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FORBES, JOHN -- Born in Cork, Ireland, of Scotch parents, February 26, 1797. He emigrated to the United States in 1817 and located in Cincinnati, Ohio. The following year he was married to Emily Sophia Sisson, and with her left for Texas early in the year 1835. In Headright Certificate No. 8 issued to him February 1, 1838 for one labor of land by the Nacogdoches County Board of Land Commissioners, it is shown that he stated that he had arrived in Texas in April, 1835. On May 6, 1835 he was granted title to a league of land in Vehlein's Colony, situated in the present County of Houston.

Leaving Cincinnati Mr. and Mrs. Forbes traveled by steamer to Natchitoches, Louisiana and from there overland to Nacogdoches. Shortly after their arrival Mr. Forbes visited San Felipe de Austin where he first met Stephen F. Austin, Henry Smith, William B. Travis, Robert M. Williamson and other prominently identified with the affairs of Texas.

As chairman of the Committee of Safety of Nacogdoches Municipality in 1835, Mr. Forbes wrote to President Andrew Jackson protesting against the introduction of their chiefs, Ben Hawkins and Apotheoyola, of some five thousand Creek Indians into East Texas, in addition to the Indians already there.

The General Council of the Provisional Government passed an act providing for the election by the council of two judges, a First and a Second, for each municipality. The Second Judge to act only in the absence of the First. Mr. Forbes was elected First Judge of the Nacogdoches Municipality, November 26, 1835. On December 17th he, Gener-

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al Sam Houston and John Cameron were chosen by the General Council to negotiate a treaty of peace with the Cherokee Indians living near Nacogdoches. Mr. Cameron declined to serve on the commission and the treaty was signed by Judge Forbes and General Houston.

Judge Forbes administered the oath of allegiance to the recruits for the army as they passed through Nacogdoches. In a letter of January 12, 1836 to Governor James W. Robinson he told of having forwarded a number of men. "I have been very busily engaged," he wrote, "in attending to numerous volunteers from the United States, fifty-two of whom will leave here tomorrow for the frontier. Almost all are gentlemen of the best respectability and mostly hailing from Tennessee.

"They have come to fight the battle of Texas and maintain its rights, and while here have pledged themselves to sustain the council against the speculators who have been tampering with them. I have had the honor of administering the oath of allegiance to them. The celebrated David Crockett is of the number. I would recommend to your particular attention Captain Kimble, Major Autry and Major Gilmore. I hear that these gentlemen are on the road for this place. I trust that hereafter the volunteers will take the route by sea to Matagorda or Copano as provisions are scarce here."

On February 17, 1836 Judge Forbes was appointed aide-de-camp to General Houston with the rank of Major and on March 5th General Houston ordered him to Velasco to act with Adjutant General John A Wharton in forwarding troops and munitions of war to the army. He sent three

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companies commanded respectively by Captains Amasa Turned, Richard Roman and William S. Fisher. They joined the main army on the Colorado, March 26, 1836. Major Forbes' experiences are told in a letter to General Houston which in 1938 was in possession of Mrs. Robert A. John, 2120 La Branch Street, Houston. He stated that he left Washington-on-the-Brazos on March 5th for Velasco where he remained until the 24th when the troops left by boats for Brazoria and from thence overland to Columbia. Major Forbes accompanied Captain Turner's company which traveled faster than the companies of Roman and Fisher. Turner's company camped the first night at the fartherest point of the timbers skirting the prairie west of the Brazos. On the night of the 25th Turner's company camped in the timbers of the Colorado three miles from the Atascocita Crossing. The present town of Columbus in Colorado County is a few miles west of the old crossing. General Houston's army was at that time eight or nine miles above the crossing and was reached by Turner at eleven o'clock on the morning of March 26th. The companies of Roman and Fisher on the night of March 26th camped where Turner's company had camped on the 25th. By forced marches the companies reached the main army at two o'clock of the morning March 27th. This differs some what from the account given by Henderson Yoakum [History of Texas, Vol. 2, p. 114] who stated that the three companies joined Houston's army on March 26th.

