

JOHN F. TORREY AND BROTHERS

by

Henry C. Armbruster

A THESIS

Approved:

Committee

Approved:

Dean of the Graduate
School

154711

ESTILL LIBRARY

JOHN F. TORREY AND BROTHERS

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
Sam Houston State Teachers College
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

by

Henry C. ^{crews}Armbruster

Huntsville, Texas

August, 1963

154711

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. NEW TEXIANS	3
Family Background of the Torrey Brothers	3
Arrival and Establishment in Texas	6
Variety of Interest of John Torrey	7
III. THE INDIAN TRADE	15
Locations of Torrey Trading Posts	16
Torrey's Trading House on Tehaucana Creek	17
Licensing and Establishment	19
Government Regulation	22
Residents of the Post	24
Danger from the Indians	28
Nature of the Trade	34
Significance of the Torrey Indian Trade to the Pacification of the Indians	42
IV. THOMAS STEBBINS TORREY	48
The Santa Fe Expedition	49
Journey to the Wild Tribes	55
Adjudication by the Comanches	66
Return of Indian Children Prisoners	71
Safe Return Followed by Death	74

CHAPTER	PAGE
V. JAMES NASH TORREY	76
The Mier Expedition	77
The Battle of Mier	80
Surrender	81
Escape	82
Recapture and Execution	83
Burial on Monument Hill	85
VI. JOHN F. TORREY'S NEW BRAUNFELS YEARS	87
Early Ventures	88
Mill and Factory on Comal River	90
Marriage and Children	97
Destruction of Mill by Fire and	
Restoration in Stone	99
Establishment of Textile Factory	100
Damage from Tornado	105
Destruction of Mill and Factory by Flood	107
VII. CONCLUSION	111
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115
VITA	123

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Jacob N. Torrey's Commission in Connecticut Militia	5
2. Passport Issued to Thomas Torrey	54
3. Torrey Mill Coupons	101
4. Torrey Mill Damaged by Tornado	106

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Soon after the Texas War of Independence and for many years thereafter the name of Torrey was well known in Texas, but today it is all but forgotten. The brothers who bore that name came to Texas from the Eastern United States as young men and won the respect of their fellow Texans not only as businessmen but also for their contributions to the settlement and expansion of the frontier, the security of the citizenry, and the early establishment of manufacturing in the state. No county, village, city, or crossroad bears the name of Torrey in commemoration of these brothers, though men have been thus honored for contributions no greater than theirs. Many Texas towns still have the names of their first settlers, but the Torreys, who traveled the extreme frontier regions and far out into Indian country long before the settlers came, have not left their name on any landmark. This study offers some belated recognition for the part which the Torreys played in frontier Texas.

The following chapters deal with the careers of four of the Torrey brothers--John, David, Thomas, and James--and, because of his initiative and enterprise and his longer life span, John Torrey receives more attention than the other three. There were three younger Torreys, but mention of them is incidental to the saga of the four upon whom this

study concentrates. This thesis makes no pretense at being a complete biography of John Torrey and his brothers during their Texas years but is simply a collection of the details of their lives which have been preserved in public records, newspapers, letters, family mementos, documents, and historical writings. The complete and detailed history of the firm of John F. Torrey and Brothers--its business alliances, partnerships, profits and losses--is also beyond the scope of this project.

The study first takes up the arrival and establishment of the brothers in Texas, providing some background information and view of their adjustment to frontier life. The Torrey Indian Trade as operated by David and John Torrey, the adventures of Thomas and James Torrey, and John Torrey's New Braunfels years and milling and manufacturing interests, follow in that order in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER II

NEW TEXIANS

The history of the gradual expansion of the populated area of the North American continent is but the collective story of the migration of individuals lured by the promise of the West. Texas had its place in the unfolding of American frontier history, and seven sons of Connecticut became a part of the westward surge of humanity, each playing an important role in the saga of the Texas frontier. David, John, Thomas, James, Tudar, George, and Abe Torrey all came to Texas to seek their fortunes.¹

John F. Torrey, the first of the brothers to arrive in Texas, fitted himself into the pioneer society and was soon followed by David, Thomas, and James. The family history of these brothers, their arrival and establishment in Texas, and the several interests of John Torrey all provide a background of information for the examination of the Torrey contribution to Texas history.

The name Torrey had either a Norman French origin from the word tour, meaning tower, or a Gaelic origin from the word torr, meaning hill. Families of this name lived in English counties as early as the sixteenth century. Records indicate that they were landed gentry and yeomanry of the

¹John H. Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892, (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 278.

British Isles. Among the early lines of the family in England was that of William Torrey of Combe St. Nicholas, Sommersetshire. William Torrey's great grandson Philip had four sons who came to America. William, eldest of the four immigrant brothers, brought his two sons, Samuel and William, and settled in Massachusetts. Louisa Maria Torrey, wife of the Honorable Alphonso Taft and mother of William Howard Taft was descended from the immigrant William Torrey.²

An active and resourceful race, the Torreys have won success in various fields, particularly in science, education, and the ministry.³ Among those of the name who fought in the War of the Revolution was David Torrey of Massachusetts,⁴ father of Jacob N. Torrey, and grandfather of the seven brothers who came to Texas.⁵ Jacob N. Torrey, who served the state of Connecticut as a captain in the militia in 1818,⁶ married Laura Kilburn on February 12,

²Media Research Bureau, "The Name and Family of Torrey" (Washington D. C.), pp. 2-3.

³"John Torrey (1796-1873)," Encyclopaedia Americana (1963), XXII, 309; and "Reuben Archer Torrey (1856-1928)," ibid., pp. 309-310.

⁴Media Research Bureau, op. cit., p.6.

⁵Birth Records, Town of Ashford, Warrenville, Connecticut.

⁶Torrey Family Documents (Mrs. Curtis T. Vaughan, San Antonio, Texas), Commission of Jacob N. Torrey as Captain in the Connecticut militia, February 25, 1818.

Oliveet W. Olgout, Esquire,

CAPTAIN GENERAL AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF IN AND OVER THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT IN THE
UNIONED STATES OF AMERICA

Be ahead. H. E. E. E.

You

Comrade

Plas bang by the General's authority of the State, accepted to be Captain of the
Bills Company of the

2nd Regiment of Infantry

in the Militia of the State, to take with from the 25th day of September, 1861, and from the
25th day of September, 1861, regarding the State and Company in your Military, Company and from the
day of the day of the State, in the same manner, official and official you
to take the said Company, from your own and change, as that Captain, especially and
disregarding to discharge that Bill and State, concerning your position, Bill and State in the
one of them, from according to the State and Discharge of the, authorized and established by the
State of the State, having them in your Bill and Government, and continuing them to day,
you as that Captain, and you are to advance all and Bill and Discharge as from
them to State, you shall receive, either from me, or from other your position, Bill and Government
to the State hereby agreed in your

From and my Hand, and the Public Seal of the State at Hartford, the 20th

Day of May, 1861

By the Company, Captain,

Shawmut

Secretary

[Signature]

FIGURE 1

1815.⁷ Children of this marriage were David Kilburn, born September 6, 1815; John Frink, born April 14, 1817; Thomas Stebbins, born July 27, 1819; James Nash, born January 3, 1821; Laura Ann, born April 1, 1824; Mary Elizabeth, born August 26, 1826; Tudar Jacob, born September 28, 1828 and died June 9, 1831; Jacob Tudar, born January 16, 1831; George Bicknell, born March 9, 1833;⁸ and Abe, born in 1836.⁹

Although there is some possibility that John Torrey and his brothers David, Thomas, and James might have come to Texas even earlier,¹⁰ evidence indicates that they arrived in the new republic soon after the War of Independence, the second son, John, leading the way in 1838,¹¹ followed by the eldest, David, in 1839, Thomas in 1840, and James

⁷Marriage Records, Town of Ashford, Warrenville, Connecticut.

⁸Birth Records, Town of Ashford, Warrenville, Connecticut.

⁹There is no record of Abe's birth in Ashford, but the 1860 New Braunfels census lists him as aged 24.

¹⁰John's obituary notice found in the Torrey Papers at the University of Texas avers that he came to Texas in 1835, participated in the War of Independence, and served on General Sam Houston's staff. James Torrey's last words before execution by the Mexicans imply that his brothers were in Texas at the time of the Battle of San Jacinto (1836). However, John Torrey, in an 1887 interview with the editor of the Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, said that he came to Texas in 1838.

¹¹Ernst Koebig, "Lebenslauf Skizze," Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, January 27, 1887, p. 2.

in 1841.¹² Soon after his arrival, John made the acquaintance of Sam Houston, who, in 1838, was serving the last year of his first term as president of the republic.¹³ David also met and subsequently became closely associated with Texas' first president in political, business, and Indian affairs.¹⁴

Upon arrival in Texas, John established himself in Houston, a city as new as was the republic. He lead his brothers not only to Texas, but into business also, for the merchandising firm in which David, Thomas, and John shared interest was called John F. Torrey and Brothers. So young was the city of Houston at this time that the Torrey brothers built the first frame house there. This small building was used as a trading post for Indians and was located on the north side of Preston Street near what is now the east end of the Preston Street bridge.¹⁵

But John was never one to limit himself to a single enterprise. He also followed, in 1840 at least,¹⁶ the trade

¹²John H. Brown, loc. cit.

¹³Koebig, loc. cit.

¹⁴Walter P. Webb (ed.), et al., The Handbook of Texas (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), II, 790.

¹⁵S. O. Young, A Thumbnail History of the City of Houston Texas from Its Founding in 1836 to the Year 1912 (Houston: Rein and Sons Company, 1912), p. 44.

¹⁶Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], July 1, 1840.

of watchmaker, which he had learned in Connecticut.¹⁷ The Torrey business ventures were varied. Of great importance in Texas history were the trading houses founded along the Indian frontier by David and John and the early manufacturing projects on the Comal with which John was concerned, both of which will be presented more fully in following chapters. Also indicative of the energy and versatility of John Torrey were the several lesser and shorter-lived commercial projects in which he dealt.

From 1840 to 1844 the John Torrey Jewelry and Fancy Goods Store on Houston's Main Street offered the Houston shoppers such luxury items as jewelry, books, American and English periodicals (by the year or single copy), stationary, "fancy goods," spectacles, and hardware.¹⁸ At the same time the Torrey trading houses, first in Houston, then further out on the frontier, catered to the needs of the uncivilized red man with such wares as tobacco, calico, blankets, and beads.¹⁹

¹⁷Koebig, loc. cit.

¹⁸Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], January 12, 1841, p. 3, col. 2; and Texas National Register [Washington, Texas], December 28, 1844, p. 32, col. 1.

¹⁹Letter from Sam Houston to Stephen Z. Hoyle, April, 1843, in Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker (eds.), The Writings of Sam Houston 1813-1863 (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1943), III, 350.

Torrey and Brothers entered into a co-partnership in the J. C. Spencer Company of Robinson County and, in 1846, dissolved this alliance.²⁰ In 1844 the firm furnished Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels with sabers and other weapons for the Adelsverein, an association intended to protect and facilitate German settlement in Texas, and contracted with Baron von Meusebach, a representative of the organization, to provision and transport German immigrants from the coast inland, thus assisting in the establishment of New Braunfels in 1845. This transaction took John Torrey to New Braunfels for the first time. He later made his home there for many years and began the first industry on the Comal.²¹

During his early years in Texas (1838 to 1849) John also had time to make numerous trips over the state for the purposes of business, pleasure, and service to the republic and even traveled to California in 1849.²² While it was David who made the buying trips back East,²³ John made trips by

²⁰ Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], January 7, 1846, p. 3, col. 1.

²¹ Koebig, loc. cit.

²² Koebig, loc. cit.

²³ Letter from Torrey and Brothers to Major T. G. Western, July 26, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 302; and Webb (ed.), et al., loc. cit.

steamer in 1841, 1842, 1844, and 1845²⁴ between Houston and Galveston, ordering goods, seeing to shipments and attending to business at the Galveston customs house.²⁵

In the year 1843 John Torrey went with an Indian commission deep into Indian territory to bid the hostile Comanches come to a peace council.²⁶ On another occasion he took the time to combine business with pleasure. Hamilton P. Bee recalled that in the early years Torrey's Tavern once stood on the site of the present town of San Marcos, and there John Torrey, "that old Texas hero," kept hotel under a tree for some time on two pounds of crackers, a box of sardines, and a bottle of whiskey. At night his guests reclined under the tree and were protected from tarantulas, centipedes, and poisonous reptiles by the host's cabras, or goats, which Bee said, warded off such pests. This rustic tavern and hotel was an entertaining project, and, Bee recalled, John ran it "Youst like h-ll."²⁷

²⁴Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], December 8, 1841, p. 3, col. 1; Telegraph and Texas Register, November 16, 1842, p. 3, col. 2; Telegraph and Texas Register, December 7, 1842, p. 3, col. 2; and Telegraph and Texas Register, November 6, 1844, p. 3, col. 1.

²⁵Letter from Torrey and Brothers to Thomas G. Western, September 1, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), op. cit., p. 345.

²⁶Koebig, loc. cit.

²⁷Dallas Herald, April 3, 1875, p. 2, col. 4.

A more significant event in the history of this Central Texas town found John Torrey again as witness. On a business trip from New Braunfels to the trading post on the upper reaches of the Brazos, Torrey spent the night of July 24, 1846, on the San Marcos River in the camp of a company of rangers, stationed there to protect several families who had just arrived with their wagonloads of belongings to found a new settlement. Torrey's companion on the trip, Dr. Ferdinand von Roemer of Germany, observed of the site:

In fact, a more advantageous and pleasant place for settlement could not be imagined than this park like little prairie, surrounded on one side by the forest fringing the San Marcos and on the other by the steep hills, the beginning of the higher hill country.²⁸

Dr. Roemer considered himself fortunate to have the companionship of Torrey, who was personally acquainted with all the conditions of the country and the peculiarities of the various Indian tribes. On this horseback journey along the fringes of the settlements John Torrey did not choose a direct route to their destination, but traveled a roundabout course, making stops and side trips to attend to business. The trip was of several weeks duration, and Torrey made business stops in Bastrop, at a farm near Caldwell, and in a settlement called Boonville. Torrey was, indeed, well

²⁸ Oswald Mueller (trans.), Roemer's Texas (San Antonio: Standard Printing Company, 1935), p. 182.

acquainted with the country and also with the settlers whom they met along the way.

From San Marcos the pair set out for Bastrop, traveling northward until they had crossed the Rio Blanco, then turning somewhat eastward. After a journey of about fifteen miles they camped at a spot known as Alligator Hole, but discovered that the real threat of the spot was not from alligators but mosquitos. Torrey, who traveled entirely unarmed, had no fear of the red man and did not hesitate to kindle a campfire despite his companion's apprehension that it might attract some wandering Indians. Depending entirely upon his familiarity with most of the tribes which traveled the borders of the settlements for his protection, Torrey felt so secure in their friendship that he even said he wished there had been Indians about from whom he might have secured venison to supplement their meager meal.

After Bastrop business took the travelers to Caldwell, which Roemer described as being without particular attractions and reputed to be an unhealthful place. Torrey stopped to buy beef cattle from a wealthy farmer, a Mr. Porter, whose farm was located a few miles from Caldwell. Porter had five hundred head of cattle which he priced at two cents a pound, leaving the problems of their transportation to the buyer.

Other business necessitating a side trip to a

settlement called Boonville took them some twenty miles south of Wheelock's settlement, located in the vicinity of Franklin in Robertson County. This trip led past a deposit of petrified wood,²⁹ which is also mentioned in an account of a trip to Torrey's Trading House made by Dr. John Washington Lockhart.³⁰ Following the business stop in Boonville, Torrey and his companion backtracked to Wheelock, then resumed their journey to the post.

On the falls of the Brazos, somewhere in the vicinity of the town of Marlin in Falls County, there was at one time a hamlet with the colorful name of Bucksnot. There the two lodged overnight with a settler whom Torrey had known in former days. Their host, who had once been a man of means, could offer them but simple fare because he had been ruined by gambling on horse races, a very popular sport in this sparsely settled country.

A short journey from Bucksnot brought the wayfarers to the trading house. Torrey and his guest stayed there for a few days in the company of a Torrey agent, an Indian whose job it was to beat the pelts taken in trade in order to rid them of insects, a government employed gunsmith who repaired

²⁹Ibid., pp. 182-189.

³⁰Jonnie L. Wallis, Sixty Years on the Brazos, The Life and Letters of Dr. John Washington Lockhart (Los Angeles: Privately Printed, 1930), p. 111.

the Indians's weapons, and two Mexican boys, seven and nine years of age, who had been ransomed from their Comanche captors by the owners of the post. They dined on buffalo meat, smoked buffalo tongue, bacon, honey and bread, considered in this outer fringe of civilization to be the choicest food. Piles of buffalo hides made excellent³¹ beds.

John Torrey and his brothers had come from the East and adapted themselves to frontier life. It was David and John Torrey who were primarily responsible for the Indian trade. Thomas and James Torrey died early. These Connecticut Yankees first established the firm of Torrey and Brothers in Houston, then expanded it to include the trade with the Indians on the very edge of civilization.

³¹Mueller, op. cit., pp. 190-195.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIAN TRADE

The firm of Torrey and Brothers dealt extensively in the Indian trade for approximately ten years--from the time of John Torrey's arrival in Houston in 1838 until 1848 when they sold the major trading house to George Barnard. The Torreys moved further west, and David Torrey began to open up a new trade with the Apaches, but in 1849 he was killed by a band of Mescaleros. After that time John Torrey turned his attention primarily to his milling projects on the Comal. The Torrey Indian trade coincided with the time during which the Republic of Texas dealt with the matter of Indian affairs and the uncertain period immediately following annexation at the end of 1845, when the relatively stable Indian relations achieved under Sam Houston's policy of peace, friendship, and commerce was jeopardized by the change in government. At Houston's invitation, the Torreys established a trading house on the Brazos which played an important part in the implementation of his Indian policy. The examination of the Torrey Indian trade will concentrate on this Brazos post and will include an investigation of the nature of this business and of its significance to the pacification of the Indians.

