

Chapter 1

THE SMITHS AND THEIR KIN IN TEXAS

During the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century (1830 to 1850), more of the Smith children started moving out of Tennessee. In 1841, four years after establishing his boating business, Bird B. Smith moved to Mississippi County, Arkansas, across the Mississippi from Tipton County, Tennessee.[\[261\]](#) By 1848 Bird was living in Ripley, Tippah County, Mississippi, which is in northern Mississippi near the Tennessee border.[\[262\]](#) Prior to 1840 Susannah (Susan?) and her husband, James Reed, are supposed to have moved to Lafayette County, Louisiana.[\[263\]](#) At least five of the Smith children, however, migrated to Texas led by the youngest brother, Thomas Ingles Smith. [\[264\]](#)

Since the early part of the century, there had been ongoing exploration of the western part of the American continent. In 1806 the Lewis and Clark expedition had proven that an overland route to the Pacific Northwest was feasible. There had also been expeditions to the American Southwest. On one of the expeditions, a mountain peak was spotted in what is now Colorado, and Pike's Peak received its name. The effect of these various expeditions on the American people was to create a fever to migrate west to hoped for prosperity on the new land. This fever was abetted by the economic depression in 1818, the first experienced by the young nation, and again in 1837 by the second panic, which lasted seven years and caused widespread unemployment throughout the South and West. This panic may have been the precipitating factor in the moves made by this Smith generation.

The urge to migrate to Texas had gripped many, even if it meant, until after 1836, moving to a foreign country, in this case Catholic Mexico. Land speculators, smelling the fever, were eager to get land grants from the Mexican government to settle people in Texas and make their fortunes. The most famous example was Austin's Colony in southeast Texas, west of present day Houston. Moses Austin

had been wiped out in the 1818 Panic while living in Missouri and hoped to regain prosperity with the colony. His colony was eventually taken over by his son, Stephen F. Austin, after Moses' death. However, Austin's Colony was only one of several colonization efforts in Texas.

In 1822 a group of 70 Tennesseans formed the Texas Association of Nashville, Tennessee, and petitioned the Mexican government for a contract to settle colonists in Texas. Among those signing were Sam Houston of later Texas fame, and Abram S. Hogsett. Since Hogsett is an unusual name, it is likely that Abram S. Hogsett was related in some way to the Hogsett spouses that Thomas Ingles Smith and Polly Smith married.[\[265\]](#)

The Texas Association sent three commissioners to Mexico with their "memorial" to try to get a land grant. One of the commissioners was Robert Leftwich.[\[266\]](#) Robert Leftwich had suffered severe business reversals as a merchant[\[267\]](#) and was apparently hoping for a new start in his business fortunes with this new undertaking. In 1825 Leftwich, who by this time was the "agent for the group, obtained, in his own name, a contract to settle eight hundred families in Texas; he transferred the contract to the association on the condition that the area be referred to as Leftwich's Grant." [\[268\]](#) Two years later, in 1827, the transfer to the Nashville Colony, as it was then known, was approved by the Mexican government with Hosea H. League as the empresario.[\[269\]](#) The grant was about 100 miles wide and 200 miles long running through central Texas. It was second in size only to Austin's Colony, upon which the new colony abutted on its southern side.

With the grant in hand, the Tennesseans began recruiting settlers to go to Texas. In Tennessee Sterling Clack Robertson "signed a subcontract with the Texas Association to introduce 200 families

families into their Texas colony...He took in Alexander Thomson[\[270\]](#) as a partner, and the two of them started to Texas with their first party of settlers." [\[271\]](#)

Sterling Clack Robertson, who was born in 1785 in Nashville, Tennessee, was a nephew of General James Robertson, the "Father of Middle Tennessee." Robertson served in the Battle of New Orleans under General William Carroll, and is shown on the muster roll as "Sterling Robertson, Asst. QM Gen." [\[272\]](#) Thus he was with the Tennessee army, as were Bird Bowker Smith and the members of his family, as they floated down the Mississippi River. Having a position on the command staff, he was surely known by William Ingles Smith, also serving on the command staff, as well as by William I. Smith's father, Brig. General Bird Bowker Smith, who was serving under Maj. Gen. Carroll. By 1816 Robertson, who was married to Frances King,[\[273\]](#) was living on Richland Creek on a 2,027 acre plantation in Giles County.[\[274\]](#) This was about the same time that Rhoda Ingles Smith and her four youngest children were also in Giles County. Among the four Smith children still with their widowed mother, Rhoda Ingles Smith, was Thomas Ingles Smith.

Two problems immediately arose regarding the new colony. First, in 1830 the Mexican government, fearing the potential immigration of so many Americans with their different culture and viewpoints, banned further immigration from the United States. This put a damper on immigration into the Nashville Colony; new colonists, brought in by the Texas Association, found themselves adrift without the promised land. Many, including Robertson's partner, Alexander Thomson, became Austin colonists, at least temporarily.

The second problem was caused by the proximity of Austin's Colony to the new colony. This quickly became a source of friction with Stephen F. Austin and his agent,

Samuel M. Williams, and “led to sharp disagreements between Austin and Sterling C. Robertson then agent for the Nashville Company.”[\[275\]](#)

The disagreements between Austin and Robertson “culminated in a long, acrimonious lawsuit to determine titles to the lands and the rights of the respective colonizers.” [\[276\]](#) Robertson was defended in this lawsuit by attorney George W. Gibbs,[\[277\]](#) who had served as a 1st lieutenant and as an aide to Brig. General Bird Smith during the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. Gibbs was supposed to have been the first lawyer to practice in Sparta, White County, Tennessee. When the Robertson’s lawsuit was finally settled, the colony was thereafter known as Robertson’s Colony.

In 1831 Austin and Williams managed to have the Nashville Colony transferred to them. They kept control of the colony until 1834 when Robertson managed to regain control of the colony on the basis that he had settled 100 families before the ban on colonization in 1830. Robertson was able to establish 600 settlers in the colony before the colony was again returned to Austin and Williams in 1835, immediately before the outbreak of the Texas Revolution.

Meanwhile, during all the Robertson Colony turmoil Thomas Ingles Smith was still living in Tennessee. In 1830 he was in Tipton County, north of Memphis, on the Mississippi River. Since Thomas’ wife was from the Hogsett family, it is probable that he was aware of the events in the development of the Robertson Colony. It is readily apparent from letters written to his nephew, Bird S. Jones,[\[278\]](#) that Tom Smith had a definite interest in western land. On June 7, 1835, Tom wrote from Cole Creek in Lauderdale County that John C. McLemore of Memphis had hired him to examine land for possible purchase on the headwaters of the Red River. In return for examining (surveying?) the land, Tom would get some salary and a portion of the land. Obviously this is a potential land speculation situation, only one of many such ideas swirling about at that time, most not bearing fruit. This deal, for example, apparently soon fizzled out for want of funds.

Family stories, however, indicate that Thomas did not come to Texas until 1836. At that time Felix Huston, a Natchez lawyer, raised a group of volunteers to go to Texas to fight in the Texas Revolution. Thomas probably came to Texas with that group as a recruit.[\[279\]](#)

It is generally believed that Thomas I. Smith was a surveyor. In 1836, after the Texas Revolution, he remained in Texas, settling in the southern part of what had been Robertson’s Colony, near the colony’s former headquarters of Nashville. At this time the area was Milam County. The next year, in 1837, the part of Milam County east of the Brazos River was formed into Robertson County. In Milam County Thomas located in the settlement of Old Franklin,[\[280\]](#) north of the Old San Antonio Road. The Old San Antonio Road was a main transportation route running from Nacogdoches in East Texas to San Antonio. From here surveyors were going out to survey the land northward that had



Early Texian

previously been Robertson Colony lands. Both Milam and Robertson counties were then immense counties stretching from northwest of present day Houston northward through central Texas to the present day Dallas/Fort Worth area. It is probable that Thomas' wife joined him in Texas with their only known child, William Ingles Smith.

On May 20, 1839, Thomas I. Smith was given a headright certificate by the Milam County Land Commissioners for a league and a labor of land.[\[281\]](#) Land certificates were given in the counties in which the applicants were living at the time of their applications, so it is apparent that Thomas was living in Milam County in 1839. The records of the Texas Land Office concerning File 117 for Thomas I. Smith show that Thomas arrived in the Republic of Texas in 1836 and entered military service on May 28 of that year.

Thomas' headright is listed as a second class headright.[\[282\]](#) A second class headright grant was "issued to those who arrived in the Republic after March 2, 1836, but prior to October 1, 1837. Heads of families received 1,280 acres with the stipulation of a three year residence." [\[283\]](#) This type of headright was a conditional headright since it required that the person receiving the land meet certain conditions. Not only was the person to live in the Republic for three years, he also had to "perform all the duties of citizenship, and pay the usual office and surveying fees." [\[284\]](#) In granting Thomas' application for a land grant, the Milam County Land Commissioners noted that Thomas was a married man and as part of this conditional grant he was required to bring his family to Texas by January 1, 1840. The other condition noted by the land commissioners was that Thomas had to pay \$1.40 for each irragable labor, \$3.50 for each arable labor and \$2.40 for pasture labors.

It is readily apparent, however, that Thomas received more than the 1,280 acres given for a second class headright. It appears that through military service Thomas I. Smith was able to increase the amount of land that he received. For those who had arrived in Texas after March 2, 1836 and before August 1, 1836, military service "could increase one's headright to a first-class headright." [\[285\]](#) A first class headright gave a married man one league (4,428.4 acres) plus one labor (177.1 acres) for a total of 4,605.5 acres.[\[286\]](#)

Tom, however, received much more than 4,605.5 acres for his "Head Right Certificate No. 11" when his land was located or surveyed in Navarro County (now Ellis County) in 1839. According to the records of the Texas Land Office Thomas also received 26 labors. Since a labor consisted of 177.1 acres, 26 labors was 4,604.6 acres. These 26 labors added to the league and a labor totaled 9,210 acres. Under the conditions of his land certificate, Thomas should have paid about \$75.60 for his land as the survey said that 12 labors were arable, the remainder was pasture. The survey was done by B.J. Chambers, deputy surveyor for Robertson County in 1840.

Thomas actively campaigned for his kin to move to Texas as evidenced by letters he wrote to his nephew, Bird S. Jones, in Haywood County, Tennessee. It would seem that he wrote similar letters to his other relatives and soon some of them moved to Texas to join Tom, enticed by the large amount of land being offered to immigrants to the young Republic. Two Smith sisters and one Smith brother and their families joined Tom in Texas. John S. Jones, a young single man and nephew of Thomas, also came to Texas at the same time.

Tom's brother, Abram Smith, sold his land in Arkansas to their older brother, John Ingles Smith, and left central northwest Arkansas where he had settled some 12 years before. Arriving in Texas in January 1839, Abram Smith was presumably accompanied by his wife, Elsie, and their five children. Their last child, Mary, was born in Texas in about 1840.[\[287\]](#)

Thomas returned to bring back his sister, Ann H. Smith Stokes, who appears to have been widowed by this time, and at least five of her seven children.[\[288\]](#) On August 26, 1839, Tom again wrote to his nephew, Bird S. Jones, [\[289\]](#) in Haywood County, Tennessee saying that he had returned to Cole Creek (Lauderdale County, Tennessee) from Texas. In the letter Tom wrote about leaving his nephew John S. Jones, a younger brother of Bird Jones, well pleased with Texas. John S. Jones had arrived in Texas in January 1839, perhaps with his uncle Abram Smith and his family. John Jones, Tom wrote, owned one section of land (360 acres) and had received \$75 for joining a local ranger group for three months. Tom asked that Bird Jones come see him while he was at Cole Creek since "horse and self is both broke down." When Bird came Tom said that he would tell him more about Texas.