On April 2, 1836 Major Forbes was appointed Commissary General of the army. After the Battle of San Jacinto he had charge of all property captured from the Mexicans. On May 14, 1838 he was issued

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Donation Certificate No. 7 for 640 acres of land for having participated in the Battle of San Jacinto. On November 24, 1837 he received Bounty Certificate No. 503 for 960 acres of land for his services from February 17 to November 16, 1836. The military record of Major Forbes is contained in Comptroller's Military Service Record No. 5913.

Major Forbes was appointed Lieutenant Colonel on the staff of Governor Richard Coke in 1876.

Mrs. Forbes was born October 22, 1800 and died June 20, 1870 (or was she born October 27, 1802? Did she die June 20, 1872?). Colonel Forbes died June 22, 1880, while a member of the Texas Veterans Association. The two are buried in marked graves in Oak Grove Cemetery, Nacogdoches.

Susan W. Forbes, daughter of John and Emily Sophia (Sisson) Forbes was married to Frost Thorn. She died December 11, 1891 in Nacogdoches.

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The original letters and affidavits of Colonel Forbes from which the following were copied are among the Pension Papers in the Archives of the State Library, Austin:

Nacogdoches, Texas, October 12th, 1870.

To the Honble. A. Bledsoe  
Comptroller of the State of Texas  
at the City of Austin

Sir By letter of Sept. 12/70 I presented myself to your notice, as an Applicant for the benefit of "An Act granting Pensions to the surviving Veterans of the Revolution, which separated Texas from Mexico and seeking information how the claim should be substantiated.

On the 27th of September last I received in reply your printed Circular in which it is stated that the comptroller will for the present issue certificates only for service rendered prior to the close of the Battle of San Jacinto &c &c. I herewith send you a statement, duly sworn to of some facts necessary to establish my claim, which I trust will be satisfactory Three are prominent 1st. acting as Commissioner, (under instructions from the Provisional Government) conjointly with Genl. Sam Houston in holding and making a treaty with all of the Indian Tribes, in eastern Texas which was with difficulty effected after a three days talk and some hostile demonstrations, on the part of some of their Chiefs. Had we failed in securing their friendship and neutrality, eastern Texas would have been abandoned and the West paralyzed. The Indians were very numerous and Warlike, and in the event of their proving hostile. They would have

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been joined by the Mexican population here, who at that time were numerous, and the consequences would have been very disastrous. Few persons now living know the dread and terror that was entertained of the Indians at that time by our sparse population. We had also some evil disposed white persons amongst us. When the runaway panic occurred, now almost forgotten (I was at that time with the Army) my family with Genl. Rusk's family, and others fled from his town across the Sabine, in their absence my house was broken into and goods and chattels, to a large amount taken therefrom; others also suffered.

2nd. Altho from fortuitous circumstances I could not carry out Genl. Sam Houston's Orders of March 5th, 1836, to the letter, yet in its spirit it was carried out very effectually, by my overland march under great difficulties by me joining Genl. Houston's army on the eve of its retreating from the Colorado to San Felipe the munitions of War, which I brought very much needed, and the reinforcement of three companies of Infantry well armed and disciplined commanded by such able and gallant officers, as Captn. Turner, Captn. Roman and Captn. Wm. Fisher, infused fresh life and vigor into the Texian Army who were there by greatly strengthened and encouraged. Do not think me egotistic when I say that it was the turning point in our military affairs, as it enabled the Comd in Chief when the proper time arrived to gain a glorious Victory expel the Mexican Army from our Territory and permanently secure the Independence of Texas.

3rd. I have given a true and plain statement of the capture of Genl. Santa Anna, and of the manner of his introduction to Genl. Sam

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Houston and his full identification. I have pladed this before you, as some Imposters proclaiming that the were the captors of that important personage had had fetes and presents given them in the States outside of Texas.

