

BUNTON, JOHN WHEELER -- Born in Sumner, Tennessee, February 22, 1807 a son of Joseph Robert and Phoebe (Desha) Bunton. In the headright certificate issued to him January 13, 1838 for three-fourths of one league and one labor of land by the Board of Land Commissioners for Austin County it is stated that he came to Texas in 1833. On April 8, 1835, as a single man, he had received title to one-fourth of a league in Milam's Colony situated in the present Bastrop County.

Mr. Bunton was Secretary of the first Committee of Safety organized at Mina (Bastrop), May 17, 1835. In Comptroller's Military Service Record No. 1158 it is certified that he was First Sergeant in Captain Robert M. Coleman's Company of Mina Volunteers from September 28 to December 17, 1835 when discharged at Mina. For the Storming and Capture of Bexar, December 5 to 10, 1835 he was probably transferred to Captain John York's Company since his name appears on page 23 of the army rolls in the General Land Office as a member of Captain York's Company.

Mr. Bunton was one of the delegates from Mina Municipality to the Constitutional Convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos and was a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence. In Comptroller's Military Service Record No. 141 it is stated that he served in the army from March 28 to May 12, 1836. He was a member of Captain Jesse Billingsley's Company of Mina Volunteers at San Jacinto and on February 8, 1836 he was issued Donation Certificate No. 484 for 640 acres of land for having participated in the battle. In Service Record No. 133 it is certified that Mr. Bunton was due \$391.35 for having served as a Major of Rangers from July 24 to October 24, 1836.

The appearance of the Mexican fleet in the Gulf in 1837 was followed by some damage to Texas. The Champion, freighted with provisions, etc., for the army, was taken by the enemy; and also, on the 12th of April, the Julius Caesar, whose cargo was valued at thirty thousand dollars. On board the latter were a number of passengers returning from a visit to the United States, among them being Major and Mrs. John W. Bunton, Mr. and Mrs. Desha Bunton, a sister of John W. and Desha Bunton and her husband and a number of slaves, all of whom were taken prisoners. President Houston had previously issued an order for the release of the Mexican prisoners; but learning that those on board the captured vessels had been taken to Matamoros and confined, he revoked the order of release.

The blockading navy of the enemy necessarily came in contact with the commerce of the United States; and the Mexican brig of war Urrea, having captured some American vessels and property, was taken by the United States sloop-of-war Natchez, and sent into Pensacola as a pirate. On the 17th of April, the Texan schooner Independence, having a crew of thirty-one men besides several passengers - among whom was William H. Wharton, on his return his mission to the United States, was met about thirty miles from Velasco, by two Mexican brigs-of-war, the Liberator; having sixteen eighteen pounders and one hundred and forty men, and the Vince dor del Alamo, carrying six twelves and one long eighteen pounders, and one hundred men. After a severe fight, in which the Texans behaved most gallantly, the Independence was overpowered and taken into Brazos Santiago, whence the crew and passengers were transferred to Matamoros and confined. In this engagement, Captain George W. Wheelwright, of the

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Independence, was severely wounded.

The following is from an editorial in the Telegraph and Texas Register of Houston, June 24, 1837:

"The Honorable John W. Bunton and lady, having recently arrived from Matamoras, via New Orleans. Mr. Bunton states that the Champion has been condemned by the Mexicans as a piratical vessel, the Julius Caesar has also been condemned though not as a piratical craft. The officers of the Independence are not ill treated, but the crew are kept in close confinement. Captain Wheelwright has nearly recovered. General Filisola made a proposition for the exchange of Prisoners just before Mr. B. left. This was that all the Mexican prisoners now in Texas should be released in exchange for the Texian Captives now in Mexico; the Texian government defraying the expenses of removing these captives to Matamoras.' Colonel Wharton spurned the offer with indignation, considering it an insult upon the national character; the ratio of the Texian captives being to the Mexicans as one to ten or twelve."

On July 1, 1837 Major Bunton offered the following explanation in the Telegraph:

"Having seen my name affixed as a citizen of Tennessee ye an address, or representation, giving an account of the capture and imprisonment of officers, crew, and passengers of the Julius Caesar, published in a New Orleans Journal. In justice to myself, I am under the necessity of saying that my name was appended without my knowledge or consent. True it is, I claimed protection from the United States flag, not as a citizen, but from the treaty between the United States and Mexico."

Major Bunton removed to Austin County and was from that county elected to the House of Representatives of the First and Third Legislatures. Retiring from the practice of law he engaged in the cattle business on an extensive scale.

Major Bunton was an active member of the Texas Veterans Association from its organization to the day of his death at Mountain City, Hays County Texas, August 24, 1879. His remains were buried in the Robinson cemetery on the old Bunton homestead near Buda by the side of those of his wife who died September 16, 1862. The remains of the two were removed by the State of Texas and, on March 2, 1932, reinterred in the State Cemetery at Austin and a joint monument erected at their grave there.

Mrs. Bunton was before marriage Mary Howell. She was born in Gallatin, Tennessee, February 22, 1816 and was a cousin of Mrs. Jefferson Davis. She was a close personal friend of the first Mrs. Sam Houston, who was born and died at Galatin.

Children of Major and Mrs. Bunton were (1) Elizabeth, (2) Joseph Howell, (3) Thomas Howell; (4) Desha, (5) William Howell, (6) and James Howell Bunton.

(1) Elizabeth Bunton was married to Dr. W. A. Catman. Their children were John Bunton Catman, deceased; Feunot, deceased; Mary, who married David Crostwait and after his death, a Mr. Wright, and now as Mrs. Mary Wright resides on Warwick Avenue, San Antonio.

(2) Joseph Howell Bunton had two children, Henry and Marcus Howell, both deceased.

(3) Thomas Howell Bunton was never married.

(4) Desha Bunton had the following children: Miss Brewye Bunton, Kyle Texas; John Ashley Bunton; Wilmet Bunton; Willie Manlove Bunton; and Robert Desha Bunton.

(5) William Howell Bunton had one child, Oliver Wendel Bunton.

(6) James Howell Bunton was never married.