

**PALMER, ISOM**  
**(1811-1874)**

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Isom Palmer, Texas Revolutionary, Republic of Texas veteran and Sergeant-at-Arms, Texas Constitutional Convention, born in Dickson County, Tennessee about 1811, was the son of Martin and Sarah (Hardwick) Parmer.<sup>1</sup> In 1816 the family relocated to northwestern Missouri, where his father was elected to the Missouri legislature and became familiar with Moses Austin. In early 1825 the family moved again to Arkansas where they resided briefly before moving to Texas that same year. Upon their arrival in Texas, the family settled along the Neches River near Mound Prairie in present-day Cherokee County. The move to Texas brought sadness to the family following the death of Palmer's mother upon their arrival.<sup>2</sup>

A year later in 1826, Palmer's father relocated the family south to a farm fifteen miles east of Nacogdoches. On November 22, 1826, a company of thirty-six men rode into Nacogdoches under his father's leadership to arrest the town Alcalde and captain of the militia, ushering in the Fredonia Rebellion. While history fails to record the names of these men, Palmer might have been present in this company and might also have been at his father's side during the attack at the Old Stone Fort on January 4, 1827, where a small group of eleven Fredonians with eight allied Cherokees repulsed an attack of sixty-seven men led by the former Alcalde. After the collapse of this first independence movement in Texas, Palmer and his father went into hiding.<sup>3</sup> On April 26, 1831, ten days after both men were identified passing through the town of San Felipe de Austin, an order was issued for their arrest.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The children of Martin and Sarah PARMER referred to themselves as PALMER. Furthermore, the spelling of his first name has been recorded as Isom, Isam, Isham or Ishom. The name reflected in this biography is from both his gravestone and death record.

<sup>2</sup> Ericson, Joe E. and Carolyn R., *Martin Parmer, The Man and the Legend* (Nacogdoches: Ericson Books, 1999) pp. 18-50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 58-74.

<sup>4</sup> Kemp, Louis W., *The Signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence* (Salado, Texas: Anson Jones Press, 1944; reprinted 1959) pp. 246-247.

With the influence of Stephen F. Austin, Palmer would eventually obtain a pardon for his actions at Nacogdoches. He would also receive an original patent of land in San Augustine County where he was living in 1834.<sup>5</sup>

Following the 1835 Consultation and the commencement of the Siege at Bexar later that year, Palmer joined Captain John M. Bradley's cavalry company and entered the fight for Texas independence waging outside San Antonio. On November 26, 1835, news quickly spread through the Texas camp of an approaching Mexican cavalry re-supply column. Palmer, in Bradley's company, under the command of Colonel James Bowie, along with one hundred infantry led by Colonel William H. Jack, moved to engage the advancing column. The fighting, which took place near Alazan Creek, later became known as the "Grass Fight" because the Mexican supply mules carried only fodder for the animals.<sup>6</sup>

The siege at Bexar ended when the Mexican commander, General Martin Perfecto de Cos, surrendered his forces on December 9, 1835. The capitulation resulted in most of the Texas troops returning to their homes; yet, this campaign became the first action of the Texas Revolution.<sup>7</sup>

When the delegates began to assemble at Washington-on-the-Brazos, Palmer traveled to the convention with his father, a delegate from the Tenaha Municipality.<sup>8</sup> When the convention proceeded to elect a Sergeant-at-Arms, Robert Potter nominated Isom Palmer. Incurring no opposition, the President of the Convention declared him duly elected.<sup>9</sup> According to family tradition Palmer "purchased a very large, fine-looking horse, for which he paid four hundred Mexican silver dollars, and rode him to Washington."<sup>10</sup> Tradition further declares

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<sup>5</sup> *Martin Parmer*, p. 73.

*Abstract of All Original Texas Land Titles comprising Grants and Locations to August 31, 1941* (Austin: General Land Office, 1941) volume 1, p. 872.

<sup>6</sup> Barr, Alwyn, *Texans in Revolt: The Battle for San Antonio, 1835* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) pp. 39-40.

Miller, Thomas L., *Bounty and Donation Land Grants of Texas, 1835-1888* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967) p. 514.

*Republic of Texas Pension Abstracts* (Austin: Morgan Printing & Publishing, Inc., 1987) p. 257.