In my previous letter I mentioned that my military appointments and commissions had each a History connected therewith. I have only given you a few facts from ~~Y~~ a great many that I could furnish and I sometimes wish that I was ~~at~~ your elbow that I could be word of mouth communicate more fully. Few now living can appreciate the difficulties we had to meet with and overcome not only with open & external foes, but also with internal enemies to the independance of Texas from certain quarters and also strife for place, power and gain by ambitious and unprincipaled Individual aspirants.

Should the statement herewith forwarded prove satisfactory as to authorize you to isse to me a certificate under the act of Augst. 13, 1870, you would confer a favour by forwarding it to me at Nacogdoches.

With great respect

John Forbes.

I know of only two Persons that was in the Texian Army and participated in the Battle of San Jacinto now living in the County of Nacogdoches to wit David Rusk and M. G. Whitaker applications by others will probably be made but I have no knowledge whatever of their pretensions

J. F

Nacogdoches, Texas, December 16, 1871-

Honble. A. Bledsoe.

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Comptroller, Public Acts.

Austin

Austin, Texas

Sir I herewith enclose to you my Affidavit of the loss of my original Pension Certificate No. 120 and pray of you a Duplicate of said certificate by so doing you will confer a great favor.

On the 31st day Decr. 1870 I forwarded to the Honble. Amos Clark, State Senator from Nacogdoches, then at Austin, my power of Attorney to apply for me, and for my use the Dividend due me to Decr. 31. 1870 to which I should be entitled to under the Act of granting.-- Pensions appd. Augst. 13/70. I also sent with it my original Pension Certificate No. 120 as evidence of claim if required with the request that said Certificate should be returned to me. I wrote afterwards to Amos Clark several letters relating thereto and received no communication from him whatsoever. Judge Clark died at Austin during the session and I have made due and diligent inquiry for the recovery of my Papers &c without effect, they cannot be found and are lost to me.

Should you comply with my request in sending a Duplicate of my Pension Certificate can you further gratify me (and pardon the vanity of an old man) by having it made on parchment. I would like it for an Heirloom I have children, Grand children, & Great grand children around me, and I should like it to be preserved to descend to their children's descendants, A Memorial of an Old Texian, by reference to my papers on file in your office you will see the several Military appointments and Commissions I had the honor to hold in the service



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of Texas, throughout our arduous Struggle for Liberty and Independence which under an all wise providence, and the firm and decided energy of the Old Texians was happily accomplished

As I am ignorant of the present condition of the Pension Act I should be thankful for any information connected therewith

I remain Your Obt. Servt.

John Forbes

The State of Texas            )  
  )  
County of Nacogdoches    )   Personally appeared before the Undersigned  
Authority \_\_\_\_\_ John Forbes, to me well,  
and honorably known, who Deposeth and saith that he believes, that he is entitled to the benefits of "An Act granting Pensions to the surviving Veterans of The Revolution which separated Texas from Mexico approved August 13th. 1870. That he is now in his 74th. year of his age being born on the 26th. day of February, A. D. 1797, and now resides, and with his family have permanently resided in the town of Nacogdoches Texas for nearly 36 years past In support of said claim he submits Under Oath a few facts, as follows I the said John Forbes was duly commissioned Aid de Camp with the rank of Colonel to the Governor of Texas as commander in chief of all the forces of Texas, dated at San Felipe, Decr. 8, 1835 (signed) Henry Smith Governor under which authority, important military duties were discharged by me.

On the 17th. day of February 1836, I, the said John Forbes, was appointed a Volunteer Aid of the Staff of the commander in chief of the army of Texas by Genl. Sam Houston, Comr. in Chief, and accompanied

Genl. Sam Houston to the Convention to be held at Washington on the Brazos River Previous to which I, the said Forbes acted as Commissioner appointed by the Provisional Government conjointly with Genl. Sam Houston, in holding and making a Treaty, with all of the Indian tribes then in Eastern Texas, which was happily consummated their neutrality secured, and the peace & quiet of Eastern Texas preserved

On the 5th. day of March 1836, the same day that Genl. Sam Houston was reconfirmed by the Convention, at Washington, commander in chief of the Army of Texas, I was reappointed Volunteer aid on his staff and important duties by special orders assigned me I here subjoin a correct copy of said appointment and Special Orders, to wit

"Head Quarters Washington 5th. March 1836."

