. Far from the trigger-happy hotspur that Long and others portrayed, Kuykendall described a person who often "turned his back" on insults. Indeed, according to Kuykendall, "It required a strong moral stimulus to rouse [Travis's] combativeness."<sup>17</sup>

Kuykendall's sketch of Travis is also important for what it does not say. Kuykendall clearly admired Travis, but seemed to have had little affection for him. He concedes that his old boss was "able and honest," but also allows that he was "loud and somewhat harsh" and possessed a "brusque manner." Those traits, along with Travis's belief in his abilities, caused Kuykendall to conclude that the hero, "was not a very popular man." In brief, Travis could be a bore. His subordinates acknowledged his competence and, in time, came to trust his leadership, but seldom did that admit liking him.<sup>18</sup>

Kuykendall's reminiscence is a wonderfully rich and highly significant source. Along with Travis's diary and letters, it provides a human face to a figure who is frequently lost in the sterile hagiography of Alamo cultists. It also moderates the vituperation of bitter activists out to advance their own agendas. The man Kuykendall knew was neither the "most perfect model," nor the "quintessential Craze-orian." Rather he was an employer with whom he had worked closely and who exhibited the full range of human virtues and vices. Rich in the type of detail that only one who knew Travis intimately could provide, Kuykendall's description provides information that one can find nowhere else.<sup>19</sup>

But enough of professorial pontificating. Please find below the sketch itself.

(Please observe that the current editor has maintained Kuykendall's original spelling, punctuation, and syntax.—S.L.H.)

\* \* \*

Col. Wm. Barret Travis  
by  
J. H. Kuykendall

Not long after Travis was released from military durance at Anahuac in 1832 he removed to San Felipe and commenced to practice law at that place, which, although it was but a small straggling village of two or three hundred inhabitants, was the capital of Austin's Colony and the seat of its Land Office.<sup>20</sup>

Hence, it became the abode of most of the lawyers who immigrated to the Colony and the period to which I refer, 1833 and 1834, could boast of half a score of talented young attorneys, namely, Robt. M. Williamson,<sup>21</sup> Thomas J. Chambers,<sup>22</sup> Ira R. Lewis,<sup>23</sup> William H. Jack,<sup>24</sup> Patrick C. Jack,<sup>25</sup> Spencer H. Jack,<sup>26</sup> William B. Travis, Mosely Baker,<sup>27</sup> Luke Lessassier,<sup>28</sup> and Ephraim Roddy.<sup>29</sup>

Only the last two named had attained to the meridian of life, yet all, I believe, have gone to their final rest.

Travis, if I remember rightly, was born in the state of North Carolina, perhaps, however, in Georgia, but he was reared and educated in Alabama.<sup>30</sup> At the age of 18 or 19 he taught school for some months, during which time he became enamored of one of his pupils, "the beautiful Miss Cato," as he terms her in his auto-biography, who reciprocated his passion, and they agreed to marry as soon as Travis could acquire a profession and thereby qualify himself to support a family.<sup>31</sup>

Travis commenced the study of law and so intense was his application thereto that he was admitted to the bar before he was twenty-one years of age, having previously, I believe, married Miss Cato.<sup>32</sup>

This union, however, endured scarcely two years.<sup>33</sup> "My wife and I had a feud which resulted in our separation." This is all he says in his unpublished autobiographical sketch concerning an event which probably did not conduce to his happiness.<sup>34</sup>

Travis soon secured a lucrative practice at the colonial capital. He also found time to study and acquire the Spanish language, and being thereby qualified to perform the duties of Secretary of the Ayuntamiento of the municipality of Austin, he was appointed to that office early in the year 1834. The archives of that office under his charge and the laws and decrees of the General Government and those of the state of Coahuila and Texas, as soon as they were received at his office were translated by him into English, and such as were of general importance were either circulated in manuscript or printed in a little weekly newspaper published at Brazoria.<sup>35</sup>

In April 1834, the writer—then a youth of seventeen, having some knowledge of the Spanish language, was solicited by Travis to act as his amanuensis and read law under his direction. With my father’s consent I accepted the proposal. I performed a good deal of clerical labor, but only read and imperfectly digested “Blackstone’s Commentaries”<sup>36</sup> and “Las Siete Partidas.”<sup>37</sup>

In April 1835, Mrs. Travis, who still resided in Alabama, landed in Brazoria, ostensibly to visit friends or relatives there, and Travis upon being notified of this fact hastened to Brazoria where he had a friendly interview with his wife, and when he left for home took with him the elder of their two children, Charley, a lively, prattling little fellow of five or six years, seated behind his saddle.<sup>38</sup>

As he passed through Columbia I was in the act of departing for the interior of Mexico and we traveled the same road together for thirty miles. That night, the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1835, we lodged at Mrs. Powell’s, and on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> we shook hands and bade each other, what proved to be, a final adieu.<sup>39</sup>

Travis was a laborious student, a good scholar, and a very brainful young man. He was a fluent speaker at the bar, but his voice was loud and somewhat harsh. Though not noted for either wit or humor he keenly relished both. The following anecdote will illustrate his proclivity to indulge in practical jokes—a sort of merriment very common among the colonists.

