

TARLTON, JAMES - Born in Scott, Kentucky, July 4, 1787, second child and eldest son of the eight children of Jeremiah and Eleanor (Medley) Tarleton. His father was a first lieutenant in the Maryland line in the American revolution, having enlisted at the age of fifteen. The family originated in Saint Mary's County, Maryland. Lord Bannistre Tarleton, a cousin of Jeremiah Tarleton, served under Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Altho born Tarleton, James Tarlton seems to have been the only member of the family who dropped the "e" from the name.

Mr. James Tarlton served in the legislature of Kentucky from Scott County, 1825-1826. In November 1835 he came to Texas in command of a company of thirty-six volunteers riflemen recruited in Kentucky. San Antonio having fallen before the company reached Texas the company was disorganized. General Houston sent Captain Tarlton with despatches to Fannin directing him to evacuate Goliad.

Captain Tarlton, altho an officer, fought in the ranks in Captain Moseley Baker's Company at San Jacinto. For this service he was, on February 2, 1856, issued Donation Certificate No. 4- 5 for 640 acres of land. On November 3, 1837 he received Bounty Certificate No. 232 for 1280 acres of land for having served in the army from January 13 to October 13, 1836.

The following information concerning Colonel Tarlton is contained in one of Comptroller's Military Service Records in the Texas State Library, Austin:

"Colonel Tarlton received \$20.00 per month for his services as

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a volunteer from November 15, 1835 to January 30, 1836. He received pay at the rate of \$40.00 per month for his services as a captain of infantry from January 30 to June 29, 1836. In addition to this he was allowed one servant at \$8.00 per month. He received pay at the rate of \$60. per month for his services as a lieutenant-colonel of riflemen from June 29 to October 20, 1836, and was allowed two servants at \$8.00 per month each.

A lengthy account of the battle of San Jacinto written from the battlefield April 22, 1836 by Colonel Tarlton was published in the Daily Commercial Republican and Commercial Register, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 3, 1836.

Colonel Tarlton was living in Ft. Bend County in 1838. In 1855 his home was in Houston. He moved to Bonham, Fannin County in 1858 and there died April 4, 1861. He is buried in a marked grave. He was married in Kentucky to Nancy Price, who died in Kentucky in 1835.

Colonel and Mrs. Tarlton had but one child, Robert Price Tarleton, who was born in Kentucky, January 1, 1833 and died in Bonham, Texas in 1897. He became a lieutenant in the Confederate Army in the war between the States. He was married to Mary Ragsdale, March 17, 1859. Miss Ragsdale was a daughter of Thomas and Amanda Melvina (Hallowell) Ragsdale. Thomas Ragsdale served in the army of Texas in 1836.

Children of Robert Price and Mary Jane (Ragsdale) Tarleton were (1) James Thomas, (2) Collins Galbraith, (3) Mary McKee, and (4) Amanda A. Tarleton.

(1) James Thomas Tarleton was born October 30, 1860. He was mar-

ried to Pearl George. Mr. and Mrs. Tarleton reside in Wolfe City, Texas.

(2) Collins Galbraith Tarleton was born September 22, 1864 and died July 9, 1873.

(3) Mary McKee Tarleton was born July 31, 1867. On October 17, 1888 she was married to Maurice Langborne Van Leer, son of Wayne and Mary E. (Mills) Van Leer, of Nashville, Tennessee, who settled in Fannin County, Texas in 1851. A son of this union, Major Blake Ragsdale Van Leer, resides at 7 Exter Circle, Raleigh, North Carolina.

(4) Amanda A. Tarleton was born December 9, 1878 and died August 29, 1880.

Surviving great grandchildren of Colonel James Tarleton are: Major Blake Ragsdale Van Leer, 7 Exter Circle, Raleigh, North Carolina; Mrs. Mary Lou (Tarleton) Joyner, Wolfe City, Texas; Mrs. Rose (Tarleton) Stevens, Wolfe City; Mrs. Lois Elizabeth (Tarleton) Hill, 1107 Gallaway Street, Dallas; Mrs. "Bill" (Tarleton) Robnett, 1318 Hendricks Street, Dallas and Mrs. Sudie (Van Leer) Cox, Bonham, Texas.

Surviving great-great-grandchildren of Colonel James Tarleton are Blake Wayne Van Leer, Maryly Van Leer, Samuel Wall Van Leer, James Albert Joyner, Robert Ryan Joyner, Beverly Lou Robnett and her twin Carolyn Sue Robnett.

