



In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my.....Search for Eldorado

Hello to Family & Friends



My visit to the C of C produced a county map (worthless), a 'Mural Art of Cuero' brochure; there are about eight murals that I missed yesterday, and a walking tour map of downtown with the historically or architecturally significant commercial buildings, no homes, of which I had already photographed the best of them. I meandered over to the Pharmacy Museum which I had read was open today. I was misinformed.

Back to the RV to decide my next step.

After much deliberation, and the fact that there has been no sunshine and I haven't been driving a lot to charge my batteries, I decided to drive about 40 minutes to the Fannin Battlefield Site, then come back to Cuero for the evening, maybe a bike ride, and plan on the museums for tomorrow.





The Road to Texas Independence Began Here



September 16, 1810

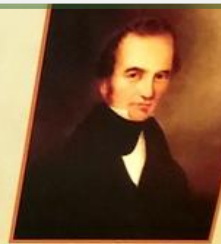
Mexico launches a war of independence from Spanish colonial rule.

August 24, 1821

Mexican and Spanish authorities sign the Treaty of Córdoba, which grants Mexican independence.

April 1823

With permission from Mexican authorities, Stephen F. Austin brings 300 families into Texas for an American settlement. More Americans follow.



I really do find this ironic

During the 1820s and early 1830s, homesteaders from North America flowed into Mexico's northern frontier territory of Coahuila y Tejas. Mexican authorities grew concerned about these immigrants who refused to speak Spanish and set up their own schools and institutions. The Anglos, however, believed that their hard work was taming an unruly land and creating order and prosperity. Fearing that Coahuila y Tejas would be absorbed into the United States, the Mexican government closed its borders to American immigration in 1830. The stage was set for an epic confrontation.



April 6, 1830

Mexico closes Texas to further American immigration. Tensions rise between Texians and the central Mexican government.

April 1, 1833

General Antonio López de Santa Anna is elected president of Mexico by its congress.

May 31, 1835

Santa Anna declares himself ruler of Mexico and abolishes the 1824 constitution.

October 2, 1835

Mexican troops are rebuffed by colonists in Gonzales when they attempt to retrieve a cannon. The fight becomes the opening salvo of the war for Texas independence.

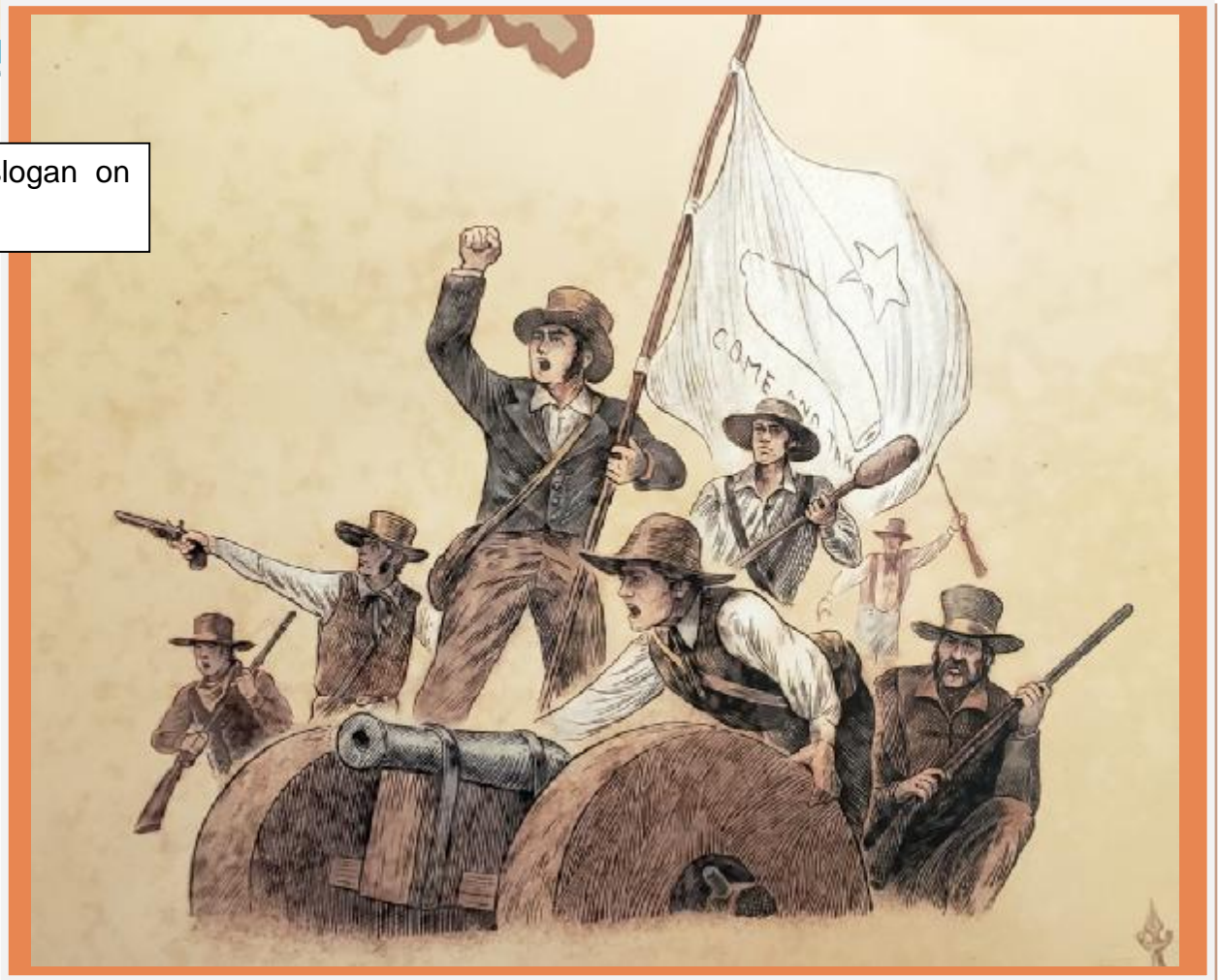
October 9, 1835

Texian volunteers under the command of George Collingsworth take the strategic Presidio La Bahía in Goliad.

Come and Take it

The opening shot of the war occurred in Gonzales where a group of Texian volunteers defied the Mexican government over a small cannon.

Note the slogan on the flag.