*Republic of Texas - Board of Land Commissioners
County of Milam - Minutes
List of the names &c. of persons
to whom certificates have been given*

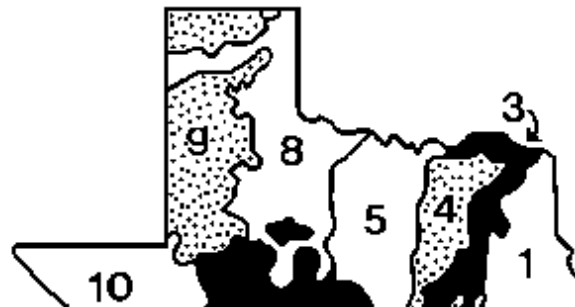
<i>Name</i>	<i>when filed</i>	<i>Acres of Land to each</i>	<i>Date of Claimant's Emigration</i>
<i>A. S. Williams</i>	<i>16th April 1839</i>	<i>320 acres</i>	<i>March 1839</i>

Henry Lacey	2	13 th May	2 ^d "	Nov	1838
Hugh C. A. King	3	" "	" "	Nov	1838
John C. King	4	" "	" "	Nov	1838
John M. Keen	5	14 th May	640 Acres	April	1839
James Chance	6	14 th May	640 acres	Sept	1838
Samuel Water	7	14 th May	640 acres	Sept	1838
William Custer	8	14 th May	320 acres	April	1839
Joseph Rowland	9	14 th May	640 acres	Nov	1837
S. C. Gray pro. Sta.					
Joseph Rowland	10	14 th May	320 acres	February	1838
Wm. J. Smith	11	20 th May	1 League & Labor	20 th May	1836
Abraham J. Smith	12	" "	640 Acres	January	1839
John J. Jones	13	" "	320 "	"	1839
George Bruce	14	22 "	2/3 League & Labor	May 1835 & Married 14 th	
April 1839					
William R. Martin	15	27 th July	320 acres	July 27 th	1839
Isaac Handifer	16	" "	640 "	July 5 th	1838
William C. Martin	17	" "	320 "	Permanent Resident Citizen	
Stephen Bell	18	" "	Rejected (appeal)	{ not recorded }	
D. J. Bell	19	" "	"		
Wm. C. Martin	20	" "	640 "	January	1839
John L. Adams	21	29 th Aug	640 "	previous to 1 st Oct. 1837	
William H. Martin	22	" "	"		
(Mr. M. Bell) Per Administrator					
			320 "	January	1839

✓ Solomon Louis	✓ 23	660	November 1837
✓ Mayby Jones	✓ 24 "	321	Nov 1836
✓ Benjamin Middleton	25 3 Oct	1280 acres	24 Sept 1837
✓ John Middleton	26 "	640	24 Sept 1837

**Milan County,
Texas
Land Certificates**

**Texas
Vegetational
Areas**





1. **Pineywoods**
2. **Gulf Prairies**
3. **Post Oak Savannah**
4. **Blackland Prairies**
5. **Cross Timbers and Prairies**
6. **South Texas Plains**
7. **Edwards Plateau**
8. **Rolling Plains**
9. **High Plains**
10. **Trans-Pecos, Mountains and Basins**

It was on his return from this trip eastward that Tom brought back his sister, Ann and part of her family. Ann's son, William J. Stokes, described their arrival. "I came to Texas in October, 1839,[\[290\]](#) with my mother, and in company with my uncle, Colonel Thomas I. Smith who participated in the revolution in 1836, and was at the battle of San Jacinto. We settled at Yellow Prairie, then Milam county. We had all our horses stolen in the spring of 1840, that portion of the county being then frontier." [\[291\]](#) Alexander Thomson, former partner of Sterling C. Robertson, and his settlers in 1830 named the area Yellow Prairie because of the color of the soil. Yellow Prairie was located in what is now Burleson County.

Two years later, in December 1841, Juliet Lewis Smith McClellan, her husband, William Beavers McClellan, and their nine children arrived in Texas. The McClellans, in time, settled in the western portion of Washington County, just south of the Old San Antonio Road and Milam County. It appears that the McClellans had intended to come to Texas sooner, but "deference to his father's (John McClellan) wishes held him in the old States." [\[292\]](#) John McClellan died about 1840, and Juliet and William were in Texas by the following year.

Since Alexander Thomson, a former resident of Giles County, Tennessee, was the official surveyor[\[293\]](#) for Robertson County at one point, it is possible that Thomas I. Smith worked with him surveying. It seems that his brother, Abram T. Smith, also went with the survey parties, a rather hazardous duty considering the Indians. A couple of years earlier in October 1838, Thomas I. Smith was with a survey party of 24 men from Milam County, which had run into Kickapoo Indians while trying to survey the upper Robertson County around Richland Creek. The battle went on for several hours and only seven of the Milam men survived the encounter.[\[294\]](#) Indians continued to be a problem

in the area and a "company of rangers or minute men under one Chandler (probably Eli Chandler[\[295\]](#)) at Old Franklin was organized to protect the region between the Navasota and Brazos Rivers....There was a fierce fight that year two miles east of present Franklin." [\[296\]](#)

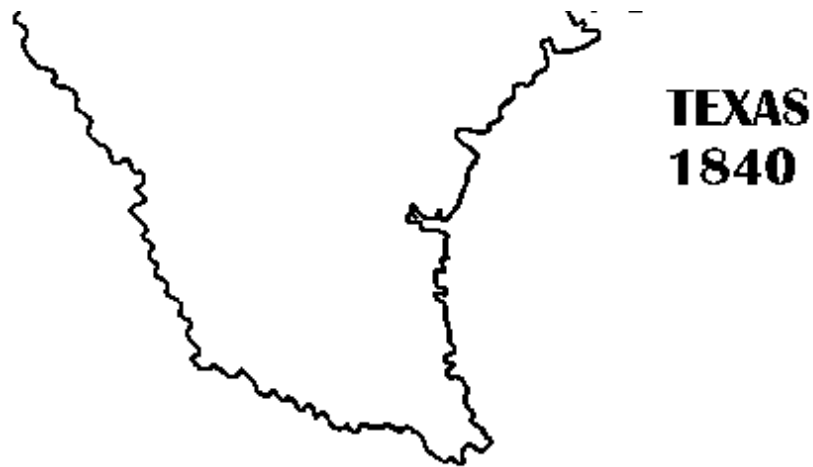
Thomas Ingles Smith had a short, but illustrious career in Texas before his premature death, earning him a small but notable niche in Texas history, achieved first as a result of his surveying and later his service as a ranger and Indian Commissioner.

As surveying crews many times roused the Indians' ire, Thomas' ranger duty evolved logically from that situation. The pioneers followed the same Indian strategy that they had developed in Virginia and other east coast states, namely if the Indians attacked any settler, all other settlers, in the form of militia or minute men (in Texas they became ranging companies and later Rangers), would band together and pursue the Indians to wreck what revenge they could and recover, if possible, any captives or recover booty, such as horses, that might have been taken.

In August 1841 a group of Milam County men including Captain Thomas I. Smith, Captain Abram T. Smith, Thomas' son, William I. Smith, Thomas and Abram's nephew, Guy Stokes, and others were sent out with two other companies to subdue the Cherokee Indians, who were trying to stop the surveying work. The Cherokee, a civilized east coast Indian tribe,[\[297\]](#) had been pushed out of their traditional homelands by the European settlers and moving westward had settled in eastern Texas. The settlers' ranging group was on Chambers Creek in present Johnson County, south of today's Fort Worth, pursuing the Cherokee.

The Indians were hiding in a deep ravine on Chambers Creek, and one of the captains, who outranked Thomas Smith “ordered the troops to go upon the hill to fight the Indians. Captain Smith told him if they went up there some of them would be killed, but the order stood and when they reached the top of the hill Abram Smith, the last man to form in line, was killed.” Abram’s two nephews, William Smith and Guy Stokes, caught Abram as he started to fall from his horse. “An old renegade stepped in view and told him (them) they could take him to hell if they wanted to, but he was going to have his scalp first.” The Smiths took Abram’s body 15 miles down Chambers Creek and buried it. They burned a brush heap on the grave, and after the fire had died down, they rode their horses over the spot, giving it the appearance of an abandoned camp.[\[298\]](#) Abram’s death was the first in





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in the Smith family caused by Indians since the death of his Ingles relatives in Virginia almost 100 years before.

A slightly different account of Abram Smith's death was given by George B. Erath's report of the small expedition. Erath "states that, on July 26, 1841, he met the Robertson County group (Chandler's company at the Ioni Village on the Brazos. Others joined them and Eli Chandler took command of all. They proceeded up the Brazos, and on August 3rd camped at the upper edge of the cross timbers, where they discovered Indians. Erath and twenty men were detached to trail the Indians. Erath divided his men, placing Captain Love of Robertson County in command of the other group. They continued trailing the Indians and Erath's group eventually (came) upon them. The Indians from behind a cliff of rocks fired them upon; the first fire killing Capt. A. J. (sic) Smith of Milam Co. Love and other reinforcements arrived, after which the Indians left. After burying Smith they returned to the settlements below." [\[299\]](#)

Abram and Tom's nephew, John S. Jones, then living in Washington County, Texas, wrote to his brother, Bird Jones, in Haywood County, Tennessee, about Abram's death. "Aunt Alcy," he wrote, "took it very hard. She is now living with Uncle Thomas Smith. She is well." [\[300\]](#) Without doubt those were dangerous times. The previous year, Tom Smith had himself been slightly wounded on a similar excursion.

The next year, 1842, was an eventful and busy year. Major Thomas I. Smith had acquired a sufficient reputation as a commander of the Rangers that on March 25, 1842, Sam Houston, the president of the Republic of Texas, wrote to him saying that he had learned "that there are some persons on the frontier who have a disposition to molest the Tanchua and Lipan Indians. They cannot be good citizens, or they would wish to preserve peace with them." While practical in understanding how much he could do for the Indians, Houston had long been considered an advocate for the Indians. This was partially, no doubt, due to his long association with the Cherokee dating from his youth in

Tennessee. He was also cognizant that in the present situation of the Republic of Texas, it benefited Texas to not be fighting the Indians on the northwestern frontier of Texas and at the same time be fighting Mexico on the southwestern frontier. Therefore, Houston asked Tom Smith that “should any property be stolen from the Indians, or injury done them, I hope you will have active measure taken for its restoration and for the preservation of their friendship. If they were hostile to us, they could do us much harm in our present critical condition.” [\[301\]](#)

The Texas revolutionaries in 1836 had declared their independence and won the decisive battle at San Jacinto southeast of present Houston, but the Mexican government did not necessarily accept this situation and continued to send its troops on baiting expeditions into Texas. In March 1842 Mexican troops captured and held San Antonio for a time until they retreated.