Some time in the summer of 1834 a little foreigner named P— came to San Felipe for the purpose of obtaining material assistance to build a boat to navigate the Brazos River.

Day after day he visited Travis in his office and importuned him to aid the enterprise. Travis became weary of the persistent bore and resolved to get rid of him. To effect this purpose he prevailed on a tall fellow from the country named G— who had been loitering about the village for some time, to pick a quarrel with P— and then challenge him to a duel.

As Travis anticipated, P— hastened to consult him about the difficulty. Travis advised him to accept the challenge and fight the challenger immediately. “I”, said he, “will be your second and you must fight with pistols across this very room.”

But P— protested that he did not know how to shoot, whereas his antagonist was an excellent marks man and an experienced Indian fighter. To this Travis replied that Indian fighters always stood behind trees when they fought the Red man. “But bring one of them,” he continued, “face to face with his antagonist without a protecting tree, and he will ingloriously back out.”

Reassured by these words P— accepted the challenge, and at the appointed hour G— and his second entered the office. The seconds retired into an adjoining room and charged with powder only, a pair of long pistols and laid them on the table in the office.

The tall Indian fighter stood erect and silent in a corner of the room with his arms folded across his breast, scowling savagely at the little foreigner, who became very nervous. And when informed that the moment for the duel was at hand he declared he would not fight, urging that he was a mechanic, an inventor, a useful man, and if he fell the world would feel his loss, he therefore begged his second to take his place and fight the duel in his stead. When Travis with well-feigned

indignation began to reproach him for cowardice, he hastened out of the office exclaiming, "I shall not die till I make mine boat!" The next day he disappeared from the village.

Though generally recognized as both able and honest, Travis was not a very popular man. His brusque manner often gave offence and sometimes provoked insults upon which he turned his back. He certainly was not a man of impulsive physical courage. It required a strong moral stimulus to rouse his combativeness. He was very ambitious; he hungered and thirsted for fame—not the kind which satisfies the ambition of the duelist and desperado, but the exalted fame which crowns the doer of great deeds in a good cause. In such a cause he was prompt to die as Leonidas.<sup>40</sup> His aspirations corresponded with those of the poet in the following quotation, the concluding lines of which nearly literally describe his end:

"To pass when life her light withdraws  
Not void of righteous self-applause,  
Nor merely in a selfish cause.

In some good cause, not in mine own,  
To perish, wept for, honor I, known,  
And like a warrior overthrown;

Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears,  
When soil'd with nobel dust, he hears  
His country's war song thrill his ears:

Men dying of a mortal stroke  
What time the foeman's line is broke,  
And all the war is rolled in smoke."<sup>41</sup>

In person Col. Travis was rather the average height and weighed about 175 pounds. He had light brown hair, reddish-brown beard and blue eyes. He died at the age of twenty-seven.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Earlier historians frequently cited J. H. Kuykendall's first name as "James." Authorities now agree that his first name was actually, "Jonathan." He almost never used his first name (hence the confusion) and normally went by J. H. or Hampton. Jonathan Hampton Kuykendall Papers [hereinafter JHK Papers], Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin [hereinafter CAH]. Vertical Files, CAH.

<sup>2</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, Hobart Huson and Marshall E. Kuykendall, "KUYKENDALL, JONATHAN HAMPTON," accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fku07>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid; for Kuykendall's account of the events of 1836, see, Eugene C. Barker (comp. and ed.), "The San Jacinto Campaign," Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association (April 1901), 4:291-306 [hereinafter QTSHA].

<sup>4</sup> Dilworth to Huson, in J. H. Kuykendall Vertical File, CAH; for Kuykendall's account of his exploits in the Mexican War, see, "Journal of a Trip to Mexico, October, 1846-November, 1847" in JHK Papers, 1882-1887, CAH.

<sup>5</sup> Kuykendall, "Journal of a Trip to Mexico," JHK Papers.

<sup>6</sup> "Journal of James [sic] Hampton Kuykendall in Confederate Army of the Rio Grande[,] May 27-December 28, 1862" and "Notes of a Journey from the Rio Grande to the Guadalupe by a Furloughed Soldier, 1863," in JHK Papers.