Texas settlers soon openly rebelled against Mexican rule. Mexico's supreme leader, General Antonio López de Santa Anna ordered General Martín Perfecto de Cos to lead troops into Texas to regain control of the territory. Four days after de Cos took over the Presidio La Bahía in Goliad and then marched towards San Antonio, Texian forces retook the Presidio in a surprise attack. By October 1835, the Mexican military was expelled from Texas. In December, a furious Santa Anna declared that foreigners who attacked Mexican forces would be deemed pirates and thus subject to immediate execution. This was known as the Tornel Decree. Determined to crush resistance, Santa Anna readied his troops to attack San Antonio while sending a second division, under General José Urréa, north from Matamoros toward Goliad.



The War Begins

Mexican forces cross the Rio Grande to quell the revolution.

By January of 1836, Texian forces had been infused with a large number of volunteers, including many Americans who crossed the border to join the fight. Among the rising military leaders was James Walker Fannin, an immigrant from Georgia who had dropped out of West Point but nonetheless regarded himself as a capable commander. Born illegitimate, the boy grew up as James F. Walker before taking on his father's last name. In 1834, he and his family settled in Texas where he became prosperous through trading slaves. In 1835, he volunteered his services to Texian forces and acted as a scout with James Bowie. By January of 1836, Colonel Fannin commanded a force at Presidio La Bahía in Goliad. His service was marked with both missteps and personal bravery.

The Quick Rise of James Walker Fannin



December 29, 1835

Santa Anna publishes the Tornel Decree which declares the Texian rebels to be considered pirates, and executed if captured.

January 1836

Under command of Colonel James Walker Fannin, Texian militia begin to fortify Presidio La Bahía, renamed Fort Defiance.

February 23, 1836

Santa Anna forces besiege the Texas garrison inside the Alamo in San Antonio. Lt. Col. William Travis calls for assistance from Fannin's forces at Goliad, but after an attempt at a relief march Fannin retires to Goliad.

In February 1836, Santa Anna's forces laid siege to the Texas garrison in the Alamo in San Antonio. Commander Lieutenant Colonel William Travis called on Fannin for assistance, but due to poor logistics and morale, Fannin abandoned a relief march and returned to Goliad. The Alamo fell on March 6. Fannin also attempted to send relief to settlers at Refugio who were under attack by José Urréa but those plans went awry as well.



The Alamo

The fall of the Alamo made Colonel Fannin's position at Fort Defiance less secure. This romanticized image shows James Bowie at the gates.

March 2, 1836

Independence from Mexico is declared.

March 6, 1836

Mexican forces overrun the Alamo.

March 13-14, 1836

Mexican General José Urréa's forces engage Texian troops sent by Fannin to Refugio.

On March 14, 1836, Texian army commander Sam Houston ordered Fannin to destroy Presidio La Bahía and retire to Victoria. Fannin delayed the retreat until the morning of March 19, an ultimately fatal mistake. By that time Urréa's forces, between 300 to 500 infantrymen and cavalry, were only two hours behind. Mexican cavalry reached Fannin's force of about 350 men just as they were entering a prairie near Coletto Creek, about 16 miles from Victoria. Caught in an open field, Fannin's command formed a moving square defensive position, skillfully manipulating a chaotic mix of men, carts, horses, and oxen. By holding their fire until the Mexican advance was close, they repulsed numerous charges by the Mexican cavalry. Calling upon all their skills and fighting for their lives, the volunteers were able to hold off the Mexican soldiers, even though Fannin's men were surrounded and outnumbered.

A Fight at the Wrong Place and Time



March 14, 1836

Fannin receives word from Commander Sam Houston about the defeat at the Alamo and is ordered to destroy Presidio La Bahia and retire to Victoria.