The citizens of the Republic were outraged and demanded that action be taken, preferably invasion of Mexico. The public outcry was a consistent response to any threat the settlers received; be it Indians or Mexicans. These people were not passive, but aggressive in their reactions. President Sam Houston, however, was not inclined to take action, probably due to the severe lack of funds available to the Republic. Finally public pressure became so great that he decided to raise a force of volunteers. Thus, on July 26, 1842, he wrote to Thomas I. Smith and Eli Chandler, saying that Texas must rely on volunteers for the mission, but that “chivalry and patriotism of his countrymen, when well directed, can accomplish much.” The volunteers would only be provided with ammunition and must look “to the valley of the Rio Grande for remuneration.” Houston wanted to raise 1,000 men west of the Trinity River, since ones coming from farther east would use up valuable “substance indispensable to family use, and prevent emigration for the want of supplies.”

Houston, having been assured that volunteers were more than eager to sign up, assigned each county a certain number of volunteers, which meant that Milam County would be allowed to sign up 66 men. Houston said that he had “great reliance upon the zeal of his countrymen and their willingness to pursue such a course as will give protection to our South Western frontier for the future; and he is satisfied, if this expedition can be carried into effect, that the country has much to hope from its results.” [\[302\]](#)

In September, before recruitment could be completed, Mexican General Adrian Woll advanced with his troops in the same area, but this time there was a large company of Texans to meet him. In the Battle of Salado Creek about six miles east of San Antonio, the Texans had a hard battle, but finally prevailed with Woll and retreated his army. Tom Smith was wounded during the encounter. [\[303\]](#)

The volunteer force, called the Somerville Expedition after its commanding officer, was apparently raised by Tom Smith and Eli Chandler and subsequently “twelve hundred Texans marched to the Rio Grande, quarreled with their officers and marched home again, with the exception of three hundred men under ex-Secretary of War William S. Fisher.” [\[304\]](#) Ignoring orders to disband and return home, these men crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico, were captured at Mier, imprisoned and later many were executed when forced to draw lots; black beans meant death by firing squad. They became known in Texas history as the Mier Expedition.

Partially as a result of the “flag waving” Texas volunteers on the Rio Grande, as well as many other factors, a temporary armistice was called between Texas and Mexico.

The actions of the Mexicans gave President Sam Houston a reason to try to remove the Texas Archives from the Texas Capital in Austin, a relatively short distance north of San Antonio. Houston had not favored the establishment of Austin as the Texas capital considering its location on the far edge of civilization and thus exposing it to Mexican troops and Indian raids. Houston's detractors have said that Houston simply wanted the capital in Houston. The Allen brothers of New York founded Houston. The fledgling town on the Texas gulf coast was named in honor of the hero of the decisive Battle of San Jacinto. Some cynics have said that the Allen brothers named their town to attract Houston's support and so enhance the growth of the Allen's speculative venture. However, by this time, as a compromise, Houston had moved the capital to Washington-on-the-Brazos, in Washington County, northwest of Houston.

Finally, on December 10, 1842, Sam Houston wrote a letter to Thomas I. Smith and Eli Chandler stating the "importance of removing the public archives and government stores from their present dangerous situation at the City of Austin to a place of security, is becoming daily more and more imperative." [305] Houston noted that some were threatening to destroy the archives, and therefore he was obligated to provide for the safety of the archives by removing them from Austin. Suggesting that the two men needed some 10 to 15 wagons with strong teams, Houston warned them "to conduct your operations in utmost secrecy." Houston thought that they might "raise your men (for the move) as if for an Indian excursion; and by no means let your object be known till you are ready to act."

While the Texas Congress was not willing to help Houston with the removal of the archives, Tom Smith and Eli Chandler responded to Houston's request by raising the necessary men and providing the wagons and teams. In the early morning darkness, December 30, 1842, the group led by Smith and Chandler was in Austin and began packing the wagons at the Land Office where the archives were stored. Two wagons had been loaded when Angelina Eberly, who ran an Austin boarding house and thus had a vested interest in keeping the Texas capital in Austin, spotted the men and wagons. Immediately understanding the situation, she ran with a flaming torch to where a cannon had been placed on Congress Avenue to thwart Mexican and Indian raids. Pointing the gun toward the Land Office, she lit the fuse and set off the cannon. The two loaded wagons immediately took off with the now roused citizens of Austin in pursuit. Overtaken northwest of Austin at Brushy Creek, Smith and Chandler decided to give up the wagons, which were returned with their contents to Austin. While the capital of Texas did not return to Austin until Houston's term as president was over, the Archives remained in Austin, much to the delight of Austin's citizens. This event became known as the "Archive War." [306]

During this period Thomas Ingles Smith's name had come up as a potential nominee for Indian Commissioner or Agent. On October 30, 1842, E. L. R. Wheelock [307] wrote Sam Houston from Robertson County. In his letter Wheelock noted the "considerable degree of dissatisfaction prevails in several portions of our country from the circumstances of the Removal of Eden Stroude as Indian Commissioner." After considering the effect of the removal on Houston's enemies and friends, Wheelock goes on to remark on the possibility of a Mr. Patton serving as the Indian Commissioner, but that Patton's neighbor, Colonel Rus Parker, said Patton did not want the job. "Under these circumstances," Wheelock wrote, "I beg Your Excellency to permit me to Suggest to You Maj. Thomas I. Smith of Milam County as a suitable worthy and in Every aspect Qualified for the discharge of the various duties of Indian Agent for the Brazos River—he is favorabe (sic) Known as one of our prudent but bold defenders." [308]

Another letter of recommendation was written by T. I. Powel from the Falls of Brazos, [309] wherein Powel wrote, "My object for including this upon your notice is to inform you that though the solicitations of many friends Thomas I. Smith has consented to accept the appointment of Indian agent" if Houston so appoints him. Praising Tom Smith, Powel wrote, "As regards the moral worth integrity patriotism and decision of character of Colonel Smith his acts speak for themselves." In closing, Powel noted Smith's devotion to Houston as a politician and as a man, certainly qualities desirable in a political appointment.

The Indians had continued to be a problem for the Republic of Texas, raiding as far south as Austin and the San Antonio River in 1842. In the raid on the San Antonio River, several members of a Gilliland family living on a ranch there had been killed. Keeping peace with the Indians would protect Texas citizens, and therefore the Indians were an important issue at this time and for many years to come.

Tom Smith did receive the appointment as one of the Indian Commissioners. Besides meeting with Indian councils, Tom Smith kept an eye on all the activities on the frontier that might affect the Republic's relationship with the Indians. On June 21, 1843, Tom Smith wrote to Sam Houston that he had returned home a few days before from his settlement near the Trinity River, just south of present Dallas County. "It is all peace and quiet on the frontier at this time," he wrote and the "Delaware Indians sent word to me the Cadoes (sic) and Ionies were making corn on the Trinity above me." However, a Shawnee Indian told him that some Caddoes and Ionies were on "this side of the Trinity above fifteen miles from me." Tom Smith was afraid that these Indians might be disturbed by a group of men who had "not answered to their name in the service of Texas since I have been a citizen." This group of men was apparently surveyors, and they were to start surveying on the first of July. Smith wonders if it might not be advisable "to have a stop put to locating on the frontier till the Indian line was designated. It might have a bad effect on the Indians to see ther (sic) cornfields surveyed by the

whites." He mentioned that he had settled three families up there who would be in a very exposed situation if things went bad with the Indians.[\[310\]](#)

Settlement in then northern Robertson County had some complicating factors. Among those seeking to claim land there were the Texian settlers, who had land coming to them for service in sundry Texas military actions or under early immigration laws. Another group interested in that location was the Peters Colony, which wanted to settle colonists there. For the most part the Peters Colony (Kentucky Colonization Company) had land north of the area, but also had some grants in the northern part of Robertson County. Another colonization group, the Mercer Colony, also wanted to settle colonists in the area. Texians, who still had land claims, which they wanted located in the area, certainly were not happy to have colony surveyors, especially from the Mercer Colony, claiming land that they wanted. Charles Mercer of the Mercer Colony had started out with the Peters Colony, and then set out to get his own emparsario contract. By the time he finally got going, however, the mood was against the emparsario idea entirely, since so many old Texians felt their land rights were violated by the colonies.

Surveyors had started surveying for the Mercer Colony in the middle of 1840, some three years before and had "encountered opposition to the survey led by Thomas I. Smith, captain of Texas Rangers and William R. Howe, who lived on Chambers Creek. In the face of this opposition, Mercer signed a contract with (B.J.) Chambers at Captain Smith's and authorized him to obtain any evidence of threatened resistance of the laws of the Republic and to transmit it to the Secretary of State." When Chambers was instructed to survey the neighborhood of Chambers Creek, threats and notices from settlers in the region prevented him. One such notice follows.

Sir:

We understand that you have come up into the section of the country for the purpose of surveying for General Mercer and his colony. This, therefore, is to notify you that if you attempt to do so we will cause you to desist even through rough means if necessary.

signed Elkanah Cape
R.S. Home
Wm. H. Moor
S. Mayfield

Thomas I. Smith
Chas. Davis
Wm. Cox
G.W. Serve[\[311\]](#)

In April 1843, two months before Thomas I. Smith's letter to Sam Houston, Thomas' niece, Rhoda Jane Stokes Howe and her husband, William R. Howe, had settled on Chambers Creek in

present day Ellis County. They were the first settlers in the area and probably were one of the three families to which Tom Smith referred in his letter. It is likely that the settlement was at least in part a response to the pressures of the Mercer Colony surveying.

In October 1843 three other families settled in the area, and in January 1844 Thomas I. Smith and his nephew, William J. Stokes, came to settle in the same area. They "stopped with my brother-in-law, Howe," wrote W. J. Stokes, "who always had plenty of meat. Buffalo was in abundance. We could step out at any time and kill one for breakfast or dinner, according to necessity." Stokes stated that some "settlers...lived upon buffalo meat for from two to four months without bread of any kind...and many were the horses stolen by the Indians." W. J. Stokes wrote:

"During the years 1843, 1844 and 1845, and until 1846, there were no settlements between Chambers' Creek and Buck Snort, or the falls of the Brazos, which was our nearest southern settlement, and travelers had to pack their own provisions, and camp out one night, as it was two days' ride. We would stop before sun-down of an evening and cook our supper, then put out the fire and go three or four miles and hide from the Indians. The reason we stopped before night was the Indians could not see a fire as far in day-light as in night, and by putting out the fire probably prevented any discovery of us, and by going off three or four miles in the dark they could not follow us, even if they had discovered us." [\[312\]](#)

Another early settler in this area, which was Robertson County at the time, was Callaway H. Patrick, who later married into the Smith family. Patrick, whose family had settled in what is now Leon County, had moved farther north in Robertson County. The flavor of the times is reflected in his remembrances:

"One evening in the year 1843, I was engaged with others building a flatboat at the fall of the Brazos. I went out of camp a short distance and I thought I heard an owl hooting. I listened, and I soon decided that the owls which I thought I heard were Indians, because when a man mimics an owl there is an echo, but there is no

echo to a genuine owlhoot. I got lost from camp, and not long after I heard the Indians I saw some deer running from me. I wouldn't have fired at them for any money, but it was good opportunity for me to run and I took after them. I swam a bayou and found my way into the town of Bucksport. The next morning we made up a party there and went out to look for the Indians. We found that they had followed me the evening before up

to the bank of the bayou, but they had left the locality and we could not find them.” [\[313\]](#)

The same year, 1843, there was an Indian council held on the “Grapevine prairie” [\[314\]](#) that was one of the parleys the Indian commissioners, including Tom Smith, attended. Young Callaway Patrick was there and later wrote about the trip home:

“In 1843 a treaty was held with the Indians at Grapevine prairie. I was there, and after the treaty a party of us went to Cedar Springs, and we came on down the trail now known as McKinney avenue (in Dallas, Texas) to John Neely Bryan's log cabin, which was located at the foot of what is now Main street in Dallas. I bought eight quarts of whisky from him, at 25 cents a quart, and it was whisky too. He had about a barrel and a half of whisky, a keg of tobacco and some lead, powder and caps which he had hauled from Shreveport (Louisiana). That was his stock.” [\[315\]](#)

Money was not of much use, Callaway Patrick said, since there was not anything to buy. What money they had was “Texas red-back”, the money of the Republic. Just as there was no merchandise to buy, there were no hotels either. Visitors would sleep in the same room as the cabin's residents, since the cabin was usually just one room. “Of course,” Patrick said, “the men folks would leave the room while the women went to bed.” [\[316\]](#) Clothing was not readily available either and the early settlers wore buckskin or made their clothing from the cotton they grew. Combining wool and cotton produced a warmer material for winter use. In any event, the home produced fiber had to be spun on a spinning wheel. Then the thread was woven into cloth on looms, which sometimes were hoisted to the cabin ceiling by ropes when not in use.