Note: Relief Certificate No. 4, February 2, 1856 by Stephen Crosby, Commissioner of the General Land Office, for one league and one labor of land.

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TARLTON, JAMES - Born in Kentucky, came to Texas in December, 1835; served in Capt. Mosely Baker's Company at San Jacinto. He lived in Houston in 1855. On November 6th of that year he wrote a letter to General Sidney Sherman, from which the following was extrated:

"A paper called the Galveston News, dated June 14, 1855, has been placed in my hands whilst in your city, in the columns of which I find what is said to be the report of a speech delivered by Gen. Sam Houston on the 9th of said month at the San Jacinto Battle ground, where a few volunteers of the United States, aided by a few residents Texians in whipping the cohorts of Mexico under the command of General Santa Anna.

"Had not the report of that speech been vouched for as substantially correct by several gentlemen who heard it, I never could have believed that General Houston could have picked up such a tissue of falsities as it contains. Let us in charity hope the General, although a Son of Temperance, and lately, as I am informed, a convert to Christianity (God help the mark!) had become so excited on the occasion as to be induced to take a few drops of brandy, or perhaps its substitute, opium, which it is known the General is very fond of."

".....Shall I journalize the movements of the General and his little army of five or six hundred men? At the Colorado, the General's 'little army' was at least 1,800 men;

the enemy at most 600 on the morning Gen. Houston ordered the shameful retreat from the banks of that river."

The interesting letter, of Capt. Tarleton, which we copy from the Louisville Journal of Tuesday, we think must remove the doubts of the most incredulous, respecting the capture of Santa Anna by the Texians, and their most decided success.

TEXAS

We take pleasure in laying before the public the following letter from our estimable fellow citizen Capt. Tarleton, who, is commander of the company of Texian volunteers, that went first from this place. The very high estimation, in which Captain Tarleton is held in this community as a brave soldier and an honorable man, will cause his letter to be read with deep interest.

Lynchburgh, Texas, April 22, 1836.

My dear Brothers,- My last letter to you, dated at San Felipe De Austin, was couched in rather gloomy language, I had then a sad tale to tell you. Now, and thank my God for it, I can tell you another and a very different story. The retribution, called for by my butchered friends at Goliad, has not been invoked in vain. The arch fiend Santa Anna is now in our camp with several of his principle officers, a prisoner at our discretion, and his choice and veteran troops lie in hundreds scattered over the prairie, in which a battle, the parallel to which perhaps cannot be found in the annals of civilized warfare, was yesterday fought.

Our army under the command of General Samuel Houston became tired

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of retreating, and expressed great anxiety to be led to meet the enemy at once to decide the fate of Texas. Accordingly, on the 14th inst., Gen. H. took up the line of march for this place, situated at the junction of the San Jacinto river and the Bayou Buffalo. The two streams form what is called the San Jacinto Bay, on the east side of which, by looking at the map of this country, you will see Lynchburgh, or rather Lynch's feery, for in reality there is no town or village to be seen, and, on the west, there is a most beautiful prairie, handsomely variegated with small groves of timber. At about 10 o'clock, the morning of the 20th, we pitched our camp in the edge of the timber on the S. E. side of Buffalo Bayou with the intention of breakfasting, having first dispersed a small party of the enemy, that we found in the neighborhood. Before we had breakfasted, it was announced that the enemy in force was in sight. Our little band of heroes was instantly formed in the best position the ground enabled us to take, when we anxiously awaited his arrival. At about half past eleven o'clock, his near approach was confirmed by the report of his cannon and small arms, which was instantly returned by us. This skirmishing continued for some time without any injury to either side, when the Mexican troops were marched beyond the reach of our fire, and of course, it ceased. At about 3 P. M. Col. Sheerman, (with whom you are acquainted) of the 2d Regiment of Volunteers, offered to head the cavalry for the purpose of bringing on a general engagement and at once decided the contest. His offer was accepted, and about 63 men mounted their horses and proceeded to the neighborhood of the

enemy's cavalry, which they soon found already mounted, 68 in number backed by four companies of infantry 160 strong, and ready to receive our cavalry. The enemy had not long to wait. Col. Sheerman, with his characteristic bravery, gallantly led on his little squad of heroes to the charge. The artillery and both regiments of foot, including the regulars, rushed with that ardor, which the love of liberty so nobly and so naturally inspires, to the support of our brave companions on horseback, but our commander-in-chief thought it expedient to order them to return to camp. In this little affair we had none killed and only two or three wounded, none dangerously. The enemy's loss has not been ascertained, but must have been considerable. His Adjutant General was severely wounded, and is now lying in the adjoining room to the one in which I indite this narrative.