The trading post established on the Brazos, or more accurately on Tehaucana Creek, a tributary of the Brazos,

was the most important one, but the Torreys also had several other posts along the Indian frontier. Not all were in operation at the same time, and locations of the minor posts or branches were changed to meet the needs of convenience and profit. The Torreys began their Indian trade in Houston,¹ but after the partial treaty of 1842, followed by a general treaty in 1843, the Indians were prohibited from coming within the settlements. The Torrey Company in Houston served as the supply center for the posts with goods purchased in Boston and New York.² As early as 1842 the Torreys operated a trading house on the Bosque River.³ Later there were trading houses at Austin, San Antonio, New Braunfels, and Fredericksburg.⁴ The Torreys also had branch stores on the Navasota River and at the falls of the Brazos. George Barnard located the Navasota branch for the Torreys in 1843, and John Torrey had established the San Antonio

¹S. O. Young, A Thumbnail History of the City of Houston Texas from Its Founding in 1836 to the Year 1912 (Houston: Rein and Sons Company, 1912), p. 44.

²Walter P. Webb (ed.), et al., The Handbook of Texas (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), II, 791.

³Draft on Government, February 24, 1842, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 125.

⁴John K. Strecker, Chronicles of George Barnard (Waco: The Baylor Bulletin, 1928), XXXI, 24, and Walter P. Webb (ed.), et al., loc. cit.

store by 1844 and the New Braunfels one in 1845, soon after the first settlers had arrived there from Germany.⁵ Torrey apparently conducted the San Antonio store independently during the years 1844 and 1845, but after that time receipts from that store are signed for the company. Marcus A. Trumble was assistant at the San Antonio post in 1846 and 1847, and W. A. Andross was in charge of the Houston store for David Torrey in 1845.⁶

The Tehaucana post, sometimes referred to as Post Number Two, the trading house on the Brazos or on Trading House Creek, or simply as Torrey's trading house, was established early in 1844 under the law of the republic.⁷ Because of its official recognition, this post was known far and wide on the frontier as Torrey's trading house.⁸ According to a law of January 14, 1843, the Republic of Texas was to establish a line of trading posts which were to mark a temporary line between the whites and the Indians. The treaty concluded with the Indians at Bird's Fort in 1843 provided that trading houses to supply the needs of the

⁵Oscar Haas, "John Torrey Figured in Local Wartime Economic Struggle," New Braunfels Herald, December 11, 1962; and Strecker, loc. cit.

⁶Strecker, loc. cit.

⁷Strecker, loc. cit.

⁸Webb (ed.), et al., loc. cit.

Indians would be established at the Clear Forks of the Trinity, at Comanche Peak on the Brazos, and at the Old San Saba mission. The Torrey post on the Brazos was the only successful attempt at carrying out this plan, and it was almost a hundred miles short of Comanche Peak.

Sam Houston wrote to Messrs. Torrey and Brothers on December 23, 1843, informing them that at the falls of the Brazos there were many Indians who had come down to trade, bringing quantities of pelts and some of them even specie. Houston pointed out that it was an excellent opportunity to establish a good trade, urged them to send immediately the most important items of trade, such as powder, lead, and blankets, and advised them to establish themselves at the falls temporarily until they could erect a trading house at a location more convenient to the trade.⁹ However, the Torreys were not prepared to send a shipment of goods to the falls immediately, and Houston's private secretary, W. D. Miller, communicated with them on the matter again on December 30:

His Excellency earnestly wishes, therefore, that you should make every possible exertion to have goods at the point of trade in as short a period as you suggest--that is, within forty days. If this should not be the case, His Excellency believes you will not only lose much, but what is of more consequence, that the disappointment of the Indians in this respect will prejudice the

⁹Executive Record Book (Austin: Texas State Library), No. 40, p. 291.

efforts of the Government in confirming the peace already established. By all means use all expedition. It is highly important.¹⁰

The traders requested a license, and Houston replied on January 8, 1844, promising to forward a license to them at the first opportunity. The firm made a bond in the sum of ten thousand dollars as the law required and received a license dated December, 1843, which authorized them to establish a post on the Brazos "above the line designated by law as the boundary between Indians and Whites" and to trade with the Indians in "all goods, wares, and merchandize not prohibited by law."¹¹

Whether the Torreys arrived with trade goods in time to satisfy the Indians at the falls or not, no serious damage to the peace resulted, for in the year 1844, at the newly established Torrey trading house on the Brazos, Texas effected a treaty which included even the Comanches, who had not participated in the previous year's treaty. The convenient location for the trading house proved to be on Tehaucana Creek near an old Indian council ground, about

¹⁰Letter to Messrs. Torrey and Brothers, December 30, 1843, in Amelia Williams and Eugene C. Barker (eds.), The Writings of Sam Houston 1813-1863 (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1943), IV, 232.

¹¹A License to the Torrey Brothers to Establish a Trading House on the Brazos, in Amelia Williams and Eugene C. Barker (eds.), op. cit., VIII, 457.

seven miles southwest of the present city of Waco.¹²

Torrey's trading house, with its official status, enjoyed a near monopoly in the Indian trade in Texas. At least three times licenses were issued for the establishment of a post on the Trinity River, the first to A. G. Kimbell and Lewis V. Green,¹³ who never established a post. Kimbell, on November 10, 1844, relinquished his license to Norman Chatfield. Chatfield and a partner named Kennedy received a license for a Trinity post,¹⁴ but they too failed to carry out this plan. A third attempt occurred in 1845, when Mathias Travis was licensed to operate a trading house on the Trinity¹⁵ and his partner I. C. Spence went so far as to construct a building¹⁶ and, in July of that year, to submit an invoice, as prescribed by law, for some six hundred

¹²John H. Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 262.

¹³Executive Record Book (Austin: Texas State Library), No. 40, p. 279.

¹⁴Relinquishment of License of A. G. Kimbell, November 10, 1844, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 152; Letter from T. G. Western to Anson Jones, December 24, 1844, Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁵Certification of Mathias Travis to Operate a Trading House, June 4, 1845, Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁶Letter from I. C. Spence to T. G. Western, September 9, 1845, Ibid., pp. 356-357.

dollars worth of goods.¹⁷ This attempt was also doomed to failure. The post was never firmly enough established to warrant stationing an Indian agent there, and the names of traders Travis or Spence do not appear among the Texas Indian Papers after September of 1845. In 1846 Torrey's was again the only place authorized by the government where Indians could trade.¹⁸

Torrey's trading house stood in a post oak grove on a high, pebble-covered hill overlooking the forested bottom of Tehaucana Creek.¹⁹ The post was some two miles from the Brazos and consisted of six or seven houses built of rough, unhewn logs in the simple manner customary to the frontier. The largest of the houses held the pelts taken in trade, and another contained goods for which the Indians bartered their pelts. The remaining houses served as quarters for the men who lived at the post.²⁰ There were also corrals for the large supply of live stock kept at the post.²¹ The houses

¹⁷ Trading House No. 1 Invoice of Goods Introduced by Mathias Travis through Isaac C. Spence, July 10, 1845, Ibid., pp. 275-277.

¹⁸ Oswald Mueller (trans.), Roemer's Texas (San Antonio: Standard Printing Company, 1935), p. 182.

¹⁹ Jonnie L. Wallis, Sixty Years on the Brazos, The Life and Letters of Dr. John Washington Lockhart (Los Angeles: Privately Printed, 1930), p. 112.

²⁰ Mueller, op. cit., pp. 192-194.

²¹ Wallis, op. cit., p. 114.

were not surrounded by palisades or any other protective enclosure.²² Settlers at Bucksport, located at the falls of the Brazos, about a day's journey from the trading house, took the precaution of arranging their houses with the windows and doors opening into an inner court so that they might better defend themselves,²³ but the trader's safety depended upon his usefulness and even necessity to the Indians. The wild Indians, in fear or otherwise influenced by the friendly tribes, suffered the trading house to exist.²⁴ Occasionally even the hostile Indians would come to the post to trade, pretending to be of a friendly tribe, but they were always very sly and on their guard. If Torrey recognized them, he never gave any indication, but carried on the trading normally, for to alarm them would have cost him his life. In such a business the good-will of the customer was all-important, and Torrey gained the friendship and respect of the Indians by treating them kindly and dealing fairly with them.²⁵

The trading post was subject to regulation and supervision by the Indian agency. It was necessary for the

²²Mueller, op. cit., p. 192.

²³Ibid., p. 190.

²⁴Wallis, op. cit., pp. 117-119.

²⁵Wallis, op. cit., p. 119.

traders to submit complete, periodic invoices of all merchandise shipped to the trading house in compliance with section ten of the 1843 law under which the post was licensed.²⁶ The government's purpose in authorizing the establishment of Indian trading posts was to help maintain friendly relations with the Indians. Therefore one of the duties of the Indian agent stationed at the post was to supervise the trading to see that the Indians were dealt with fairly and, moreover, that they were satisfied with their treatment.²⁷

Although there was apparently no question of the honesty of the Torreys, early in 1845 some of the Indian customers at the trading house began to complain that prices were too high. Government agents adjusted the prices to satisfy the red men.²⁸ Red Bear and other Indians descended upon Washington on January 2, 1845, seeking to trade there and complaining of prices at Torrey's. The Superintendent

²⁶Letter from T. G. Western to L. H. Williams, May 27, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 255.

²⁷Letter from T. G. Western to Benjamin Sloat and L. H. Williams, January 4, 1845, Ibid., pp. 160-161; and Letter from T. G. Western to L. H. Williams, April 29, 1845, Ibid., p. 225.

²⁸Letter from Stephen T. Slater to T. G. Western, December 25, 1844, Ibid., p. 157; and Letter from T. G. Western to L. H. Williams, April 29, 1845, Ibid., p. 225.

of Indian Affairs, Major T. G. Western, indicated his disapproval:

their [the Indians] introduction into the Settlements cannot be tolerated--it must be prevented by the Agents it is in violation of law and of existing treaties, Subversive of order expensive to the Government and very annoying--no indian must be permitted to come below the trading house except on Public Service or when sent for by the Govt.²⁹ and then not without a passport from an Agent--

Western bestowed gifts upon the Indians to soothe them and sent them back to Torrey's to trade.³⁰ To remedy the situation he wrote John Torrey, asking his cooperation in the matter:

It would be gratifying to the Govt. to know that your instructions to your Agents at your Trading House were Such as to afford every facility to the Trading Indians Compatible with your interests as regards the prices of Goods etc. So as to render them contented and prevent further Clamor on that Subject--They will not under any circumstances be permitted to come below the Trading house and it is confidently hoped that Strict Justice will be meteed [sic] out to them there. . . .³¹

The Torrey employee, George Barnard, managed the Tehaucana post for the Torrey Company,³² and in 1849 he

²⁹Letter from T. G. Western to Benjamin Sloat and L. H. Williams, January 4, 1845, Ibid., p. 160.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Letter from T. G. Western to John F. Torrey, January 3, 1845, Ibid., p. 159.

³²It is possible that Barnard was a stockholder in the trading company, buying in either prior to the establishment of the Tehaucana post or in later years. John K.

bought the post, paying \$9,500, or approximately one-half the cost of the total amount of stock invoiced for the year of sale.³³ Like the Torreys, Barnard came from Connecticut.

He was born in Hartford in 1818 and arrived in Texas in

1839.³⁴ In the early forties Barnard was a clerk for the

Torreys in Houston.³⁵ Both Barnard and Thomas Torrey were members of the Santa Fe Expedition.³⁶

Barnard, whose personal accounts reveal him to have

Strecker, in his "Chronicles of George Barnard" says that Barnard, while recuperating in Houston after his release as a Santa Fe prisoner, met David and John Torrey and that Barnard, Sam Houston, and others bought interests in the Torrey company with the prospect of establishing posts along the frontier, but later in the "Chronicles" Strecker says that Barnard and the Torreys were schoolmates. The business alliance which Strecker believes existed among Barnard, Torreys, Houston, and others is substantiated by deduction rather than evidence. Sam Houston's signature on several receipts made out to Indians for pelts in 1846 and 1847 from the Torreys' indicates to Strecker that Houston was a stockholder. In the case of Barnard he points out that there are business agreements from the Tehaucana post signed for Torrey and Company with Barnard's name in parenthesis or simply "George Barnard, Trading Post Number 2." However, Roemer, who visited the trading house in 1846, in naming those persons living at the post, spoke of "an agent in the employ of the Torrey brothers who knew how to trade with the Indians," but said nothing of a partner or business associate.

³³Strecker, op. cit., p. 24.

³⁴Noel M. Loomis, The Texan Santa Fe Pioneers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 204.

³⁵Dallas Herald, August 7, 1869, p. 3, col. 3.

³⁶Loomis, op. cit., pp. 204, 251.

been something of a dandy, must have provided quite a contrast in appearance to the Indians, frontier farmers, and Texas Rangers, who were trading post customers. The dashing Texas Rangers, as described by Roemer, were "wild rough fellows, sons of settlers who had exchanged the work of the field for a time for the irregular life of a soldier."³⁷ Barnard wore silken underwear, and, while he sold "fine dress coats" to frontier farmers and substantial plantation owners for eight and ten dollars each, he was paying Lockwood and Dubois on Broadway, New York, thirty-five dollars each for his dress coats and twenty dollars for his business coats, seven-fifty to nine dollars for his fancy, silk vest, and from ten to fifteen dollars a pair for cashmere trousers.³⁸

Barnard's fellow resident at the post was the Indian agent, whose duty it was to supervise the trading, keep himself and his superiors informed of the location and disposition of the various tribes for which he was responsible, and take steps to rectify any situation which might threaten the peace, either among the Indian tribes or with the white settlers. During 1844 Benjamin Sloat was the Indian Agent assigned to the post. L. H. Williams replaced

³⁷Mueller, op. cit., p. 183.

³⁸Strecker, op. cit., p. 25.

Sloat in April of 1845.³⁹ The Indian agents were assisted in their peacemaking ventures by some friendly Delawares, in particular, John Conner, Jim Second-Eye, and Jim Shaw, upon whom the Indian Agency relied as interpreters and messengers.⁴⁰

These Delawares had not only learned the language of the white man, but had also adopted at least one of his customs, the use of fire-water. Although the law forbade selling whiskey to the Indians, the three interpreters procured somewhere a generous supply and then distributed it to a large party of their fellow-tribesmen encamped at Torrey's trading house soon after its establishment. The Indians imbibed and at first became quite merry; later, after night-fall, each of the braves surrendered his knife and gun to the chiefs, who hid them, and the orgy began in earnest. Throughout the night pandemonium prevailed. Screams, hideous yells, fisticuffs, scratching, biting, and all manner of unarmed personal combat caused apprehension among the white men present, but none of the Indians were killed or seriously injured, although it took them two days to recover.⁴¹

³⁹Letter from T. G. Western to L. H. Williams, April 29, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 225.

⁴⁰Brown, op. cit., II, 264.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 265.

When Williams replaced Sloat at the trading house, it was to have been a temporary arrangement, but complications with the Comanches delayed Sloat's return from his mission to that tribe, and before he could resume his duties at the post, he died of a "congestive fever."⁴² Williams remained at the trading house and was present during one of the most serious threats which the Indians ever made against the post.

In May, 1845, a party of Comanches--about a thousand lodges or four thousand persons in number--camped near Torrey's trading house, causing some apprehension on the frontier. The Indians, however, were assembling for a war expedition to Mexico,⁴³ and it was not until the fall, after their return, that some of them were to threaten the trading house. In July Sloat, accompanied by Jim Shaw and two white men, met Mopechucop's party of one hundred and fifty Comanche warriors on the San Saba bound for Mexico. Unable to dissuade them from their raid, he escorted them, at their insistence, past San Antonio to prevent any conflict with

⁴²Letter from George Barnard to T. G. Western, October 6, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), pp. 377-378.

⁴³Letter from T. G. Western to Robert S. Neighbors, May 11, 1845, Ibid., pp. 235-236; and Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], May 28, 1845, p. 2, col. 1.

Texans. At San Antonio they met Captain Hays, of the Texas Rangers, who presented the Indians with beef and other provisions and also tried to stop them from their foray. Sloat left them at San Antonio,⁴⁴ and on their way to the Rio Grande the Indian band attacked and killed a group of contraband traders coming from Mexico and took their horses and baggage mules.⁴⁵

On September 12 Mopechucoppe and his men were back in Texas, at the council ground near the trading house to attend a treaty council.⁴⁶ Either from bad conscience over the trader incident or from fear caused by a rumor which circulated among the Indians that the whites intended to fall upon them and kill them,⁴⁷ the Comanches at first exhibited an uneasiness and suspicion of the Texans. Thinking no doubt to counteract the rumor of evil intent, the commissioners who greeted the Comanches assured them that there was no need to feel fear, for the white men

⁴⁴Letter from Benjamin Sloat to T. G. Western, August 18, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 325.

⁴⁵Letter from William G. Cooke to T. G. Western, August 25, 1845, Ibid., pp. 331-332.

⁴⁶Minutes of a Council Held at Tehaucana Creek and Appointment of Daniel D. Culp as Secretary, September 12, 1845, Ibid., p. 335.