Not all the Smith relatives were staying close to home in the Chambers Creek area. One, Ann Smith Stokes' son, Guy, was ranging with the famous Ranger captain John C. Hays in South Texas. There was a disputed area in South Texas during this time since Texas claimed the Rio Grande as the border and Mexico begged to differ. The area had been abandoned by the Mexican residents who left behind large numbers of livestock, including horses. Texans came into the area to drive out the animals, but there were also bands of Mexicans roaming the area. It was into this area in 1843 that Captain Hays and his 16 men rode. The 16 men under Hays' command included the later famous ranger

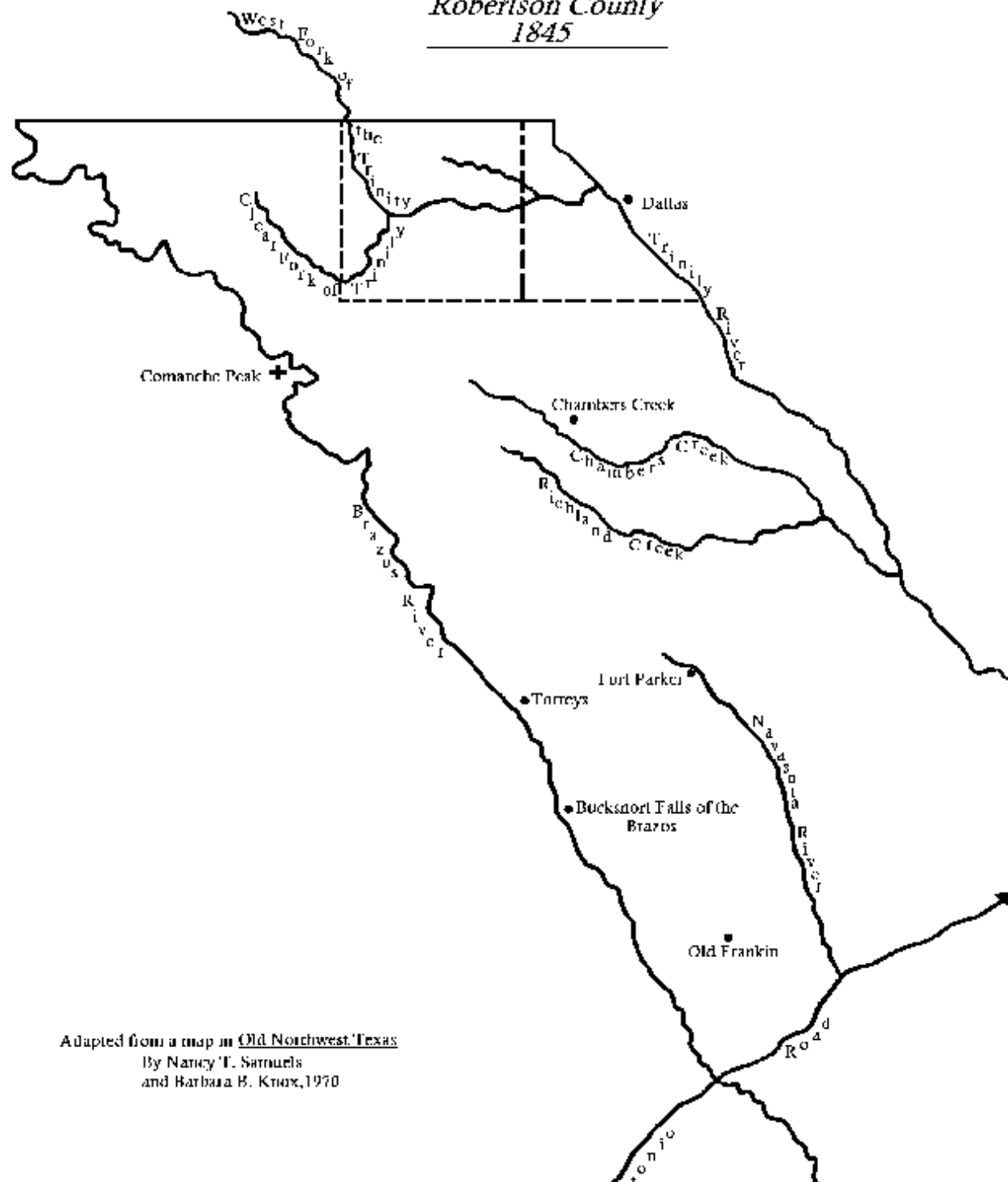
Shapley P. Ross and Guy Stokes, who was about 25 at the time. The rangers captured some Mexican soldiers, gathered some 100 horses, and headed out of the area. Some other Mexican soldiers, however, discovered the Texans and fired upon them. The Texans, strung out in a line, were all galloping back and forth to help their comrades. The horses were stampeded towards the Mexicans, and after discovering a large force of Mexicans nearby, the Texans withdrew from the area. In the melee, some of the rangers, including Ross and Guy Stokes, lost their hats, an unhappy event under the hot South Texas sun.[\[317\]](#)

During 1843, Thomas Ingles Smith continued to be involved with Indian affairs and creating the new settlement in north Robertson County. Later this area became Navarro County. The present area is Ellis County, which was created out of Navarro County. Tom Smith, with other Indian commissioners, George W. Terrell and John S. Black, [\[318\]](#) was at another Indian Council at Techuacana Creek in now Limestone County in 1843.

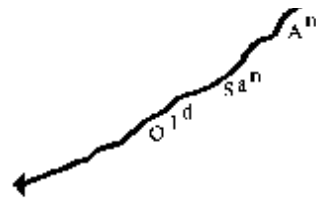
In 1844, E. H. Tarrant had replaced Indian Commissioner Black. Tarrant and the commissioners met with representatives of various Indian tribes, including Comanches, Delawares Cherokees and Lipans at the Techuacana Creek location and entered into treaties with them.[\[319\]](#) These and several other Indian councils were successful in maintaining peace on the Texas frontier, although it was noted at the time that Texas, “during the days of the republic, expended \$3,815,011 in protecting her.” [\[320\]](#) All during this time new settlers were moving into the upper Robertson County, near the Howes and the Smiths. One such group was “a company of emigrants from Arkansas, composed of Sidney Pruitt, Daniel Weaver, Robert Parks and their families....They settled around the Howe settlement on Chambers' Creek.” [\[321\]](#)

While Thomas I. Smith had essentially settled in the upper part of the county, he still had surveying work farther south. In 1845, Milam County selected a site for its county seat. Tom I. Smith “did the platting and surveying in the original laying out of the town.” [\[322\]](#) This was all done despite Indian raids and continual trouble from the Mexican government.

*Robertson County
1845*



Adapted from a map in Old Northwest Texas
By Nancy T. Samuels
and Barbara B. Knox, 1970





Early Texian

The same year (1845) Thomas I. Smith received a commission to command a ranger company,[\[323\]](#) and for the next couple of years the ranging companies took most of his time. The records of the Controller of Public Accounts of the Republic of Texas list several requests for money in connection with Tom Smith's Robertson County Ranger Company. These requests began in March 1845 and ran through December 1845.[\[324\]](#) Ranger companies, like the one commanded by Thomas I. Smith, were not the militia of earlier American history, although they are of a common ancestry. In the days of the Republic of Texas, there was a constant shortage of money and a persistent abundance of hostile Indians. The result was the ranger companies, composed of local residents who enlisted for a few months and then returned to their duties at home. Not financed by the Republic, the ranger companies were in essence left to their own devices to do what they could against the warlike Indians attacking them. The groups evolved into "one of the most colorful, efficient and deadly band of irregular partisans on the side of law and order the world has seen. They were called into being by the needs of a war frontier, by society that could not afford a regular army."[\[325\]](#) Not bound by regular army or militia rules, the ranger groups were able to adapt to the unique frontier conditions that existed in Texas, where the frontier was to exist some 40 years, much longer than anywhere else in American frontier history does.

The men who enlisted in the ranger groups "were not typical Texas farmers—the man with a farm and family could not spend his time riding the wild frontier. They were for the most part extremely young; they were adventurous and uniformly courageous."[\[326\]](#) While Thomas I. Smith at age 45 was older than most of the Ranger captains who later achieved fame, he was experienced in some 30 years of warfare and, most important, he was experienced in the ways of the Indians the Rangers would be facing, due to his experiences as Indian Commissioner. Also his family had fought the forest Indians in Virginia, and some of their remnants, such as the Delawares, had been pushed into the upper Robertson County area. The biggest obstruction to settlement in the area, however, was the warrior class Comanches, whose territory was the plains to the west. It was not until the evolution of the Colt six-shooter, first manufactured in 1838 and first used in Texas in 1839,[\[327\]](#) that Texans were able to make significant progress in defeating the Comanches. In the interim, these early Texas Rangers, by now hard-bitten frontiersmen, had learned Indian lore, tracking and the riding skills necessary to defend themselves and their families.

While the subject of annexation by the United States had been discussed at various times during the Republic, now it became an important issue. Many in the Republic had long wanted the United States to annex Texas and periodically the issue would rise, but the northern states and those opposing slavery had fought bitterly to keep Texas out since its admittance would add a slave holding state. In the interim, while the Republic of Texas had problems with Mexicans, Indians and a lack of money, many citizens were becoming accustomed to forging their own way. Many were beginning to talk of a greater Republic of Texas, which might stretch all the way to the Pacific Ocean. This began to make the United States very nervous to see that another nation, however small and poorly financed, might take over territory coveted by the United States. The lack of money during the Republic days also continually threatened to tie closer bonds between the Republic and certain European nations like France and England. In truth, at this time England was playing a part in helping Texas negotiate a treaty with Mexico that would recognize Texas' independence. Mexico was beginning to see advantages to having the Republic of Texas between itself and the United States.