<sup>7</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, Hobart Huson and Marshall E. Kuykendall, "KUYKENDALL, JONATHAN HAMPTON," accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fku07>; Nolen, "Kuykendall's Sketches of Early Texians," in J. H. Kuykendall Vertical File, CAH; J. H. Kuykendall, "Reminiscences of Early Texans," QTSHA, vols. 6 and 7 (Jan. and April., 1903), 236-253; 311-332.

<sup>8</sup> Handbook of Texas Online, Hobart Huson and Marshall E. Kuykendall, "KUYKENDALL, JONATHAN HAMPTON," accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fku07>.

<sup>9</sup> Dilworth to Huson, Sept. 30, 1963; J. H. Kuykendall, "Sketches of Early Texians, in JHK Papers; William Barret Travis, *The Diary of William Barret Travis*, August 30, 1833-June 26, 1834, ed. by Robert E. Davis (Waco: Texian Press, 1966), 169.

<sup>10</sup> Travis, *Diary*, 184; Dilworth to Huson, Sept. 30, 1963; Handbook of Texas Online, Hobart Huson and Marshall E. Kuykendall, "KUYKENDALL, JONATHAN HAMPTON," accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fku07>.

<sup>11</sup> Kuykendall, "Sketches of Early Texians."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Amelia Williams, "A Critical Study of the Siege of the Alamo and the Personnel of its Defenders," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1931; Ruby Mixon, "William Barret Travis, His Life and Letters," M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1930. The University of Texas acquired Kuykendall's "Sketches of Early Texians" from Rev. O. W. Nolen. In a letter that accompanied the typescript, Reverend Nolen explained: "I copied these sketches direct from Mr. Kuykendall's manuscript and was given permission to use them in any way I might wish." O. W. Nolen to Donald Coney, Dec. 21, 1936, in holding record for JHK Papers, CAH; Walter Lord, *A Time to Stand* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961; Martha Anne Turner, *William Barret Travis: His Sword and his Pen* (Waco: Texian Press, 1972; Archie P. McDonald, *Travis* (Austin: Pemberton Press, 1976).

<sup>14</sup> William C. Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo: The Lives and Fortunes of David Crockett, James Bowie, and William Barret Travis* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 379-380, 382, 383.



<sup>15</sup> For characterizations of Travis in popular culture see Don Graham, "Remembering the Alamo: The Story of the Texas Revolution in Popular Culture," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 89 (July 1985) [hereinafter SWHQ], 35-66; Susan Prendergast Schoelwer with Tom Gläser, *Alamo Images: Changing Perceptions of a Texas Experience* (Dallas: DeGolyer Library and Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 13, 63, 68, 71, 80, 85, 94, 95, 105, 108, 112, 125, 131, 132-141, 142, 143, 182; Frank Thompson, *Alamo Movies* (East Berlin, Pa.: Old Mill Books, 1991), 13-15, 66, 78, 80, 96-97, 103, 106; Frank Thompson, *The Alamo: A Cultural History* (Dallas: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2001), 6, 8, 41, 42, 49-50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 60, 62-65, 69, 111-112, 115, 129, 131-132, 137, 138, 152, 162, 164, 165, 168, 173, 177, 179, 223-224.

<sup>16</sup> William Ransom Hogan, *The Texas Republic: A Social and Economic History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), 267, (quotation), 268-272.

<sup>17</sup> John M. Niles, *History of South America and Mexico: Comprising Their Discovery, Geography, Politics, Commerce, and Revolutions, To Which is Annexed, A Geographical and Historical View of Texas, With a Detailed Account of the Texian Revolution and War by Hon. L. T. Pease*, 2 vols. (Hartford: H. Huntington, 1837), 1: 325 (first quotation); Jeff Long, *Duel of Eagles: The Mexican and U.S. Fight for the Alamo* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990), 378n (second quotation), 33 (third quotation). The following is representative of the curious hyperbole that permeates Long's treatment.

