



# Texas Navy Association

Historical Article



On March 16, 2001 Mr. Bill Davis of Reston, Va was kind enough to present us with a little piece of cherished Texas history in the form of some old family letters which give an account of Hartwell Walker the first "Sailing Master of the Schooner of War Invincible" and some events at Camp Fannin Rio Brazos surrounding the first raising of the Texas Flag Jan 17, 1836.



Transcript on following page:

Portsmouth Feby 26th 1836

My Dear Sarah:

Yours of 21st was rec'd yesterday, and as we might expect, expressed great anxiety respecting our dear Hartwell. It is to give you all the information we possess in relation to him that I give you this hasty scrawl. Hartwell left Capt Crowell in Oct & on 20th left N Orleans as a volunteer member of the New Orleans Greys which Company appears took a conspicuous part in the Battle & Capture of "San Antonio de Bexar" by which the whole of the Mexicans were driven out of Texas. It seems they have declared Texas independent, adopted a flag Etc etc. but I will give you copy of an extract of a letter rec'd by Col Chadwick from his son Joseph, which we rec'd yesterday (few hours after the receipt of yours) by the way of Derry-

Extract of Letter from Mr Joseph Chadwick  
"Camp Fannin Rio Brazos Jany 18, 1836"

"Yesterday our Battalion was paraded marched into town drawn up in line opposite to the Flag Staff and at the firing of a signal cannon a flag containing a single star & the stripes & the word Independance was run up and who by? -- By the hands of Mr Walker, a grandson of our friend Col Seth Walker a distinguished member of the New Orleans Greys, who took so conspicuous a part in the capture of San Antonio De Bexar. He is a Sailor by profession and is now commissioned as sailing master of the schooner of War Invincible, now lying off the Harbour waiting to take a part of us to Copany<sup>1</sup> -- I had been introduced to him for some days - yesterday he came up to me , and after looking a little while in my face inquired "Are you not from Exeter" "Yes" - "You know my old grandfather then" - I took the hint immediately - we went to school a little while together in old times.

Last night we had a long talk about Exeter , Portsmouth etc etc. - We left not a stone unturned particularly in Col Walkers family - He is a fine fellow & will never Haul down the flag he was the first to raise" At the moment the flag was run up, our Battalion presented arms & fired a volley in Salute - Mean time, the Steam Boat Yellow Stone 14 days from New Orleans crowded with volunteers appeared in the offing, and under charge of the Pilot came up the river as the Flag was hoisted; we countermarched & formed line on the Beach, and as they passed "Presented arms" fired a volley & cheered as cannon from the shore & the boats & three cheers from the passengers answered & Joined in the salute & welcome" --- In addition to the foregoing Mr Goodrich of the Custom House Recd a letter from his friend Capt John E Ross who commands the Steam Boat Laura running on the river Quintana (Texas) dated Jan 25, 1836 (One week Later) He mentions having found a Townsman (Hartwell) & Mentions his being attached to the "Invincible" as above --. Our minds are relieved by hearing of his being alive & well so lately; & altho we shall constantly be anxious, yet we know there is the same Almighty Arm to protect him in the hour of battle that has so long sheilded him - when exposed to immint danger.

I can say no more on this subject at present, - Alfred is in N Orleans, had 17 days passage from Boston in Ship Xylon, Capt Coffin of Newbury Port. His Elizabeth has rec'd one letter from him he was very well, - We have heard nothing for a long time from Jere[miah] & his family -- All are well new at N Market. Olive has been confined with bad cold but is now about - the folks at Derry are well with exception of Marthas children. They have been very sick, Mary with croup & Chs Wm Lung fever but were better last Tuesday. Elizabeth bids me say

she has bought your French Muslin & will write you soon & give you all particulars. I fear we shall not see your Unkle & Aunt Hartwell this winter the traveling has become so very bad, we are exceeding long, Had calculated on it with great satisfaction. Give our love to them & their children. Alonzo & your dear ones how have you go along with them this dreadful trying winter. We long to see them & you. Remember me to your father Hartwell Family. We are all pretty well, Nannah better, your Ma some what lame but her ankle is getting better slowly - All join me in best love to you all.

Affectionately yours  
W. Walker

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of this word, as written, is not clear. It could be either Copano Bay, which is where the Invincible was headed or company, as in “taking us into ship’s company”.