These factors finally resulted in the United States offering to annex Texas and giving Texas, as an incentive, the rights to retain its public lands and to divide, if so desired, into four more states. Mexico, understanding the situation, hastened to approve the treaty with Mexico recognizing Texas' independence. It was, however, a move made too late and the Texas Congress approved the annexation, pending the approval of the citizens of the Republic of Texas. In the ensuing vote in 1845, the people of Texas voted 4,000 to 200 [\[328\]](#) in favor of the annexation. Callaway Patrick, the young soon to be nephew-in-law of Thomas I. Smith, was one of the 200 who voted against it. Particularly interesting is the population of Texas at the time of annexation, estimated to have been between 125,000 and 150,000.[\[329\]](#)

Statehood, while providing a postal system and a better financial system, had not solved the Indian problems and Tom Smith and his ranging company continued their tasks of patrolling the area on through the year 1845. Those enlisting on September 15, 1845, and "mustered into the service of the United States" for an enlistment lasting until December 15, 1845 included Callaway Patrick, Thomas' future nephew-in-law, and two of his Pullen nephews, Bird S. Pullen and James R. Pullen.[\[330\]](#)

It is believed that Thomas I. Smith's Robertson County rangers were the first to patrol the upper Robertson County area, south and west of the Three Forks of the Trinity [\[331\]](#) (this area includes present day Dallas and Fort Worth). Smith and his rangers would stay at various camps and patrol the surrounding areas. It may have been during one of the ranging trips that Tom Smith had an unfortunate accident.

"Capt. Smith and his Company was (sic) camped near Comanche peak near the mouth of the Paluxy, which empties into the Brazos River three miles below Granbury, the county seat of Hood County. One morning, before it was good daylight, the Captain went to move his horse to fresh grass. His Tonkaka scout saw him, and thinking he was a Comanche Indian Attempting (sic) to steal the horse, shot him in the back. The shock threw him to his knees, and when he attempted to rise the pain was so severe that he had to remain in that position eight hours before a surgeon could be brought from the nearest fort to extract the arrow." [\[332\]](#)

Various Indian tribes had provided scouts for the Texans all through the days of the Republic. The Lipan Indians were commonly used since they were bitter enemies of the Comanche Indians, the most warlike and hostile of the tribes.

In the previous year, 1844, the Indians had agreed by treaty to surrender all the white captives that they held. William J. Stokes, Tom Smith's nephew, was with Tom Smith's ranger group which was sent in 1845, "after John McLannan...a young man about twenty years of age, who had been captured by the Indians at Parker's Fort, (in present Limestone County) in 1839. He was so thoroughly Indianized that he refused to come in with us and we had to tie him, much to the displeasure of the young warriors." [333] This event must have been particularly poignant for Thomas Ingles Smith, whose namesake uncle, Thomas Ingles, had been held by Indians for seven years and who, like young McLannan, had become very Indian-like.

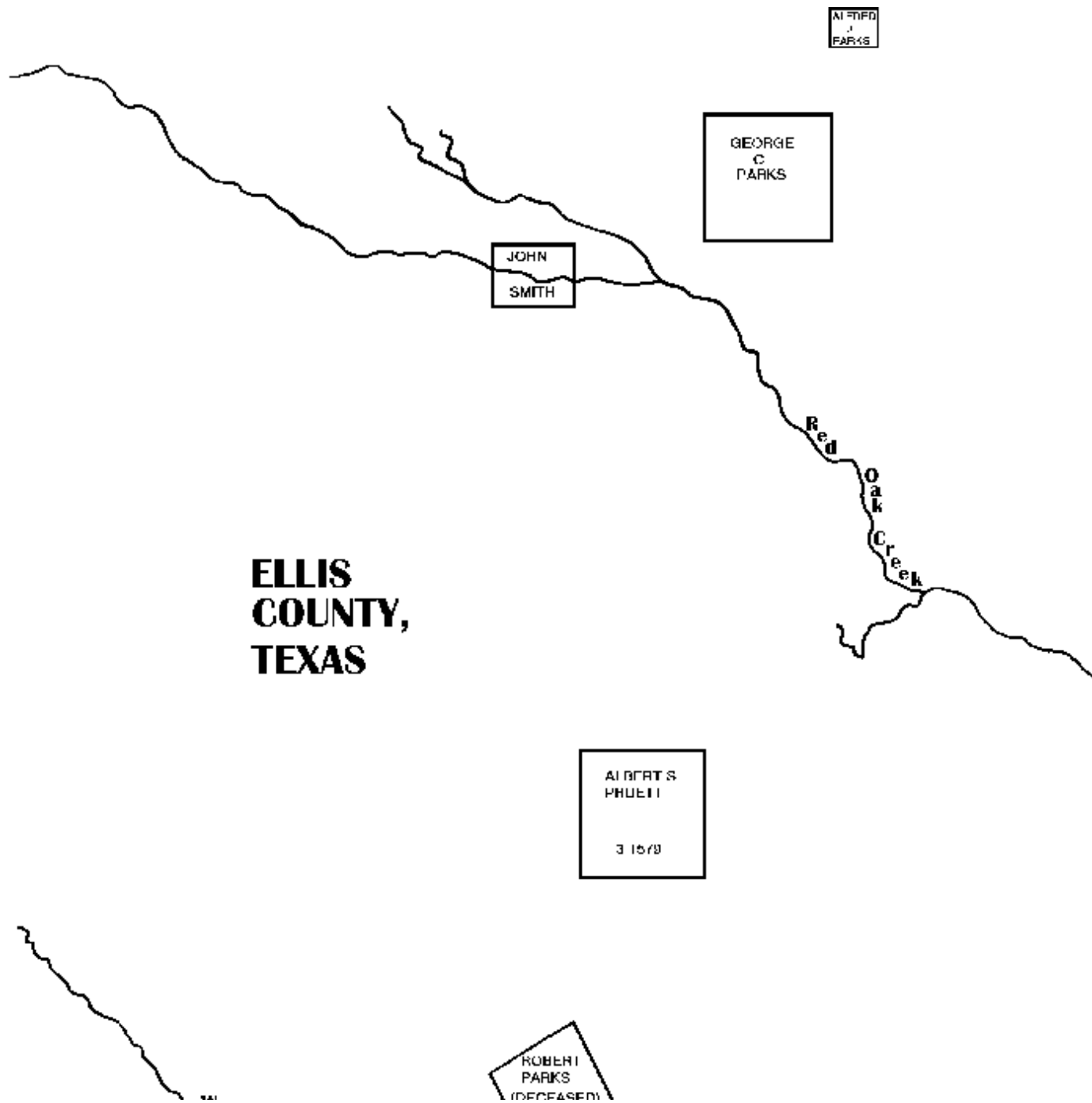
The population in the upper Robertson County was large enough by 1846 that in the spring of that year "several of the pioneers met in the home of Thomas I. Smith which was one mile north of Chambers Creek, in a little community known as 'Freezeout'. This was near the home of W. R. Howe, Thomas I. Smith's nephew-in-law. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the creation of a (new) county....A petition was drawn up asking that a new county be created out of Robertson County and that the home of W. R. Howe be made the temporary county seat....On July 13, 1846, a new county was created....and was called Navarro County in honor of Jose Antonio Navarro, a Texas patriot." [334]

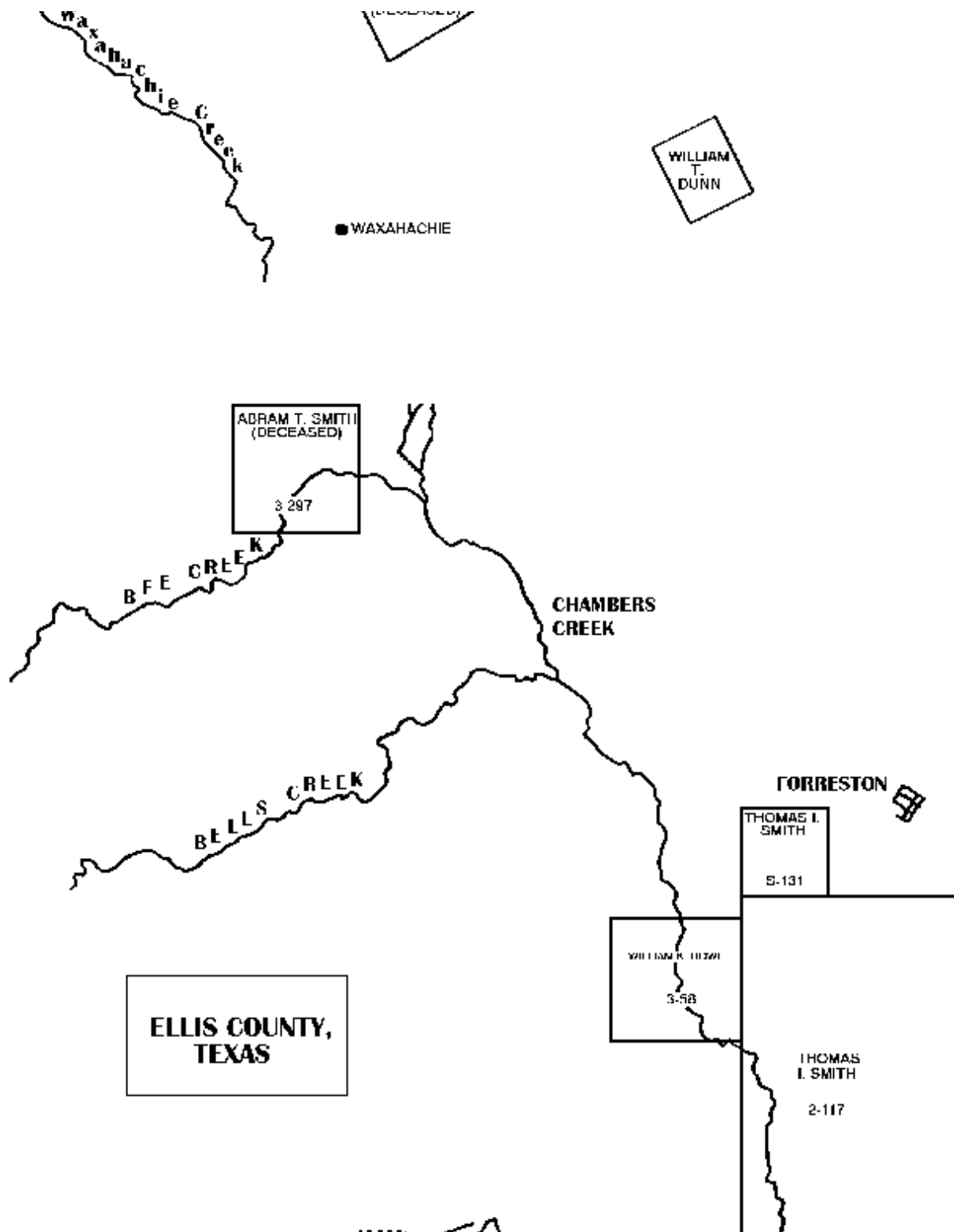
The Navarro County tax list for 1846 shows William R. Howe with 220 acres and William Stokes with 320 acres. This first tax list for Navarro County shows Thomas I. Smith being taxed for some 11,000 acres of land. To his original grant of 9,033 acres Thomas added 320 acres in a script grant, that is land purchased from the republic, which adjoined the northwest corner of his large land survey. This gave him 9,353 acres. There is another land survey in what is now southern Ellis County for a Thomas Smith, but it is not clear if this is Thomas I. Smith. It is possible that the remaining