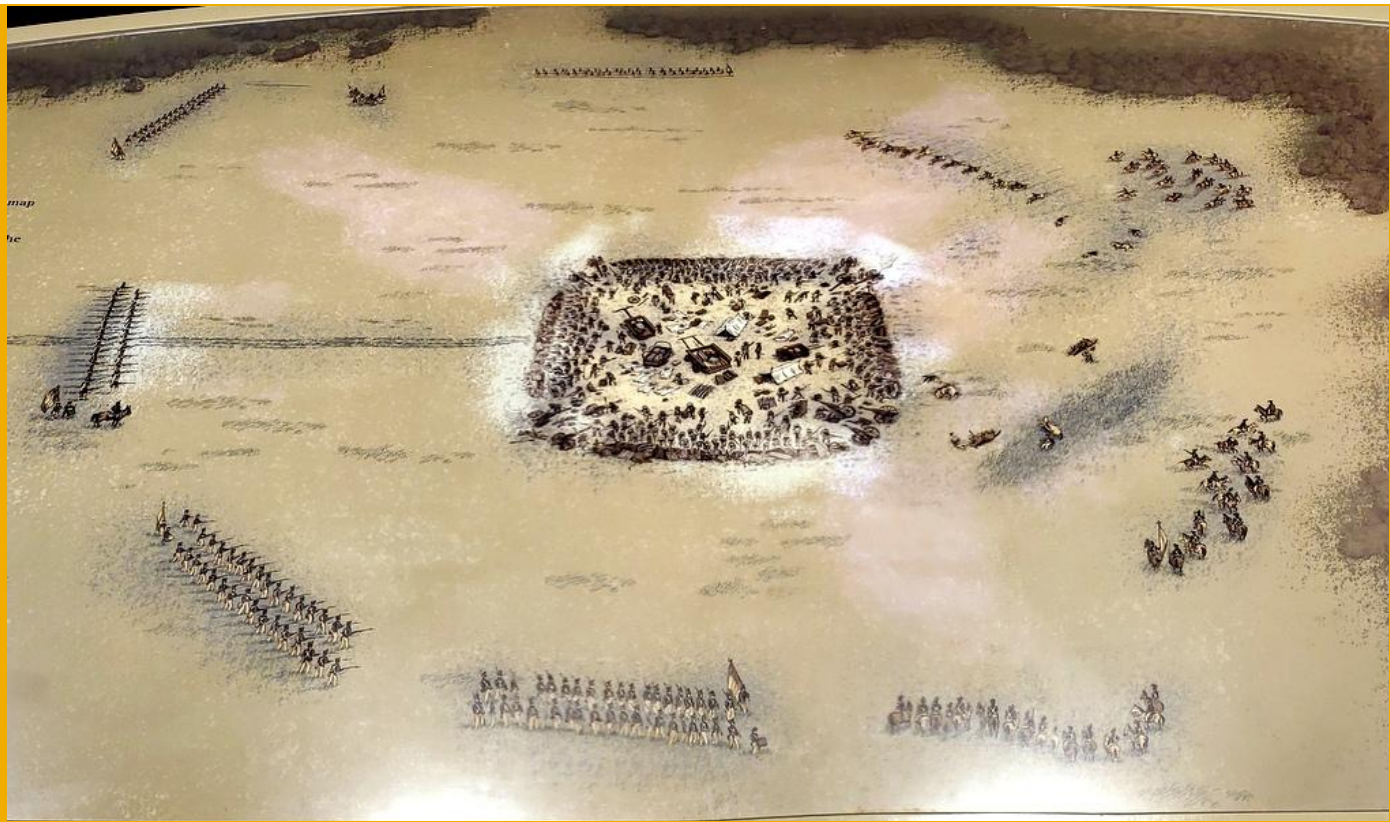
March 19, 1836

Fannin's force of 350 men starts for Victoria after burning La Bahia. Urréa advances to Goliad, only two hours behind Fannin.

The Texian March Toward Victoria

19 March 1836





1. Surrounded!

The Texians line of march from Goliad to Victoria is cut off by Mexican dragoons. The Texians form a fighting square to repel the attack.

2. The Battle Begins

The Mexican dragoons charge and the Texians hold their fire until the Mexican horsemen are only 100 feet away. When they open fire with their cannon and rifles, the attack is stopped in its tracks. The Mexican dragoons regroup and attack again.

3. The Battle Continues

The Mexican Infantry arrive along with General Urrea and begin their attack. The Texians respond with cannon and rifle fire and halt their advance. After several unsuccessful attempts to overrun the Texian square, the Mexicans retreat but continue to fire from a distance until their ammunition runs low.

By nightfall, seven Texians were dead and 28 wounded, including Fannin who was shot in three places. Approximately 50 Mexicans were killed and 140 wounded. Due to poor planning, the Texians lacked sufficient water. They considered escape by breaking through the Mexican ranks under cover of darkness, but the wounded would have to be left behind. Reluctant to leave their comrades, and faced with a hopeless situation, Fannin and his men negotiated a surrender to Urréa's forces. Despite their wretched condition, some Texians bitterly opposed giving up, but most realized they had little choice. The Texians agreed to lay down arms but it remains unclear if the terms of the surrender were understood by all parties. The Texians were marched back to the Presidio La Bahía, formerly Fort Defiance, and held prisoner.



The Cannons

On Sunday morning, March 20, the arrival of the Mexican cannons was a major reason the Texians decided to negotiate a surrender.

March 19, 1836

About 1:30 p.m. Urréa's forces catch up to Fannin's troops in an open prairie and heavy fighting lasts until nightfall.

March 20, 1836

Fannin and his officers parley with Urréa and agree to surrender. Fannin's men are taken to Goliad.

4. The Battle Ends

On the next day the Mexican cannon arrive. Unable to use their own cannon for lack of water, the Texians decide to surrender.

The Battle Square

This painting, by Nola Davis, of the Battle of Coleto Creek is based on the many narratives provided by Texian survivors as well as some Mexican sources. It depicts the open plain of the location and the debris and smoke typical of battle.



The Mexican dragoons. The word "dragoon" is derived from the word "dragon" referring to "horse-mounted men with guns shooting fire."

The Execution of Fannin

Fannin clearly believed that his troops would be treated honorably as prisoners of war. Urréa, too, may have assumed that some arrangement would be made to send Fannin's men out of Texas, but his memoirs insisted that he made no such promises. "Had I been in a position to save him, along with his companions, I would have gladly done so," he wrote. Fannin's men did receive some food and medical treatment while they were held in Goliad under the command of José Nicolás de la Portilla. But Santa Anna was clear: the Tornel Decree must be enforced. So on the morning of March 27, Palm Sunday, Mexican soldiers divided those of Fannin's men who could walk into three groups, marched them out of the Presidio and opened fire. A handful of men managed to escape. The wounded men, including Fannin, were shot in the Presidio. Fannin was among the last to be slain. Some Mexican soldiers were aghast at what they were ordered to do, including Portilla.



The Massacre (or Execution?)

Illustrator Edward Johnson captures the moment when the line of Mexican soldiers fires upon one of the three groups of Texian prisoners after they had been marched from the Presidio.

March 27, 1836
Palm Sunday

Fannin and his men are executed, only a few men manage to escape.

April 21, 1836

With the cry of "Remember the Alamo, Remember Goliad," Texian forces win victory over Mexican forces at San Jacinto, achieving independence for Texas.

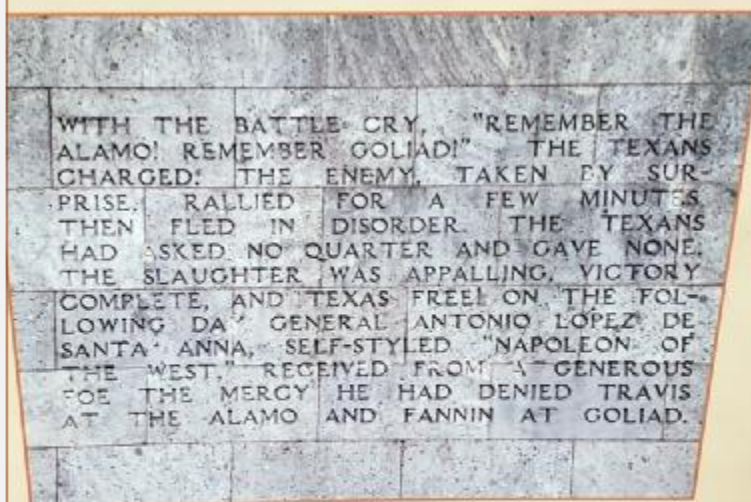
Escape!

Volunteer Herman Ehrenberg, a native of Germany who served with the New Orleans Grays, was one of 28 men who escaped the massacre. In his diary he wrote:

"Like a corps from hell they set after me, but with a 'The Republic of Texas Forever' I threw myself into the rescuing floods."

