

Fromme Farm

By

Henry Elrod

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## Fromme Farm

Ever wondered where you live? Sure, you know your address, but what about the history of the place? The land under our feet has been here a long time. In Texas, if your place is like mine, some notable people have owned it before you.

Stephen Fuller Austin's Old Three Hundred, the original American colonists in the Mexican State of Texas, included a fellow named James Knight (Handbook of Texas, 2012a; Kubiak, 2012). The members of the 1821 Texas colony each received land through letters patent granted by Austin under the authority of the Mexican government. A league and a labor was generally the grant for a head of family. A vara was a Spanish measure of distance. Each vara is about 33 inches, so about 1,900 varas is equal to a mile, and 1.0 million square varas, a labor, is about 177.1 acres (Handbook of Texas, 2012b). A league was approximately 4,428 acres. Most of Austin's colony was on the lower Brazos River, in what are Brazoria and Fort Bend Counties today. There were 307 such grants made, including nine families qualified for two grants each, and not including Austin's personal grant. Knight got a share of land in that area.

Knight also had claims for land in Bexar County, at the head of the Leon Creek, about 20 miles northwest of San Antonio. Knight had been a soldier in the Texas Army that defeated Santa Ana at San Jacinto, and anyone who actually got into a battle received a warrant for 320 acres, half a section. Besides owning a lot of land, he ran a ferry across the Brazos, and operated a store in Fort Bend County. The letter patent was executed for President Mirabeau B. Lamar by Thos. Wm. Ward, Commissioner of the General Land Office. The patent described was based on the survey made for J. Knight under his Bounty Land Warrant. The text of the Letter Patent to G.

C. Hatch, as assignee of J. Knight (Letter Patent, 1841), and the text of Bounty Land Warrant, with the legal descriptions of the property are in the appendices to this article.

The Letter Patent was recorded in the deed records of Bexar County, at nine o'clock in the morning on March 22, 1847, by B. E. Edwards, Deputy Clerk of Commissioners Court, i.e., the County Clerk of Bexar County. The field notes from the survey, together with the Warrant, were recorded in Bexar County in July 1840, at Book C, Page 133. In general, the legal description of the property in the Bounty Land Warrant and that described in the Land patent are the same (Letter Patent, 1841).

Knight died in 1858 (Handbook of Texas, 2012a). We do not know why, but he sold or gave his rights to his 320 acres of bounty land in Bexar County to George Clifton Hatch. George Hatch was a character of his time (Guthrie, 2012). Like David Crocket, and Hatch's nephew Jim Bowie (Givens, 2012), Hatch had been a public official, a county clerk in Dyer County, Tennessee, but moved to Texas to join Sam Houston in 1836. He served in the Army of the Republic of Texas with Deaf Smith's unit at the Battle of San Jacinto. Hatch was a slave owner and cotton planter in San Patricio County, near Portland and Ingleside (today nearly suburbs of Corpus Christi.) In 1836, when he was 38, Hatch was sworn in as a citizen of the Republic of Texas by a Justice of the Peace in Bexar County (Affidavit, 1838). The text of the affidavit, also interesting reading, is in Appendix C. In 1842, Hatch was arrested in San Antonio by a Mexican General, imprisoned in Perote, Mexico, and then escaped and made his way back to Texas. Hatch and David Morgan were chained together when they made their escape. They got back to Point Isabel, near Brownsville, and caught a ship to New Orleans. After the Civil War, in which his

four sons fought, Hatch fled to British Honduras to avoid the loyalty oath. He returned to his farms near Ingleside in 1868.

In 1872 Hatch was murdered at Indian Point, near Portland where Nueces Bay and Corpus Christi Bay intersect, today the site of the Nueces Bay Bridge (Givens, 2012). Hatch was in his buggy returning from Corpus Christi. He was found at the north end of the Reef Road at Indian Point, with his pockets cut out and his horse gone. A man with Hatch's horse was chased by a posse into Mexico, where they killed the murderer. Happily for this story, in 1847 Hatch had conveyed his interest in the 320 acres in Bexar County, acquired through J. Knight's Bounty Patent, to Charles Kessler of Colorado County (Deed, 1847).

Charles Kessler was an early settler in Colorado County (Stein, 2012), along the Colorado River, in the town of Columbus. In the 1840s and early 1850s he was involved in various disputes and litigation with Welchmeyer and Zimmerscheid, over title to real property in Colorado County. At least one of these cases was decided by the Texas Supreme Court. Kessler, a recent immigrant from Germany, farmed and operated a saw mill powered by horses. Kessler also miss-spelled his name, from time to time using a single s, and other times using two. Kessler conveyed the Fromme Farm property to Henry Allen November 10, 1848 (Deed, 1848).