⁴⁷Letter from Benjamin Sloat to T. G. Western, August 18, 1845, Ibid., pp. 325-326.

would do them no harm and would explain any bad reports which they might hear. Two days after the arrival of the Comanches, five or six men bearing official documents rode into camp, alarming the Comanches. Mopechucopé wanted to know what it meant, but he was satisfied with the explanation that the riders brought only "good talk" from the president to his red brothers. After the council the Comanche chief renewed his peace treaty, received gifts, and departed in friendship.⁴⁸

In a sudden change of mood Mopechucopé and his braves surrounded the trading house late in November. From their menacing appearance John Torrey expected them to attack, and, because he had no means of defense, he decided to try to parley with them. With great presence of mind he asked if they had not come for a council. As they hesitated, undecided what to reply, he told them that their presents were ready. At this the warriors consented to a council.⁴⁹ The following day was set aside for trading, but the Indians did little trading. The third day was the day for "big talk." Seats were prepared for the council and the Indians

⁴⁸Minutes of a Council Held at Tehaucana Creek and Appointment of Daniel D. Culp as Secretary, September 12, 1845 to September 26, 1845, Ibid., pp. 335-344.

⁴⁹Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], January 28, 1846, p. 2, col. 4.

came up from the camp armed with knives, bows, and guns. They invited all the white men present at the post to attend the council, but in view of their hostile appearance the white men thought it wise to station four or five of their number in the houses. The interpreter, Jim Shaw, informed the Comanches that it was not in the best form to bring their arms to council, but they explained the singular behavior with the excuse that they feared the weapons might be stolen if left in camp. The Indian women and children huddled together below a bluff, apparently ready for any emergency. Torrey, Williams, and the post's gunsmith, William Cogswell, went into the parley with little hope of getting through it safely.⁵⁰ The council began with the passing of the council pipe and the speech of an old chief advising the young men to remain at peace. Williams spoke to the Indians in a vein obviously intended to overcome their hostility, promising that gifts would be distributed at the end of the council and that there would continue to be presents for them each year when the leaves fell.⁵¹ The government stores which the Indian agent had on hand to

⁵⁰Letter from L. H. Williams to T. G. Western, November 23, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), pp. 414-415.

⁵¹Report of a Council with the Comanche Indians, November 23, 1845, Ibid., p. 411.

give the Indians were very low, and their hostility showed plainly that if they were not pleased they would take action to satisfy themselves.⁵² Therefore Torrey gave them presents, and, since they seemed determined to extract as many presents as possible, he laid out goods to the amount of four or five hundred dollars before they were entirely satisfied; then they exhibited nothing but friendliness, with many a grim warrior coming forward to assure Torrey that he was "Bobbasheelee heap."⁵³

The presents which the Comanches thus extracted from the white men included such items as twenty-one silk handkerchiefs, 18 looking glasses, lead and 35 pounds of powder, blankets, 75 pounds of brass wire (for making armlets and other personal decorations), and brightly colored cloth.⁵⁴

Before the Comanches left they informed the men at the trading house that the powerful chief, Pahayuco, would arrive there soon. Destitute of government stores and not

⁵²Letter from L. H. Williams to T. G. Western, November 23, 1845, Ibid., p. 414.

⁵³Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], January 28, 1846, p. 2, col. 4.

⁵⁴Report of a Council with the Comanche Indians, November 23, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 413.

anxious to repeat the experience, Torrey and Williams immediately asked that help be sent to them. Williams wrote the Superintendent of Indian Affairs of the situation, concluding with the comment that

The whites here seem to think that should they be similarly situated again they would like, the Georgia Major be troubled with a slight lameness, and retreat before the enemy appear.⁵⁵

Torrey set out for Austin and saw William G. Cooke, the Secretary of War, who had already heard from the Indian Superintendent of the need for protection at the post. Robertson County Rangers had been disbanded, but Cooke secured an officer and thirty men from United States forces in Austin to protect the post, and authorized Williams to purchase supplies to present to Pahayuco.⁵⁶

Almost from the beginning there had been threats against the trading house. But the Torreys and Barnard held their ground and continued to operate their rustic emporium until 1849, after which Barnard carried on alone, and the Torrey brothers headed further west. Soon after the establishment of the post, a threatened Indian raid had prompted Western to send an artillery piece to the post to strengthen its rather weak defenses, but, to the credit of

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 415.

⁵⁶Letter from William G. Cooke to Anson Jones, December 12, 1845, Ibid., pp. 422-423.

the peacemaking skill of the traders, it never became necessary to use it.⁵⁷

The very real and constant danger from the Indians was one of the disadvantages of the Indian trade, but the business was a profitable one. In the Indian Superintendent's words, it was "an enterprise offering greatest advantage upon a modest amount of capital."⁵⁸ The transactions with the Indians were conducted in the simplest form of commerce, that of bartering one commodity for another, the trader hoping to turn a profit on the sale of the goods which he took in trade. The Torrey Company also sold goods to the government to be bestowed upon the Indians at annual powwows held, conveniently enough, at the adjacent council grounds.

The initial expense of establishing the post included the construction of log buildings which housed the wares, traders, and government agents. In 1846 Paul Richardson charged one hundred dollars to fell logs and build an additional log building.⁵⁹ The cost of construction of the

⁵⁷Notes, Council Ground, Tehaucana Creek, July 22, 1844, Ibid., p. 82; Letter from T. G. Western to Benjamin Sloat, August 1, 1844, Ibid., p. 87; and Letter from T. G. Western to Benjamin Sloat, August 16, 1844, Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁸Letter from T. G. Western to Richard Fitzpatrick, May 5, 1845, Ibid., p. 229.

⁵⁹Strecker, op. cit., p. 28.

six or seven houses which comprised the post must have been about six or seven hundred dollars. The first shipments to the trading house, from February 23 to April 8, amounted to about two thousand dollars worth of merchandise, and it cost approximately two hundred dollars to have these goods freighted to the post. From February 1844 to July 1845 a total of \$14,300.03 worth of goods were shipped to the trading house at a total shipping cost of \$1,424.00.⁶⁰ From July 1, 1845 to December 1, 1845, a total of \$5,213.16 worth of merchandise was shipped to the post, costing \$304.62 in freighting charges.⁶¹

The freighters carried, on their return trips to Houston, the bales of buffalo robes, deerskins, and other pelts taken in trade from the Indians. The freight charge was \$1.50 a hundred pounds both to and from Houston in 1846 and was raised to \$2.00 in 1848.⁶² The value of skins other than the deer and the buffalo was relatively small; these pelts included the raccoon, cougar, antelope, bobcat, gray wolf, and occasionally the beaver.

⁶⁰List of Invoices of Goods Sent to Trading House on Tehaucana Creek, May, 1845, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 248.

⁶¹Invoice of Goods, Wares, and Merchandise Received at Trading House Post No. 2 from Torrey & Bro., December, 1845, Ibid., p. 420.

⁶²Strecker, op. cit., p. 16.

Although some of the buffalo skins which the traders purchased were entirely raw, most were tanned and some were decorated on the inside.⁶³ Indian squaws spent many hours preparing the hides, first scraping the skin thin and making it soft, then often painting the inside with bright colored hieroglyphics, relating battles, fights with wild beasts, races or other scenes which they had witnessed.⁶⁴ Buffalo skins were not suitable for leather-making because they were too porous, but they were useful as lap robes for wagons and sleds in colder climates, and most found their way to market in the northern states and Canada. The value of the robes depended upon the size, uniformity of the fur, and also upon the artistry of the painting on the inside. In 1846 the hides of average size sold in Houston for three dollars, and fancy ones sold for from eight to ten dollars.⁶⁵ On October 15, 1845, Charles Beasley purchased five buffalo robes at two dollars each and also some sugar and coffee from the trading house, trading, in partial payment of his bill, ninety-seven pounds of cotton at four cents a pound and five bushels of corn at one dollar a bushel.⁶⁶

⁶³Mueller, op. cit., pp. 192-193.

⁶⁴Wallis, op. cit., pp. 114-115.

⁶⁵Mueller, op. cit., p. 192.

⁶⁶Strecker, op. cit., p. 8.

In 1846 large herds of buffalo could still be seen on the Texas plains. Traveling from the trading house to New Braunfels, Torrey and Roemer came upon a herd of at least a thousand buffalo, grazing on the grassy plains near a small brook called Willis Creek.⁶⁷ But Indians and buffalo hunters were trading an estimated one hundred thousand hides annually, and the number of animals killed for sport or meat was, no doubt, much greater, as the climate was unsuitable for the treatment of hides more than half the year.⁶⁸ By the early 1850's the great buffalo herds were disappearing from the Texas plains, and only the plentiful deer provided the Indian with peltry for trade. Five separate shipments of skins from the trading house, from June 15, 1852 to January 22, 1853, netted \$6,657.18, almost a thousand dollars a month. Of this total amount only \$113.00 was for skins of animals other than deer. From 1844 to 1853 the trading house handled at least seventy-five thousand deerskins. In the course of about ten years, Grant and Barton, commission furriers in New York, sold at auction, for Torrey and Brothers and later for George Barnard, more than seventy-five lots of skins.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Mueller, op. cit., p. 207.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 193.

⁶⁹Strecker, op. cit., p. 21.

Next to the skins, mules were the most important item of trade. Torrey got most of his mules in trade from the Comanches, who captured them on annual raids in the northern provinces of Mexico.⁷⁰ Because of the war-like relations between Texas and Mexico, Torrey felt no compunction about taking the animals thus acquired, and he sold them at reasonable prices.⁷¹ Most of the mules were completely wild when brought in. Those which Torrey had tamed sold for higher prices than the wild ones. There were usually two to six yoke of oxen, a number of horses, and sometimes as many as thirty Spanish mules on hand at the trading house.⁷² During the day the animals grazed on the prairie and at night they were locked securely in the stockade built for that purpose.⁷³ On the frontier at this time yearling colts sold for ten dollars, ponies for twenty to thirty-five dollars, oxen for about twenty dollars, Spanish mules for fifty-five to sixty dollars, and tame mules for one hundred and seventy-five dollars a span.⁷⁴

A sideline of the trading house was the recovery of

⁷⁰Mueller, op. cit., p. 193.

⁷¹Wallis, op. cit., p. 109.

⁷²Strecker, op. cit., pp. 18-20.

⁷³Wallis, loc. cit.

⁷⁴Strecker, op. cit., p. 21.

stolen horses and runaway slaves. The Comanches and other Indians brought in runaway slaves and the Torreys redeemed them in the interest of the owner. The estate of James Matthews issued to Messrs. Torrey and Company, Trading House, Robertson County, Texas, on April 7, 1845, a receipt for the return of a Negro boy named Paul, acknowledging a debt to the Torreys for one hundred dollars paid the Comanches for his return, and further stipulating that the estate would pay a like sum for the recovery of Charles, another runaway.⁷⁵ Apparently there was an established rate for the return of runaways; that same month another group of Indians captured three runaways and received one hundred dollars for each:

Received of Messr. Torrey Co for the following Indians, to wit, Red Worm, Runafter, Oaks-ta-le, Ashes, Keys, Segene, Standing Rock, and Culetoke (Cherokees), the sum of three hundred dollars par funds for the apprehension and delivery of the runaway negroes, the property of R. H. Porter, viz., Isaac, Rheuben and Charles. Also the sum of fifty five dollars for the delivery of three gray mares and a roan horse, taken with the above mentioned negroes. Taken up about 15 miles west of the Guadalupe river, making their way to the spanish country. In witness whereof, we have fixed our signatures at the trading

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 14. The Torreys apparently received no commission or direct benefit on these transactions, other than the good-will of the slave-owners, but it is safe to assume that the Indians spent their reward money at the trading house or accepted the reward in the form of trade goods since Torrey's was the only place where they could trade.

house on Tahwoccanno Creek, Robertson county,
April 4, 1845.

Signed
Daniel G. Watson
John Conner, His x mark
Jess Chisholm⁷⁶

For humanitarian reasons, the Torreys also ransomed a few Mexican prisoners from the Comanches. The Texas government acted promptly to secure the release of Texans who fell victim to the Indians, but there was no such official concern for Mexican citizens in Texas. In 1844, when a band of Indians abducted two Simpson children from their home near Austin, congress made a special appropriation of funds to effect their recovery.⁷⁷ That same year Torrey paid the ransom for a Mexican girl taken prisoner by the Comanches on one of their raids in Mexico, and hired her to cook at the trading house until he could arrange to return her to her home. She remained at the post about a year, quite contented and not at all eager to return to Mexico.⁷⁸ In 1846 Torrey also ransomed three small Mexican boys from their Indian captors. He was successful in reuniting one of the

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁷⁷ Joint Resolution for Redemption of William and Jane Simpson, December 31, 1844, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 158.

⁷⁸ Letter from T. G. Western to Benjamin Sloat, December 14, 1844, Ibid., p. 152; and Wallis, op. cit., p. 111.

boys with his relatives and was in this instance reimbursed for the \$120 ransom which he had paid for the lad.⁷⁹

The Torrey trading houses had an unusual banking and credit system. The Tehaucana post served as a clearing house for the checks of rangers and Indians, not only within the immediate area but for the entire border from the western edge of what is now Hood County almost to New Braunfels. The trading company sometimes paid advances to Indians for deerskins; the debts could then be paid at the posts on the Navasota river, at the falls of the Brazos, or at New Braunfels. A Texas historian, John K. Strecker calls the Torrey Company the first regional bank in the United States.⁸⁰ The advances were paid on a basis allowing approximately fourteen cents a pound for the skins. The record of one such transaction reads:

Three months after date I promise to pay to Messrs. Torrey Co. the sum of Thirty Dollars in Shaved Skins at six for one dollar. Trading house, Oct. 1, 1844⁸¹

Trading house receipts made out to Indians for delivery of deerskins were marked with an x in a circle to indicate one hundred skins, a plain x to indicate ten, and a single

⁷⁹Mueller, op. cit., p. 144.

⁸⁰Strecker, op. cit., p. 19.

⁸¹Strecker, op. cit., p. 7.

stroke for each one under ten.⁸² Several of these receipts made out at New Braunfels on various dates in the fall and winter of 1846 and on July 21, 1847, were signed by Sam Houston for the Torrey Company or were witnessed by Sam Houston. The receipts were later sent to the Tehaucana post when the Indians had balanced their accounts and served as a record of credit due to the trading house for skins from the New Braunfels store.⁸³

Besides being a profitable business carried on at some risk to person and property, the trading house was of value to the republic in the regulation of Indian affairs. From the viewpoint of the white men at least, the trading house exerted a salutary effect upon the Indians.⁸⁴ The Indian trade was an important means of controlling the red men,⁸⁵ and, by the establishment and operation of the trading house, the Torreys played an important part in Sam Houston's policy of peace, friendship, and commerce with the Indians, which resulted in the successful negotiation of treaties with the Indian tribes, the reduction of Indian disturbances

⁸²Ibid., p. 12.

⁸³Ibid., p. 23.

⁸⁴Brown, op. cit., II, 262.

⁸⁵Lena Clara Koch, "The Federal Indian Policy in Texas, 1845-1846," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (July, 1924, to April 1925), 268.

on the frontier, and the consequent reduction of the cost of Indian relations because of the lessened expenditures for protection.⁸⁶ Sam Houston noted the contribution of the Torreys to Texas Indian relations in a letter written on behalf of the traders to William L. Marcy at the time of the Texas annexation:

At a time, when our relations with the Indians, were not by any means tranquil, these gentlemen, at their own risk and expense, established a trading House beyond the reach of all succour, from the inhabitants, and without protection from the Government; It is owing much to their enterprise and exertions that we have been enabled to bring about, and maintain friendly relations, with numerous Tribes, which had inflicted serious injury upon our frontier settlers: But recently, an irruption of the Comanches was averted by the influence of their Trading House.⁸⁷

After the Republic of Texas became a state, the Torreys continued to operate the trading house and continued to be of assistance in Indian relations. At the Spring Creek Council in 1846 the United States concluded a treaty with the Texas Indian tribes. According to the original wording of the treaty, the Indians were to receive presents of an undetermined amount the "next fall." The senate set

⁸⁶Anna Muckleroy, "The Indian Policy of the Republic of Texas," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1922-1923), 148.

⁸⁷Letter from Sam Houston to William L. Marcy, December 23, 1845, in Amelia Williams and Eugene C. Barker (eds.), The Writings of Sam Houston (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1943), IV, 122.

the amount of the presents at ten thousand dollars but changed the words, "next fall," to read: "at such time as the President of the United States may think proper."⁸⁸ The United States dallied and delayed the fulfilment of the promise of gifts to the Indians for so long that the Indians were about to lose confidence in the white man's word. All of the gains made by the treaty would have been lost had not Sam Houston asked for and received help from the Torreys. Houston persuaded the brothers to purchase presents and distribute them among the Indian chiefs and wait on the United States Government for their pay.⁸⁹

The immediate effect of the pacification of the Indians through trade, treaty, and presents was to draw immigration further west all along the frontier.⁹⁰ The trading house served as meeting place for red men and white, the two contending forces for the soil of Texas.

What was the significance of this trading House?
What did it stand for? It stood for everything

⁸⁸Treaty with the Comanches and Other Tribes, May 15, 1846, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), Article IX, pp. 47-48.

⁸⁹Paper on Indian Affairs, 1845-1860, Texas State Library; John S. Ford's Journal (MS. University of Texas Library); and Neighbors Papers, University of Texas Library.

⁹⁰T. C. Richardson, East Texas Its History and Its Makers (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940), I, 134.

to the east of it. It stood for the white man, the westward-driving, land-hungry Anglo-Saxon. This was his advance, the point of his spear thrust far out into the Indian country. It was a symbol.⁹¹

With the continuing advance of settlement, the Tehaucana site of the trading house became unsuitable, and the traders moved further out into the Indian country. After George Barnard bought the post, he moved it to Comanche Peak in Hood County in 1849.⁹² The Torrey brothers moved west. David Torrey attempted to open up a new trade with the Apaches and was killed in the attempt.