He continues his account of how he swam across the San Antonio river to escape.

The impact of the executions on the Texas Revolution was swift and considerable. Horror over the cold-blooded cruelty galvanized opposition to Mexican rule. On April 21, at the Battle of San Jacinto, Texian forces defeated the Mexican military, making Texas an independent republic.



San Jacinto

A detail of the memorial at the site, note the reference to the Alamo and Goliad on the last line.

September 5, 1836

Sam Houston is elected president of the new Texas Republic.

December 29, 1845

Texas becomes the 28th state of the United States.

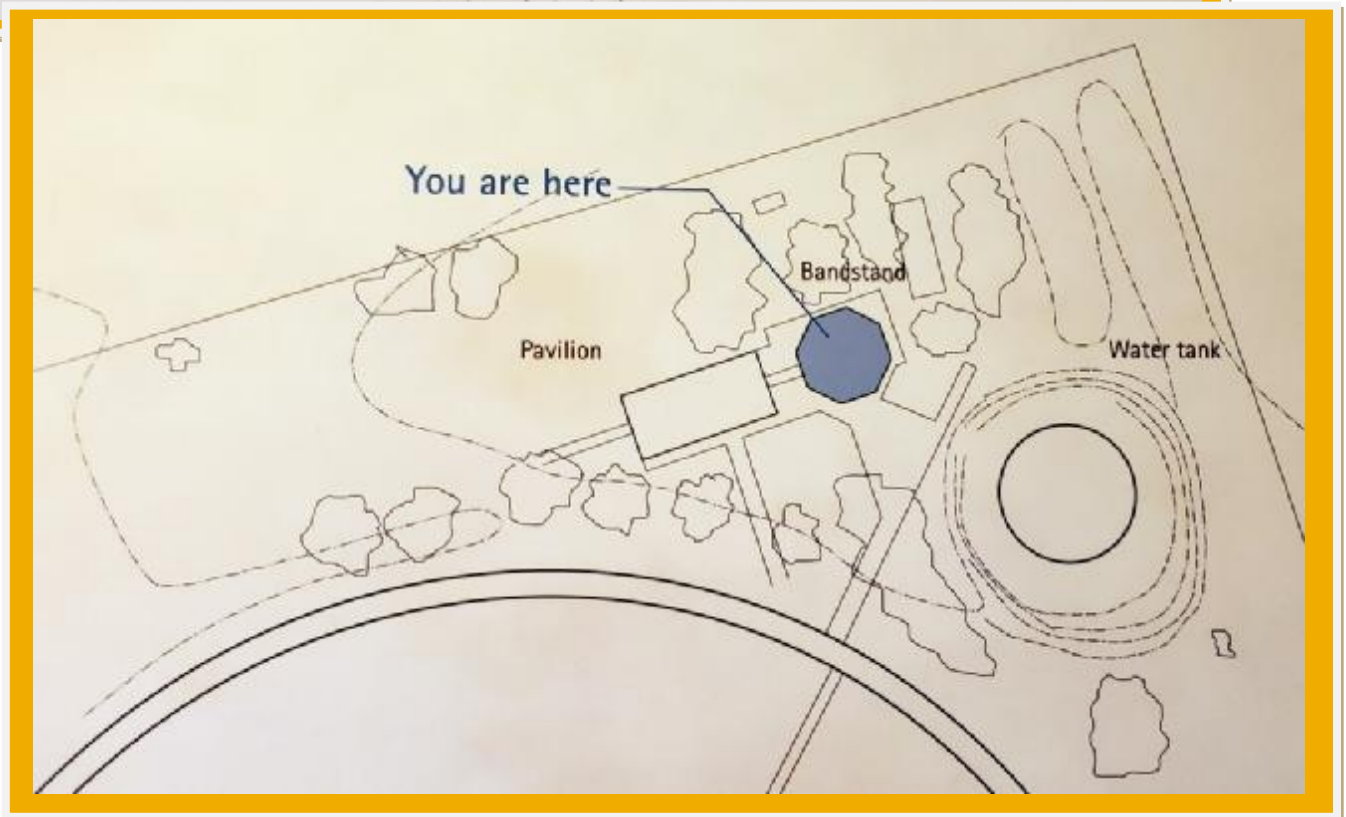
Discovering History

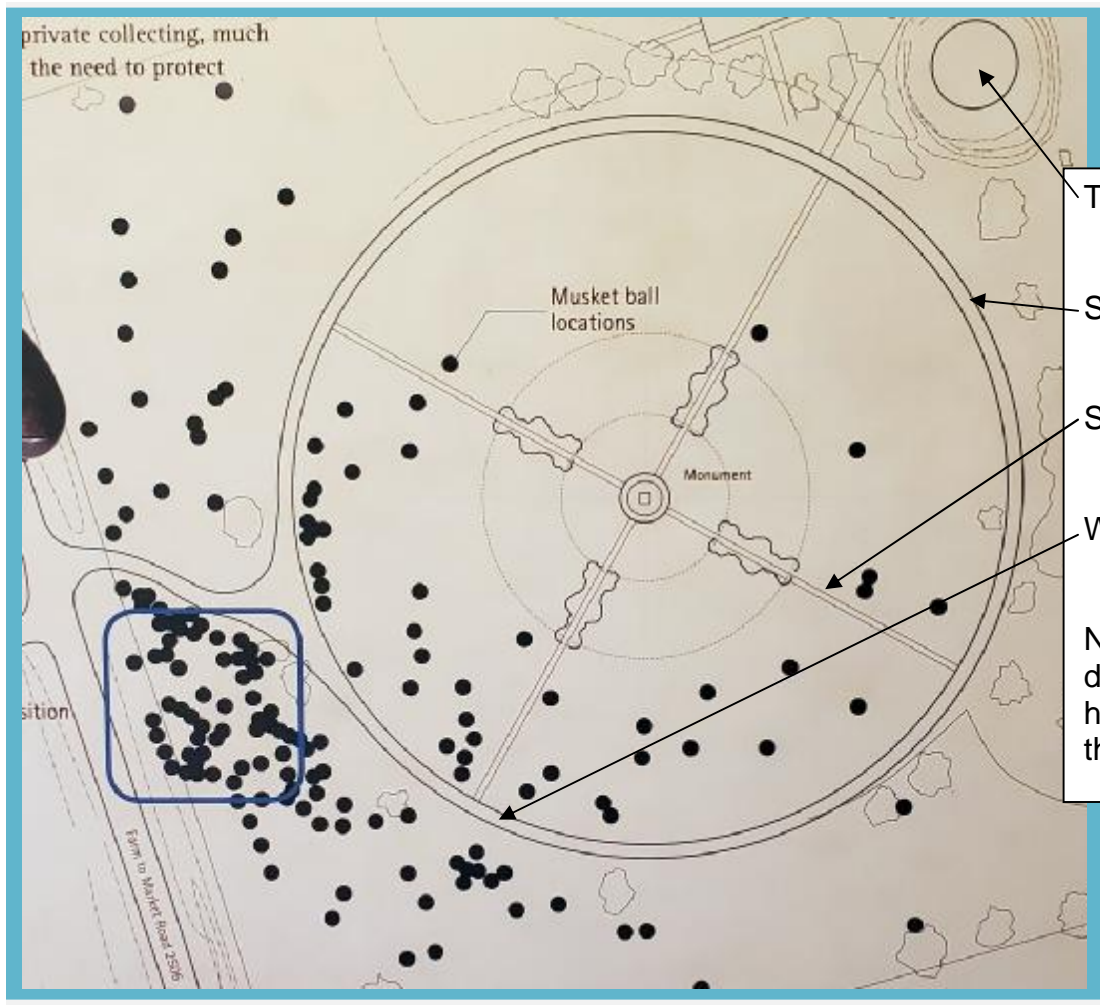
Evidence from the past

provides proof in the present

Archeological research yielded vital clues about the Battle of Coleta Creek. Using sophisticated sensing equipment, researchers found nearly 500 artifacts, including 415 lead balls used in muzzle-loading guns.

Since each side used slightly different ammunition, the possible locations of the Texian and Mexican positions were determined by analyzing the lead balls' location and caliber. Because so many artifacts have disappeared due to private collecting, much still remains unknown. This underscores the need to protect and preserve historic sites.





The Water tank

State Park Road

Sidewalks

Where the RV is parked

Note the blue square, the drawing on page 8, as well as the painting on page 10. This is the Battle Square.

Historic Markers and Memorials

The creation of what is now the Fannin Battleground State Historic Site began in 1913, when the Hanleys, owners of the land, deeded 10 acres to the state. The next year, a cement wall four feet high and eight inches thick was built around the site. Iron gates, formerly at the grounds of the Texas capitol, were installed at the entrance. An arch overhead declared that this was the "Fannin Battlefield."