Travis faced defeat [at the Alamo] like a mystic facing a mountain. It stood before him, an undeniable barrier. But by closing his eyes, it was no longer in front of him. Travis turned his back on reality. He took to his white-washed room in this former mission and retreated to the only religion he knew: propaganda. He propagandized the colonies, the States, the world. He even propagandized his own men. (*Duel of Eagles*, 189-190)

The press release announcing the book was equally overwrought, describing Travis as, "a man emotionally unable to make a decision, unfit to lead." "Morrow News," press release, William Morrow & Company, 1990. Copy in Jeff Long Vertical File, CAH. Professor Paul Andrew Hutton was squarely on the mark when he concluded:

Long's book fits well into the so-called "new western history," now all the rage in the halls of academe and the absolute darling of the media. These historians, whose hallmark trait is a dark sense of negativism, condemn what they interpret as the celebrationist tone of previous western historians and seek to set the record straight on the many sins of our ancestors. It can certainly be argued that the hagiographic tone of much Texas history is in dire need of a corrective, but the rhetorical overkill employed by Jeff Long in *Duel of Eagles* actually undercuts his ability to provide any sense of balance to the historical record.

Paul Andrew Hutton, "Duel of Eagles review," in SWHQ, 96 (July 1992). 135.

<sup>18</sup> When Colonel James C. Neill left on furlough, the Alamo garrison held an election between Travis and living legend James Bowie to determine the post's commander in Neill's absence. The regulars voted for Travis, the regular; volunteers cast their votes for Bowie, the volunteer. Bowie won by an overwhelming margin, although he later offered to share command with Travis. The ambitious attorney had the qualifications to gain appointments, but not the disposition to win elections. With the onset of Bowie's debilitating illness, he relinquished sole command to Travis. J. J. Baugh to Henry Smith, February 13, 1836, in John H. Jenkins (ed.), *Papers of the Texas Revolution*, 10 vols. (Austin: Presidial Press, 1973), 4: 320-321; William B. Travis and James Bowie to Henry Smith in *ibid.*, 4: 339.

<sup>19</sup> Niles, *History of South America and Mexico*, 1:325; (first quotation); Long, *Duel of Eagles*, 33 (second quotation).

<sup>20</sup> The “military durance” to which Kuykendall refers sprang from Travis’s leadership in the so-call “War Party” and his taunting resistance to Juan Davis Bradburn, the centralist garrison commander at Anahuac. For Travis’s role in the Anahuac disturbances, see, Margaret Swett Henson, *Juan Davis Bradburn: A Reappraisal of the Mexican Commander of Anahuac* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1982.), 93, 95-97, 98, 99, 103, 114, 126, 136, 140-141; McDonald, *Travis*, 57-81; Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo*, 262-274, 343, 659-660n. For more on the “War Party,” see, Stephen L. Hardin, *Lust for Glory: An Epic Story of Early Texas and the Sacrifice That Defined a Nation* (Abilene, TX: State House Press, 2018), 57-61.

<sup>21</sup> Born in either 1804 or 1806, Robert McAlpin Williamson suffered from tuberculous arthritis when he was fifteen years of age. That affliction caused his right leg to bend at a ninety degree angle. The peg leg he wore resulted in his nickname, “Three-legged Willie.” In 1826, Williamson moved from Georgia to Texas. Settling in San Felipe, he became involved in local politics, becoming a leader in the “War Party.” His pleas for Texians to resist centralist policies caused historians to dub him the “Patrick Henry of the Texas Revolution.” He was a close friend of Travis and, following the fall of the Alamo, Mexican soldiers removed a letter Williamson had written him from his body. During the rebellion, Williamson served as a Texas Ranger major and oversaw their deployment. In the periods of the Texas Republic and Early Statehood, he remained active in politics, serving as District Judge and legislator. He died in 1859. *Biographical Directory of the Texan Conventions and Congresses, 1832-1845* (Austin: Texas House of Representatives, 1941) [hereinafter *Biographical Directory*], 192; Joe E. Ericson, *Judges of the Republic of Texas: A Biographical Directory* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1980), 301-302; the standard biography remains Duncan W. Robinson, *Judge Robert McAlpin Williamson: Texas’ Three-legged Willie* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1948); for the letter found on Travis’s body, see, Thomas Ricks Lindley, “James Butler Bonham, October 17, 1836-March 6, 1836,” *Alamo Journal* (Aug. 1988), 5, 10. The contents of the Williamson letter were translated into Spanish and published on March 31, 1836, as part of a Mexican broadside. For Williamson’s command of the Texas Rangers during the Texas rebellion, see, Stephen L. Hardin, *The Texas Rangers* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1991), 5-6, 54-55.

