

SPICEWOOD — There is a saying that goes something like this, “I wasn’t born in Texas, but I got here as fast as I could.”

Jesse Burnam, a Kentucky native, probably never heard those words, but when he came to the Texas territory in 1812, he didn’t just arrive in what would become the Lone Star State, he helped form it.

And his legacy thrives today in Burnet County with numerous descendants still making a difference in the community.

On June 13, his descendants as well as the Burnet County Historical Commission will recognize Burnam with the dedication of the latest historical marker. The ceremony takes place at 10 a.m. at the marker, located at the intersection of CR 401 and Texas 71. The public is invited.

After the ceremony, Sam and Trina Burnam will host a reception at their home, 3500 Texas 71 (about a mile east of the marker.)

“He was a pioneer in Burnet County just about the time the county was being formed,” said JoAnn Myers of the Burnet County Historical Commission. “And he wasn’t just somebody who helped (create) Burnet County, he was one of the men who helped create Texas.”

Burnam was no stranger to conflict. He first served the United States during the War of 1812 against the British. He even fought under then-Gen. Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans, which prevented the British from regaining a foothold at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

In 1821, Burnam and then-wife Temperance Null Baker settled in Texas, the 13th of the 300 families for which Stephen F. Austin obtained land grants from the Spanish government. They settled along the Colorado River (near what would become La Grange in Fayette County), where Burnam set up a trading post and the Burnam Ferry.

In 1833, Temperance died, leaving Burnam with nine children. He then married Nancy Ross. The two had another seven children.

As Texas began to assert its desire for independence, the community elected Burnam to represent them at those discussions at Washington-on-the-Brazos, the initial capital of the soon-to-be country and eventual state. Burnam helped get volunteers to serve in the Texas military to stand up against Gen. Santa Anna of Mexico and his army as it moved across the land.

Burnam hosted Col. J.W. Fannin and William Barrett Travis at his trading post as the two headed for the Alamo.

“His legacy in Texas is amazing,” Myers said. “He isn’t as well-known as some of the others like Austin, Sam Houston and Travis, but he played a big role in the creation of Texas and its break from Mexico.”

After becoming an independent nation, Texas eventually joined the United States as the 28th state in 1845. Two of Burnam’s sons headed up the Colorado River after statehood and settled in what would become Burnet County. In 1855, Burnam and his wife as well as the rest of the family followed. They set down roots



CAPT. JESSE BURNAM

TEXAS PATRIOT JESSE BURNAM (ALSO SPELLED BURNHAM), BORN IN MADISON COUNTY, KENTUCKY, WAS THE YOUNGEST SON OF SEVEN CHILDREN. IN 1812, JESSE MARRIED TEMPERANCE NULL BAKER IN SHELBYVILLE, TENNESSEE. JESSE WAS A PRIVATE IN THE MOUNTED VOLUNTEERS OF TENNESSEE IN THE WAR OF 1812, SERVING FROM SEP. 1814 TO APR. 1815, INCLUDING THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS. JESSE, TEMPERANCE AND FAMILY ARRIVED IN TEXAS IN 1821, SETTLING AT PECAN POINT (RED RIVER COUNTY). BY 1823, THEY WERE AMONG STEPHEN F. AUSTIN'S "OLD THREE HUNDRED," BUILDING A HOME, FORTIFIED TRADING POST AND FERRY SERVICE ON THE COLORADO RIVER FRONTIER. AUSTIN COMMISSIONED BURNAM AS A CAPTAIN OF MILITIA IN MAY 1824. TEMPERANCE DIED IN 1833, LEAVING JESSE WITH NINE CHILDREN. HE LATER MARRIED NANCY ROSS, WHO BORE HIM SEVEN MORE CHILDREN. JESSE WAS A DELEGATE TO THE CONVENTIONS OF 1832 AND 1833 AND THE CONSULTATION OF 1835. HE AIDED COL. JAMES W. FANNIN IN GATHERING VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPLIES DURING THE TEXAS REVOLUTION, AND GEN. SAM HOUSTON ARRIVED AT BURNAM'S CROSSING ON MARCH 17, 1836, ORDERING THE FERRY, HOMESTEAD AND STORE BURNED AHEAD OF THE ADVANCING MEXICAN ARMY. JESSE WAS A REPRESENTATIVE IN THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS' PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT AND ITS FIRST CONGRESS.

JESSE AND NANCY MOVED THEIR FAMILY TO BURNET COUNTY IN 1855, FOLLOWING TWO OLDER SONS WHO HAD SETTLED HERE. JESSE'S LAND WAS SOUTHEAST OF PRESENT-DAY MARBLE FALLS ON DOUBLE HORN CREEK, WHERE HE ESTABLISHED ONE OF THE FIRST SHEEP RAISING OPERATIONS IN THE AREA AND A LARGE WHEAT FARM. THE HISTORIC BURNAM HOMESTEAD, NOW IN THE FAMILY'S FIFTH GENERATION, INCLUDES A LOG CABIN, TWO-STORY HOME, SPRING HOUSE, AND FAMILY CEMETERY WHERE JESSE, NANCY AND OTHERS ARE BURIED.

Members of the Burnam family and the Burnet County Historical Commission will dedicate a marker honoring the life and contributions of Jesse Burnam, an early Burnet County pioneer, on June 13. The dedication will take place at 10 a.m. at the marker, located at the intersection of CR 401 North and Texas 71 (about two miles east of the Texas 71 and U.S. 281 intersection.) A reception will follow at the home of Sam and Trina Burnam at 3500 Texas 71. Courtesy photo

in what became known as Double Horn. Burnam built a sheep operation (one of the first in the area) and a large wheat farm.

His first log home is still standing. His descendant Murry Burnam uses it as a barn.

Myers said many of Jesse Burnam's descendants have continued to make significant contributions to the community and the county.

"Jesse Burnam did quite a bit for Texas," she said. "This marker is one of the ways we can honor him and keep his story alive."

At the completion of the dedication, the Moses Austin Rangers from the Moses Austin Chapter of the Sons of the Republic of Texas will give cannon and musket salutes.

While the event is open to the public, those attending should bring lawn chairs since seating isn't provided.

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