Dr. John Sibley and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1803-1814

JULIA KATHRYN GARRETT

[continued]

[A deposition made by fugitive Texas rebel, John Garnier before John Sibley, Justice of the Peace in Parish of Natchitoches]

Natchitoches Sept. 19th 1811

Before me, John Sibley one of the Justices of the peace in and for the Parish of Natchitoches, come John Garnier & on Oath declared that he was a Gunner belonging to the Royal Artillery at St. Antonio & that about the sixteenth of August last the Commanding Officer at St. Antonio received a letter from Governor Cordero of Quaghuilla [Coahuila] stating that Colonels Manshack & Bernard with Captains Domingal &

99Captain Miguel Menchaca, a Texas rebel, fled from San Antonio after the collapse of the revolutionary government in Texas in March, 1811. He found refuge in the home of José Bernardo Gutiérrez in Nuevo Santander. Soon afterward Menchaca and Gutiérrez fled across Northern Texas to Natchitoches. For details see José Bernardo Gutiérrez, "To the Mexican Congress, An Account of the Progress of the Revolution from the Beginnings," Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar (Austin, 1921-1928), Charles Adams Gulick and Katherine Elliott, eds., I, 7-S. (Hereafter cited, Gutiérrez, "To the Mexican Congress," Lamar Papers.)

99Gutiérrez was a merchant and blacksmith in Revilla on the Rio Grande. He became a supporter of Hidalgo's revolution, and converted his clerical brother Father José Antonio. Together they aided in revolutionizing the cities of the Rio Grande, Nuevo Santander, and Texas. By February, 1811, Hidalgo and his rebel chiefs had encamped at Saltillo with Jiménez. The royalists threatened to move northward against the rebel army. The rebel chiefs held a war council. They decided to consolidate their military strength by uniting the troops of the provinces of Texas, Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Nuevo Santander. Leaving an army in Saltillo to serve as a rear guard, they planned to march with one thousand soldiers to San Antonio. At that place, they would await supplies and troops from the United States which would be sent there by Jiménez's envoys, Aldama and Salazar. After reinforcing their ranks, the rebel chiefs would return to Mexico to continue the revolution. During the session of this war council, news came of the capture of Jiménez in San Antonio. Gutiérrez was entrusted with their mission. Soon afterwards Hidalgo and party were seized on their way to Texas and the revolution in the northern provinces collapsed. In order to save the revolutionary cause, Gutiérrez prepared to fulfill the commission entrusted to him by the war council at Saltillo. He fled across Texas to the United States to obtain supplies and men for the rebels, who were continuing the revolution in the interior of Mexico. Ibid.; Don José Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara, Breve Apología (Monterrey, 1827), Segunda edición, Aumentada con los Apuntes Biográficos del autor, por José L. Cossío (Mexico, 1915); Lorenzo de la Garza, Dos Hermanos Héroes (Guerra, Tamaulipas, Mexico, 1918).
Fernandes & Eight or ten other persons had taken their departure from Colone [Colonia] 106 Bound as it was suppose to the United States & advising that patrols should be sent out in different directions to intercept them.———The Deponent states that he being detained in St. Antonio in the Royal Service, contrary to his will, went likewise in search of them, with the intention of joining them & coming with them into the United States, and fell in with them, and that they proceeded on by the most secret & unfrequented Rout, & on the Sixteenth of September crossed the Sabine at the Mandaro [Nadaco] Village, and at night on the seventeenth were in the Baou Pierre Settlement, attacked by a party of Royal Troops from Nacogochos. The Deponent made his escape on horseback, and he has reason to believe that the whole Party except himself were taken Prisoners with their Baggage, papers, etc. ———

The deponent understood from Colonels Manshack [Menchaca] & Bernard that they were Embassadors from the Republican party in the Kingdom of Mexico to the Government of the United States, and that they had the disposition of Fifteen Millions of Dollars, and were desirous of procuring in the United States for use of the Republican or Revolutionary party, Arms, Ammunition, and desirous likewise of entering into some mutually Advantageous Commercial Arrangements.———

The Deponent further states that he understood from those Gentlemen, that except the City of Mexico, Chihuagua [Chihuahua], Quaghuila [Coahuila] & St. Antonio all the rest of the Kingdoms of Mexico was in the possession of the Revolutionary party. And that sixty thousand Revolutionary Troops were in possession of the pass between Mexico & Vera Cruts [Cruz] 107 and that all Communication was intercepted.———Col. Bernard had received a letter from his Brother, an Eclesiastic, written near Mexico, stating that the Revolutionists had intercepted an express with dispatches from Chihuahua to Mexico—and that the Country round Mexico was alive with Troops going against it, to the number of Five hundred thousand at least, & that a great Majority of the People of Mexico were waiting, impatiently their approach to join them & that the Royal Troops in Mexico did not exceed Forty thousand. The deponent further states that the Colonels Manshack & Bernard had with them an intercepted letter written by [Nemesio] Salcedo the Ruler of Chihuahua 108 to Col. Lejion of Quaghuilla saying that as

106 The name Colonia was sometimes used instead of Nuevo Santander or the complete title Colonia del Nuevo Santander; the province was created in 1746. It was called the Colony of Nuevo Santander after 1749, when Escándon set forth to found colonies in that province.
107 After the arrest of Hidalgo and his party Rayón, who had been left in command of all revolutionists, retreated from Saltillo to Valladolid. He had been successful in his campaign and had closed the communications with Mexico City. Bancroft, History of Mexico, IV, 306-316, 328, 331.
108 Commandant-General of the Interior Provinces.
soon as his own affairs would admit of it he contemplated sending about six thousand Troops into the United States to take possession of the Territory of Orleans and proceed on to Baton Rouge & Pensacola and punish the Rascally Americans for what they had done in that quarter against his brother Copatriots; and that in a conversation between Col. Lepson and the Baron Bastrop on the subject of such an enterprise, Col. Lepson observed that with Six thousand of his Troops he could whip sixty thousand Americans; the Baron replied he would in such a case prefer being on the side of the sixty thousand Americans.

The Deponent further saith that he heard Col. Bernard say he had very important communications to make to the Government of the United States, both in writing & by word of Mouth.

The Deponent further saith that it was the opinion of Cols. Manshack & Bernard that Mexico was in the possession of the Revolutionists, and that the Europeans of Vera Crusts [Cruz] were making preparations to embark with their property on board of some English Vessels, who were laying there, as soon as they should hear of the fall of Mexico which was Momently expected.

Signed. —

John Garniere

Sworn to before me
Signed—John Sibley J.A. [Indian Agent]

The foregoing is a true Copy of the Original in my possession
Signed; John Sibley

103 Baron de Bastrop, who later befriended Moses and Stephen Austin in their colonizing enterprise, had appeared in Texas from Louisiana at the end of 1805, strongly protesting anti-American sentiments. He was favored by the Spanish officials during the years from 1804-1810, therefore his support of royalists in the revolution is easily explained. Hatcher, The Opening of Texas, 95-98, 121, 151, 174.