<sup>7</sup> *Texans in Revolt*, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> *Martin Parmer*, p. 83.

<sup>9</sup> *Journals of the Convention of the Free, Sovereign and Independent People of Texas, in General Convention Assembled*. (Columbia: Printed at the Telegraph Office, 1836) p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> William Zuber to A. W. Morris, 1902. Robert Bruce Blake Research Collection, Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center Archives Collection, 1958-1959, vol. LX, pp. 57-58.

that this “fine gray”<sup>11</sup> attracted the eye of General Sam Houston. Houston, desiring a better mount, purchased this horse prior to his departure for Gonzales on March 6, 1836. It was this horse, previously owned by Palmer, which Houston would ride into the fray at San Jacinto. Unfortunately, this fine horse would become a casualty of war, the first of two horses shot from under the General that day at San Jacinto.<sup>12</sup>

Days after the Declaration of Independence was signed, Palmer obtained a leave of absence and departed Washington on March 16, 1836.<sup>13</sup> He and his father traveled home to East Texas to protect their homes from the advancing Mexican forces.<sup>14</sup>

Following the news of the victory at San Jacinto, Palmer settled back into farming and land speculation. In 1846, Palmer was living in Walker County and six years later, on February 26, 1852, he married Miss Laura E. Dougherty (c. 1827-1881).<sup>15</sup>

In 1860, the couple was living on four hundred acres in Houston County. When secession came in 1861, Palmer, although no longer a young man of fighting age, but possessed of the same fighting spirit, enlisted as a private in the local militia company.<sup>16</sup> That same year, Palmer joined the Masonic Order, affiliating first with Trinity Lodge No. 4 of the Royal Arch Order in Crockett. Later, he transferred to the Lothrop Lodge No. 21, also of Crockett, where he maintained his membership for two years.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *Papers Concerning Robertson's Colony in Texas*. Compiled and edited by Malcolm D. McLean (Arlington: The University of Texas at Arlington Press, 1987) vol. 13, p. 672.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ingmire, Frances T. *Walker County Texas Marriage Records 1846-1856* (St. Louis: Ingmire Publications, c1985) p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Parmer, Isam. *Texas Confederate Military Service Records* (Austin: Adjutant General's Office).

<sup>17</sup> *Transactions of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Texas at the Twelfth Annual Convocation* (Houston: Printed at the Telegraph Book and Job Establishment, 1861) p. 53. In Confederate Imprints, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A&M University, film B1664, reel 142, item 5097. *Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Texas at its Twenty-Seventh Annual Communication* (Houston: Printed at the Telegraph Book and Job Establishment, 1863) p. 32. In Confederate Imprints, Sterling Evans Library, Texas A&M University, film B1664, reel 142, item 5096-1.

The year 1864 found the Palmers residing in Madison County, where they remained for about ten years until finally moving to Brazos County in the early 1870s.<sup>18</sup> Continuing to exercise an active interest in veteran affairs, Palmer was appointed committeeman for the Eighteenth District during the organizational meeting of the Texas Veterans Association held in Houston May 13 – 15, 1873.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, he did not live long enough to attend the First Annual Meeting held a year later.

On February 22, 1874, Palmer died at his home near Bryan.<sup>20</sup> It is unknown if his request to be buried by his “Masonic brethren”<sup>21</sup> was carried out, but he was interred in the Bryan City Cemetery.<sup>22</sup> His grave can be found today in the northwest quarter of lot 8 in block 3.

Although Palmer did not live long enough to contribute substantially to the growth of Bryan or Brazos County, he did participate actively in some of the most dramatic events in our State’s history.

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<sup>18</sup> Voter Register of 1867-1869, Madison County lists Isom Palmer, “in the county, 3 years.”

<sup>19</sup> Harris County, Texas Proceedings of the Convention of Texas Veterans Held at Houston, May 13-15, 1873. Compiled by Frances T. Ingmire (St. Louis: Ingmire Publications, 1980) p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Republic of Texas Pension Abstracts*, p. 257.

<sup>21</sup> Brazos County Probate Book A-1, 1871, n.p.

<sup>22</sup> *The Brazos County Texas Cemeteries* (Nacogdoches: Ericson Books, 1997) p. 194.