David and John Torrey joined a party of about one hundred men led by Captain Hays bound for California. The party left El Paso in September of 1849. The Torrey brothers did not intend to go through to California. Hays and David were to treat with Indians in the Trans-Pecos area, after which the Torreys intended to return to Texas.⁹³

⁹¹Walter P. Webb, "The Last Treaty of the Republic of Texas," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXV (January, 1922), 155.

⁹²Strecker, op. cit., p. 24.

⁹³John Henry Brown, Life and Times of Henry Smith the First American Governor of Texas, (Dallas: A. D. Aldridge and Company, Stereotypers, Printers, and Binders, 1887), p. 378; Walter P. Webb (ed.), et al., The Handbook of Texas (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), II, 791; and Jacob de Cordova, Esq., "Murder of Daniel Torrey by the Indians," Texas State Gazette [Austin], February 23, 1850, p. 7, col. 1.

Although he had planned to return to Texas within twenty-five days, John Torrey went through to California instead, but he did not remain there as did Hays, and he was soon back in Texas, operating his milling enterprises in New Braunfels.⁹⁴ David Torrey returned to Texas, traveling down the Rio Grande on the Mexican side to Presidio Del Norte, where he crossed over to the Texas side and opened a trading camp to trade with the Mescalero Apaches.⁹⁵ Torrey carried on an excellent trade in the camp of some seven or eight hundred Apaches, but the friendly disposition of his customers changed without warning when news reached the camp that some Apaches had been killed in a brush with Americans traveling to California. David Torrey and all of his companions, except one who lived to tell the story, were killed by the Apaches on Christmas Day, 1849.⁹⁶

In the early 1850's the buffalo were disappearing from the Texas plains. By 1854 the Indians had lost the

⁹⁴De Cordova, Ibid.; and Ernst Koebig, "Lebenslauf Skizze," Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, January 27, 1887, p. 2.

⁹⁵John Henry Brown, Life and Times of Henry Smith the First American Governor of Texas, (Dallas: A. D. Aldridge and Company, Stereotypers, Printers, and Binders, 1887), p. 378.

⁹⁶Ibid; and De Cordova, loc. cit.

struggle for Texas, and the government had placed them on reservations.⁹⁷

With the passing of the buffalo and the Indian from the Texas scene also passed the Indian Trader, but Torrey's trading house had served the Texans well and earned a place in Texas frontier history.

⁹⁷Richardson, op. cit., III, 1140.

CHAPTER IV

THOMAS STEBBINS TORREY

Thomas Torrey left Connecticut to join his brothers David and John in 1840.¹ His life in Texas was brief but noteworthy. He helped with the location of trading houses for the Torrey Company,² joined the Santa Fe Expedition,³ and went, at Sam Houston's bidding, on a peace-making mission to the wild and hostile Indian tribes.⁴ He died in 1843 at the age of twenty-four.⁵

The year after Thomas Torrey came to Texas, the ill-fated Santa Fe Expedition was organized. It was President Lamar's plan to send a three-member government commission accompanied by a military escort to invite the people of Santa Fe to place themselves under the protection of the

¹John H. Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 278.

²Walter P. Webb (ed.), et al., The Handbook of Texas (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), II, 790.

³Ibid.; R. Earl McClendon, "Daniel Webster and Mexican Relations: The Santa Fe Prisoners," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVI (1932-1933), p. 292; and Noel M. Loomis, The Santa Fe Pioneers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 251.

⁴Letter from Sam Houston to Thomas S. Torrey, Esq., in Amelia W. Williams and Eugene C. Barker (eds.), The Writings of Sam Houston 1813-1863 (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1943), III, 360.

⁵Webb (ed.), et al., loc cit.

Texas flag. William G. Cooke, R. F. Brenham, and Jose Antonio Navarro were the commissioners. The military escort of two hundred and seventy men was under the command of General Hugh McLeod. In order to establish commercial relations with the people of Santa Fe, Lamar issued an invitation to merchants to join the expedition. About fifty merchants and traders rendezvoused at Austin for the excursion, which left from Brushy Creek, about fifteen miles north of Austin on June 21, 1841,⁶ and among these merchants was young Thomas Torrey of the firm of Torrey and Brothers. The expedition was just the sort of enterprise to attract one of the Torrey brothers, combining as it did the promise of a lucrative trade with the element of adventure, for, as evidenced by the Indian trade carried on by these brothers, the Torreys did not shrink from a business project which included a degree of personal risk.

The party left Texas in high spirits, and Thomas Torrey's expectations for the journey were no less than those shared by the other members of the group. He intended to establish a regular business between the United States and Santa Fe, which would, no doubt, have been very profitable had he succeeded.⁷ Torrey also served as a

⁶Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas from Wilderness to Commonwealth (Fort Worth: Wortham-Molyneaux Company, 1924), IV, pp. 82-83.

⁷Loomis, loc. cit.

buffalo hunter for the group.⁸ Prior to the expedition, he had hunted with George W. Kendall, the reporter of the New Orleans Picayune, who went along on the trip and later wrote at length of the expedition.⁹

For about six weeks the journey was not unpleasant, for it led through country which afforded a plentiful supply of game for food and an abundance of water and grass for the cattle and horses. But later the party entered a mountainous, arid region in which there was no game for the hunters. When the last of the cattle were slaughtered and provisions ran short, the party began to encounter difficulties. To obtain food in a wilderness for a company of more than three hundred men would have been difficult under the best conditions, but in a country where there was no vegetation or game and very little water, it was almost impossible. Faced with the possibility of starvation, the commissioners sent three men ahead to announce the approach of the expedition and to return with food. The three

⁸Webb (ed.), et al., loc. cit.; Evidently somewhat in error, R. Earl McClendon in his "Daniel Webster and Mexican Relations: The Santa Fe Prisoners," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1932-1933), p. 292, indicates that Thomas Torrey was a merchant from Connecticut, who happened to be in Texas during the spring of 1841 and sought to take advantage of what he thought would be a safe means of visiting Santa Fe, expecting to return directly to the United States.

⁹Loomis, loc. cit.

chosen--Howland, Baker, and Rosenberry--set out, and the rest of the party continued their march, losing their way at times and subsisting on such food as could be found in the barren country through which they passed.¹⁰ Kendall wrote that they were reduced to the necessity of eating snails and lizards and that the men devoured "every tortoise and snake, every living and creeping thing"¹¹ which they could find. To make matters worse, many of the men had to walk because their horses were lost in a stampede.

Howland, Baker, and Rosenberry arrived at the Mexican settlements early in September and were promptly placed under arrest. After the remainder of the party had endured three weeks of near-starvation with no word from the three men, the best-mounted men pushed on ahead, while the rest established camp to wait in the wilderness until relief could be sent. Cooke took command of the advance party and set out with about ninety men. After much hardship, they finally reached the Mexican settlements. Cooke and his men surrendered their arms to Mexican forces with the understanding that they would be permitted to remain at Santa Fe for several days for the purpose of trading, after which

¹⁰Wortham, op. cit., IV, pp. 85-86.

¹¹George Wilkins Kendall, Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1856), I, 253.

their weapons would be returned, but the Mexicans had deceived the Texans and made them prisoners. Shortly afterward, the two hundred men who had been left in camp made their way to the settlements, weakened and ill. Mexican forces arrested them immediately.

The Mexicans marched the Texan prisoners to El Paso, where they were turned over to troops of the national government of Mexico and marched to Mexico City. The Texans were treated with extreme cruelty by their Santa Fe captors, but the national government forces treated them more humanely. Many of the men were ill after the ordeal in the wilderness and unable to stand the long trek from Santa Fe to El Paso. They received no sympathy from the captain of their guard, and many of those who faltered in the march were shot and their bodies left by the wayside. To add to their misfortune, smallpox broke out among the prisoners, and a number of them died of the disease. The march lasted three months. In early February, eight months after their departure from Brushy Creek, the prisoners reached Mexico City, where they were placed in Perote Prison.

Members of the expedition who claimed citizenship of countries other than Texas obtained their release in a few months through the efforts of the foreign ministers at the Mexican capital. Most of the others were released in

June.¹² Through the efforts of the United States Minister in Mexico City, Torrey, Kendall, and five others were released on April 21, 1842.¹³ On April 25, Torrey received a passport to leave Mexico:

The President of the Mexican Republic grants free and safe passage to Don Thomas S. Torrey, citizen of the U. S. of America so that he may leave the Republic. And His excellency charges all authorities, civil as well as military, of the nation not to cause any obstacle on his journey and to grant him whatever aid he may need assuming that he will pay just prices for such aid. Governor's Place, Mexico, April 25, 1842, twenty-second Anniversary of Independence.

By order of His Excellency

The document bears the signature of the Secretary of State and Foreign Affairs and is duly recorded.¹⁴ From Mexico City Torrey made his way to Vera Cruz where his passport was countersigned on May 12, 1842, permitting him to depart for New Orleans aboard the United States warship, Woodbury.¹⁵

The fiasco of the Santa Fe Expedition did not dampen Thomas Torrey's spirit of adventure, for he accepted an

¹²Wortham, op. cit., IV, pp. 86-90.

¹³R. McClendon, op. cit., p. 309; and Loomis, loc. cit.

¹⁴Translation from Spanish of Passport Granting Free and Safe Passage to Don Thomas S. Torrey, Governor's Palace, Mexico, April 25, 1842, (Torrey Family Documents, Mrs. Curtis T. Vaughan, San Antonio).

¹⁵Ibid.

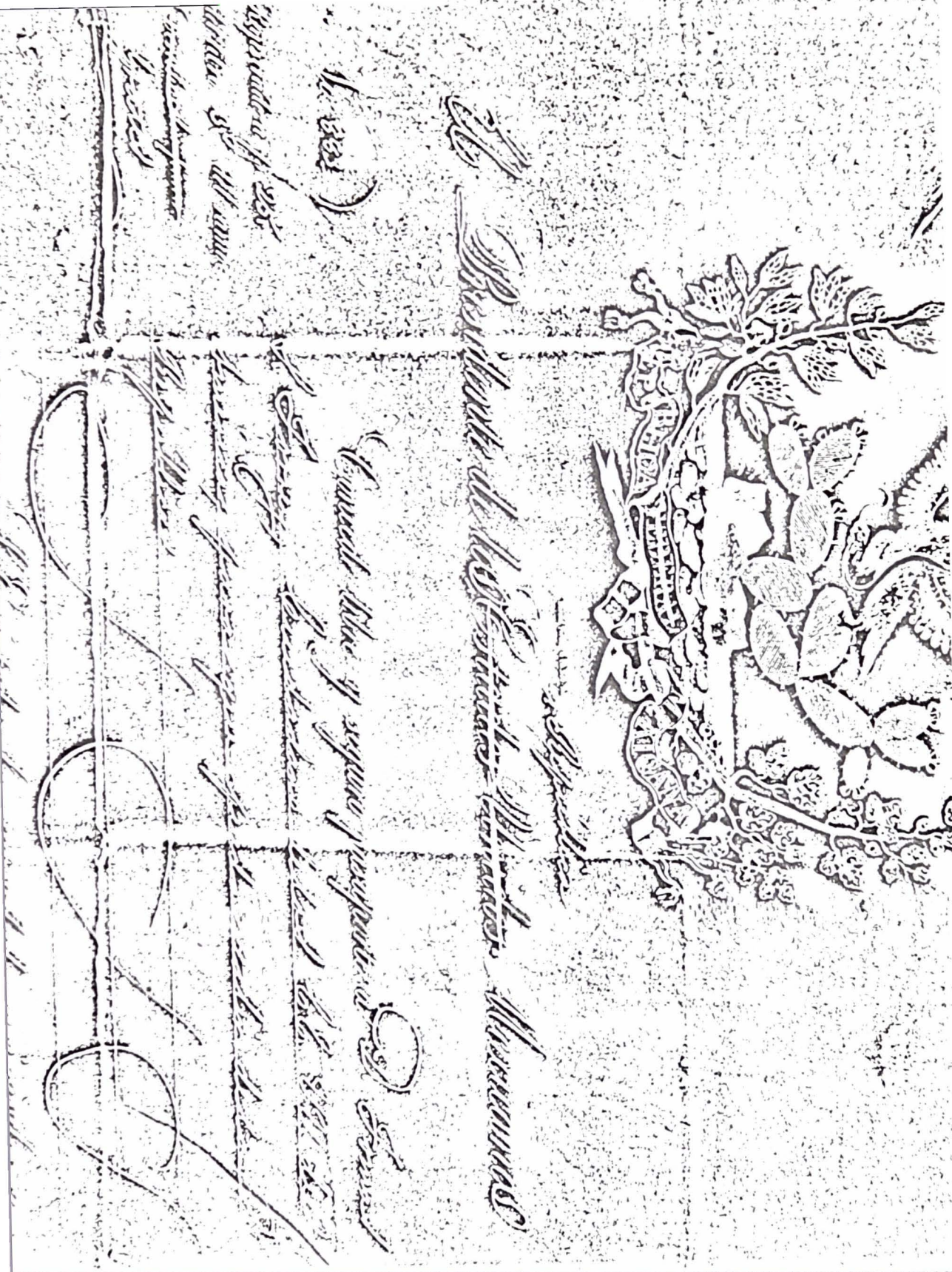


FIGURE 2

PASSPORT ISSUED TO THOMAS TORREY

appointment as Indian Agent for the Republic of Texas,¹⁶ and the year following his release in Mexico City, he went on a mission deep into Indian country.¹⁷ Lamar's administration had been marked by more or less constant Indian wars. When Sam Houston began his second term, he sought to make peace with the Indians. A first step in this pacification was to conclude treaties with the wild and hostile tribes which inhabited the western part of Texas. Houston appointed Joseph C. Eldredge as Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and charged Indian Agent, Thomas Torrey, and Eldredge with the task of inducing the wild tribes to attend a treaty council. They were to be accompanied by the Delaware interpreters and guides, Jim Shaw, John Conner, and Jim Second-Eye, and two or three white men of approved character.¹⁸ Houston wrote to Thomas Torrey:

¹⁶ Brown, op. cit., II, 264.

¹⁷ John Henry Brown, Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Company, Bechtold Printing and Mfg. Co. Binders, L. E. Daniell, Publisher), pp. 93-99; J. W. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas (Austin: Hutchings Printing House, 1889), p. 40; E. T. Bates (ed.), History and Reminiscences of Denton County (Denton: McNitzky Printing Company, 1918), p. 159; T. C. Richardson, East Texas Its History and Its Makers (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940), I, 133; and author unknown, History of Texas Together with a Biographical History of Tarrant and Parker Counties (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1895), p. 238.

¹⁸ John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Bechtold and Company, 1893), II, pp. 263-264; and Williams and Barker, loc. cit.

Sir -- You are hereby appointed an agent to accompany Colonel Joseph C. Eldredge and such friendly Indians as may go with him to visit the tribes of wild and hostile Indians on our frontier. . . .

The object of your appointment is that if he should be prevented by illness or death, after having left the settlements, from performing the duties assigned him, you will consider yourself invested (and you are hereby invested in that event) with all powers and you will conform to all the instructions given to him.

Sam Houston¹⁹

Eldredge invited his friend, Hamilton P. Bee, to go along,²⁰ and John F. Torrey also joined the group.²¹

The main purpose of the mission was to find the Comanches and get them to come to a treaty council to be held at Bird's Fort, twenty-two miles west of the present city of Dallas, on August 10, 1843.²² Eldredge left Washington on May 7 and went to Fort Milam to get a Comanche

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Bechtold and Company, 1893), II, 264.

²¹ Although other sources make no mention of John F. Torrey as a part of the group, Torrey, in a 1887 interview with Ernst Koebig, editor of the Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, related the story of this journey to the wild tribes and revealed that he also was a member of the party.

²² Ernst Koebig, "Lebenslauf Skizze," Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, January 27, 1887, p. 2; and Letter to Sam Houston from J. C. Eldredge, December 8, 1843, in Dorman H. Winfrey (ed.), Texas Indian Papers 1825-1843 (Austin: Texas State Library, 1960), p. 251.

child called Maria, in order to return her to her people. She had been taken prisoner at the Council House Fight, which occurred in 1840, during Lamar's administration, at San Antonio.²³ At this time the Comanches, who had been making raids on the frontier, came in, at the Texans's invitation, to discuss a treaty. The Texans had told them to bring all the white prisoners in their possession. Instead of doing so, the Comanches brought only one prisoner, although they held many others. In the council house, the Texans informed the twelve chiefs in attendance that they would be held as hostages until the other white prisoners were delivered up. One chief attempted to escape and was shot. Instantly, the others drew their knives and tried desperately to escape. All twelve were killed, and, in the ensuing battle with the warriors who had accompanied the chiefs, another thirty-five Comanches died. The Texans took a number of Indian prisoners, mostly women and children. The result of this battle was to send the Comanches on the warpath.²⁴ It was after Houston took office for his second term that Thomas Torrey and Eldredge made their journey to the Comanches and other hostile tribes, and

²³ Ibid.; and John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685-1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 264.

²⁴ Wortham, op. cit., IV, 65.

Houston sent some Indian prisoners with them to be released to their people in order to show the good intentions of the Texans.

At the old council ground on Tehaucana Creek, Eldredge met Thomas Torrey and the other members of his party, which included, in addition to the white men and their Delaware guides, a Comanche boy called William Hockley, two young Waco women prisoners, and the friendly Waco chief, Acoquash. Three days later, on May 15, the commission departed, heading for the plains in search of the wild tribes.²⁵ Their progress was quite slow because the Delawares, prepared to trade with the tribes they encountered, had loaded their pack animals heavily.²⁶ The Delawares were later to prove their loyalty to the white men in a time of great danger, but the commissioners found that their course was determined to a certain extent by the trading interests of the guides, and Torrey and Eldredge could in no way move them to the greater speed which they felt necessary because of the approaching date of the council.²⁷

²⁵Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 251-252.