"To Major John Forbes.

Sir you are hereby appointed Volunteer Aid de Camp "To the Commander in Chief of the Army of Texas, and will proceed forthwith to Velasco, and in conjunction with Col. John A. Wharton forward the Troops, and munitions of War, under an order to him dated 2nd. March-- instant, from this place Subject to the following countermand "viz" that the supplied, and munitions, will be sent no further South than Demitts Landing. Arms and munitions are wanted in camp and prompt dispatch is required Colonel Wharton and Major Forbes, upon the completion of this order will report to the commander in chief.

"Signed Geo W. Hockley

signed Sam Houston

Aid de Camp

Comr. in Chief of the Army

Under this order, which contemplated proceeding by Sea from Velasco

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to Demitts landing at the head of La Vaca Bay No provision had been made for transportation by sea, nor was a single cent advanced to me for carrying out this important order. I had to rely solely on my individual resources I started on the evening of the date of the order from Washington for Velasco, on arriving there, I found Col. Poe in temporary command which he relinquished to me I also found there Two companies of Infantry for the service of Texas. Just arrived from New Orleans, viz Captn. Turners company of Regulars and Captn. Roman's company of Volunteers, commanded by excellent Officers, fully armed & equipt and under good discipline, also a considerable quantity of munitions of War. I ascertained that Col. John A Wharton was at Matagorda, and I had to act without him another company of Volunteers was raised, called the Brazoria and Velasco Blues, who elected Wm. Fisher, (then collector of the Port) as their Captain the Company was armed and Equipt from the Stores on hand, making altogether 3 companies of Infantry. When I arrived at Velasco, there was no sea-going Vessel at the port but a few days after a large schooner arrived with freight to McKinney & Williams as they were both absent I had an interview with their agent to obtain the use of the Vessel, to carry the Generals Orders, and was flatly refused, deeming it my duty to act promptly, a detachment of Captn. Romans Compy was ordered up under arms, the vessel was impressed, and taken possession of (a very unpleasant duty, but unavoidable in our then trying crisis) I had just commenced to discharge its cargo, when I received the intelligence through a reliable source (not official) of the unhappy

Defeat, and Massacre of Col. Fannins Command at Goliad by the Mexican Army, and of their advance in strong force I immediately abandoned my intention of proceeding by sea to Demitts landing and gave up the Vessel after an hours detention, without injury to the consignees and determined on my own responsibility to join Genl. Houston's Army wherever it was, by an overland route with the 3 companies of Infantry, and as large a quantity of Munitions of War as could be transported, I accordingly proceeded with the troops & munitions &c up the Brazos River to Columbia as a starting point, selecting the old contraband trace leading there from to the Colorado, as the line of March to Head Quarters. By the aid the patriotism and liberality of the citizens of Brazoria Columbia and neighboring planters of Brazoria Coy. a sufficient number of wagons & ox teams were procured for the use of the companies and transportation of Munitions of War &c. The troops and Wagon trains started from Columbia in fine Order & Condition and on a forced March joined Genl Sam Houston Army on the Colorado on the day that it fell back from the Colorado upon San Felipe. With a quantity of Munitions of War and Three companied of Infantry well armed and deciplined & under the command of Excehllent Officers forming "The Elites" of the Texian Army who with the other brave troops composing the Army under the command of Genl. Sam Houston aided by Divine Providence finally defeated the Mexican Army at San Jacinto and led to the capture of its celebrated Leader and the finals expulsion of the Mexican forces from the territory of Texas.