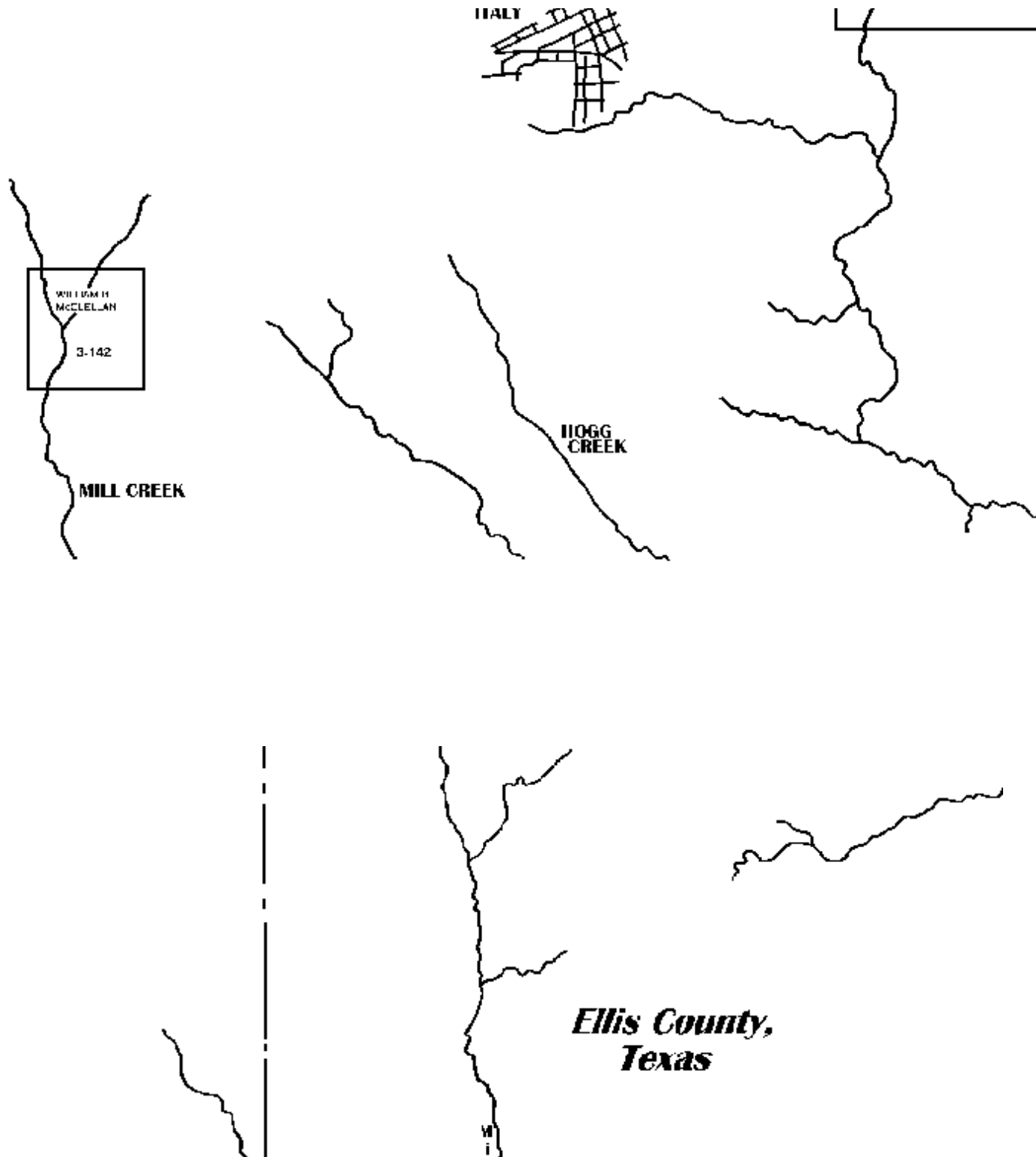
acreage was purchased from other settlers. Besides the enormous amount of land, Thomas I. Smith also had two slaves, a rarity in that area.

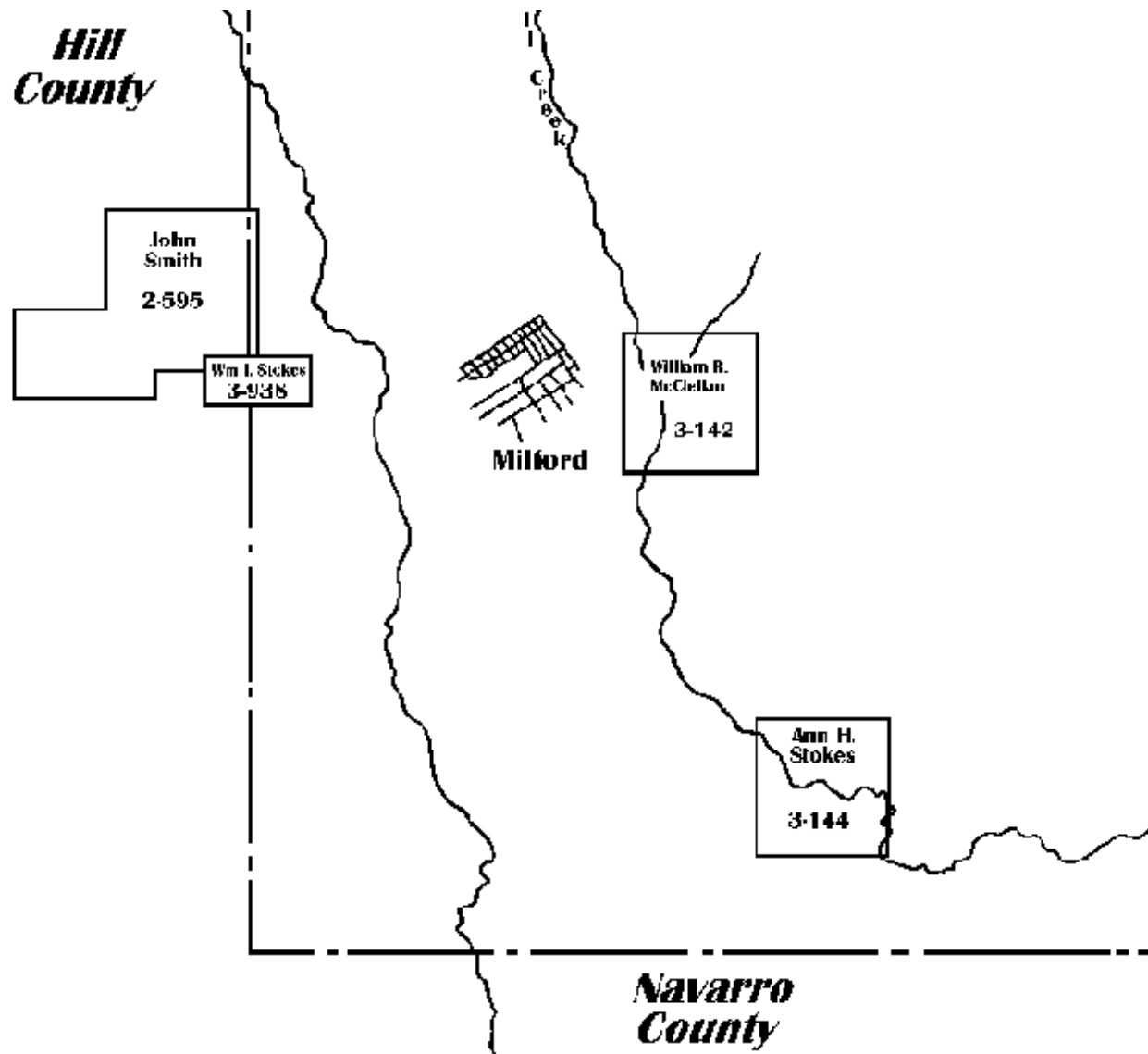
Other Smith relatives also received land grants in what had been the upper Robertson County, now Ellis and Navarro counties. Thomas' sister, Ann H. Stokes applied for a headright on January 10, 1840, in Harris County (location of present Houston) and received her grant of 640 acres in Navarro County on February 27, 1850.[335] Her land was eventually surveyed and located on Mill Creek.[336] Ann Stokes is also shown as having a large land grant in southeast Dallas County, although she was not listed as a Peter's colonist as were most of the settlers in that area. Ann's son Guy Stokes applied for 320 acres, for a single man, on December 23, 1839, in Washington County, noting that he arrived "Post October 10, 1837". Ann's son-in-law, William Howe, applied for his land, on January 9, 1840, in Harris County and received the grant in Navarro County. Abram Smith, Thomas' deceased brother, received a land grant patented by his heirs on September 15, 1849, on Bee Creek, which is south of Chambers Creek.[337] He had received his land certificate in Milam County on the same day as his brother Thomas received his substantial land certificate in Milam County. William Beavers McClellan, Thomas' brother-in-law and husband of his sister Juliet, is noted as arriving in Texas, December 1841, and as receiving his headright, on January 1, 1844.[338] McClellan received the survey for his third class headright that was located in Ellis County on October 5, 1846, "thirty-five miles west of Trinity River on Mill Creek, a branch of Chambers Creek." [339] McClellan's son, John J. McClellan, who is also listed as arriving in Texas December 1841, received 320 acres, also on January 1, 1844.[340]

While times were becoming settled in the Navarro County area in the year following annexation, Mexico was extremely unhappy over Texas' annexation, and war loomed nearer. As Mexico had a history of agitating the Indians when it wanted to make trouble in Texas, J. P. Henderson, the governor of Texas, wrote, on May 5, 1846, informing Thomas I. Smith that he would receive "a Commission authorizing you to proceed to the Indian Tribes, within the limits and on the frontier of the State of Texas." The governor urged Thomas I. Smithy to go "with dispatch to visit with Genl. E. Morehouse, such of the Indian Tribes on the frontier of the State as you think proper to visit. Watch their movements and endeavor to find out their dispositions and intentions in regard to the









present difficulty between Mexico and the United States, and also, ascertain whether there are any Mexican emissaries amongst them.” [\[341\]](#)

While it appeared that the Indians would not involve themselves in the conflict between Mexico and the United States, nevertheless Texas citizens had asked for protection. The state decided, in July 1846, to have “five companies of mounted rangers for the protection of the frontier.” [\[342\]](#) One of these companies was to be “at or near Torrey’s trading house on the Brazos, commanded by Thos. I. Smith.”[\[343\]](#)

The Ranger company that Thomas I. Smith had raised at the request of the Texas governor was the “fifth company to form, sixty-four strong in Navarro County on the second of August. They elected Captain Smith and Lieutenants E. S. Wymann and A. J. Reynolds.” [\[344\]](#) Serving as a sergeant with the unit was Thomas I. Smith’s nephew, William J. Stokes. The company was officially called the Texas Mounted Volunteers (1st service) and was “composed of personnel recruited primarily from Navarro County.” Instead of the usual three month enlistment, the company would serve until February 2, 1847.[\[345\]](#)

Others who had served under Thomas I. Smith in his ranger company enlisted in similar units. Callaway Patrick, for example, enlisted in Company K of the 1st Regiment, Texas Mounted Riflemen, which was “recruited primarily at Wheelock, Texas and mustered into federal service on July 18, 1846, and mustered out of federal service on October 2, 1846.” [\[346\]](#) The captain of this unit was Eli Chandler, 46, who had been with Thomas I. Smith during the “Archive War.” Chandler was one of the founders of Cairo, an early Texas town destined for demise, where Callaway Patrick’s family had settled. Another serving in Chandler’s group was Patrick P. Smith, the eldest son of the deceased Abram Trigg Smith. Chandler’s Company was in John C. Hay’s 1st Regiment. John C. Hay was a famous Texas Ranger of the time. Callaway and young Patrick Smith would fight in the battle of Monterey, Mexico, with their comrades of Company K.[\[347\]](#)

Clinton M. Winkler, a young lawyer, one of the volunteers who enlisted in Thomas I. Smith’s ranger company remembered the occasion.