The next day, that is yesterday, the 21st, at length arrived, and the whole army expected, as soon as breakfast was over, to be led to the enemy's encampment, which, by this time, had become considerably strengthened by having thrown up a breast-work, and by the acquisition of a reinforcement of 500 men under the command of General Cos, who, to gratify his master, had violated his parole of honor solemnly pledged at San Antonio in December. At last, at half past three o'clock P. M. were ordered to prepare for battle, which was soon done; and then commenced a conflict, the parallel of which, I presume, cannot be found on record. To see a mere handful of raw undisciplined volunteers, just taken from their ploughs and thrown together with rifles without bayonets no two perhaps of the same calibre, and circled only by two

pieces of artillery, 6 pounders, and a few musketeers some with and some without bayonets, and some 40 or 50 men on horseback to meet the trained bands of the hero of so many victories -to see them, with trailed arms, marching to within some 60 or 70 yards of such an army at least doubt in number entrenched too behind a breast-work impregnable to small arms and protected by a long brass 9 pounder to see them. I say do all this, fearless, and determined to save their country and their country's liberty or to die in the effort was no ordinary occurrence. Yet such was their conduct, and so irresistible was that Spartan phalanx, that it was not more than from fifteen to twenty minutes from our first fire until a complete rout of the enemy was effected; and such slaughter on the one side and such almost miraculous preservation on the other have never been heard of since the invention of gunpowder. The commencement of the attack was accompanied by the watch words, "Remember the Alamo, Laborde and Tampico" at the very top of our voices, and, in some ten minutes, we were in the full possession of the enemy's encampment, cannon, all things, else, whilst his veterans were in the greatest possible disorder, attempting by flight to save their lives. I happened to be so placed in the regiment, to which I was attached, that I was enabled to be the third man, who entered the entrenchment, which I soon left in company with the balance of the regiment in pursuit of the defeated enemies of the Texian liberty. I feel confident, that I do not exaggerate, when I state their loss in killed as nearly if not quite equal to the whole of our number engaged; whilst we

had only six killed on the spot and some twelve or fifteen wounded, two of whom have since died, one of them Doctor Motley of Ky., a relative of Mr. Shapley Owan, who died to-night and since I commenced writing this letter. The number of our prisoners has not yet been officially announced, but I should suppose it to be nearly if not quite 600, many of whom are wounded. So complete has been our triumph and their defeat, that my antipathy to them has subsided, and I can now commiserate their condition.

If the people of Texas shall act wisely, the war is ended, and its terrified inhabitants may return to peace and quietness to their homes, and yet make bread sufficient for their support. Santa Anna has agreed to send all his troops home and to deliver to us their arms, ammunition, money, and all other public property, and to acknowledge our Independence and Separation from Mexico. He and his principal officers will of course be held as hostages until the fulfillment of the treaty, and our army will not be disbanded until Texas is safe, which I have no doubt will be in a few weeks, when I shall return to Kentucky with the intention of making arrangements for permanently settling in this country.

I am told that General Houston has ordered the spoils of the enemy to be divided equally among the captors, and, that he will use his influence in attempting to prevail on Texas to allow, for this

When the Mexicans commenced retreating from their breastworks at San Jacinto on the evening of the 21st of April, 1836, Santa Anna, General Cos and other officers of note among them hastened to join forces at the old Fort Bend on the Brazos under Fillisola. Santa Anna and his cavalry but four attempted their retreat by way of Vince's Bridge, not knowing that this bridge had been destroyed by Deaf Smith on the morning of that day. About the time this retreat of the Mexicans was commenced, Captain Karnes called for all those having loaded guns to follow him in the pursuit. The following are the names of all I can recollect of those who responded to Karnes's call, namely, James Cook, Washington Secrest, Field Secrest, Deaf Smith, Shell Tunage, Thomas Robinson, John Robinson, Elisha Clapp, Thomas House, W. T. C. Pierce. These eleven are all dead, to my certain knowledge. I also recollectea Dr. Alsbury and a man who escaped from Fannin's massacre, but do not know whether they are alive or not, as I have not seen them since the summer of 1836. I was also of the number, making fourteen, with Captain Karnes. I think there were four more making eighteen in all, but I do not recollect the names of these four. The distance to Vince's bridge from the battle ground was about four miles over a very wet, muddy plain, and, for about a quarter of a mile, knee-deep to our horses in mud and water. Two or three miles from the battle ground, some three or four Mexicans struck off (leaving the balance) in the open prairie in the direction of the head of Vince's Bayou. Elisha Clapp, having a very fleet horse, started in pursuit of them and soon coming up with them fired his