From San Felipe, the army, thus reinforced proceeded to Encamp

ment near Groce's on the Brazos river, where it underwent a thorough reorganization and I, the said Forbes received the appointment of Commissary General with rank as colonel dated Camp near Groce's 2nd. April 1836 (signed) Sam Houston Com in Chief.

I refer to the Official Report of Genl. Sam Houston comr in chief to the Secretary of War of the Battle of San Jacinto containing the names of the officers and men engaged in that Battle for my participation therein. A printed copy of said report will be found in Col Yoakum's History of Texas, as additional evidence I received my San Jacinto Donation and a Bounty warrant. No. 503 issued to me by Barnard E. Bee Secretary at War dated November 24th. 1837. which warrant having received a Patent therefor No. 870, Vol. 6, Sept. 19, 1854 is on file in the land office at Austin, and can be referred to

And I the said John Forbes under Oath maketh the following statement of the capture of Genl. St. Anna and of his introduction to Genl. Houston, as follows:

Some two days after the Battle of San Jacinto and in the morning at early sunrise I was attending to some duties close by the guard fire where the Mexican prisoners under guard I noticed two men approaching me from the Prairie skirting Buffalo Bayou, as they came up to where I was standing, one of the men was a very youthfull soldier with his gun on his shoulder, belonging to Captain Baker's company I think his name was Joel Robertson, the other man was a Mexican in underdress and unarmed, the young soldier stated that as he was coming into camp the Mexican threw himself in his way, and requested to be

taken to Genl. Houston. The Mexican then quickly addressed me in Spanish, which I rendered into english meant, Sir Genl. Houston, intimating a desire to see the General and took from some where about his person, a Letter which he handed to me, pressing his finger on its address, which read Don Lopez de Santa Anna &c. I returned the letter to him and asked him if he was Genl. St. Anna he replied affirmatively and again repeated Sir Genl. Houston with emphasis, at that moment I was joined by Col. Geo. W. Hockley whom I told who the prisoner was, and that we would take him before Genl. Houston at the same time we heard from the Mexican Prisoners at the Guard fire an exclamation of El President! El President! The Prisoner placed between Col Hockley and Myself, our young Texian soldier in the rear passed through Col. Burlesons Quarters at the head of which Genl. Houston's tent was pitched on our arrival we found the Genl. outside of his tent stretched on a mattress at the foot of a large tree apparently asleep resting on his left side and his back towards us. We ranged up along side and I put my hand on his arm to arouse him, he raised himself on his elbow and looked up the Prisoner immediately addressed him telling him who he was and surrendering himself to him, a prisoner of War, Genl. Houston looked at him intensely but made no reply, turning to me requested me to proceed to the Guard fire and bring from thence before him, a young man who was reported to be the private secretary of Santa Anna and who could talk english fluently. I did so, and on my return found the Prisoner seated quietly in a chair beside the Generals mattress. the young man on seeing the

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prisoner assured General Houston that the Prisoner then before him was truly Genl. Santa Anna

General Houston wanting additional evidence sent me again to the guard fire to bring Genl. Almonte before him. in bringing down Genl. Almonte I met with Genl. Thos. J. Rusk and Lieut. Zavalla to whom I mentioned what was taking place before Genl. Houston. They accompanied me with Genl. Almonte to where Genl. Houston was, when the Prisoner was fully recognized and Identified

Throughout the whole General Santa Anna's demeanor was dignified and soldier like but, a close observer could trace a shade of sadness on his otherwise impassive countenance

On the 22nd, day of May 1836, I, the said John Forbes, was by the President of the Republic of Texas, duly appointed, and commissioned "by the advice, and consent, of the cabinet of the Executive Governments of "Texas, Commissary General with the rank of colonel, (thereby ratifying and confirming the appointment of the same office made by Genl. Sam Houston to Camp near Groce's April 2nd. 1836)

Done at the town of Velasco, 22nd. May 1836

signed David G. Burnet

Countersigned by  
signed

Mirabeau B. Lamar  
Secretary of War