²⁶John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Beckett and Company, 1893), II, 265; and Letter from J. C. Eldredge to Sam Houston, June 2, 1843, Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

²⁷Letter to Sam Houston from J. C. Eldredge in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 256, 260-261.

The commissioners also carried goods to serve as gifts to the Comanches. Houston sent Thomas Torrey a memorandum of the necessary articles for the trip, as suggested by the Delawares, which included blankets, vermilion, fancy calico, cotton bed ticking, black silk handkerchiefs, fancy shawls, assorted beads, lead, powder, tin pans, and tin cups.²⁸ Eldredge also purchased, from Torrey and Brothers, two horses for the trip and such medical supplies as epsom salts, magnesia, pulverized rhubarb, ipecac, calomel, gum opium, blue ointment, and adhesive plaster.²⁹ An additional item purchased for the journey was a flag painted by Jeff Wright for the sum of ten dollars.³⁰ This must have been the white flag borne by the men to show the Indians that the intent of the party was peaceful, and it proved to be well worth the price, for, in deference to the sanctity of the flag of truce, the Comanche chief determined to spare the lives of the commissioners.³¹

²⁸Williams and Barker, loc. cit.

²⁹Account of Indian Bureau with Torrey and Brothers, May 5, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 199-200.

³⁰Account of Indian Bureau with Jeff Wright, in Winfrey, op. cit., p. 201.

³¹John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Beckett and Company, 1893), II, 273.

The group halted for a few days at an Anadarko village west of the Trinity River and sent out runners to invite tribes from the surrounding area to visit them. Delegations from eleven small tribes responded. Among them were Wacos, Caddos, Keechis, Delawares, Bedias, Biloxi, Ionies and a few others, constituting a large assemblage.³² The head chief of the Wacos, Nah-ish-to-wa, came and accepted the Waco girls whom the Texans had brought. Although one of the girls was the chief's niece, both caused quite a scene when the commissioners endeavored to surrender them, refusing to go with the chief and crying bitterly. In vain the Texans tried to persuade the girls to go, and finally, the old chief's patience exhausted, he informed the girls that they would be taken by force if necessary. They mounted and departed, still lamenting their fate, but the chief expressed his gratitude for their return.³³

The next morning all met in a council.³⁴ Bee acted as

³² Ibid., p. 266; Letter from J. C. Eldredge to Sam Houston, June 2, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 210-211; and The Northern Standard [Clarksville], September 14, 1843, p. 1, col. 4.

³³ Letter to Sam Houston from J. C. Eldredge, December 8, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., p. 255.

³⁴ Letter from J. C. Eldredge to Sam Houston, June 2, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

secretary. The deliberations began with the solemnities of embracing, smoking, and a wordy exchange of civilities.³⁵ The Keechi chief advanced to the center of the gathering and motioned Thomas Torrey, Eldredge, and Bee to approach. The chief cordially embraced and shook hands with the white men, saying that it was the first time since the war that he had thus met the white man in friendship.³⁶ A series of dialogues between the Delawares and the chiefs followed, and when Eldredge finally began to speak to the Indians, saying that he was the representative of the president come to speak Houston's words to them, the interpreter, Jim Shaw, indignantly refused to convey what he considered to be a lie.³⁷ Back in Washington, Houston had considered commissioning the Delawares to meet the wild tribes for him,³⁸ and Shaw and the others had apparently understood that he had done so and that the white men had come along only to write down an account of the proceedings. They had believed that

³⁵John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 266.

³⁶Letter from J. C. Eldredge to Sam Houston in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

³⁷John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 266; and Letter to Sam Houston from J. C. Eldredge, December 8, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., p. 256.

³⁸John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 264.

Eldredge's commission, attested to by ribbons and seals, indicated the official capacity of the Delawares. Only after Bee had read the document to them were they convinced otherwise. Then Shaw said:

I beg your pardon, Joe, but I have been misled. I thought the Delawares were to make the treaties. We will go no farther, but go to our own country, on the Missouri river--will start tomorrow, and will never return to Texas.³⁹

Without their guides, it would have been futile for the men to continue their trip; so they made arrangements for some Anadarkos to guide them back to the settlements, but by the next day Shaw and the other Delawares had reconsidered and agreed to continue the journey.⁴⁰

On June 3 the party left the village and, following the trail of the Santa Fe Expedition, arrived in the neighborhood of the Tawakoni and Waco villages. Acoquash went to the nearby village and returned to inform the group that the chiefs would meet them on the following day.⁴¹ There was a considerable bustle of activity with couriers passing back and forth between Acoquash and the village. In keeping with the ceremonious preparations made by the Indians, the

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 266-268.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Letter to Sam Houston from J. C. Eldredge, December 8, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 256-257.

Texans mounted and rode out to meet the delegation half way. Reaching the appointed spot, the white men drew their party up into a line and tried to make as smart an appearance as possible. In a few minutes they were greeted with a terrific noise of drums, fifes, and screaming. To the Texans it seemed that the woods were alive with Indians when the old Tawakoni chief and his one hundred and fifty warriors came into sight from an opening in the timber. The Texans were once again embraced by Indian chieftains, and the smoking of the pipe and the council followed.⁴²

The old chief seated Thomas Torrey and Eldredge directly in front of him and spoke:

The ground upon which you sit is my ground, the water of which you have drunk is my water and the meat of which you have eaten was mine, and you have been welcome, not many times have the leaves come and gone since I and my people lived near the white man in peace. Had I wished I could have slain them all. They were weak and we were strong but I did not want war. Soon the white man became strong, then he killed my people, took away our lands and blood was in our path. Treaties of peace were made but were broken by bad men. I thank the Great Spirit that has inclined the heart of your great chief Houston to peace.⁴³

In a subsequent conversation, after the council had adjourned, the chief hinted so broadly for a gift of powder

⁴²Ibid., p. 257.

⁴³Ibid., p. 258.

that the commissioners were obliged to dip into the presents which were intended for the Comanches and make him a liberal gift of powder and lead.⁴⁴

The commission had camped near the Waco village, and the Delawares announced that, before they could proceed further, it would be necessary to send out runners to determine the whereabouts of the Comanches, requiring about fifteen days.⁴⁵ The chief of the associate tribes of Tawakoni and Waco offered to send the runners from his tribes, and the Texans accepted.⁴⁶ In the meantime Shaw, Conner, and Second-Eye proposed to go to Warren's Trading House on the Red River to deposit the peltries which they had acquired on the trip, in order that they would be unencumbered and could move swiftly when word came as to the location of the Comanches. The Delawares were to be absent only seven days at the most, and to insure their quick return, Thomas Torrey accompanied them.⁴⁷ A report came in due time that the Comanches were located about a twelve day's journey distant,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, p. 268.

⁴⁶ Letter to Sam Houston from J. C. Eldredge, December 8, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., p. 259.

⁴⁷ Ibid.; and John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 268.

but Torrey was unable to move the Delawares to the swift return they had promised. When they did return, sixteen days had passed. Torrey told his companions that the Indians had waited to attend a powwow of Delaware chiefs which met at Warren's, and afterward he observed that Shaw dictated a letter addressed to the United States Indian Agent, Butler, but he was unable to discover what it concerned. At Torrey's urging, the guides promised to leave after the council, but instead they delayed two more days to administer medication to a sick squaw, not for love, but for money, each receiving an exorbitant fee of twenty-five dollars for the service.⁴⁸

The group was finally reunited and traveled another twenty days before they found the Comanches located five hundred miles northwest of the white settlement boundary.⁴⁹ During this last part of the journey to the Comanches the food supplies were completely exhausted and the men depended entirely upon game, which was fortunately abundant. The travelers drew near the town of Pahayuca, the head chief of the Comanches, and waited until a delegation of about five

⁴⁸ Letter to Sam Houston from J. C. Eldredge, December 8, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

⁴⁹ John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 269; and Koebig, loc. cit.

hundred warriors came to invite and escort them into the town. Pahayuca was absent and would not return for about a week, but his seven wives prepared a tent for the visitors and made them welcome.⁵⁰ The messengers were received in a friendly manner, but later learned that the Comanches distrusted them and that they were being held prisoner until a war council would decide their fate.⁵¹

Pahayuca returned on August 8 and greeted his guests courteously, but revealed nothing of his disposition toward their mission. The next day a hundred warriors met in council. Torrey and his companions were not invited, but they did not realize immediately that it was their own life or death which the council deliberated. After a few hours had passed with the Indians in council, the Texans had their first inkling of their peril. A committee from the council confronted them with the charge that, while visiting in the Waco villages, they had given poison to the Wacos. Word of this treachery, the Indians said, had reached them from the Wacos. The commissioners were able to refute the charge successfully by calling the Waco chief Acoquash, who still accompanied them, to testify in their behalf, pointing out

⁵⁰John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Beckett and Company, 1893), II, 269.

⁵¹Koebig, loc. cit.

that they had cured the old chief's squaw, not poisoned her.⁵² While the party had tarried in the Waco village, Bee had administered jalap and rhubarb to the ailing squaw,⁵³ and now the men had reason to be very glad, indeed, that she had recovered.

More alarming than the charges brought against Torrey and his friends was a warning received from a Negro prisoner held by the Comanches. The man understood only a little of the Comanche language, but he told the commissioners that the council was deciding whether they should live or die, and that their chances did not appear to be good. The Texans immediately sent for the Delawares and asked them if it were true, but the guides denied the story and reassured them. Less than an hour later, one of the Delaware hunters came to warn the white men that the Comanches were going to kill them, and Torrey and Eldredge again summoned their guides and demanded to know the truth. Shaw then replied that he had lied, hoping to spare them as long as possible from knowing of their peril, but the truth was that the council was unanimously clamoring for the death of the white men. All of the chiefs who had a right to speak had already

⁵²John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Beckett and Company, 1893), II, 270.

⁵³Ibid., p. 268.

spoken, favoring execution, with the sole exception of Pahayuca, who was yet to speak. No one knew his opinion in the matter, and Shaw doubted that he had enough influence to save the white men even if he were so disposed. Shaw and Conner said that they had done all that they could, even telling the council that they would die with the white men, for they had promised the White Father that they would care for his messengers and never return without them.⁵⁴ Acoquash had been equally loyal, coming at noon, with tears in his eyes, to tell them that they would be put to death.⁵⁵ The Waco chief had plead for the lives of the white man, saying that they were messengers of peace under the protection of the white flag, and to kill them would be to provoke the wrath of the Great Spirit, but the Comanches had been unmoved, and Acoquash, too, swore to die with Thomas Torrey and the others.⁵⁶

The prisoners decided upon the only course of action left them. Each had two pistols, and they intended, when the Comanches should come for them, that each would kill an Indian with one pistol and use the other on himself to

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 270-271.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 271; and Koebig, loc. cit.

⁵⁶ John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 271.

escape torture. From noon to four o'clock not a word was spoken in the council.⁵⁷ The men sat through the long afternoon, a pistol in each hand, awaiting their sentence. At four o'clock they heard the voice of Pahayuca as he addressed the council, but they could understand nothing of what he said.⁵⁸ Then other voices rang out, and occasionally they heard the voices of the Delawares. A little later there was a confusion of sounds, and the friends thought that their end was at hand.⁵⁹ John Torrey's story of what happened next, as told by newspaper editor Ernst Koebig, recounts that

There came what was for them a ghastly silence which was interrupted by their old friend, Acoquash, plunging into the tent, tearful and unable to speak. All three had jumped up, cocked pistols in hand, for they believed their friend had come, as he had promised, to die with them. Then came the Delaware guides crying, "Saved!"⁶⁰

Pale and silent, the friends, red men and white, fell to

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 272; and Koebig, loc. cit.

⁵⁸ Koebig, loc. cit.

⁵⁹ John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 272.

⁶⁰ Translation from the German of "Lebenslauf Skizze," Koebig, loc. cit. This source mentions only three white men in the party, Eldredge, Bee, and John Torrey. John Torrey told the story to editor Koebig forty-four years after it happened and after Thomas Torrey's death. The omission of Thomas could have been an oversight or the fault of John Torrey's memory after so long a time, but his other details coincide well with other accounts of the journey.

earth, each giving thanks without words for his deliverance.⁶¹

Pahayuca had spoken for their lives, espousing the cause of mercy and the sanctity of the white flag, and his will had been followed by a small majority of the warriors.⁶² After dark the Texans heard the voice of Pahayuca spoken in tones of command. The interpreters told them that the great chief was warning the Comanches that the white men were under his protection and that death would be the penalty for doing them harm.⁶³ The Comanche chief had one hundred of his warriors surround the Texans's tent for their protection.⁶⁴ The next morning, the white men were invited to the council and there they conveyed Houston's message of friendship and invitation to the great council at Bird's Fort. The appointed date of the council was already at hand, but the Texans suggested sending runners back to have the council delayed. The Comanches declined the invitation to the great council, but entered into a temporary treaty of peace with the Texans, which Eldredge and Pahayuca

⁶¹Koebig, loc. cit.

⁶²Ibid.; and John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Becktold and Company, 1893), II, 272-273.

⁶³Ibid., p. 273.

⁶⁴Ibid.; and Koebig, loc. cit.

signed for their respective nations and Thomas Torrey witnessed.⁶⁵ The commissioners distributed the presents brought for the Comanches and prepared for the ceremony of returning the Comanche children, Maria and William Hockley, to their people.⁶⁶

The Comanche girl had not been at all eager to return to the Indians, and her delivery was a heartbreaking experience for the commissioners. She was only eleven or twelve years of age, and during her stay among the white people, she completely forgot the Comanche language. The boy, who was not much older than Maria, still retained his knowledge of his native tongue and had quickly reverted to the Indian's style of dress after leaving the settlements, but he too exhibited some shyness of the Comanches.⁶⁷ Throughout the long trip, Maria's mood had changed to despair whenever a report came that the Comanches might be near. When the likelihood of finding her people seemed remote, her relief and joy were evident from her demeanor. When the commission

⁶⁵Armistice Signed by Comanche and J. C. Eldredge, August 9, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 228-229.

⁶⁶John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Beckett and Company, 1893), II, pp. 273-274.

⁶⁷John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Beckett and Company, 1893), II, 264; and J. W. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas (Austin: Hutchings Printing House, 1889), pp. 186-188.

finally reached Pahayuca's village, the child tried to avoid notice and kept as close as possible to the men who had brought her. However, her appearance caused a great sensation, for the Comanches recognized her as the daughter of their former head chief who had died in battle with the Texans in 1840. She was, in fact, the royal princess, No-sa-co-oi-ash, but this good fortune was of no comfort to Maria. Bill also kept close to the commissioners, and, although he knew the Comanche language, refused to utter a word to his people until the great chief Pahayuca returned to the village and greeted the boy in the unmistakable tone of authority. Bill answered at once, and thereafter the boy was truly a Comanche again and returned to the white men only when he was needed to take part in the ceremony of his return to the tribe.

The commissioners took some pains to clothe and ornament Maria for the ceremony, painting her face and adorning her with beads as befitted a Comanche princess. Torrey and his companions even taxed their ingenuity to make a dress of flaming-red calico for the child. Her hair was plaited smoothly and decorated with ribbon, and she wore a wreath of wild flowers on her head.⁶⁸ When the time came to hand her over to the Comanches, all of the men, including

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 188-189.

even the Delawares, were moved to tears.⁶⁹ Eldredge spoke a few appropriate words and attempted to place the hands of the two children in the hand of the chief, but Maria broke away, begging her friend not to give her to the Indians. The child had lived in the home of some white settlers since her capture and had learned to feel the same fear that the settlers felt of the Comanches. After a consultation with his companions, Eldredge asked the chief to give him the child and promised to care for her as long as he lived, but the chief refused. In her adult years she served her people as interpreter in their councils with the white man, but the last thing that the commissioners heard as they left the Comanche village were the sobs of the unwilling princess.⁷⁰

Knowing that Houston would be disappointed and impatient if they did not return before the council adjourned, the Texans decided to separate for the return trip, with Eldredge and Bee striking a direct course to Bird's Fort, guided by Jim Second-Eye. Torrey volunteered to take the slower route and gather up the Indians whom they had met earlier on their journey and bring them in to the council. Jim Shaw and John Conner accompanied Torrey.

⁶⁹ John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Beckett and Company, 1893), II, 274.

⁷⁰ Wilbarger, op. cit., p. 190.

Thomas Torrey was anxious to get back to the settlements after his long absence and told Eldredge that he would make every effort to hasten the Indians along the way.⁷¹ The men started their journey homeward with the knowledge that their mission had been largely successful. Although the Comanches had refused to attend the great council, they had declared themselves friends of the Texans and promised to come in the next year and make a formal peace treaty with the republic.⁷²

The Indian agent reached Bird's Fort safely with a delegation of Indians,⁷³ and, soon after his return, went out again on a business trip to locate a site for a new trading house. He was accompanied by George Barnard, who had been a fellow member of the Santa Fe Expedition and was associated with the firm of Torrey and Brothers. On the return trip along the Brazos, Thomas Torrey sickened and, on September 28, 1843, died.⁷⁴ Many months of his brief three

⁷¹John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Bechtold and Company, 1893), II, 275; and Letter to Sam Houston from J. C. Eldredge, December 8, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., p. 273.

⁷²Armistice signed by Comanches and J. C. Eldredge, August 9, 1843, in Winfrey, op. cit., pp. 228-229.

⁷³John Henry Brown, Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Company, Bechtold Printing and Mfg. Co. Binders, L. E. Daniel Publisher), pp. 94-95.