rifle, killing one of them. The others, seeing that his rifle was discharged, turned to give him battle, when Clapp was compelled to retreat, but being able to cope with three Mexicans with an empty gun. The one nearest to him discharged his escopete at him, but the ball missed him, though judging from the whistling, Clapp afterwards told me he thought it passed within six inches of his head. But he returned to us unhurt. We continued our pursuit to Vince's Bridge, the three Mexicans as I afterwards learned making good their escape to Fillisola's army on the Brazos, where they reported to him that Houston's army with 4,000 strong and that Santa Anna and all the army was either killed or taken prisoners. While pursuing the Mexicans on the road to Vince's bridge, we overtook numbers, their horses being too tired to enable them to escape; and as we overtook them, we felt compelled to kill them and did so, though on their knees crying for quarter and saying "Me no Alamo - me no Bahia," meaning that they were not in either of those horrible massacres. As there were but some fifteen or eighteen of us, and some sixty of the Mexicans we were pursuing, besides Santa Anna, Cos and several other officers, we saw it was impossible for us to take prisoners and we had but little disposition to do so, knowing they had slaughtered so many of Fannin's men in cold blood and that they had surrendered as prisoners of war under solemn treaty stipulations that they would be sent safely to New Orleans. For about half the distance from the battle ground to Vince's Bridge the road was strewed every few hundred yards with dead Mexicans, as we took no prisoners in this pursuit. When we arrived

within half or three-quarters of a mile of Vince's Bridge, Capt. Karnes ordered those in advance to halt till the rear could come up, stating that Santa Anna was, no doubt, with the other Mexicans and when they should reach the bridge and find it destroyed, they could certainly make a fight as it would then be their only alternative. We then followed in a body, prepared for and expecting a fight; but when they reached the bridge and found it gone, they immediately scattered in all directions, some going up and others down the bayou. When we discovered this, every man put spurs to his horse, and started after them as fast as possible. When within 300 or 400 yards of the bridge we discovered Vince's large, black stallion with a fine-looking officer on him dressed in uniform. Capt. Karnes, supposing it was Santa Anna himself (as it was rumored that he was riding Vince's horse) made for him. When he came up to him on the bank of the bayou, the officer dismounted and Karnes asked him if he was Santa Anna. He replied that he was, supposing that quarter would be given Santa Anna. Whereupon Capt. Karnes struck at him with his sword, hitting him a glancing blow on the head as he stood on the bank of the bayou. When he discovered that no quarter would be shown to him he jumped into the bayou saying at the same time that he was not Santa Anna. Whereupon some pistols were discharged at him, killing him in the bayou. We then continued our pursuit up and down the bayou, killing all we overtook, until we had killed all we could find. When we came to the wreck of the bridge, the sun was near setting. Continuing our search, we finally found four horses in a thicket, some few hundred yards a-

bove the bridge. We saw that their riders had dismounted and crossed the bayou on foot, wading through the mud and water, and had got into a much larger thicket on the opposite side. These four afterwards proved to be Santa Anna, Cos, Santa Anna's secretary, and another officer whose name I do not recollect. By this time it has become too dark to search the thicket for them that night. Capt. Karnes called then Bn Dr. Alsbury, who spoke the Spanish language, to call to Santa Anna in the thicket (for he had no doubt that Santa Anna was one of them) and say to him if he would come out and give himself up, we would take him a prisoner and spare his life; for he had fears that he might get out of the thicket and escape during the night to Fillisola's camp some 20 miles distant, as he had not men enough to guard the thicket securely. Dr. Alsbury called out to him accordingly to come out and deliver himself up and his life would be saved. But no reply was made; all was as still as if there had not been a living soul in the thicket. Yet we were satisfied Santa Anna must be there. Capt. Karnes then dispatched a runner to camp with the news that we had Santa Anna in a thicket near Vince's Bridge and that we had not men enough to guard the thicket till morning, that more men should be sent immediately to help us. Our force, then consisting of fourteen, was disposed to the best advantage to guard the thicket; but the number not being sufficient to surround it, we left the space open on the side towards our camp, so that, should he get out during the night, he would have to beat about in the direction of the battle ground, where he would be least likely to escape. In this condition