<sup>22</sup> Born in Virginia in 1802, Thomas Jefferson Chambers won admittance to the bar in Kentucky and in Alabama before traveling to Mexico in 1826. There he studied Mexican law and in 1829 became surveyor general of Coahuila y Tejas. He established his headquarters at Nacogdoches and in 1834 earned the position of state attorney of Coahuila y Tejas. Later that year, he became the superior judge of the superior judicial court of Tejas, although he never assumed the duties of that office. During the Texas Revolution, he traveled to the United States to procure volunteers and provender for the rebel cause. In his June 3, 1837, report to Congress he claimed that he had recruited 1,915 U. S. volunteers, expended \$23,621, and had sold bonds amounting to \$9,035. During the days of the Texas Republic and Early Statehood, Chambers continued to be busy in politics and was also a founding member of the Philosophical Society of Texas. In 1861, he was a member of the Secession Convention and traveled to Virginia to offer his services to the newly formed Confederate government. On March 15, 1855, he was murdered in his home, Chambersia, at Anahuac. *Handbook of Texas Online*, Margaret Swett Henson, “CHAMBERS, THOMAS JEFFERSON [1802-1865],” accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fch08>; Thomas Jefferson Chambers Vertical File, CAH; for a more complete treatment, see, William M. Chambers, *Sketch of the Life of Gen. T. J. Chambers* (Galveston: printed at the Book and Job Office of the Galveston News, 1853); and Llerena Beaufort Friend, “The Life of Thomas Jefferson Chambers,” M.A. thesis, University of Texas, 1928.

<sup>23</sup> Ira Randolph Lewis was born in Virginia in 1800 and came to Texas in 1831, settling initially in San Felipe de Austin, then in Cole's Settlement, and finally in Anahuac. While in San Felipe in 1832, Lewis was involved in a "difficulty" with a fellow attorney, William H. Jack, a member of the opposing faction. The seconds arranged a "Texas fight"—no-rules fisticuffs—between the two principals, but Lewis objected to this "vulgar mode of fighting." He was, nevertheless, persuaded by the arguments of his second, T. McQueen: "In this vile community a boxing match is the prettiest way in the world of settling a difficulty; a victor does not draw the persecution of a party, and a defeat is soon forgotten. Chivalry has not yet found entrance in Texas." A prominent attorney, Lewis served as a member of both the Consultation and the General Council. During the War for Texas Independence, Lewis traveled to the United States where he recruited volunteers and solicited contributions for the war effort. In 1842, he served as a volunteer when General Adrian Woll led a Mexican force across the Rio Grande and briefly occupied San Antonio de Béxar. In August, 1867, Lewis died in Independence. Biographical Directory, 123-124; Handbook of Texas Online, Robert Bruce Blake, "LEWIS, IRA RANDOLPH," accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fle41>; Ira Randolph Lewis Vertical File, CAH; T. McQueen to "Madam" (Mrs. Ira R. Lewis), Aug. 9, 1832, quoted in William Ransom Hogan, "Rampant Individualism in the Republic of Texas," SWHQ, 44 (April 1941), 465 (quotation); for the full text of the letter see the copy in Ira R. Lewis Papers, CAH.

<sup>24</sup> William Houston Jack was born in Georgia in 1806 and came to Texas in 1830. A lawyer by profession, he led a mob demanding the release of his brother, Patrick, and William Barret Travis, who had been arrested by Juan Davis Bradburn. A member of William H. Patton's company, he fought at San Jacinto. After the revolution, Jack was a member of the Congress of the Texas Republic. In 1842, he participated in the expedition against a Mexican foray led by General Rafael Vasquez. On August 20, 1844, Jack died in Brazoria County. William S. Speer (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the New West . . .* (Marshall, TX: United States Biographical Publishing Company, 1881), 284-286; Biographical Directory, 111; Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence (Austin: Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, 1938), 82 [hereinafter *Monuments Erected*]; Handbook of Texas Online, Thomas W. Cutrer, "JACK, WILLIAM HOUSTON," accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fja04>.

<sup>25</sup> Patrick Churchill Jack, younger brother of William H. Jack, was born in Georgia in 1808. An attorney like his brother, he came to Texas in 1830 and settled in Stephen F. Austin's second colony. His was a strident voice in opposition to centralist policy toward U.S. immigration and his arrest, along with that of Travis, led to the 1832 Anahuac Disturbances. He was a delegate to the Conventions of 1832 and 1833. During the Republic period he served as a member of the Second Congress. In 1840, he was appointed district attorney of the First Judicial District and, in 1841, to the Sixth District. In 1844, he died of yellow fever in Houston. Zachary Taylor Fulmore, *The History and Geography of Texas as Told in County Names* (Austin: Press of E. L. Steck, 1915), 186-187; *Monuments Erected*, 118; Biographical Directory, 111; Handbook of Texas Online, L. W. Kemp, "JACK, PATRICK CHURCHILL," accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fja01>; Patrick C. Jack Vertical File, CAH.