An obelisk monument commemorating the battle was built.



The Centennial

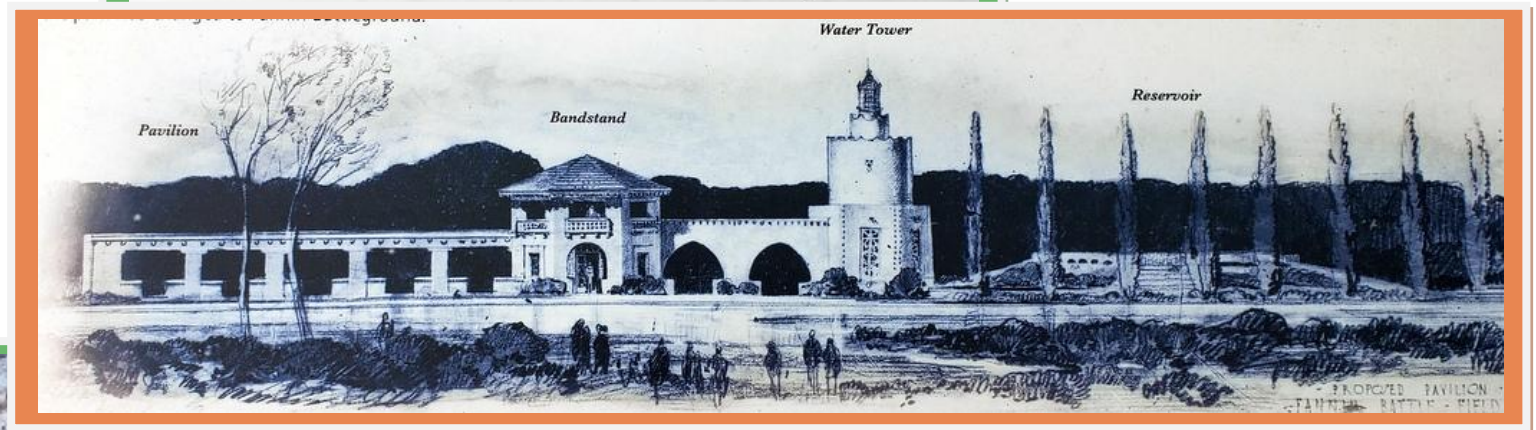
Brings a Pavilion to the Site

In 1935, Texans prepared to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Texas Republic. Projects planned included improvements to the Fannin site. The most significant addition was the construction of a rectangular pavilion next to the bandstand. Work began on February 1, 1938, and was completed by summer. The pavilion was soon hosting community dances and other events.

The pavilion was the last major improvement to the park for decades. In the 1950s, the cement fence built around the park, which had begun to crumble, was removed. In 1961, winds from Hurricane Carla blew the top of the granite monument off its base and damaged the bandstand's roof. In 1963, the official name of the park was changed to Fannin Battleground.

An Architect's Vision

This drawing shows architect Raiford L. Stripling's vision for a combined pavilion, bandstand, and water tower on the site. A bandstand, more utilitarian water tower, and windmill were built in 1928, and a modified pavilion was finished 10 years later. Stripling also oversaw the restoration of the Presidio la Bahía in nearby Goliad where Texas volunteers captured in the Battle of Coleto Creek were held before their execution.



The architects vision, and my photo of reality.

A brave but hopeless stand in 1836 by Texian volunteers led by Colonel James Walker Fannin helped fuel the fight for Texas independence. The memory of the lost battle at Coleto Creek and the execution of Fannin and his company in Goliad has been kept alive by a community that has never forgotten the sacrifices made for self-determination and freedom.