"I volunteered in August as a Texas ranger of the United States in the war with Mexico...enlisting at Marlin in Thomas I. Smith's company, P. H. Bell's regiment. These rangers were stationed at posts from the Colorado to the Red river. The scouts from each post or station met once a week along the whole line. Smith's company...was stationed on Richland creek about four miles west of the town of Milford. The station took its name from our captain. Most of our supplies were hauled from Fort Smith, in Arkansas. One night while at Smith's station the Indians slipped into our camp and stole some horses. We pursued them into the Wichita mountains beyond the Red River....In 1847 in the spring we were ordered to Mexico." (348)

Another account of this event was remembered by Thomas I. Smith’s nephew, William J. Stokes, who noted that it occurred in November 1846 when they “pursued some Indians, who had stolen some horses on Richland creek...to the Wichita mountains and up Red river.” The rangers were gone for six weeks in the bitter cold of winter. Since the Indians had burned off the prairie there were no buffalo and soon the rangers were without food “for four days, with the exception of two deerskins we had over our packs, and which we cut into strips and divided between fifty-five men.” The rangers would burn the hair off the deerskins and eat them, pronouncing them “good.” The group lost one ranger, 17, who “died on the Wichita river and was buried at night.” [\[349\]](#)

In February, after six months patrolling the frontier, Thomas I. Smith re-enlisted most of his rangers for six months more and headed for San Antonio with four other ranger companies. With the number of rangers in San Antonio, there were enough for “a battalion with a position for a major. Both Captains (Thomas I.) Smith and (H.E.) McCulloch offered their services, but...Captain Howe (of the United States Army) at first refused to order the election. When it was held on April 4, Captain Smith was elected.”[\[350\]](#)

The events leading up to the election were a lesson in the directness of the Texans in relation to United States Army officers. It seems that United States Army Captain Marshall S. Howe, who was in charge of the Texas frontier at this time, was not very popular with the Texas Rangers. “He is accused of ordering incomplete rations of subsistence issued to the Texas troops in camp near San Antonio.” When the election of the major’s position was delayed by Howe, Ranger captain Shapley P. Ross went to Howe’s office to ask that the election be held so that the rangers could get on to Mexico. Howe wrote an order that Ross considered to be less than what was needed and when ordered by Howe to take the order, Ross refused, causing Howe to become angry and say, “Do you know who you are talking to sir?” “Yes, sir, I do,” Ross replied. “I am talking to Captain Howe.” The situation

The Smiths and their Kin in Texas

95

situation deteriorated from there, and the result was that Ross “seized the captain by the nape of the neck and the seat of the pants and carried him to the banister.” Then Captains Tom I. Smith and Captain H.E. McCulloch arrived, calming down affairs. The election was held the next day.[\[351\]](#)

The day after the election of Thomas I. Smith as battalion major, the rangers headed for Camargo, Mexico. Except for an encounter with the famous Comanche chief, Yellow Wolf, two days out of Rancho Davis, the march was without incident. Yellow Wolf was happy to find out that the Texans were going to fight the Mexicans, and since he was at war with Mexico himself he “agreed not to molest the Americans. That night (wild) mustangs stampeded the quartermaster mules. The next day the Comanches returned the animals.” [\[352\]](#)

After arriving at Rancho Davis Thomas I. Smith was directed to return:

“...to the Texas frontier and post the different companies of his battalion so as to give protection to the border settlers. Major Smith marched the command to Camargo to obtain supplies for the long march he had to make. Here General (George) Croghan ordered Major Smith to take his battalion and escort him to Monterey. The major took fifty men and accompanied the general to Cerralvo, where he was relieved by a regular officer and force.

(Shapley P.) Ross, as senior captain, marched the battalion to Guerrero, Mexico, and remained there until Smith and McCulloch returned from Cerralvo. The order to return to the Texas frontier was repeated. Major Smith moved the battalion to Laredo, turned in his wagons, retained the pack mules and marched for the upper frontier.” (353)

Thomas I. Smith’s dealings with Howe had left a less than favorable impression on him. In a letter to the editor of *The Austin Democrat*, a newspaper in Austin, Texas, dated May 31, 1847, and reprinted in the July 31, 1847, *Clarksville Northern Standard*, Thomas I. Smith wrote that he felt himself called upon to explain the situation “not only for the sake of the reputation of his troops and himself, but more especially to prevent Capt. Howe from imposing himself again upon the people of our state by calling them from their farms and firesides, to the cause of war merely for the purpose of marching there and back again.” [\[354\]](#) It seems that Howe had called in the frontier ranger companies

companies to send them to General Zachary Taylor's headquarters without authorization to do so and when Thomas I. Smith's troops arrived in Mexico, Smith learned that his troops would not be considered part of the United States forces and so he returned to the frontier.

Yet, in all, Thomas I. Smith, proved himself a good commander. "Under Colonel Harney's five-company call, he recruited a company of sixty-four men, added seventeen to it later, kept it on the frontier for six months without federal status, discharged it at the end of its commitment, reenrolled all but three in a new company, marched it to San Antonio for pay, and continued beyond to the Rio Grande, only to be ordered back to North Texas; yet he lost none to desertion and only one to illness during twelve months. Such results are more indicative of good leadership than they are of mere good fortune." [\[355\]](#)

By the next fall, Thomas I. Smith, was turning his attention for once to more peaceful pursuits. On November 18, 1847, with James C. Neill and David R. Mitchell he formed a land partnership in Navarro County.

There is some confusion between James C. Neill [\[356\]](#) and John C. Neill, especially since both men had identical initials, "J.C.". Thomas, however, had a long history of association with James C. Neill, dating back apparently to the 1838 incident of the Kickapoo and the surveying party. The two men also served as Indian commissioners together during the Texas Republic. Also by this time, Thomas I. Smith's first wife had died, and Tom was remarried to Louisa Bartlett Neill, the widow of John C. Neill, who died in the early 1840s and who may have been a relative of James C. Neill of Grimes County. When James C. Neill died Thomas Smith and the third partner, David R. Mitchell, were listed as the administrators of James' estate. It is reasonable, therefore, considering the above and the fact that John C. Neill had to be dead or Thomas Smith could not have married his widow, to decide that the J.C. Neill of the land partnership was James C. Neill, not John C. Neill.

David R. Mitchell was David Reed Mitchell, who arrived in Texas around 1845 and "became a surveyor for the Robertson Land District." [\[357\]](#)

The land partnership contract between Smith, Neill and Mitchell provided that the three were equal partners in "all the profits, rents, sales that may accrue of two separate one-third of a league of land situated in Navarro County on the south side of Chambers Creek, a branch of the Trinity River, or Mesmerism Creek, a branch of Chambers Creek, Robertson County, Texas." [\[358\]](#)

Before the partnership barely was started, however, James C. Neill died in Grimes County, sometime before March 31, 1848. At almost the same time, on March 30, 1848, Thomas Ingles Smith

died of “winter fever”, in Austin, Texas [359] closing not only the door on the fledgling land partnership, but on an interesting and colorful life on the Texas frontier. Only ten days earlier Tom had written his brother, Bird Booker Smith, from Austin. Bird reported that Tom had written “in such a lively strain that he was in perfect good health & his wife had a fine Boy and called Its name Tom.” [360] The infant Tom, son of Thomas I. and Louisa Smith, apparently did not survive childhood.

Not by any means were the Indian problems over on the Texas frontier. The year after Thomas I. Smith’s death “incomplete figures indicate that at least 149 white men, women, and children were killed on the northwest Texas frontier.” [361] The United States military forces were poorly equipped to deal with this type of Indian warfare, and the result was continual strife for three more decades.

The Texas frontier was settled by “an Anglo-American vanguard with bordering in its blood.” Men like Thomas I. Smith and his various relatives “would pay their price... the last great American frontier was to cost seventeen lives per mile of advance.” Yet it was on Texas’ raw frontiers that the Texas personality was born. Described as the most European or territorial of all Americans, the “Texan’s attitudes, his inherent chauvinism and the seeds of his belligerence, sprouted from his conscious effort to take and hold his land. It was the reaction of essentially civilized men and women thrown into new and harsh conditions, beset by enemies they despised.” This territoriality is a “feeling for place and tribe” [362] and still exists among these Texans’ descendants.

[261] Bird Booker Smith died in 1870 in Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas. Information from Jeanette K. B. Daniels, June 30, 1994. Letter in possession of author. Columbia County in located in southwest Arkansas on its border with Louisiana.

[262] In his letters in 1848 to his nephew Bird Jones, Bird Booker Smith mentioned that he was thinking of moving, although he did not know where. See Appendix C, Letter 13, pp. 210–211.

[263] Notes of author from telephone conversation with Carol Whitehead (Houston, Texas), a descendant of Bird B. Smith, Jr. (1994).

[264] These are Thomas Ingles Smith, Abraham Trigg Smith, Ann Smith Stokes, Juliet Smith McClellan and Mary Smith Little. *Old Northwest Texas* by Nancy Timmons

Samuels and Barbara Roach Knox, Fort Worth Genealogical Society, 1970 states that six members of this family came to Texas. Records of some of the children of Rhoda Smith Pullen have been found and she may have been the sixth Smith who located in Texas.

[265] The Hogsett surname is sometimes spelled Hogshead, Hogsed, Hogshed or Hogsett. Said to be of Scotch-Irish descent, the families followed the traditional migration path from Pennsylvania (circa 1700), Shenandoah Valley of Virginia (circa 1729–30) to North Carolina and to Tennessee (See Tracy, Sherman Weld. *The Tracey Genealogy. being some of the descendants of Stephen Tracy of Plymouth Colony, 1623*, Rutland, Vermont, Tuttle Publishing, 1936, pp. 150–157). Common male given names of this family are John, David, Samuel, William, Walter, and Michael. It is possible that the Hogsetts mentioned here settled in Kentucky and then into middle Tennessee.

[266] The Leftwich family was associated with the Smith family in Bedford County, Virginia. “W. Leftwich”, probably William Leftwich, was a witness to the will of Guy Smith, father of Gen. Bird Smith, in 1781. One of Guy Smith's daughters, Susannah, married John Leftwich, who may have been a son of William. The Robert Leftwich, agent of the Texas Company, was the son of Augustine Leftwich Jr., a younger brother of William Leftwich, who witnessed the will.

[267] McLean, Malcolm D. *Papers concerning Robertson's Colony in Texas*, v. 2, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, pp. 34–36.

[268] *Handbook of Texas*, v. 2, p. 488–489.

[269] McLean, Malcolm D. *The importance of Sterling Clack Robertson*, remarks made at the dedication of the Sterling C. Robertson Dam on October 19, 1979.

[270] Thomason, who was born in South Carolina August 29, 1785, lived in Giles Co., Tennessee, where he rented land from Sterling C. Robertson. *Astride the Old San Antonio Road, a History of Burleson County, Texas*. Dallas: Burleson County Historical Society, Inc., 1980, p. 16.