<sup>26</sup> Spencer Houston Jack was a lawyer who served as an agent for Samuel May Williams and Stephen F. Austin. He appears to have come to Texas about 1830. In 1834, he traveled to Mexico with Peter W. Grayson to secure the release of Austin who had been imprisoned by Mexican officials. He had several professional dealings with Travis. In late-1837 or early-1838, Jack passed away while in Matagorda. Handbook of Texas Online, Ronald Howard Livingston, "JACK, SPENCER HOUSTON," accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fja02>; Travis, *Diary*, 9, 14, 16, 24, 71, 92, 160.

<sup>27</sup> In 1802, Mosely (sometimes spelled “Moseley”) Baker was born in Virginia. As a young man he practiced law in Alabama. It is uncertain when he came to Texas, but it appeared to have been in either 1832 or 1833. An active member of the “War Party,” in the summer of 1835 he traveled to East Texas to muster troops for the coming conflict. He fought at the “Come and Take It” skirmish at Gonzales and later at the Grass Fight. On March 1, 1836, he won election to command a volunteer infantry company. During the retreat from Gonzales to San Jacinto, Baker argued with General Sam Houston over his Fabian strategy, the beginning of a life-long enmity between the two men. Baker’s unit, Company D, fought at San Jacinto where he was wounded. Following the war, Baker remained active in politics, serving in the First and Third congresses. In 1842, he organized volunteers from Harris County to oppose General Adrian Woll’s occupation of San Antonio. He became a Methodist minister in either 1845 or 1846, after which time he published the religious periodical, True Evangelist. On November 4, 1848, Baker died of yellow fever in Houston. In 1929 state officials reinterred his remains in the State Cemetery in Austin. Monuments Erected, 81, 166. Sam Houston Dixon and Louis Wiltz Kemp, *The Heroes of San Jacinto* (Houston: Anson Jones Press, 1932), 181. Biographical Directory, 48-49; Travis, Diary, 16, 17, 38, 89, 108; Handbook of Texas Online, Thomas W. Cutrer, “BAKER, MOSELEY,” accessed March 24, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fba37>; Moseley Baker Vertical File, CAH.

<sup>28</sup> Luke Lesassier (also spelled Lessasier) came to Texas in 1830. He was the first law partner of Samuel May Williams and served on the first San Felipe de Austin board of health. He was a friend and business associate of Travis. By 1832, he was practicing law with Robert McAlpin Williamson. During the Anahuac disturbance, Lesassier read the Turtle Bayou Resolutions to the throng that had assembled to forcibly recover Travis and Patrick C. Jack from the custody of Colonel Juan Davis Bradburn. Lesassier was later a delegate from San Felipe to the Convention of 1832 and 1833. He subsequently served on several San Felipe committees and in 1834 became alcalde of that municipality. He died sometime before June 1834, at which time his will was probated. Although historians are unsure of Lesassier’s age at the time of his death, he must have been older than most of his fellow attorneys for Kuykendall claimed that he had “reached the meridian of life.” Biographical Directory, 123; Handbook of Texas Online, “LESASSIER, LUKE,” accessed March 26, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fle31>; Travis, Diary, 7, 8, 10, 12, 20, 29, 43, 44, 46, 48, 69, 70, 91, 103, 110.

<sup>29</sup> Ephraim Roddy was born about 1793, perhaps in Ireland. In 1831, he moved from Tennessee to Texas and was a member of the Convention of 1833. In 1844, he won appointment to a committee to survey the seat of Washington County. In 1845, voters elected him justice of the peace. The following year he achieved the post of notary public in Washington County, but refused to accept the post. In 1850, he owned a farm in Burleson County, but no additional details concerning his later life are available. In 1907, B. J. Fletcher, Roddy's grandson, related a remarkable anecdote in a letter to Mrs. I. C. Main:

Our grandfather's ready Irish wit saved him from serious consequences on many occasions. One notable case occurred at Washington, Texas in about the year 1834. He was a lawyer and it happened that he and another young lawyer, William Barret Travis, who afterward was immortalized in his glorious death at the Alamo, were opposing council in a civil case. Travis was very irascible, and he became enraged at some sarcasm of Grandfather's. He drew a Bowie knife and wanted to fight. Though unterrified the Iris barrister never forgot his wit. Thrusting his hand into his pocket, Grandfather drew out a little broken pen knife, such as was used to make pens of goose quills and said to the court, "Your Honor, owing to the discrepancy of our weapons I cannot do the opposing council much bodily harm, but if he insists upon it I will try." The whole court roared in laughter, and all adjourned to take a toddy at Travis' expense. They were the best friends ever afterwards.