IN MEMORY OF
JAMES W. FANNIN, JR.
AND FELLOW PATRIOTS
WHOSE SURRENDER HERE ON
HONORABLE TERMS ON
MAR. 20, 1836 INVOLVED THE
SACRIFICE OF THEIR LIVES AT
LA BAHIA.

VICTIMS OF TREACHERY'S BRUTAL STROKE
THEY DIED TO BREAK THE TYRANT'S YOKE
ON FAME'S ETERNAL CAMPING GROUND
THEIR SILENT TENTS ARE SPREAD
AND GLORY GUARDS WITH HALLOWED ROUND
THE BIVOUAC OF THESE DEAD



A view of the park from the upper level of the bandstand

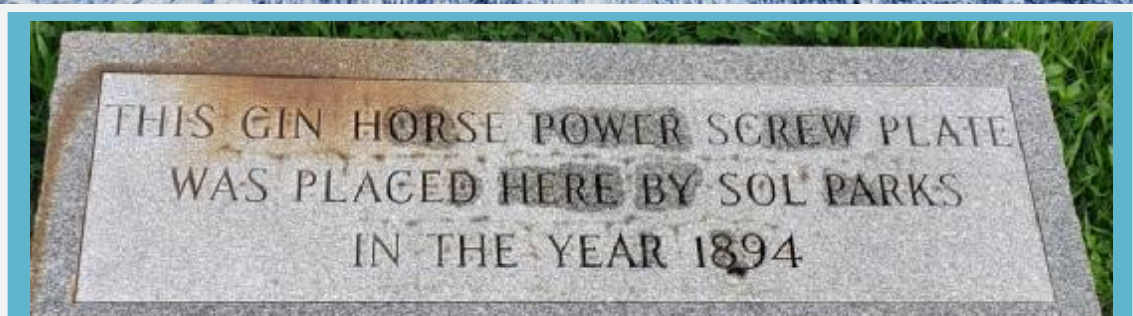
LEST WE **FORGET**

*Fannin residents keep the
memory of the battle alive*

The entrenchments hastily dug by Fannin's men eventually eroded and disappeared, but a battle survivor, William L. Hunter, returned to the location of the surrender and piled rocks to mark the spot. In 1894, landowner Sol Parks placed a distinctive iron press screw, taken from a nearby cotton gin, at the earlier rock pile. The next landowner, Hugh B. Hanley, had such reverence for the site that he would never cultivate it or allow cattle on it. The gin screw was the only historical marker at the site for decades, and is still a distinctive feature of the site.

The Residents of Fannin Remember

In 1913, Hugh Hanley deeded to the state 10 acres of his land where the Texans under Commander Fannin made their last stand. Pictured here are the members of the survey party shortly after the agreement. Mr. Hanley has his hand on the gin screw, while Ross Hanley sits atop it.



Remember the blue box noted previously? This is the area of the Battle Square. Unfortunately, a very poor picture of the gin horse power screw, and the panoramic distorts it a little. Even though I'm not from Texas, thinking of the soldiers who died here, fighting for freedom and against the rule of a dictator, there was a definite feeling of reverence as I stood here.



Back to Cuero I go. They sure do like their turkeys. I will find out why tomorrow. The high school appears to be fairly successful at athletics.

I parked and ate lunch. It's a little too windy for the drone and I can't find someplace open enough to fly it. The bike battery needs to be charged, making a test of the GoPro unavailable. Ok, another walk about town.



