



TEXAS HISTORY

The Story of Capt. Felix Frontage

Of all the stories we heard on the road one of the most interesting was the legend of Captain Feliks Frontaaj of the East Tennessee Volunteers and the Texas Militia.

Feliks Frontaaj, usually anglicized to "Felix Frontage" was the fifth of seven children born to a Dutch father, Jan Frontaaj (pronounced Fron-TAJ, like the TAJ Mahal) and a Huguenot mother, Marie Reynald, along the Clinch River in eastern Tennessee in 1798 or 1799. He grew up on a family farm where his father ran a saddle shop and stable, and at times, an inn or tavern.

Feliks ran away from home in 1813 to join Andrew Jackson's Tennessee militia during the War of 1812. Although too young to serve he acted as a courier and carried wood and water for the camps. During the Battle of New Orleans Feliks spent the day under fire hauling water buckets to the cannons and removing wounded men. His bravery at such a young age led to a special thanks from General Jackson after the battle.

After the war young Feliks, now the anglicized "Felix Frontage", traveled throughout Tennessee working various jobs as a trapper, wagon driver, and blacksmith. He married Sarah McDonald, the daughter of a successful Knoxville storeowner, and settled down to run a ferry across the Tennessee River below Knoxville.

In 1835 former congressman and local legend Col. Davy Crockett began to raise a band of Tennessee mountaineers to explore and settle in Texas. Felix Frontage decided to join and bring his family. Felix was elected "Captain" and put in charge of the wagon train of families and supplies.

Davy Crockett crossed into Texas in early January with 65 men of the advanced party. Capt. Felix Frontage followed in late March with 36 families and an additional 50 men. When the Frontage party reached Nacogdoches, Texas they received word that Davy Crockett and much of the advanced party had been killed at the Alamo earlier in the month.

Leaving some men to guard the women and children in the protected border town, Capt. Felix and 36 men rode to search for General Houston and aid the Texas Revolution.

Capt. Felix Frontage and the East Tennessee Volunteers found Sam Houston just after the initial surprise attack of the Battle of San Jacinto had begun. As luck would have it they arrived from the south following the Mexican supply line, and hit the rear of the Mexican lines as retreating troops were trying to regroup, reform, and raise a counter-attack. Capt. Felix rode in with his small force of mounted troops causing confusion and disorder in the Mexican ranks. They captured 200-300 troops and squashed the counter-offensive, effectively ending the battle and the war. The next day it was discovered that General Santa Anna was in the captured group, disguised as a common soldier.

For this action Capt. Felix Frontage was named a captain in the Texas Militia and was granted 1000 acres along the Guadalupe River. He returned to Nacogdoches, resumed command of the settlers, and established a ranch on the Guadalupe. He and his wife raised 8 children and ran a tavern, general store, and blacksmith shop for the area until his death in 1877.

Capt. Felix Frontage played a small but pivotal role in the War of Texas Independence and the people of his day never forgot his role in the decisive battle. As Texas grew and was settled many cities included Frontage with Houston, Crockett, Travis, Lamar, and Bowie in naming streets, hotels, and roads. You will often see a Frontage Road along the highway as a silent memorial to this nearly forgotten hero.