Biographical Directory, 162; Ericson, Judges of the Republic of Texas, 242; B. J. Fletcher to Mrs. I. C. Main, May 15, 1907, quoted in Travis, Diary, 24n; Handbook of Texas Online, Marie Giles, "RODDY, EPHRAIM," accessed March 26, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fro44>.

<sup>30</sup> Kuykendall did not "remember rightly." Travis scholars debate the exact date of his birth. The late Archie P. McDonald concluded that the "weight [of evidence] seems to be in favor of August 1[, 1809]." Yet, in the entry that he penned for The Handbook of Texas Online, he admits that the Travis family Bible recorded "August 9, 1809," as the date of Travis's birth. So too does the biographical sketch in Amelia William's dissertation. William C. Davis also indorsed the August 1 date. Nevertheless, all authorities agree that Travis was born in South Carolina. McDonald, Travis, 28; Handbook of Texas Online, Archie P. McDonald, "TRAVIS, WILLIAM BARRET," accessed March 26, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ft03>; Williams, "A Critical Study of the Siege of the Alamo and of the Personnel of its Defenders," 173; Davis, Three Roads to the Alamo, 190.

<sup>31</sup> Rosanna E. Cato Travis was born in 1812 and married Travis on My 3. 1828. Although the union produced a son and a daughter, it was short-lived. Handbook of Texas Online, Archie P. McDonald, "TRAVIS, WILLIAM BARRET," accessed March 27, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ft03>.

<sup>32</sup> Local gossips blamed Rosanna's infidelity, but never provided conclusive evidence. After coming to Texas, Travis remained remarkably tight-lipped concerning Roseanna. She remained in Alabama with the couple's young children, but Travis's diary recorded frequent correspondence. In 1834, young Charles Edward Travis came to live with his father. Without a formal decree of divorce, Roseanna remained in a state of legal limbo: still lawfully married to Travis, but without a real husband. In 1835, she demanded a letter from Travis stating his refusal to live with her. Perhaps Travis's romantic interest in Rebecca Cummings prompted him to finally make such a statement. Armed with that letter, Roseanna petitioned the Alabama State Legislature for a divorce decree, which it granted in November 1835. On February 15, 1836, she married Dr. Samuel B. Cloud and shortly afterwards moved to New Orleans. In 1848, both Roseanna and Dr. Cloud fell victim to yellow fever. Travis, Diary, 7, 17n, 18n, 53, 67, 105, 112, 130, 137, 143; Davis, Three Roads to the Alamo, 193, 196-197, 202-206, 282, 283-285, 385-387, 446-447, 509, 525, 574, 633n, 701n, 721n; McDonald, Travis, 47, 48, 51-54, 57, 58, 61, 81, 93-97, 124, 179; Handbook of Texas Online, Archie P. McDonald, "TRAVIS, WILLIAM BARRET," accessed March 27, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ft03>.

<sup>34</sup> Kuykendall makes a tantalizing reference to, and even quotes from, Travis's "auto-biography." While Kuykendall appeared to have had access to this fascinating document, it is now lost.

<sup>35</sup> The "little weekly newspaper published at Brazoria" was the Texas Republican, which began publishing on July 5, 1834. Franklin C. Gray and A. J. Harris were co-publishers until Harris withdrew from the partnership in December 1834. The paper's distinct "War Party" slant echoed many of Travis's political opinions. The paper began as a three-column, four-page sheet, but by November 14, 1835, had grown to incorporate five columns. The publication halted in March 1836, during the bedlam of the Runaway Scrape. Marilyn McAdams Sibley, *Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers before the Civil War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 60-64; Handbook of Texas Online, Louise C. Allen, Ernest A. Sharpe, and John R. Whitaker, "NEWSPAPERS," accessed March 27, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/een08>.

<sup>36</sup> Kuykendall refers to the seminal work by the noted English jurist, Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780), *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. It is probable, however, that the volume he "imperfectly digested" was Barron Field's (1786-1846) U.S. edition, *An Analysis of Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Philadelphia, 1830). In the hinterlands of 1830's America, where one "read for the law" under a mentor, backwoods lawyers considered a thorough knowledge of Blackstone's *Commentaries* the equivalent of a modern law degree.

