

JAMES COLLINSWORTH

J James Collinsworth was born in Tennessee in 1806. In 1826 he began the practice of law at Columbia, Maury County. From 1830 to 1834 he was a United States district attorney. At the expiration of his term in 1834 he came to Texas and located in Brazoria Municipality. In Headright Certificate No. 83 issued to him January 25, 1838 for one-third of a league of land by the Board of Land Commissioners for Brazoria County it is simply stated that he came to Texas previous to May 2, 1835 (File No. 909 Fannin County First Class Headright).

The General Council of the Provisional Government of Texas on November 28, 1835, elected Mr. Collinsworth captain of infantry. On December 11, 1835, the General Council ordered that an election be held February 1, 1836, throughout Texas to select delegates from the various municipalities to meet in convention at Washington-on-the-Brazos. Its action was approved by Governor Henry Smith on the 13th. Captain Collinsworth, John S. D. Byrom and Edwin Waller were the delegates chosen from Brazoria Municipality. On March 4 Captain Collinsworth nominated General Houston as commander-in-chief of the Texas army.

After the hurried adjournment of the convention on March 17th, Captain Collinsworth left to join the army. In Comptroller's Military Service Record No. 5699 it is stated that on April 6 he was placed on the staff of General Houston as aide-de-camp, with the rank of major. At San Jacinto, according to General Houston, he "bore himself as a chief". General Rusk in his official report of the battle said of him: "While I do justice to all in expressing my high admira

tion of the bravery and gallant conduct of both officers and men, I hope I may be indulged in the expression of my highest approbation of the chivalrous conduct of Major Collinsworth in almost every part of the engagement."

Duplicate Donation Certificate No. 655 for 640 acres of land was issued to the holder of the first certificate January 3, 1855, due Major Collinsworth for having participated in the battle of San Jacinto.

Near the battlefield on May 3, President Burnet appointed Major Collinsworth Secretary of State of the Republic. On May 20 he commissioned and dispatched him and Peter W. Grayson to Washington to seek the recognition as an independent republic.

President Houston on October 26, 1836, appointed Major Collinsworth Attorney General, but he declined the office on account of personal circumstances. He was seated as senator from Brazoria District November 30, 1836, to serve out the unexpired term of William H. Wharton who had been killed accidentally. On December 16 of that year, he was elected by a joint session of Congress Chief Justice of the newly created Supreme Court of Texas. Major Collinsworth in 1838 while a candidate for the presidency against General Mirabeau B. Lamar and Peter W. Grayson committed suicide by jumping off a boat in Galveston Bay. The Telegraph and Texas Register of July 21, 1838, refers to his "melancholy death". The following day his body arrived in Houston by boat and was placed in the capitol building which stood on the present site of the Rice Hotel. On July 24 he was

buried in the city cemetery, being the first person to receive a Masonic funeral in Texas. Quoting from the records of Temple Lodge No. 4, Houston: "The procession formed at 10 a.m. (Tuesday) at the lodge room and proceeded to the court house where Vice President Lamar and other officers, civil and military, of the republic, together with a large concourse of citizens, were gathered. The fraternity then moved with the procession of the capitol, where the corpse was deposited and listened to an eloquent eulogy pronounced by our worthy citizen A. M. Tompkins, Esq., preceded by a few pertinent remarks from Brother Lawrence, officer of the day. The procession was again formed and proceeded to the graveyard of the city of Houston, where the remains of Brother Collinsworth were deposited with solemn and Masonic prayers, ceremonies and honors."

The masterful historian Henderson Yoakum mistakenly spelled Major Collinsworth's name "Collingsworth" and on August 21, 1876 at its creating the Legislature accepted his spelling as correct and passed the following Act: "The county of Collingsworth is named in honor of James Collingsworth, the first Chief Justice of the Republic of Texas.

A monument, authorized by the State of Texas, was placed at the grave of Major Collinsworth in the old City Cemetery in Houston in 1931.