

Forgotten Letters Re

By CARL FREUND

"The country is now very quiet and there is no apprehension of another invasion by the Mexicans. The government is tolerably well organized and everything goes on smoothly.

"Santa Anna is yet a prisoner. He is kept at a private house about eleven miles from Columbia and well guarded."

Dipping his quill into an inkwell, Horatio Walcott wrote those words Nov. 30, 1836. He was describing the conditions he found in Columbia, a bustling village which was the temporary capital of the fledgling Republic of Texas after the Battle of San Jacinto.

WALCOTT FOLDED the letter carefully, sealed it with hot wax and mailed it to a brother in Mississippi.

Now, more than a century later, John B. Black of Honey Grove has found the letter among documents kept by his mother, Mrs. Mabel Walcott Black, before her death 13 years ago.

Black, an insurance agent and antique collector, also found a poignant letter written by a Confederate soldier as he sat, cold and hungry, in a bleak Arkansas camp with Christmas approaching.

In addition, he came across a receipt for a slave named Abraham, tattered copies of frontier ballads, and letters which gave graphic accounts of

the hopes and hardships of miners during the California gold rush.

"My mother was a keen student of history," Black said. "We knew she saved documents which told the story of our nation's history, but we never examined them carefully.

"She kept them in an old writing desk and bookcase in her home. After her death, we placed them in an old trunk and gave it little thought. Then, recently, I decided to go through the contents. I found the documents so interesting that I spent hours reading them."

BLACK CONSIDERS the Horatio Walcott letter his prize discovery.

Walcott told of his trip from New Orleans to Velasco, a Texas port at the mouth of the Brazos.

"I left this place (New Orleans) on Oct. 21 on the schooner Col. Fannin bound for Brazoria and towed down the river by the towboat Shack, which left us the next morning at sea," Walcott wrote.

"Our sails were soon unfurled and we proceeded toward Texas with a fair, but light breeze and, in a short time, lost sight of the lighthouse and land. We had about 30 passengers on board, mostly emigrants and adventurers..."

Walcott said the passengers included "lawyers and doctors who wanted to make fortunes in a few years" in the new nation. Accommoda-

tions aboard the schooner were so poor, he said, that most passengers slept on the deck during the 4-day voyage.

A surge of excitement swept through the passengers near the end of the trip, Walcott related, when a crewman spotted the sails of another ship.

"Our guns were immediately cleared for action in case it should prove to be a Mexican cruiser and all the small arms were got ready for use.

"When we got within about three miles of her, she fired a gun and our captain immediately displayed the Texas flag, which was answered by one of the same from the other vessel. It proved to be the Texas armed schooner Independence."

Walcott wrote that he stopped briefly in Velasco, which consisted of a half-dozen buildings, and then "proceeded up the river on the steamboat Yellowstone as far as Columbia, at present the seat of the government of the Republic of Texas, where I spent some time among the great men of the country."

THE TRAVELER said he found provisions scarce and prices high since the Mexican Army had scoured the land. Despite the profiteering, he emphasized, he was "very much pleased with the country as far as I have seen it."

Walcott sent the letter to a brother, Benjamin, who lived in Clinton, Miss. He wanted Benjamin, who had paid \$1,000 for the slave named Abraham, to join him in Texas.

Benjamin, who built sawmills and flour mills in the Mississippi Valley, was Black's great-grandfather.

Both brothers had an adventurous spirit. They could trace their ancestry to families involved in the Salem witchcraft trials in colonial Massachusetts.

While rummaging through the trunk, Black found another letter which Horatio Walcott had sent his brother from Bridgeport, Miss., on June 12, 1835.

The writer, who noted that he had been separated from his family for eight years, said that he "was sick most of the time, little caring whether I lived or died."

Black also discovered a receipt which showed that Mrs. Almira George paid \$16.52 to Nathan Anderson in Greenville, Texas, on March 17, 1860.

The payment represented taxes owed by the widow on "640 acres in Hunt and Lamar Counties and 836 more valued at \$2,952; another 1,115 acres valued at \$1,672; one Negro,

AF's Eagle Sets Climbing Record

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Air Force has announced the new F15 Eagle fighter has broken every climb-to-altitude record on the books—some of them established by the Soviet Union fighter which the Eagle was designed to beat in combat.

The Air Force said the Eagle had just broken the records for the time-to-climb to all eight altitudes used for international record purposes. They ranged from 1.9 miles to 18.6 miles.

The Eagle is the first U.S. Air Force plane with an engine thrust greater than its weight. With the

more powerful engine, the Eagle can accelerate straight up.

The five lower altitude records were set in 1962 by the U.S. Navy's F4H Phantom. The Eagle shaved those records by 19 per cent to 33 per cent.

The three higher altitude records were all set in 1973 by the Soviet Union's MIG 25 Foxbat. Those records were broken by the Eagle by 15 per cent to 28 per cent.

The Air Force records must be verified by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI) in Paris before they become official.

...ing for ... Caucus Reveal Historic Texas

Dallas Morning News - Feb. 8th 1975



John Black ... looking over some of the old documents.

\$300; one horse, \$100; 300 cattle, \$2,100, and ox at \$70."

Other receipts showed that Mrs. George dutifully paid a \$29.05 war tax in 1861 and purchased a \$200 Confederate bond in 1864 to help the South during the Civil War. Then, after the war ended, she was forced to pay an \$8.40 "insurrection tax" to a collector backed up by victorious Union troops.

MRS. GEORGE was a remarkable woman.

Her parents were the wealthy owners of a Kentucky plantation and, when she married Fleming George in 1828, they gave the couple "50 slaves and their children" as a wedding present. His parents provided the same number.

While his wife remained at home, George traveled through the South with a trusted slave and purchased land for 50c an acre. He also invested heavily in cattle and hogs.

George kept his accounts in a leather-bound notebook. Black found it among the other items saved by his mother.

The slave, who remained with the family until his death, although offered his freedom, returned from an 1842 trip with sad news. His master had been slain by robbers in Arkansas.

Creditors converged on Mrs. George and seized most of her property. Almost destitute, the courageous widow decided to leave Kentucky on an arduous journey to the land which her husband had purchased in Northeast Texas.

To pay for a ferry ride, she was forced to sell a treasured gold chain which her husband had given Eliza Jane, their 8-year-old daughter.

Then, when her journey ended, Mrs. George found herself ensnared in a bitter court battle over the Texas land. It ended with a court holding that she and her children could live on the land.

THE CONTENTS of the trunk included a letter which C. D. George, one of her sons, wrote to his sister after he had survived a Civil War bat-

tle. Written from "Camp Roan near Fort Smith," the letter was dated Dec. 23, 1862, and told of the hardships of Confederate soldiers huddled together in the woods of Arkansas.

C. D. asked Eliza Jane to urge another brother, Martin, to remain home as long as possible instead of volunteering for military duty.

"There is no fun in the army," he wrote.

Then the soldier described his longing for home with Christmas only two days away.

"I should like very much to be home Christmas, but I cannot," he told his sister. "I do not know whether I shall be at home any more before the war ends."

Did C. D. George survive the war and finally reach his home again? Or did he die in another of its battles?

Black checked old records and located a relative while seeking the answer. He learned that George did rejoin his family, although maimed, and spent his final years peacefully in Dallas.