<sup>37</sup> Las Siete Partidas was to Spanish law what Blackstone's *Commentaries* was to English law. An attorney in Mexican Texas needed to be versed in the law codes of both traditions.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Edward Travis, son of William B. and Rosanna (Cato) Travis, was born in Alabama on August 1, 1829. After his parents separated, he lived with his mother but, following a visit to Texas, remained in the custody of his father. While William was in military service, Charles lived in the home of his father's friend, David Ayers. In February 1836, Charles saw his father for the last time when William visited the Ayers household on his way to the San Antonio de Béxar. Following his father's death, Charles lived with his mother and her new husband, Dr. Samuel B. Cloud. He became a lawyer and represented Hays and Caldwell counties in the state legislature from 1852 to 1854. In 1854, he served as a captain of a Texas Ranger company stationed at Fort Clark. On March 3, 1855, based primarily on the basis of his illustrious name, Charles won appointment as captain in the Second U.S. Cavalry regiment. In March 1856, a court martial cut short his career in the regular army. The court found him guilty of circulating a gambling charge against a fellow officer and, on May 1, 1856, discharged him from the service for "conduct unbecoming an officer." The Texas Legislature examined the testimony and vindicated young Travis, but army officials ignored efforts to have the verdict of the court martial overturned. Broken in spirit and in health, Charles retired to his sister's farm in Washington County. He died there of pneumonia in 1860. Travis, *Diary*, 17, 18, 105, 114n, 143; Davis, *Three Roads to the Alamo*, 196, 202, 205, 284, 386, 446-447, 509, 512, 521, 552-553, 568, 574, 577, 629n, 701n; Charles Edward Travis Vertical File, CAH; Handbook of Texas Online, Thomas W. Cutrer, "TRAVIS, CHARLES EDWARD," accessed March 27, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ftt04>.

<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Powell, a widow with four children, operated a boarding house and tavern located on the road from Brazoria and Columbia to San Felipe near where it crossed one of the routes to San Antonio, in present-day Fort Bend County. Travis frequently lodged there while traveling on legal business. On 10 April, 1836, a column led by Santa Anna's halted briefly at Madam Powell's tavern on the march to Harrisburg. On April 20—and again on April 24—units under General José de Urrea bivouacked there. General Filisola, the other Mexican generals, several thousand soldados, their women and children, and wagon teamsters, joined Urrea at the Powell homestead. Upon learning of Santa Anna's defeat at the Battle of San Jacinto, the generals gathered at Madam Powell's and planned the Mexican army's retreat to Victoria. On April 26, as the army commenced its withdrawal, the rear guard repaid Mrs. Powell's hospitality by torching her boarding house and outbuildings. Travis, *Diary*, 13, 16, 68, 73, 85, 110, 124, 138, 143; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Robert T. Shelby, "POWELL, ELIZABETH," accessed March 27, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpo72>; Gregg J. Dimmick, *Sea of Mud: The Retreat of the Mexican Army after San Jacinto, An Archeological Investigation* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2004), 53, 89-90, 91, 96, 99, 102, 122, 133.

<sup>40</sup> Leonidas was the Spartan king who, in 480 B.C.E., commanded the Greek city states at the Battle of Thermopylae, a glorious episode of the Graeco-Persian Wars (499-448 B.C.E.). He deployed his forces in the narrow pass of Thermopylae and there held the Persian legions of Xerxes at bay for three days. Finally, on the fourth day, Xerxes discovered a track across the mountains that fed out behind the pass. Along this path, the Persian sovereign dispatched the "Immortals" of his bodyguard, who quickly overwhelmed the Greek flank guards. This enveloping movement rendered the Greek defensive position untenable. Leonidas ordered the warriors of the other allied Greek city states to withdraw. Spartan tradition, however, made no allowance for retreat. Leonidas and three hundred hippeis of his personal guard refused offers to surrender and fought against hopeless odds until overwhelmed. The Greek historian Herodotus claimed that only one Spartan, Aristodemus, lost his nerve. He retreated with the fleeing allies to bring the news of the defeat back to Sparta. The story was the source of the famous assertion, attributed to General Edward Burleson: "Thermopylae had her messenger of defeat, the Alamo had none." Throughout in nineteenth century, Texans liked to compare the two last stands, with the inevitable comparisons between Leonidas and Travis. R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History from 3500 B.C. to the Present* (revised ed.; New York: Harper & Row, Publisher, 1970) 26; Peter Connolly, *Greece and Rome at War* (London: Macdonald Phoebus Ltd., 1981), 13-24; for an insightful discussion of the true source of the Thermopylae quotation see, John H. Jenkins and Kenneth Kesselus, *Edward Burleson: Texas Frontier Leader* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Company, 1990), 405-413.

<sup>41</sup> Kuykendall quoted a passage from Alfred Tennyson's poem, "The Two Voices." For the full text of the poem, see, PoemHunter.com at <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-two-voices-2/comments/>.

<sup>42</sup> Kuykendall errs slightly. Travis—killed on March 6, 1836—did not live to celebrate his twenty-seventh year. He would not have reached that milestone until the ninth day of the following August.