In August of 1860, Henry Allen, residing in Camden, New Jersey, conveyed the property to William Friedrich (Deed, 1860). Friedrich, a German immigrant, was about 38 years old in 1860 (Adam, 2005). He was a surveyor in Comal County and Bexar County in 1860, and at various times, Friedrich apparently owned large tracts in and around Boerne. In December of 1860, W. Friedrich drew an ownership map of the surveys in northwest Bexar County, including the land that would become Fromme's farm. The deed from Henry Allen to William Friedrich

was dated June 28, 1860, at Camden County, New Jersey, and was recorded August 28, 1860 at Book S1, Page 391, at 5:00 PM, Deed Records, Bexar County, Texas.

Friedrich entered the gunpowder manufacturing business at the beginning of the Civil War. By 1867, Friedrich was living with a Dr. Herff in the Boerne area. We know the Herff name for the road and farm property next to and part of the Cibilo Wilderness Center, but he was also a big deal in San Antonio politics. As is a common experience in the explosives industry (Chandler & Salsbury, 1971) the factory blew up in 1868, killing thirteen workers and seriously burning Friedrich. Three days after the explosion, under the care of Dr. Herff, William Friedrich died of his burns.

Six years before his death, Friedrich executed a deed for the old Knight property to J. G. Petmecky and his wife, Johanna Petmecky (Deed, 1860). Dated August 28, 1860, and filed for record in the office of Sam S. Smith, Clerk of the County Court of Bexar August 28, 1860, the deed was recorded in Book S1, Page 391, Deed Records, Bexar County, but not until October 12, 1860. Joseph Gottfried Petmecky was a Bohemian immigrant who came to Texas in 1845. His parents, Jacob and Anna, immigrated to Nassau in the Bahamas, but Joseph came to Texas by ship from Antwerp to Galveston. He opened a gunsmith shop in Austin in 1853, and moved to San Antonio by 1870.

Daniel Fromme immigrated to Texas, specifically to the New Braunfels, before 1846. German settlers set up the first camp in what would be New Braunfels in March of 1845 (Lee & Goff, 2010). In 1846 heavy rains flooded the area, and disease broke out among new settlers. The disease spread to New Braunfels, and 348 people died in the epidemic that followed, leaving at least 60 orphans, including Daniel Fromme. Louis Ervendberg, a local minister of the German

Protestant Church, obtained some land, built rudimentary facilities, and housed the orphans. Four years later, by 1850, only about a dozen or so orphans remained without new families, again including orphan Daniel Fromme (Family Search, 2012b). The September 2, 1850 census record for Comal Town, Comal County, Texas, shows Danl Fromme living at the orphan asylum. The entry shows him as a male who attended school during the year, and who was born in Germany. Comal Town was the part of New Braunfels generally west and south of the Comal River, later merged into New Braunfels (Haas, 2012). The original orphanage building, a small house, stands today, about 3 miles north of New Braunfels on the Guadalupe River.

The next record of Daniel Fromme is the 1860 census, where he is listed in New Braunfels, Comal County, as a 17 year old servant from Saxony, living in the house of Anton Preper (Family Search, 2012c). Preper was a butcher from Prussia. The census entry showed that Daniel had personal property valued at \$600. In Texas in 1850 a farm laborer could make around \$12 per month (Lebergott, 1960), so it is unlikely Dan saved \$600 from his servant's wages. Perhaps, like many of the German families that immigrated to Texas in the 1840s, Daniel's family may have brought money with them. As an orphan, he could have inherited the personal property previously belonging to his parents.

In April of 1861, the American Civil War began. Although there was some Union support in the German communities of Texas (Folsom, 2012), Dan Fromme enlisted in Third Infantry (First Infantry, Lockett's Regiment) (Family Search, 2012a). The Third, which was raised in the fall of 1861, included 648 men recruited in Austin and San Antonio. Philip Lockett was a physician from Virginia who had declined an appointment to West Point. In the 1840s he was surgeon to Ford's company of the Texas Rangers (Cutrer, 2012). When the war began, he was

appointed Quartermaster General for Texas, on the staff of Earl Van Dorn, Commander of the Department of Texas. In the fall of 1861 Luckett was elected Colonel of the Third Texas Infantry. The unit saw little or no action, being stationed at various points along the Texas coast to protect supplies and shipping. At the end of the war, with General Kirby Smith in command, the unit surrendered at Galveston, whereupon it was ordered to Hempstead and disbanded. Luckett served with several prominent Texans, including Lt. William Neal who was the Mayor of Brownsville, and Charles A. Schreiner from Kerr County.

On November 1, 1865, Daniel Fromme bought 284 ½ acres of the Petmucky's original 320 acres at the head of the Leon Creek, some 19 miles northwest of San Antonio, as described in the chain of deeds from G. C. Hatch, assignee of J. Knight (Deed, 1865). He paid Joseph and Johanna Petmecky a total of \$1,400 for the property: \$1,000 recited in the deed (Deed, 1865) plus three notes secured by a deed of trust (Deed of Trust, 1865). The first note, for \$150 was due one year from the execution date of November 1, 1865; the second note for \$150 was due two years from date; the third note, for \$100, was due three years from the date of execution. All three notes included interest at 10% per year.