Cuero ISD

HOME OF THE CUERO FIGHTIN' GOBBLERS

STATE CHAMPIONS

1973 1974 1987 1988 2005 2006
 2008 2018

STATE FINALIST

1957 1993
 1970 1998 GW TEAM
 1975 2004
 1985 2007
 1986
 1988

STATE SEMI-FINALIST

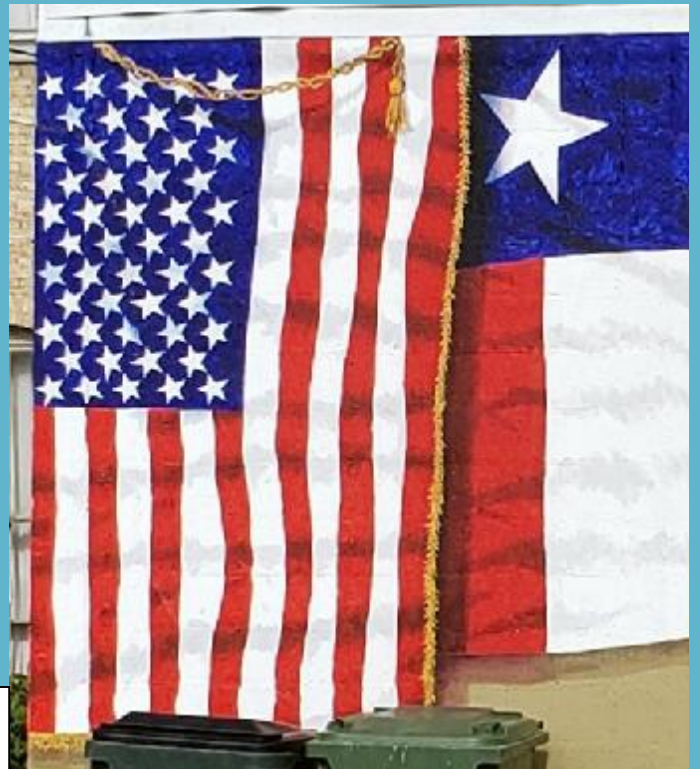
1972 2005 2008 2015
 1995 2007 2009

STATE TOURNAMENT

1919 X1975 X2000 X2001 X2002
 X2004 X2005 X2006 X2007 X2013
 X2014



A couple murals I missed yesterday





ALEX AND CLARE WOFFORD HAMILTON HOUSE

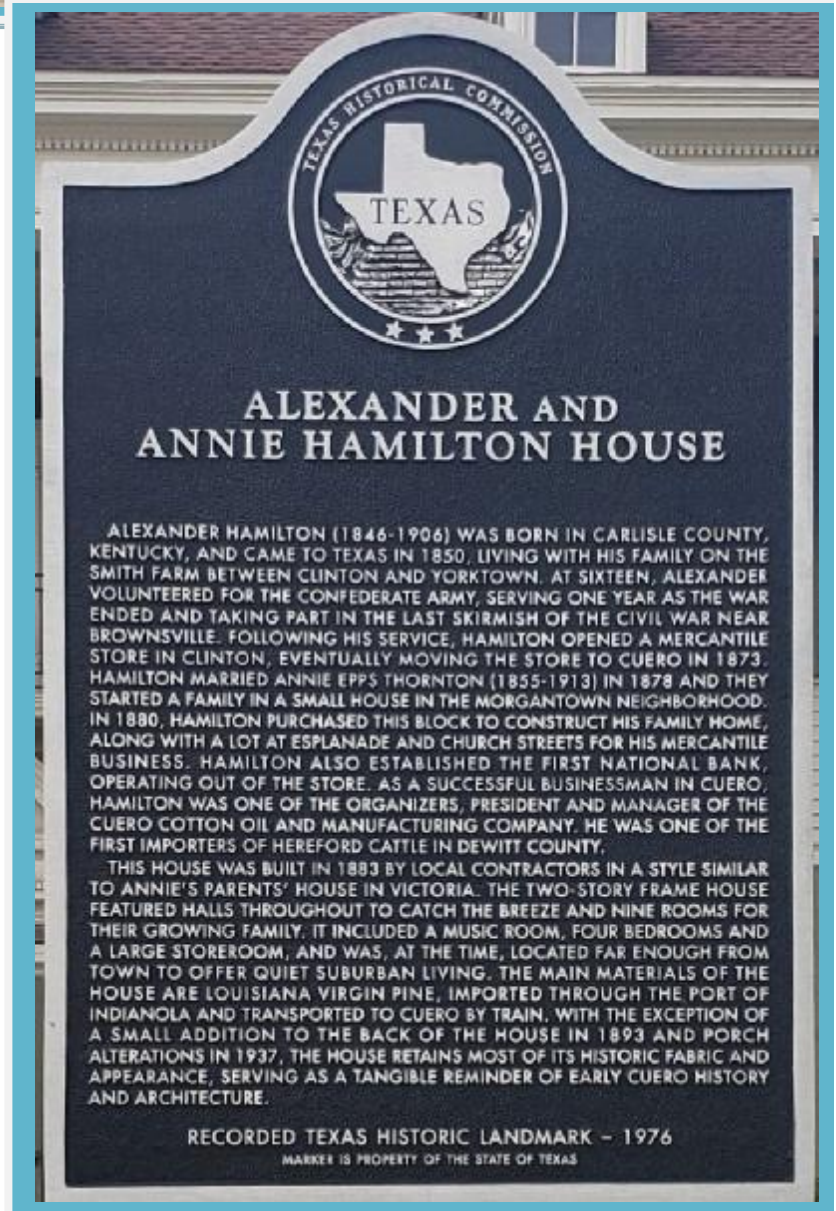
CUERO NATIVE ALEXANDER FRANK HAMILTON (1890-1952), ONE OF THREE SONS BORN TO ALEXANDER AND ANNIE (THORNTON) HAMILTON, ATTENDED LOCAL SCHOOLS AND PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY IN NEW HAMPSHIRE BEFORE COMMENCING ON A LONG CAREER IN RANCHING AND BUSINESS. IN 1904, HE MARRIED CLARE WOFFORD (1879-1973), ONE OF ELEVEN CHILDREN OF JOHN T. AND JOSEPHINE (STEVENS) WOFFORD, PIONEER DEWITT COUNTY PLANTERS AND RANCHERS. ALEXANDER AND CLARE HAD TWO CHILDREN. IN ADDITION TO MANAGING THE FAMILY'S VALLEY VIEW RANCH NEAR CHEAPSIDE, ALEX WAS DIRECTOR OF THE BUCHEL NATIONAL BANK AND DIRECTOR OF THE CUERO COTTON OIL & MANUFACTURING COMPANY. CLARE WAS PROMINENT IN CUERO SOCIETY, INCLUDING AS PRESIDENT OF THE HAWTHORNE CLUB, A LITERARY AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION.

A BLOCK FACING NORTH ESPLANADE STREET WHICH INCLUDED THE HOMES OF SEVERAL HAMILTON FAMILY MEMBERS BECAME KNOWN AS A THE HAMILTON BLOCK. IN 1916-17, ALEX AND CLARE HAMILTON COMMISSIONED NOTED SAN ANTONIO ARCHITECT ATLEE B. AYRES TO DESIGN A HOME FOR THEIR FAMILY. AYRES AND HIS FIRM DESIGNED MANY RESIDENCES, COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS, SCHOOLS, COURTHOUSES AND OTHER BUILDINGS, PRIMARILY IN SAN ANTONIO AND THROUGHOUT SOUTH TEXAS. THE HAMILTON'S COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE HOME IS A TWO-AND-A-HALF-STORY SIDE-GABLED CENTER PASSAGE DWELLING. NOTABLE FEATURES INCLUDE THREE DORMERS WITH ARCHED WINDOWS, AN ENTRY PORTICO SUPPORTED BY IONIC COLUMNS ECHOED BY PILASTERS ON THE MAIN FACADE, SOUTH ELEVATION PORTE-COCHERE AND NORTH ELEVATION OPEN PORCH.

AFTER ALEX HAMILTON'S DEATH IN 1952, CLARE CONTINUED LIVING IN THE HOME AND MANAGING RANCH PROPERTY UNTIL HER DEATH IN 1973. THEIR DAUGHTER AND HER HUSBAND THEN LIVED HERE FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS. THE HOUSE IS AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE COMMUNITY.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK - 2019
MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS







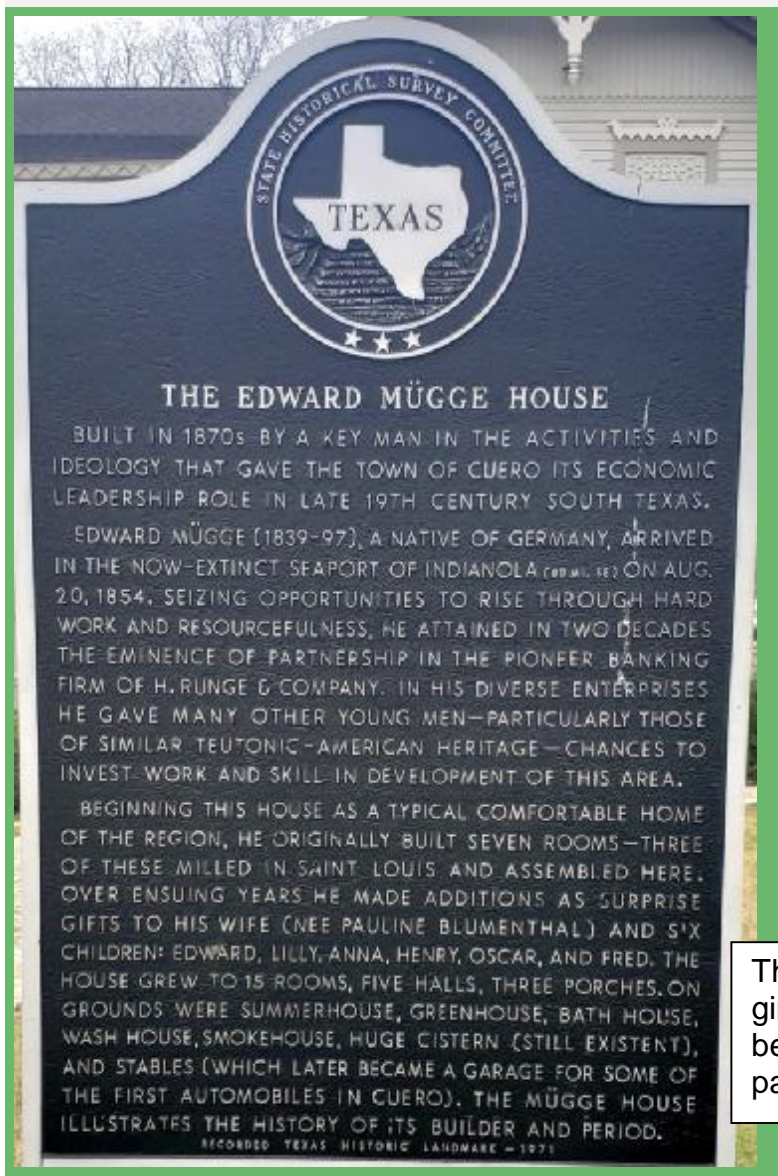
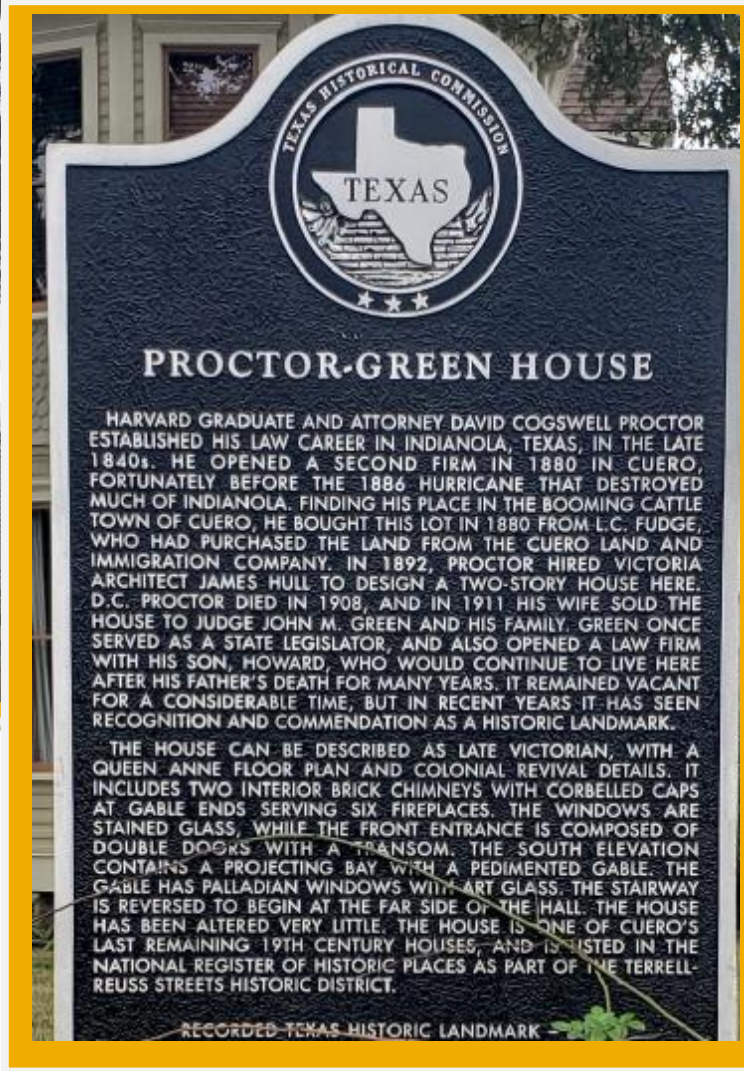
No plaque for this one, but maybe there should be. Nice collection of gingerbread.

This could be a Frank Lloyd Wright Craftsman – No plaque here either but I like it



This is that same tree in the middle of the street again, just a different angle. I will get the story here.





This plaque is for the house below. A lot of gingerbread here also. I would hate to have to be the person paying to paint the house, or the painter who has to do the job.



One last mural. Too bad there's a fence in front of it. I stopped at the pecan house on the right for a peek.





Pictured above is my \$5 bag of cinnamon sugar coated pecans. Just huge isn't it? They were ok.

There are four museums in town, two that are supposed to be open tomorrow, the pharmacy one which says on the web it was open Monday – Saturday but the sign on the window says open Wednesday, and the Heritage museum which opens Wednesday. As much as I would like to see the Heritage Museum, I am not going to sit here for another day.

My next stop is the Presidio at Goliad, which we learned a little about today and a little about a couple days ago. There must be a reason the French, Spanish, Mexican, and American militaries found it a desirable spot to defend.

I am parked in the city parking lot right now and have been for the past eight hours. I was thinking of going back to the abandoned gas station by the WalMart where I spent the last two nights without incident (Jim), but might just stay right here. I'm about 20 feet from the main train tracks that run through town. There hasn't been a train past here all day, it's kind of strange. Also, with the exception of walking past the police station and the county sheriff, I have not seen a single police car on the road in two days, or even heard a siren until today, and that was a fire truck.

Ah, life in a small town.

OMG! I was just finishing up my proof read and guess what? I here a train whistle.

Until next time.....