⁷⁴Webb (ed.), et al., loc. cit.

years as a Texan were spent in service to his new country, first on the Santa Fe Expedition and then on the journey to the Comanches. Through the efforts of Thomas S. Torrey and Joseph C. Eldredge, Houston's message of peace and friendship reached the Comanches, and a period of peace came to the bleeding frontier.

CHAPTER V

JAMES NASH TORREY

In 1841, when James Nash Torrey was twenty years of age, he left his native Connecticut for Texas, whence he had been preceded by his brothers, John, David, and Thomas.¹ Historian John Henry Brown remembered James Torrey as a gallant and estimable young man, possessing both social and soldierly virtues.² James's soldierly qualities came to the fore the year after he came to Texas, when he volunteered for what later became known as the Mier Expedition.³ On this military venture, James fared even worse than his brother, Thomas, had on the Santa Fe Expedition the previous year. However, as Thomas J. Green, a fellow member of the Mier

¹ John Henry Brown, History of Texas from 1685 to 1892 (St. Louis: Bechtold and Company, 1893), II, 278.

² John Henry Brown, Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Company, Bechtold Printing and Book Mfg. Co. Binders, L. E. Daniell, Publisher n.d.), pp. 94-95.

³ Jacob F. Wolters, Dawson's Men and the Mier Expedition (Houston: The Union National Bank, 1927), p. 11; D. W. C. Baker, A Texas Scrap-Book (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1875), p. 129; A. J. Sowell, Rangers and Pioneers of Texas (San Antonio: Sheppard Bros. and Co., Printers and Binders, 1884), p. 43; Affidavit of James Torrey's Service on Mier Expedition, signed by Ben T. Hill, Adjutant General, September 9, 1850, and William Ryan, Company Commander, September 24, 1850, in Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas; The Northern Standard [Clarksville], July 5, 1845, p. 1, col. 3; and Texas National Register [Washington], June 19, 1845, p. 2, col. 2.

group, said, James Torrey was "quite a youth, but in spirit a giant," and he bore his misfortune stoically.⁴

After the Santa Fe Expedition, the Mexicans made retaliatory raids in Texas, and the Mier Expedition grew out of the Texan counteraction. In January, 1842, General Mariano Arista addressed a statement to the people of Texas, threatening Mexican invasion. The statement reached Texas about the same time as the news of the fate of the Santa Fe Expedition. The Texans, especially those who had relatives among the Santa Fe prisoners, were incensed. In March, 1842, when a small force of Mexicans captured San Antonio, held it a few days, and withdrew, the Texans were greatly alarmed, and there was a strong demand for action.⁵ When that action finally came, James Torrey was a part of it, and the sincerity of his feeling for the Texan cause is apparent from his determination not to turn back until the Texans had struck a blow in vengeance. Texan volunteers converged on San Antonio, chose General Edward Burleson as their commander, and proposed to march on Mexico. Houston, who apparently wanted to avoid battle with Mexico if possible,

⁴Thomas J. Green, Journal of the Texian Expedition Against Mier (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1845), p. 172.

⁵Louis J. Wortham, A History of Texas from Wilderness to Commonwealth (Fort Worth: Wortham-Molyneaux Company, 1924) IV, pp. 92-93.

sent General Alexander Somerville to command the force. It was customary for the volunteers to choose their leader and they refused to accept Somerville's authority. Burleson disbanded his army and returned to his home. Texas did not send a force against Mexico until after the Mexicans captured San Antonio a second time. In September Mexican troops under the command of General Adrian Woll held San Antonio briefly, this time taking Texan prisoners when they retreated. Contributing to the wrath aroused in the Texans was a force of about four hundred Mexicans that intercepted a small group of Texan volunteers led by Nicolas Dawson headed for San Antonio. Despite the attempt of the Texans to surrender, the Mexicans kept up their artillery fire until almost all of Dawson's men were dead. This time there was no holding the Texans back, and Houston again dispatched Somerville to San Antonio to take charge of the volunteers gathering there. But Somerville was in no great hurry to pursue the retreating Woll.⁶

James Torrey was mustered into Captain William Ryan's company as a private on October 17, 1842, furnishing his own horse and equipment.⁷ There was some delay before young Torrey was to have a chance, as he expressed it, to fight

⁶Ibid., pp. 93-98.

⁷Affidavit of James Torrey's Service on Mier Expedition, loc. cit.

for the glory of his country,⁸ for it was mid-November before Somerville led his seven-hundred-and-fifty-man army out of San Antonio, and it was late December before the determined core of the force engaged the Mexicans in battle.⁹ Supplies for the army were scanty, and the route by which Somerville chose to reach the border, whether by accident or design, led through the difficult and discouraging terrain of a swampy area known as Devil's Bog. The mounts frequently sank into the mire belly deep. But despite the discomforts, Torrey and his fellow soldiers were not easily disheartened.

On December 7, the column reached the vicinity of Laredo and the men expected to attack that city, but Somerville did not order his men across the Rio Grande. Only the irrepressible Thomas Green and a few others crossed the river and planted a Texas flag at a little place called Galveston. Somerville marched his army around for approximately a week, crossing the border once for a short while; then he ordered the men to return to their homes.

James Torrey and some three hundred other volunteers refused to march home. They elected William S. Fisher to lead them and proceeded down the Rio Grande to the hills opposite the Mexican town of Mier. There they established

⁸Wolters, loc. cit.; and Thomas J. Green, loc. cit.

⁹Wolters, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

camp. A patrol determined that there were no soldiers in Mier, and the Texans, who were in need of provisions, marched into the town. The alcalde surrendered promptly and unconditionally, and promised to send food supplies to the Texans. While the Texans waited for the supplies, the Mexican General Ampudia moved into the area with a large force. A Texan patrol reported the presence of Ampudia's troops, and the Texans, under the cover of darkness, moved against Mier immediately, leaving thirty men to guard their camp.¹⁰ The volunteers had a brush with enemy lookouts about a mile from the river,¹¹ but they pushed on into the town, driving Ampudia's men before them. In Mier the volunteers made contact with the main body of the Mexican soldiers, and fighting raged in the streets. The Mexicans had artillery set up in the plaza, and this became the objective of the Texans, who broke into a building at the end of a block and made their way toward the plaza by going from one building to the next through the adobe walls until they reached the last building, fronting on the square. The Texan riflemen dealt heavily with the artillery forces in the plaza. The

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7; and William P. Stapp, The Prisoners of Perote: A Journal Kept by the Author, Who Was Captured by the Mexicans at Mier December 25, 1842, and Released from Perote May 16, 1844 (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber and Company, 1845), p. 32.

¹¹ Stapp, loc. cit.

battle went so badly for the Mexicans that Ampudia was on the point of retreating from the town, but he made one last attempt to hold out by sending a Texan prisoner to the invaders under a white flag with the false information that their position was hopeless because Ampudia had been substantially re-enforced and more help was on the way. After much debating, a part of the men decided to surrender.¹² Fisher was of the opinion that if they chose to fight their way out, probably no more than a third of them would reach the border. Some of the men still favored taking their chances in battle, recalling the fate of the Santa Fe prisoners and of Dawson's men, but when half of their comrades filed out to the plaza and laid down their arms, the remainder had little choice.¹³ The reaction of these die-hards was described by Green:

In the countenances of those whom Colonel Fisher's speech did not induce to surrender, were disappointment, sorrow, rage: many shed tears, some swore, while others maintained a sullen determination, which showed that they were prepared for the worst.¹⁴

From several Texans whom the Mexicans had captured earlier in the battle, the Texans learned that Ampudia was prepared

¹²Wolters, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

¹³Green, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 103.

to retreat from the city had they refused to surrender.¹⁵

Of the 261 Texans who had taken part in the battle, ten were killed and 23 wounded. The Mexican force had been 2,340 in number and their casualties were, according to Ampudia's official report, 430 killed and 230 seriously wounded. Perhaps their near victory over the numerically superior force revived the confidence of the Texans, for they began at once to plan an escape. On their long march toward Mexico City, they watched for their opportunity. After six weeks, the time came. Early in the morning on February 11, at the Hacienda del Salado, the prisoners made their break, rushing and overpowering their guards and seizing rifles and horses. Several of the Texans were killed in the escape, but James Torrey came through the skirmish safely. The Texans rode furiously for the border, but made the mistake of leaving the main road in an attempt to avoid Mexican soldiers. They were soon lost and without food or water. When their horses broke down, the men slaughtered them, ate the flesh and drank the blood to quench their thirst. They continued on foot, finally even abandoning their weapons for lack of strength to carry them. Some of the men formed search parties which went off in several direction, trying to find water. The Texans

¹⁵Stapp, op. cit., p. 37.

wandered for six days and nights without water. Some went mad and others died.¹⁶ On February 18, 1843, the main body of men spotted a campfire, and, thinking it was a signal from one of the search parties, stumbled into the camp of a Mexican patrol.¹⁷ Torrey was not taken with this group. He must have been on one of the search parties. Five of the escapees actually reached Texas. The others who survived were hunted down and brought in.¹⁸ Youth and a strong, healthy constitution stood Torrey in good stead, for he survived almost two weeks longer in the wilds, only to be recaptured and placed in irons with the rest of his companions on March 3.¹⁹

Two hundred and four Texans had escaped from the Hacienda del Salado, but when the Mexicans finished rounding up the prisoners, there were only one hundred and seventy, death having claimed most of the missing men. The prisoners were returned to Salado, where they learned that one-tenth of them would be shot by order of Santa Anna. In the center of the plaza, the Mexicans placed an earthen jar containing one hundred and seventy beans, seventeen of which were black,

¹⁶Wolters, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

¹⁷Green, op. cit., pp. 164-165; and Wolters, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁸Wolters, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁹Green, op. cit., p. 167.

the remainder white. The Texans drew lots to see who should die.²⁰ A handkerchief was folded over the mouth of the jar to conceal the color of the beans,²¹ and each of the Texans approached the jar and drew in turn as their names were called, until all of the black beans were drawn. When James Torrey's turn came to draw, he dipped into the jar and drew the death symbol.²² Torrey said that he had fought for the glory of his country and that he was willing to die for her glory. He turned to a Mexican officer and said, "After the battle of San Jacinto, my family took one of your prisoner youths, raised and educated him, and this is our requital."²³ The execution took place immediately after the drawing. The seventeen were divided into two parties and first nine, then eight were lined up and shot.²⁴ The next day, when the

²⁰Wolters, op. cit., p. 10; and Green, op. cit., p. 169.

²¹Stapp, op. cit., p. 72.

²²Hubert Howe, History of Texas and the North Mexican States (San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers, 1890), II, 368; Homer S. Thrall, A Pictorial History of Texas from the Earliest Visits of European Adventurers to A.D. 1879 (St. Louis: N. D. Thompson and Company, 1879), p. 331; The Northern Standard [Clarksville], February 10, 1844, p. 1, col. 2; Stapp, op. cit., p. 74; and Green, op. cit., p. 444.

²³Wolters, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁴Stapp, op. cit., p. 73.

prisoners were removed from Salado, they saw the corpses still lying where they had fallen.²⁵

During the Mexican war, duty led General Walter P. Lane and his regiment of rangers past the Hacienda del Salado. He stopped long enough to make the Mexicans dig up the remains of the seventeen executed Texans and pack them on mules. Those relics were transported to La Grange, where they were interred with honor and ceremony on Monument Hill.²⁶ This cemetery of heroes is also the final resting place of Thomas Torrey.²⁷

James Torrey left no will, but in 1850, John F. Torrey received, for the estate of James Torrey, about six hundred dollars as pay due the deceased brother for military service on the Mier Expedition.²⁸ In 1852 John Torrey, as administrator of the estate petitioned Theodore Koester, Comal County Judge, for the government lands due James in

²⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

²⁶ J. H. Wilbarger, Indian Depredations in Texas (Austin: Hutchings Printing House, 1889), p. 351; L. R. Weyland and H. Wade, History of Early Fayette County (La Grange, Texas: La Grange Journal Plant, 1936), p. 173; William S. Speer and John Henry Brown (eds.), Encyclopedia of the New West (Marshall, Texas: The United States Biographical Publishing Company, Hodge and Jennings Bros., Proprietors, 1881), p. 311.

²⁷ Williams and Brown (eds.), loc. cit.

²⁸ Affidavit of James Torrey's Service on Mier Expedition, loc. cit.

consideration for his military service. The heirs of the estate were Jacob N. Torrey, father, and brothers Abraham, Tudor, George, and John.²⁹

²⁹Comal County Probate File Number 103, February 11, 1852.

CHAPTER VI

JOHN F. TORREY'S NEW BRAUNFELS YEARS

The Houston merchant and Indian trader, John Torrey, became a prominent figure in the German community of New Braunfels. He made his home there for many years, concentrating his abundant energy upon his business ventures in that town.¹ Torrey considered that his residence in New Braunfels began in the year 1846,² but for several years after that he continued his Indian trade and other businesses in the state. John Torrey, whom Brown called "the personification of enterprise,"³ was well known for that characteristic and for his great energy.⁴ He demonstrated both of these qualities during his New Braunfels years. Torrey first went to New Braunfels in connection with the Torrey Company contract to transport settlers from the coast

¹Oscar Haas, "John Torrey Figured in Local Wartime Economic Struggle," New Braunfels Herald, December 11, 1962.

²Deposition of John F. Torrey in the case of Clemens, Blum, and Runge vs. Landa, December 10, 1882, entry 2 (Oscar Haas Archives, New Braunfels).

³John Henry Brown, Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Company, Bechtold Printing and Mfg. Co. Binders, L. E. Daniell, Publisher [n.d.]), pp. 94-95.

⁴L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752; Dallas Herald, August 31, 1872, p. 1, col. 6; and John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection, University of Texas Library).

to the town site.⁵ The trading house which he established there and his first grist mill were among the early businesses of the community.⁶ In 1851 he married Laura Dittmar, the daughter of a New Braunfels pioneer family.⁷ On the Comal River he built and twice restored a mill and began the first mechanized industry in the state.⁸ Torrey's Comal River industries were important in the local struggle for economic survival during the Civil War.⁹

In 1844 Baron von Meusebach, the representative of the Verein, the German organization which promoted the establishment of New Braunfels, made a contract with the Torrey brothers to transport the German immigrants from Indianola to the settlement location. This agreement brought John Torrey to the town site with the first settlers in 1845 or soon after their arrival.¹⁰ He sold his teams and

⁵Ernst Koebig, "Lebenslauf Skizze," Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, January 27, 1887, p. 2.

⁶Ibid.; and Haas, loc. cit.

⁷Haas, loc. cit.; and Comal County Marriage Records, December 10, 1851, Vol. A, p. 232.

⁸Daniell, loc. cit.; Charles Merritt Barnes, Combats and Conquests of Immortal Heroes (San Antonio: Guessaz and Ferlet Company, 1910), p. 261; and Walter P. Webb (ed.), et al., The Handbook of Texas (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), II, 790.

⁹Haas, loc. cit.

¹⁰Koebig, loc. cit.; Haas, loc. cit.; Daniell, loc.

wagons to the Verein and established a trading house and general merchandise store, which he operated first at the corner of San Antonio and Hill Streets on what was known as the Blessing lot and later, in 1847, moved to a lot on the town square. The agreement which Torrey made for the use of the Blessing lot must have been verbal, for there is no record of his lease of the lot. The exact date of the establishment of the store is unknown, but the original owner of the lot, Henry Blessing, purchased it in 1846.¹¹ Torrey employed George Pfeuffer, who later became a state senator, as a clerk in the trading house.¹² Torrey also built a horse-powered mill, which was completed in time to grind the settlers's first crop of corn. The charge for grinding the corn was ten cents a bushel.¹³

In May, 1847, Torrey leased a lot on the plaza from Penelope Hunter for thirty dollars a year. He was to have

cit.; John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection, University of Texas Library); and Torrey Family Documents (Mrs. Curtis T. Vaughan, San Antonio, Texas), Biographical Sketch of John Torrey, by his son, Henry Torrey.

¹¹Koebig, loc. cit.; and Oscar Haas, "Torrey Builds Store on Plaza, Grist-Saw Mill on Comal River," New Braunfels Herald, December 25, 1962.

¹²Koebig, loc. cit.; and L. E. Daniell, Types of Successful Men of Texas (Austin: E. von Boeckman, Printer, 1890), p. 575.

¹³Koebig, loc. cit.

the privilege, at the termination of the lease, to remove the store which he proposed to build there or sell to Mrs. Hunter at its appraised value. Mrs. Hunter stipulated that the lot should not be sublet without her permission and should not be used for a tavern or boarding house.¹⁴ The building which Torrey constructed stood on the lot until 1929.¹⁵

John Torrey's next venture in New Braunfels was to utilize the water power of the Comal for a grist and saw mill. On January 1, 1848, he leased and later purchased almost two acres of land at the juncture of the Comal River and the Comal Creek, designated lot No. 300. Hermann Spiess, as agent for the Verein, turned the lot over to Torrey for a five-year period at a rental fee of seventy-five dollars a year. The lease provided that Torrey could build a mill on the river, at or near the falls. If he so chose, Torrey had the right to terminate the lease at the end of one year, and if the Verein wished to reclaim the land at the end of the five years, he could remove the mill which he was to erect there or sell it to the organization. Otherwise he

¹⁴Comal County Deed Records, May, 1847, Vol. A, p. 300.