[271] McLean, *Papers Concerning Robertson's colony in Texas*, v. 7, p. 23.

[272] Hynes Papers, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

[273] Note the surname "King." Many of the Smith family's Trigg relatives married into the King family and some of these Trigg/King families moved to Tennessee. There were Trigg families living in the southern counties of Middle Tennessee early in the nineteenth century. It is unknown if there is a relationship between Frances King and these Trigg/King families.

[274] McLean, *The Importance of Sterling Clack Robertson*.

[275] *Handbook of Texas*, p. 487.

[276] Ibid.

[277] McLean, *Papers Concerning Robertson's colony*, v. 3, p. 456.

[278] See Appendix C, Letters 4 and 5, pp. 199-200.

[279] Thrall, Homer S. *Pictorial History of Texas*, 1879, p. 622; Samuels, Nancy T. and Barbara R. Knox. *Old Northwest Texas*, v. I-B, Navarro County, Fort Worth: Fort Worth Genealogical Society, pp. 615–619.

[280] Located near present day Bryan, Texas.

[281] General Land Office, Archives and Records Division, Austin, Texas.

[282] See also Samuels, Nancy Timmons and Barbara Roach Knox, *Old Northwest Texas*, v. I-B, p. 616.

[283] General Land Office, Archives and Records Division, *Republic and State Land Grants, Key to Land Grant Index*, Austin, Texas.

[284] Miller, Thomas Lloyd, *The Public Lands of Texas 1519–1970*. Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1971, p. 29.

[285] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[286] White, Gifford. *1840 Citizens of Texas, Volume 1: Land Grants*, Austin, Texas, 1883, p.234 (listed under Thomas J.[sic] Smith).

[287] There were other Smiths in the same area. William H. Smith arrived early in Texas and was living at the village of Tenoxtitlan, in present day Burleson County, when

the Mexicans abandoned it. This area north of present Washington County and Austin's Colony. *Astride the Old San Antonio Road, a History of Burleson County, Texas*. Dallas: Burleson County Historical Society, Inc., 1980, p. 16. There was a land grant made in 1833 to Robertson colonist John Smith (8-672) in the area also. John Smith's grant was in present day Franklin County. McLean, Malcolm D., *Papers Concerning the Robertson's Colony*, v. 8, p. 164.

[288] Some believe that Ann Stokes and her family had been living in East Texas in either Houston County or Trinity County. Her last child, Mary, was born in Alabama in 1830 (see 1850 census Ellis County, TX), so the family must have been living in Alabama at one time, if that census record is correct.

[289] See Appendix C, Letter 7, p. 202.

[290] Families frequently moved in the fall of the year. By that time all crops at the old location had been harvested and supplies were available to be taken with the new settlers to see them over the winter until they could plant a crop in the spring. The first months in the new location were therefore dedicated to providing shelter for the winter.

[291] *Memorial and Biographical History of Ellis County, Texas*. Chicago: 1892, p. 81.

[292] The material was gathered for inclusion in a book written by Annie Doom Pickrell entitled *Pioneer Women in Texas* (1939) 1991, p. 369. A copy of the material is in the possession of the author.

[293] *Astride the old San Antonio Road*, p. 16.

[294] *Ibid.*; also Putman, Wyvonne. *Navarro County History*, Quanah, Texas: Nortex Press, 1975, p.74. See also Brown, John Henry. *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas*.

Easley, NC: Southern Historical Press, (1880) 1978 (by Rev. Silas Emmett Lucas Jr.) p. 47–50 “The Surveyors’ Fight in Navarro County, in October, 1893. In the latter book, Thomas I. Smith is not listed as being in this engagement, although of the six men listed in this account as surviving there was noted an unidentified man who “slightly wounded, ... escaped to the east.” Another survivor listed is William Smith. Thomas Smith had a brother William, thus far not located. This may be he or some other relative. Among those listed as killed are “J. Neal or Neill.” and “P. M. Jones, (and) James Jones.” The Neill may have been the first husband of Thomas Smith’s second wife, although their only child was born in September of 1839. The Jones men could be relatives of Thomas Smith.

[295] In 1830 Eli Chandler and his family had been living in Madison County, Tennessee at the same time that several Smiths were there.

[296] Parker, Richard. *Historical Recollections of Robertson County, Texas*, A. Jones, 1955, p.21.

[297] The Cherokee had their own written language and many spoke English. Many dressed in a modified European style and had other similar “civilized” traits. A mountain and forest dwelling people, the Cherokee were feeling the pressure of the new Texas arrivals. The Cherokee were faced on the west by treeless prairie and the warlike Commaches and had nowhere else to go. They knew what the surveying crews meant, and with a sense of their backs against the wall, were resisting.

[298] Dunn, J.B. “Thomas Ingles Smith, Pioneer”.

[299] Samuels, Nancy Timmons and Barbara Roach Knox. *Old Northwest Texas*, Fort Worth Genealogical Society, 1970, v. I-B, p. 688–689.

[300] See Appendix C, Letter 8, pp. 202–203.

- [301] Williams, Amelia W. and Eugene C. Barker, editors, *The Writings of Sam Houston, 1813–1863*. v. 2, July 16, 1814–March 31, 1842, Austin and New York: Jenkins, 1970, p. 535. For full text of letter, see Appendix B, p. 180.
- [302] Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. For the full text of the letter see Appendix B, pp. 181–182.
- [303] Thrall, *Pictorial History of Texas*, p. 622.
- [304] James, Marquis. *The Raven, a Biography of Sam Houston*, Austin: University of Texas Press, (1929) 1991, p. 328.
- [305] Williams, Amelia W. and Eugene C. Barker, v. 7, December 20, 1822–January 31, 1844, p. 226. For the full text of the letter see Appendix B, p. 184.
- [306] *The Dallas Morning News*, Dallas, Texas, February 7, 1993 (a slightly anti-Houston retelling of the event); other sources include Gary Mauro's *Land*, Dr. Dorman Winfrey's article in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, v. LXIV, No. 2, October 1960 and *The writings of Sam Houston, 1813–1863*.
- [307] Edward L. R. Wheelock served as an Indian Commissioner in 1845.
- [308] Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. For the full text of the letter see Appendix B, p. 185.

[309] Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. For the full text of the letter see Appendix B, p. 186.

[310] Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas. For the full text of the letter see Appendix B, p. 187.

[311] Samuels, Nancy Timmons and Barbara Roach Knox, *Old Northwest Texas*, v. I, p. 36.

[312] *A Memorial and Biographical history of Ellis County*, p. 81.

[313] *Memorial and Biographical history of Dallas County, Texas*, 1892, pp. 177–178.

[314] This is probably now Grapevine, Texas located between Dallas and Fort Worth.

[315] *Memorial and Biographic history of Dallas County, Texas*, p. 177.

[316] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[317] Ford, John Salmon, *Ford, John Salmon*, edited by Stephen B. Oates, Austin, University of Texas Press, (1963) 1987, p. 440–441.

[318] John S. Black was born in about 1790 and migrated to Texas from Tennessee in 1829. A veteran of the Texas Revolution, he applied for his headright in 1830 and received land in Grimes County. (from *Papers Concerning Robertson's Colony in Texas*, by Malcolm McLean, v. 16, p. 220)

[319] Thrall, *Pictorial History of Texas*, p. 466; Samuels, Nancy Timmons and Barbara Roach Knox, *Old Northwest Texas*, v. I-B, p. 616.

[320] Thrall, *Pictorial History of Texas*, p. 466.

[321] *History of Ellis County, the Basic 1892 Book*, Ft. Worth, Historical Publishers, 1972, p. 70.

[322] *Astride the Old San Antonio Road*, p. 19.

[323] Samuels, Nancy Timmons and Barbara Roach Knox, *Old Northwest Texas*, v. I, p. 615.

[324] Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

[325] Fehrenbach, T. R., *Lone Star, a History of Texas and Texans*. New York: Collier, (1968) 1985, p. 473.

[326] Ibid.

[327] Ibid, p. 475.

[328] Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, p. 267.

[329] Barton, Henry W. *Texas Volunteers in the Mexican War*, Wichita Falls, 1976, p. 113.

[330] For the full text of the muster roll see Appendix B, p. 188–189.

[331] Samuels, Nancy Timmons and Barbara Roach Knox, *Old Northwest Texas*, v. I-B, p. 616.

[332] Dunn, J.B., “Thomas Ingles Smith: Pioneer”.

[333] *History of Ellis County*, p. 83.

[334] Putman, *Navarro County, Texas*, p. 3.

[335] White, Gifford. *1840 Citizens of Texas, Volume I: Land Grants*, Austin, Texas 1993, p. 241.

[336] Samuels, Nancy Timmons and Barbara Roach Knox, *Old Northwest Texas*, p. 618.

[337] *Ibid.*, pp. 618, 213.

[338] White, *1840 Citizens of Texas, Volume: Land Grants*, p. 178.

[339] General Land Office, Austin, TX. Third class headrights were to be given to immigrants who arrived between October 1, 1837 and January 1, 1840. Supposedly, the William Beavers McClellan family arrived December 1841. Perhaps that was when the family came, but William may have come earlier before returning for his family.

[340] White, *1840 Citizens of Texas, Volume I: Land Grants*, p. 178.

[341] Winfrey, Dorman, *Texas Indian papers, 1846–1859*, Austin: Texas State Library, 1960, p.41.

[342] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[343] Ibid.

[344] Barton, *Texas Volunteers in the Mexican War*, p. 72.

[345] Spurlin, Charles D., compiler. *Texas Veterans in the Mexican War: Muster Rolls of Texas Military Units*, 1984, p. 33.

[346] Ibid.

[347] Brown, John Henry. *History of Dallas County from 1837 to 1887*, Dallas: Milligan, Cornett & Farnham, 1887, p. 51.

[348] *History of Ellis County, Texas*, The Ellis County History Workshop, 1972, p. 70.

[349] Ibid., p. 82.

[350] Barton, *Texas Volunteers in the Mexican War*, p. 98.

[351] Ford, John Salmon Ford. *Rip Ford's Texas*, p. 444.

[352] *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145.

[353] *Ibid.*, p. 445.

[354] Letter of Thomas I. Smith to Austin newspaper *Democrat*, reprinted in July 31, 1847 Clarksville *Northern Standard*. Copied from microfilm Dallas Public Library, Texas Collection, Dallas, Texas. For the full text see the Appendix B, p. 190.

[355] Barton, *Texas Volunteers in the Mexican War*, p. 119.

[356] James C. Neill was very active in the Texas Revolution. He was commander of the Alamo until called away by family needs. It was while he was gone that the Battle of the Alamo took place. He was also at the Battle of San Jacinto.

[357] Samuels, Nancy Timmons and Barbara Roach Knox, *Old Northwest Texas*, p. 539.

[358] *Ibid.*

[359] VC Probate Records, Navarro County, p. 322. Thomas I. Smith died “sometime in March 1848”.

[360] “Winter fever” might be pneumonia. This cause of death was reported to Bird Jones by his brother John Jones in Washington County, Texas (Appendix C, Letter 14, pp. 211–211); See also Bird Booker Smith’s letter to Bird Jones (Appendix C, Letter 12, pp. 208–209).

[361] Fehrenbach, *Lone Star*, p. 497.

[362] *Ibid*, pp. 497, 497, 256–257, 257.