we remained on past till daylight. But during the night Santa Anna crawled out rather in the direction of our camp and the head of the bayou while Cos and another officer escaped in the direction of the Brazos timber, as we learned from Santa Anna's secretary, who remained in the timber till morning and then gave himself up to Capt. Karnes. Through his interpreter, Dr. Aisbury, the secretary informed Capt. Karnes that Santa Anna, Cos and the other officer had been in the thicket, but had escaped as above stated. Capt. Karnes then dispatched a runner to camp to give this intelligence and to say that Santa Anna was somewhere in the prairie between Vince's Bridge and the camp, in the direction of the head of the bayou. On the receipt of this information, as I afterwards learned, every man in camp that could raise a horse or pack mule started in search of Santa Anna, under command of Col. Burleson and he was picked up during the day, April 22. When I reached camp, late in the evening of the 22d I learned that the person or persons who captured Santa Anna and took him to camp did not know or suspect who he was, as he was disguised in his dress. He was first made known after his arrival at the camp by the Mexican prisoners calling his name on seeing and recognizing him. In the Texas Almanac of 1859 I see that Joel W. Robison claims to have taken Santa Anna. I was not previously acquainted with Mr. Robison, but, from his statement of the whole affair, I have no hesitation in giving it as my opinion that Mr. Robison's account is correct. I remember, on arriving at camp, hearing several of the particulars stated by Mr. Robison, particularly about Santa Anna

arriving in camp on a horse behind his captor. The interesting account given by Mr. Robison may be seen on page 166 of the Texas Almanac for 1859. After Capt. Karnes had dispatched the runner, as above stated, he took Deaf Smith and Washington Secrest and headed for the bayou in pursuit of Cos and the other officers and overtook them just as they were entering the Brazos timber and took them as prisoners to our camp. If my recollection is right, Capt. Karnes did not get back to camp with his prisoners until the next day, April 23rd, about noon, but I will not be positive as to the exact time. In conclusion, I would mention one incident that may be worth recording. John Robbins - or Jack as we called him - after our arrival at Vince's Bridge pursued two Mexicans some distance above the bridge and apart from the rest of us. He was on foot with his rifle and fired, killing one of them. The other then seized Robbins in his arms and, being much the stronger man, threw him to the ground, falling on top of him. Robbins, while calling out for help succeeded in drawing his knife from the belt and plunged it into the Mexican, and when some of our company came up to his relief he was still lying under the Mexican who was then in the agonies of death from the effects of the fatal wound by the knife. This closes the account of our pursuit of the Mexicans from the battle field, after the Mexicans commenced their flight. It is strictly correct in all its details and, if you think of interest to the readers of the Texas Almanac, you are at liberty to place it in your columns.

Sunday, March 6, 1836.

A great many persons are starting and preparing to start to the seat of war. In the afternoon Houston left, accompanied by his staff, Capt. Cooke, Capt. Tarleton, etc.

William Fairfax Gray, From Virginia to Texas, 1835, 125.

December 19, 1939

Mrs. Blake R. Van Leer
Box 5506
Raleigh, North Carolina.

Dear Mrs. Van Leer:

I have your favor of December 10 relative to James Tarlton. I am afraid that at this time I will be unable to assist you. As Chairman of the Historical Board of the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations I was in position to have had a monument costin \$200. erected at Colonel Tarlton's grave. The Commis- sions authority ended December 31, 1938.

No markers were erected at marked graves. Since I was of the opinion that Colonel Tarlton's grave was marked I did not recommend a monument for it.

The only dates I have are the ones you furnished me. They are that Colonel Tarlton was born July 4, 1787 and died April 4, 1861.

I sincerely regret that we did not learn until too late that the monument at the Grave of Colonel Tarlton had fallen to pieces.

Sincerely yours,

L. W. KEMP.

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