¹⁵Oscar Haas, "Torrey Signs with Emigration Society to Build Mill on Comal," New Braunfels Herald, January 1, 1963.

was to have the privilege of continuing his lease at a rent equal to any highest offer which the Verein might receive.¹⁶

On the same day that he leased the mill site, Torrey entered an agreement with Willis E. Parks. Parks agreed to put up one-third of the capital necessary for the construction of a grist and saw mill for a one-third interest in the concern, including the lease, and he was to receive one-third of the profits. Torrey was to furnish the remaining two-thirds of the capital for that proportion of the business and its profits. This agreement was not filed with County Clerk, Conrad Seabaugh, until six months later,¹⁷ when George Stebbins bought interest in the mill.¹⁸ Torrey and Parks built a three-story frame building¹⁹ and, in the spring of 1848, completed a

¹⁶ Ibid.; and Comal County Deed Records, January 1, 1848, Vol. A, p. 192.

¹⁷ Comal County Deed Records, June 27, 1848, Vol. A, p. 252.

¹⁸ George Stebbins, who, according to the 1850 Comal County Census Report, came from John Torrey's native state of Connecticut, was probably related to the Torreys. Thomas Torrey's middle name was Stebbins, and it was apparently the custom of John's parents to bestow family surnames as middle names for their sons. David Torrey's middle name, Kilburn, was his mother's maiden name. A younger brother, George, had the middle name, Bicknell, which was the maiden name of his paternal grandmother.

¹⁹ Oscar Haas, "Torrey Grist, Saw Mill Burns in 1861 Fire; Rebuilt in Stone," New Braunfels Herald, January 29, 1963.

dam across the river below which the turbine water wheels were installed.²⁰

Stebbins purchased lot No. 300 upon which Torrey's mill stood on May 22, 1848, from Gustavus Schleicher, trustee for the Verein, for \$1,000, subject, however, to the terms of Torrey's five year lease, dating from January 1, 1848.²¹ On June 27, 1848, Torrey surrendered his lease on the lot to Stebbins for \$2,000 and also granted him the use of the mills, dams, water courses, and other improvements for the remainder of the unexpired term of the lease.²² Stebbins bought Parks's third interest in the plant in October, 1848, for \$1,326.²³ Stebbins also became a partner in Torrey's New Braunfels trading house. Both Stebbins and Torrey's names appeared on the lease agreement when the store was rented to George H. Judson²⁴ and Moses Campbell in 1850 for three hundred dollars a year.²⁵

²⁰John F. Torrey Deposition, op. cit., entry 4.

²¹Comal County Deed Records, May, 1848, Vol. A, p. 251.

²²Comal County Deed Records, June 27, 1848, Vol. A, p. 253.

²³Comal County Deed Records, October, 1848, Vol. A, p. 525.

²⁴The Comal County 1850 Census Report lists Judson as a native of Connecticut.

²⁵Comal County Deed Records, October, 1850, Vol. B, p. 273.

Torrey apparently maintained some interest in the mill. In a sworn statement some years later, he said that while others had been associated with him and shared interest in the mill and factories from time to time, he had, from the time of the construction of the mill in 1848 until its final destruction in 1872, always reserved to himself the sole responsibility for the supervision of its operation.²⁶ He stated that he had rented the mill from 1848 to 1851 or 1852,²⁷ and on another occasion he said that Walter A. Andross and Henry Abell were the persons who had rented the mill from him during this time.²⁸ Comal County records show that Stebbins entered into a contract or lease with Andross and Abell, renting the Torrey mill to the two men for a ten year term, ending May 1, 1859, in return for which Stebbins was to receive one-half of the profits of the mill,²⁹ but Andross and Abell did not operate it for the entire length of the contract.

Andross had been an employee of Torrey and Brothers

²⁶ John F. Torrey Deposition, op. cit., entry 11.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Koebig, loc. cit. Both Andross and Abell are listed as natives of Connecticut in the 1850 census.

²⁹ Comal County Deed Records, May 1, 1849, Vol. A, p. 500.

in Houston in 1845. On May 18, 1849, John Torrey, as agent-in-fact for David K. Torrey and John F. Torrey of the firm of Torrey and Brothers, gave Andross his power-of attorney with full power of substitution to perform all acts pertaining to the business of the firm or the businesses of John Torrey which were not connected with the firm.³⁰ Shortly afterward Torrey made the trip to California mentioned in Chapter III. It could have been the discovery of gold which lured John Torrey to California, but when he left Texas in September, 1849, he did not plan to go all the way to California. He and a Mr. Nugent, a correspondent for the New York Herald, had planned to observe a peace talk between Ranger Captain Hays and a group of Indians some distance west of El Paso. Although Hays's party intended to go on to California, Torrey and Nugent had made arrangements for a guide to bring them back to Texas and expected to be gone no more than twenty-five days, but they did not return as expected.³¹ Torrey went through to

³⁰Comal County Deed Records, May 18, 1849, Vol. A, p. 506.

³¹John Henry Brown, Life and Times of Henry Smith the First American Governor of Texas (Dallas: A. D. Aldridge and Company, Stereotypers, Printers and Binders, 1887), p. 378; and Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], February 17, 1850, p. 7, col. 1.

California,³² but he was back in New Braunfels by October, 1850.³³

When Torrey returned from California in 1850 he began the first factory in the state:

Industrial pursuits on any larger scale outside of manual handiwork of tradesmen were not yet known in Texas. The first factory of any consideration, as far as history is concerned, was erected at New Braunfels by J. F. Torrey in 1850. This was a door, sash and blind factory of some magnitude, considering those days. The factory was a three-story frame building, the power furnished by the Comal, which river was dammed so as to furnish sufficient power for even greater establishments than were brought into use in 1850.³⁴

Torrey added the sash factory to the already existing mill plant.³⁵ Frederick Law Olmstead, who traveled through Texas and stopped at New Braunfels about this time, mentioned in his account the sash and blind factory under construction by two New England men who also planned to build a cotton factory. Olmstead also noted that Sunday was strictly observed as a day of rest by the German community, with all stores, except for one owned by a New Englander, remaining

³²Koebig, loc. cit.

³³Comal County Deed Records, October, 1850, Vol. B, p. 273.

³⁴L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752.

³⁵Koebig, loc. cit.

closed all day.³⁶ The factory was apparently successful, and plans were underway to enlarge the operation in 1854 when Torrey took complete control of the project.³⁷ Stebbins's reason for withdrawing could have been ill health, for he died about two years later.³⁸ Property listed in the 1854 transaction between Stebbins and Torrey included the sash machine and all the implements and tools used in its operation, all stock, finished and unfinished, the turning lathe, all accounts due to the sash works, all of the machinery of the grist and saw mills and all of the timber purchased for the enlargement of the building.³⁹ After Stebbins's death, Torrey purchased, from the administrator of the estate, a lease which his former partner had held on what was known as the Veramendi labor of land.⁴⁰ This one hundred-and-seventy-seven acre piece of land was located directly across the

³⁶ Frederick Law Olmstead, A Journey Through Texas (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861), pp. 178, 181.

³⁷ Comal County Deed Records, March, 1854, Vol. E, p. 194; and William S. Speer and John Henry Brown (eds.), Encyclopedia of the New West (Marshall, Texas: The United States Biographical Publishing Company, Hodge and Jennings Bros., Proprietors, 1881), pp. 583-584.

³⁸ Comal County Deed Records, July, 1856, Vol. P, p. 462.

³⁹ Comal County Deed Records, March, 1854, Vol. E, p. 194; and Oscar Haas, "Early Mill Has Three Owners," New Braunfels Herald, January 15, 1963.

⁴⁰ Comal County Deed Records, July, 1856, Vol. P, p. 462.

Comal from Torrey's mill. It is possible that Torrey was anticipating even greater expansion in the future.

The year after he began the sash factory, Torrey wed nineteen-year-old Laura Dittmar, the eldest daughter of Carl Dittmar.⁴¹ At the time of the marriage, the Dittmars lived in Guadalupe County, but Laura had come originally from Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany.⁴² The couple were married on December 10, 1851, by Chief Justice Theodore Koester, who had come with the first settlers to the German community, serving as the chief medical officer of the colony.⁴³ The Torrey's first child, Emma, was born in 1854, and a son, John, was born in 1857.⁴⁴ These two children and five more--Edward, Henry, Adela, Rose, and Cornelia--were still living at the time of John Torrey's death in 1893.⁴⁵ There were four other children, all boys, who died very young.⁴⁶

⁴¹Comal County Marriage Records, Vol. A, p. 232; and Barnes, loc. cit.

⁴²Comal County 1860 Census Report; and Comal County Marriage Records, Vol. A, p. 232.

⁴³Ibid.; and L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752.

⁴⁴Comal County 1860 Census Report.

⁴⁵Barnes, loc. cit.; and John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection, University of Texas Library), Obituary Notice.

⁴⁶Letter from John F. Torrey to Joseph Faust, October 20, 1886 (Oscar Haas Archives, New Braunfels).

In 1854 John Torrey's father, Jacob Nash Torrey and his three younger brothers--Tudor, Abe, and George--came to New Braunfels.⁴⁷ Abe and the father remained in New Braunfels and were listed in the 1860 Comal census as residents in John Torrey's home. When the Civil War came, two of John's brothers, Tudor and Abe, volunteered and fought for the Confederacy with the Comal County infantry company.⁴⁸ John Torrey was commissioned in 1862 as Commissary of Subsistence in the Thirty-First Brigade with the rank of major.⁴⁹ Whatever the duties of the Subsistence Commissary, they apparently did not take him away from New Braunfels, for he continued and even expanded his Comal River industries during the war.⁵⁰

The loss of his four sons was not the only misfortune which struck John Torrey in New Braunfels. His mill and factory operations were struck by a series of natural disasters--fire, tornado, and flood--until Torrey, finally

⁴⁷Torrey Family Documents (Mrs. Curtis T. Vaughan, San Antonio), Family Photograph, 1854.

⁴⁸Oscar Haas, "Early Mill Has Three Owners," New Braunfels Herald, January 15, 1963.

⁴⁹Torrey Family Documents (Mrs. Curtis T. Vaughan, San Antonio), John F. Torrey's Commission as Major, March 7, 1862.

⁵⁰Comal County Deed Records, April 20, 1863, Vol. G, p. 575.

defeated, gave up and left New Braunfels. In 1887 he returned to the town for a visit and while reminiscing with Ernst Koebig, editor of the local newspaper, said that during his years in New Braunfels he had battled with the elements. Fire and wind he had overcome, but he had been defeated by flood.⁵¹

A fire broke out at four a.m. November 14, 1861, in Torrey's mill building. A flour mill had been added to the plant, and the losses included a thousand bushels of wheat. The building was a total loss and the mills and sash works were destroyed,⁵² but Torrey began at once to rebuild. The new mill building was entirely of stone⁵³ and housed a saw-mill with a sixty-inch saw, a wheat mill, two grist mills, a malt mill, and two cotton gins.⁵⁴ The mill was completed in 1862. Torrey used an interesting sales device in that year, somewhat akin to the trading stamps of today. Coupons marked with monetary denominations were given to customers, apparently as an incentive to trade at the Torrey mills. When a customer had collected twenty coupons marked "One

⁵¹Koebig, loc. cit.

⁵²Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, November 15, 1861.

⁵³L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752.

⁵⁴John F. Torrey Deposition, op. cit., entry 6.

Dollar," he could redeem them for one dollar in currency, or if he collected enough coupons marked "Twenty-Five Cents" to total ten dollars in coupons, he could redeem them for twenty-five cents in currency.⁵⁵

Texas had joined the Confederacy in 1861. There were few manufacturing concerns in the state, but the blockade by Union forces made it imperative that manufacturing be encouraged and expanded.⁵⁶ Torrey and two partners, Henry and Hermann Runge, formed the Comal Manufacturing Company, and Torrey converted the upper floors of the mill to a cotton cloth factory.⁵⁷ This manufacturing project was so important to the state that Torrey and his partners were authorized to import machinery from Europe via Mexico, duty free.⁵⁸ The Texas legislature also issued charters to some manufacturing companies, and the partnership agreement between Torrey and the Runge indicates that the Comal Manufacturing Company was so chartered:

⁵⁵Torrey Mills Coupons, numbers 198 and 128, September 9, 1862. See illustration, page 101.

⁵⁶L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752.

⁵⁷Comal County Deed Records, April 20, 1863.

⁵⁸Walter P. Webb (ed.), et al., The Handbook of Texas (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), II, 790; and Hermann Seele, "Chronology of New Braunfels," Schuetze Jahrbuck, 1882, p. 51.



FIGURE 3

TORREY MILL COUPONS

Contract entered into...between John F. Torrey, Henry Runge, Hermann A. H. Runge regarding the establishment and conducting of a factory for the manufacture of cotton and woolen goods, of either solely or mixed, to be carried on in New Braunfels, Comal County. It has been agreed that the said business be conducted as a limited partnership or, under the charter from the State of Texas obtained during the last session of the Legislature, styled Comal Manufacturing Company. . . .

John F. Torrey is to furnish the water power and building, giving the second and third floors and the attic of the mill building, also room for the lapper and willower, and relinquishing the entire use thereof to the Comal Manufacturing Company and agreeing to keep his building, mill, dam, and water power in good repair at his expense.⁵⁹

Each of the three partners was to receive one-third of the profits. The Runge brothers furnished ten thousand dollars in specie to purchase machinery and the use of Torrey's mill and water power constituted his share of the project. The Runge brothers agreed to see to the purchase and shipment of the machinery. One of the brothers went to Europe to attend to this matter, leaving from Brownsville about May of 1863.⁶¹ The agreement provided that the company would pay the expenses of his trip. In case the cost of the machinery and raw materials exceeded the capital already

⁵⁹Comal County Deed Records, April 20, 1863, Vol. G, p. 575.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Oscar Haas, "Runge off to England to Buy Textile Mill Machinery," New Braunfels Herald, February 5, 1963.

raised, the three partners agreed to share equally any additional costs. The contract was for a five-year term from the day on which the factory should begin operation. At the termination date, the factory was to be sold to the highest bidder, and each of the partners would have an equal share of the depreciation of the machinery and in any profits from the sale. Torrey was given the general superintendence of the factory.⁶²

It is surprising that in wartime Texas the capital for the project could have been raised, but Hermann Seele, a resident of New Braunfels during this time, wrote that the sale of cotton across the Rio Grande placed a large sum of specie dollars in circulation in his part of the state.⁶³ The wartime emphasis upon manufacturing stimulated the New Braunfels economy. Other industries were begun besides the Torrey-Runge cotton mill, and, according to Seele, there was no disruption caused by the fall of the Confederacy.⁶⁴ After the Civil War had ended it was doubtful whether the charter

⁶²Comal County Deed Records, April 20, 1863, Vol. G, p. 575.

⁶³Oscar Haas, "War Ends; Industry Prospers Again in 1866 New Braunfels," New Braunfels Herald, February 12, 1963.

⁶⁴Ibid.

granted the Comal Manufacturing Company by the state legislature was any longer valid, but the concern continued, by new agreement, as a private partnership.⁶⁵

Immediately after Torrey and the Runge made their original agreement in 1863, one of the brothers left for Europe to purchase the necessary machinery, but it was almost two years later, February, 1865, when the machinery arrived in New Braunfels. Installation began at once,⁶⁶ and the factory was ready to begin operation in October, 1865.⁶⁷ This textile mill, credited with being the first cotton factory in the state,⁶⁸ had twenty-one looms and was capable of producing seven hundred yards of domestic daily.⁶⁹

The cotton factory had been in operation some four years when a rise in the Comal River damaged the building and weaving machinery. Heavy rains which began on July 4, 1869, caused flood water to sweep away a wing of the mill

⁶⁵Comal County Deed Records, February 1, 1866, Vol. B, p. 234.

⁶⁶Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, February 20, 1865.

⁶⁷Comal County Deed Records, February 1, 1866, Vol. B, p. 234.

⁶⁸Walter P. Webb (ed.), et al., The Handbook of Texas (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952), II, 790; and John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection, University of Texas Library).

⁶⁹Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, February 20, 1865.

which was of timber construction, and the high water entered the main stone building, covering the weaving looms and machinery of the Comal Manufacturing Company. All of the flour on hand in the Torrey mill was spoiled.⁷⁰ Two months later, in the late afternoon of September 12, a tornado accompanied by lightning, thunder, and rain struck New Braunfels, destroying almost everything in its path. The Comal Manufacturing Company was one of the targets of the storm:

The greatest loss of all to New Braunfels is the complete demolition of John F. Torrey's cotton factory. The factory building was constructed of rock and mortar. It was built at great expense by the enterprising Torrey and was about the staunchest piece of masonry in the whole country, but it was as nothing in the embrace of the tornado.⁷¹

The carding machines, which weighed several thousand pounds, were carried away by the tornado and never found.⁷² Torrey repaired the mill building, abandoning the severely damaged third story and roofing it over at the second story.⁷³ Torrey continued to use the building for his mills and cotton

⁷⁰Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, July 9, 1869.

⁷¹The Dallas Herald, October 2, 1869, p. 2, col.1.

⁷²L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752.

⁷³Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, June 14, 1872.

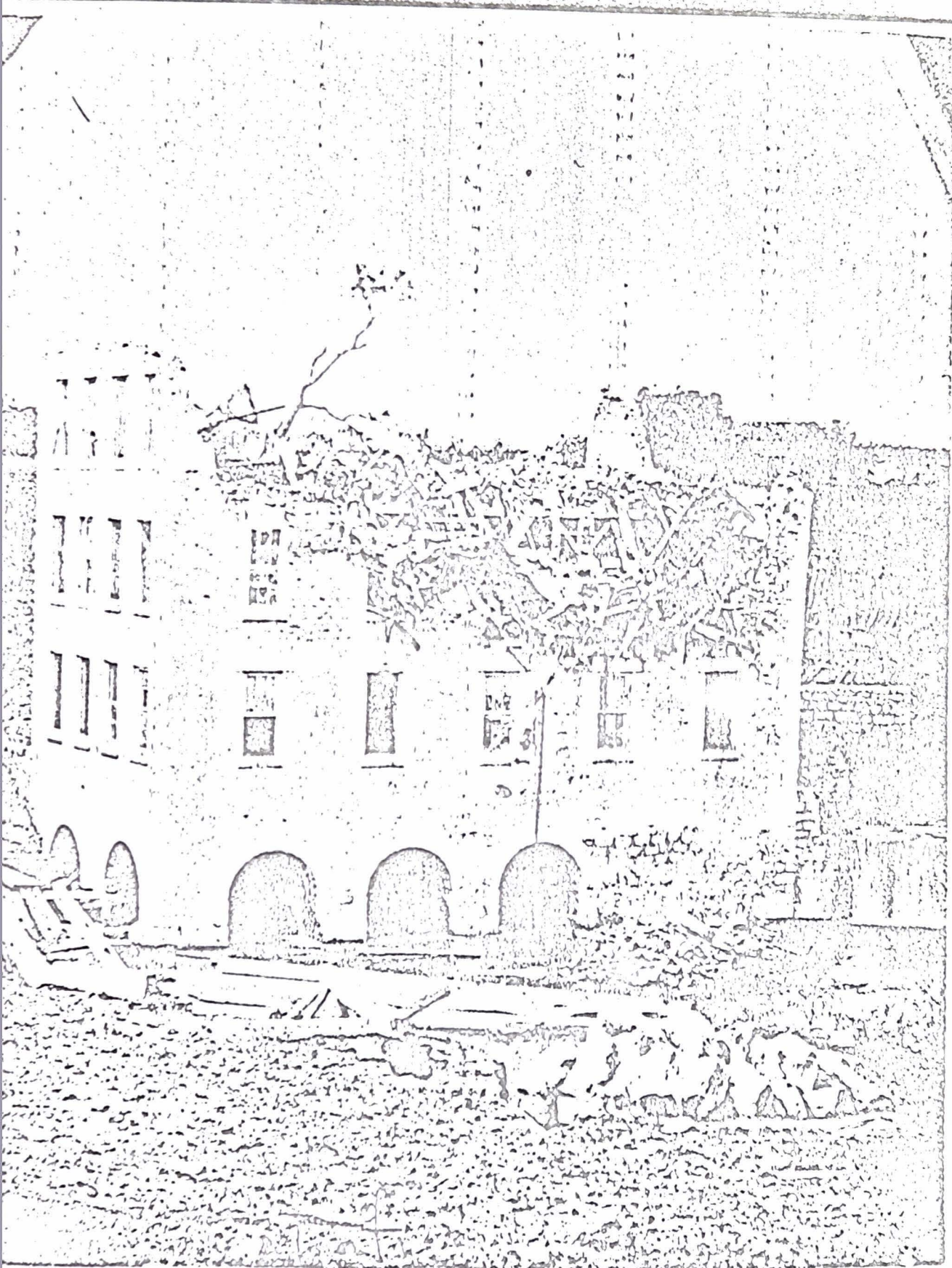


FIGURE 4

TORREY MILL DAMAGED BY TORNADO

gins,⁷⁴ and, in time, the machinery for the factory was replaced.

When the textile mill was almost ready to resume operation, it was again struck by flood water.⁷⁵ Cloudbursts on June 8 and 9, 1872, sent the Comal on a rampage, washing the Torrey mill building from its foundation.⁷⁶ The Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung reported the disaster: "Torrey's massive two-story mill building with the newly replaced saw mill and the costly, reconstructed dam⁷⁷ have completely disappeared."⁷⁸ Five men were on the roof of the Torrey mill when the building collapsed.⁷⁹ Mrs. Ernestine Kretzmeier Trappe, a maid for the Meusebach family, neighbors of the Torreys at the time, related the story of the flood years later, recalling that John Torrey was among the five men on the roof. The men, she said, had been trapped while moving grain from

⁷⁴ John F. Torrey Deposition, op. cit., entry 6; and L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752.

⁷⁵ John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection, University of Texas Library).

⁷⁶ L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752; John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection, University of Texas Library); and Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, June 14, 1872.

⁷⁷ The flood of 1869 must have damaged the dam.

⁷⁸ Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, June 14, 1872.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

the first to the second floor in an attempt to save it, and had been forced, by rising water, to climb out on the roof. Torrey reportedly said that if the mill washed away, he would go with it. Mrs. Trappe said that while the men were trapped on the roof, Mrs. Torrey went to the Meusebach house to ask her to hurry to a store and get some rope so that they might try to save the men by throwing them a line.⁸⁰ However, when the building gave way, the men were able to save themselves by grasping the telegraph wire which crossed the Comal just below the mill.⁸¹ John Torrey was saved with the others.

Hermann Runge having died sometime previously, Torrey and Henry Runge, in May, 1873, dissolved the partnership because almost all of the property of the Company had been destroyed by "various calamities, floods and tornado" and the partners were unwilling to re-establish the factory.⁸² But Torrey continued to maintain his claim to the mill site, possibly hoping to be able to start anew at some future time. According to the dissolution agreement, Runge relinquished all the interest that he and his brother had ever

⁸⁰Information received from Oscar Haas, local New Braunfels historian, in a personal interview.

⁸¹Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, June 14, 1872.

⁸²Comal County Deed Records, May, 1873, Vol. L, p. 558.

held in the mill site in return for which Torrey transferred title to Runge on twenty land certificates issued by the State of Texas, each for three hundred and twenty acres of land. Torrey also transferred his headright of one hundred and seventy-seven acres of land on the San Jacinto, all accounts due the Comal Manufacturing Company, all of the cotton on hand, and all remnants of machinery furnished to the enterprise by the Runges.⁸³

Torrey bore his losses "without a murmur of despondency or any abatement of his untiring energy."⁸⁴ He left New Braunfels and went to Hood County where he had a public land grant which he had located in 1843 at Comanche Peak, and there he took up farming.⁸⁵ About twenty years later, after a three day illness, John Torrey died in December, 1893, at the home of his son, Edward Torrey, in San Antonio.⁸⁶ Torrey had spent over fifty of his seventy-seven years in Texas. He lived in New Braunfels twenty-six years

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Dallas Herald, August 31, 1872, p. 1, col. 6.

⁸⁵ Koebig, loc. cit.; John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection, University of Texas); L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), pp. 749-752.

⁸⁶ John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection, University of Texas Library).

and pioneered in industry in the state with his sash and blind factory and textile mill.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The adventures of Thomas and James Torrey and the business ventures of David and John Torrey all are a part of the history of frontier Texas. James and Thomas Torrey were recognized for their service to Texas with their burial at Monument Hill. But of greater value to the state than the Mier and Santa Fe Expeditions, in which James and Thomas served, were the contribution to the settlement and civilization of the Texas frontier made by the Torrey Indian trade and early New Braunfels industries. The pacification of the Indians, to which the Indian trade contributed materially, permitted the Texans to settle the untamed regions of the state more rapidly than would have been possible under the harassment of hostile Indians. The production of goods within the state which otherwise had to be imported with great difficulty and expense increased the comforts of the settler's life. During the Civil War the importance of this industry was recognized by the state government.

John Torrey came to Texas in 1838, established himself in Houston, and started a merchandising firm in which he was joined by his brothers. The Torreys built the first frame building in Houston, which served as a trading house for Indians. They later moved the center of their Indian trade far out on the frontier. In Houston the brothers met

Sam Houston and became closely associated with him, their Indian trade serving a useful purpose in Houston's Indian policy. Trade was a part of the plan for securing a peace with the Indians. To minimize friction between Indians and settlers, the state was temporarily divided between Indian territory and white man's land, and to prevent the Indians from coming within the settlements to trade, Torrey's trading house on the Brazos was established, proving quite valuable in the control of the Indians. The post was licensed and regulated by the government and was, for several years, the only place in Texas where the Indians could trade legally. The trading house was a profitable business for the brothers but a hazardous one. Sam Houston praised them for the establishment of this post at their own expense and at great personal risk and noted that the post had been very beneficial in securing and maintaining friendly relations with the Indians.

David Torrey made buying trips back East for the Torrey firm, and when the expansion of the settlements drove the traders further west, he attempted to establish a new trade with the Apaches in the southwestern part of the state and was killed by that tribe. James Torrey, after a brief service as a soldier fighting for what he termed the glory of his country, died young, one of the seventeen Mier prisoners who drew black beans and were executed. Thomas Torrey

joined the Santa Fe Expedition with the intention of establishing a regular trade in that area, and with the failure of that hope, he turned to the Indian trade. He served as an Indian agent and made the trip to the Comanches which was the first step in making peace with that tribe. He died while on a trip up the Brazos, locating the site for a trading house, but had he been spared this untimely death, the acquaintances which he made with the wild tribes on his journey to the Comanches would have made him a valuable asset to the Torrey Indian trade.

John Torrey, during his early years in Texas, dealt in a variety of businesses--the Houston merchandising firm, a jewelry and watch repair business, the Indian trade, cattle buying, and others. When the day of the Indian trader was done in Texas, John Torrey pioneered in manufacturing in Texas, establishing the first factory in the state in 1850 and later, in partnership with the Runiges, operating a large textile factory. Torrey's milling business, which he operated along with the factories, at its peak included saw, grist, flour, and malt mills and cotton gins as well. Torrey's mills and factories suffered setbacks from fire, flood, and tornado which he overcame, each time repairing and restoring the mill, only to have the entire mill and textile factory washed away by a second flood in 1872. John F. Torrey, a "wonderfully energetic, good and useful

citizen,"¹died in 1893. "Honored be the name of Torrey among the children of Texas!"²

¹ L. E. Daniell, Texas the Country and Its Men ([n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.]), p. 750.

² John Henry Brown, Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Company, Bechtold Printing and Mfg. Co. Binders, L. E. Daniell Publisher, [n.d.]), p. 95.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

- Baker, D. W. C. A Texas Scrap-Book. New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1875.
- Barnes, Charles M. Combats and Conquests of Immortal Heroes. San Antonio: Guessaz and Ferlet Company, 1910.
- Bates, E. T. (ed.). History and Reminiscences of Denton County. Denton: McNitzky Company, 1918.
- Brown, John H. History of Texas from 1685 to 1892. 2 vols. St. Louis: Beckett and Company, 1893.
- _____. Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas. St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Company, Beckett Printing and Mfg. Co. Binders, L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.].
- _____. Life and Times of Henry Smith the First American Governor of Texas. Dallas: A. D. Aldridge and Company, Stereotypers, Printers, and Binders, 1887.
- Speer, William S. and John H. Brown. Encyclopedia of the New West. Marshall, Texas: The United States Biographical Publishing Company, Hodge Jennings Bros., Proprietors, 1881.
- Daniell, L. E. Texas the Country and Its Men. [n.p.] L. E. Daniell, Publisher, [n.d.].
- _____. Types of Successful Men in Texas. Austin: E. von Boeckman, Printer, 1890.
- History of Texas Together with a Biographical History of Tarrant and Parker Counties. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1895.
- Howe, Hubert. History of Texas and the North Mexican States. 2 vols. San Francisco: The History Company, Publishers, 1890.
- Loomis, Noel M. The Santa Fe Pioneers. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958.
- Richardson, T. C. East Texas Its History and Its Makers. 4 vols. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1940.
- Sowell, A. J. Rangers and Pioneers of Texas. San Antonio: Sheppard Bros. and Co., Printers and Binders, 1884.

- Strecker, John K. Chronicles of George Barnard. Vol. XXXI, No. 3. Waco, Texas: The Baylor Bulletin, 1928.
- Thrall, Homer S. A Pictorial History of Texas from the Earliest Visits of European Adventurers to A.D. 1879. St. Louis: N. D. Thompson and Company, 1879.
- Wallis, Jonnie L. Sixty Years on the Brazos: The Life and Letters of Dr. John Washington Lockhart. Los Angeles: Privately Printed, 1930.
- Webb, Walter P. (ed.), et al. The Handbook of Texas. 2 vols. Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952.
- Weyland, L. R. and H. Wade. History of Early Fayette County. La Grange, Texas: La Grange Journal Plant, 1936.
- Wilbarger, J. W. Indian Depredations in Texas. Austin: Hutchings Printing House, 1889.
- Wolters, Jacob F. Dawson's Men and the Mier Expedition. Houston: The Union National Bank, 1927.
- Wortham, Louis J. A History of Texas from Wilderness to Commonwealth. 5 vols. Fort Worth: Wortham-Molyneaux Company, 1924.
- Young, S. O. A Thumbnail History of the City of Houston Texas from Its Founding in 1836 to the Year 1912. Houston: Rein and Sons Company, 1912.

B. NEWSPAPERS

- Dallas Herald, August 7, 1869-April 3, 1875.
- Dallas Herald, August 7, 1869.
- Dallas Herald, October 2, 1869.
- Dallas Herald, August 31, 1872.
- Dallas Herald, April 3, 1875.
- Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, February 20, 1865-January 27, 1887.
- Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, February 20, 1865.

Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, July 9, 1869.

Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, June 14, 1872.

Koebig, Ernst. "Lebenslauf Skizze," Neu-Braunfelser Zeitung, January 27, 1887.

New Braunfels Herald, December 11, 1962-February 5, 1963.

Oscar Haas. "John Torrey Figured in Local Wartime Economic Struggle," New Braunfels Herald, December 11, 1962.

_____. "Torrey Builds Store on Plaza, Grist-Saw Mill on Comal River," New Braunfels Herald, December 25, 1962.

_____. "Torrey Signs with Emigration Society to Build Mill on Comal," New Braunfels Herald, January 1, 1963.

_____. "Early Mill Has Three Owners," New Braunfels Herald, January 15, 1963.

_____. "Torrey Grist, Saw Mill Burns in 1861 Fire; Rebuilt in Stone," New Braunfels Herald, January 29, 1963.

_____. "Runge Off to England to Buy Textile Mill Machinery," New Braunfels Herald, February 5, 1963.

Telegraph and Texas Register [Houston], July 1, 1840-February 17, 1850.

Telegraph and Texas Register, July 1, 1840.

Telegraph and Texas Register, January 12, 1841.

Telegraph and Texas Register, December 8, 1841.

Telegraph and Texas Register, November 16, 1842.

Telegraph and Texas Register, December 7, 1842.

Telegraph and Texas Register, November 6, 1844.

Telegraph and Texas Register, May 28, 1845.

Telegraph and Texas Register, January 7, 1846.

Telegraph and Texas Register, February 17, 1850.

Jacob de Cordova. "Murder of Daniel [sic] Torrey by the Indians," Telegraph and Texas Register, January 28, 1846.

Texas National Register [Washington, Texas], December 28, 1844.

Texas National Register [Washington, Texas], June 19, 1845.

Texas State Gazette [Austin], February 23, 1850.

The Northern Standard [Clarksville], September 14, 1843-July 5, 1845.

The Northern Standard, September 14, 1843.

The Northern Standard, February 10, 1844.

The Northern Standard, July 5, 1845.

C. PERIODICALS

Koch, Lena C. "The Federal Indian Policy in Texas, 1845-1846," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (July, 1924-April, 1925), 259-286.

McClendon, R. Earl. "Daniel Webster and Mexican Relations: The Santa Fe Prisoners," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVI (1932-1933), 288-311.

Muckleroy, Anna. "The Indian Policy of the Republic of Texas," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1922-1923), 1-29.

Webb, Walter P. "The Last Treaty of the Republic of Texas," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXV (January, 1922), 155-173.

D. ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

"John Torrey (1796-1873)," Encyclopaedia Americana (1963), XXII, 309.

"Reuben Archer Torrey (1856-1928)," Encyclopaedia Americana (1963), XXII, 309-310.

E. PRIMARY SOURCES

Collected Documents and Letters

Williams, Amelia W. and Eugene C. Barker (eds.). The Writings of Sam Houston 1813-1863. 8 vols. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1943.

Winfrey, Dorman H. (ed.). Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843. Austin: Texas State Library, 1960.

_____. Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845. Austin: Texas State Library, 1960.

_____. Texas Indian Papers, 1846-1859. Austin: Texas State Library, 1960.

Journals

Green, Thomas J. Journal of the Texian Expedition Against Mier. New York: Harper and Brothers, Publisher, 1845.

Kendall, George W. Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition. 2 vols. New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1856.

Olmstead, Frederick L. A Journey Through Texas. New York: Mason Brothers, 1861.

von Roemer, Ferdinand. Roemer's Texas. Trans. Oswald Mueller. San Antonio: Standard Printing Company, 1935.

Stapp, William P. The Prisoners of Perote: A Journal Kept by the Author, Who Was Captured by the Mexicans at Mier December 25, 1842, and Released from Perote May 16, 1844. Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber and Company, 1845.

OTHER SOURCES

John F. Torrey Papers (MS. in Archives Collection,
University of Texas Library).

Affidavit of James Torrey's Service on Mier Expedition
(Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin).

Executive Record Book No. 40 (Texas State Library, Austin).

Deposition of John F. Torrey in case of Clemens, Blum, and
Runge vs. Landa, December 10, 1882 (Oscar Haas Archives,
New Braunfels).

Letter from John F. Torrey to Joseph Faust, October 20,
1886, (Oscar Haas Archives, New Braunfels).

Torrey Family Documents (Mrs. Curtis T. Vaughan, San
Antonio).

Birth Records, Town of Ashford, Warrenville, Connecticut,
1815-1833.

Marriage Records, Town of Ashford, Warrenville, Connecticut,
1815.

Comal County Probate File No. 103, February 11, 1852.

Comal County Marriage Records, December 10, 1851.

Comal County Deed Records, May, 1847-May 1873, vols. A, B,
E, G, L, and P.

Vita was removed during scanning