Meanwhile , Anton Beyer, a German woolen manufacturer, had immigrated from Bohemia in 1841 (Brown, 1880). The Beyer family owned property along the Cibolo Creek near Boerne, and along the Leon Creek, about seven miles south of Boerne (Family Search, 2012c), so when Daniel Fromme returned from the war and bought his farm in 1865, he would have found the Beyer family as near-by neighbors. Anton Beyer's daughter, Bertha Beyer, married Daniel Fromme on December 10, 1870, in Kendall County.

The Fromme family eventually included eight children, of which five survived to adulthood (Family Search, 2012d). The family raised cattle and horses on the Fromme Farm. Per the tax rolls there were 18 head of cattle in 1874 and 30 cattle and 4 horses in 1883 (Bexar County, 2012). In 1874 Daniel Fromme registered his pee-vee-bar brand as three characters in a stack, from top to bottom a capital P, a capital V, and a bar (Brand, 1874). A picture of the brand registration is in Appendix D.

Daniel Fromme died in May of 1923, and was buried in a family plot on the eastern border of Fromme Farm, at the head of the Leon Creek. The unregistered cemetery is visible from Boerne Glen, on the inside of the curve as the road heads north and east. It is roughly in the middle of the eastern border of the farm, which is a north-south line. Thus, when the cemetery is viewed from the road, observer facing east, the old farm is entirely behind the observer. The Fromme Farm property today is occupied by the north-western parts of the Country Bend subdivision, the eighty-acre horse farm to the west of and north of Boerne Forest, and across on the west side of Boerne Stage Road, by the Fenstermaker property.

## Appendix A

No. 307. In the name of the Republic of Texas, No. 307

To all whom these presents shall come know ye, I, Mirabeau B. Lamar, President of the Republic aforesaid, by virtue of the power vested in me by law, and in accordance with the Statutes of said Republic, in such case and provided do by these presents grant to G. C. Hatch, assignee of J. Knight, his heirs and assigns forever Three Hundred and Twenty acres of Land, situated and described as follows:

In Bexar County, Number 35, in section No. 5, on the waters of the Leon, a branch of the Medina, and about 19 miles north west of the town of San Antonio. Beginning at a stake set for the north west corner of Survey No. 34, Section No. 5, from which a Live Oak 20 inches in diameter bears north  $45^{\circ}15'$  East 16 varas. And a Live Oak 12 inches in diameter bears South  $77^{\circ}$  East 20 varas. Thence west at 600 varas an old road at 750 varas a branch at 1344, the south west corner a live oak 16 inches in diameter, from which a live oak 11 inches in diameter bears North  $64\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  East four varas, and a Live Oak 10 inches in diameter bears North  $13\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  East.

Thence north at 900 varas opposite a large spring at 100 varas to the right, at thirteen hundred and forty four varas, the north west corner a stake from which a Post Oak 12 inches in diameter bears south  $55\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  West 25  $\frac{1}{2}$  varas and a Post Oak 15 inches in diameter bears north  $65\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  East 30 varas. Thence East at 200 varas a corner of branch and old road, at one thousand three hundred and forty four varas, a stake and mound for the northeast corner. Thence South One thousand three hundred and forty four varas to the beginning corner. All bearings marked thus ///+.

Hereby relinquishing to him the said G. C. Hatch, and his heirs and assigns forever, all the right and title, in and to said Land, heretofore held and possessed by the government of said Republic, and hereby issue this letter patent for the same.

In testimony whereof, I have caused the great seal of the Republic to be affixed as well as the seal of the General Land Office.

Done at the City of Austin, on the ninth day of December, One thousand eight hundred and forty one, and the Year of Independence of said Republic the sixth.

Appendix B, The Bounty Warrant

No. 2469    Republic of Texas    320 Acres

Know All Men to Whom These Presents Shall Come:

That J. Knight, having served faithfully and honorably for the term of Three Months from the Thirteenth day of July until the Thirteenth day of October 1836 and having been honorably discharged from the Army is entitled to Three hundred & twenty Acres Bounty Land, for this is his Certificate.

And the said J. Knight's assignee G. C. Hatch is entitled to hold said Land, or to sell, alienate, convey and donate the same, and to exercise all rights of ownership over it.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, at the City of Houston this 20th day of March 1838.

Approved August 13th, 1840  
Charles Mason  
C.C. & Acting Secretary of War

B. T. Archer  
Scty of War

## Appendix C

Republic of Texas

County of Bexar.

Be it known that on the 29th day of March, one thousand eight hundred and thirty eight, before me, John McCreary, a Justice of the Peace in and for said county, personally appeared George C. Hatch, a native of the State of North Carolina in the United States, but for the last eight or ten years a citizen of said States in the State of Tennessee; a married man, with a family, and thirty eight years of age; and having satisfactorily proved that he the said George C. Hatch has been a resident of Texas for more than the six months last past, the oath of citizenship prescribed by the constitution was duly administered to him and he hath hereunto placed his signature--Geo. C. Hatch.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal the day and date above written.

John McCreary (Seal)

Republic of Texas

County of Bexar

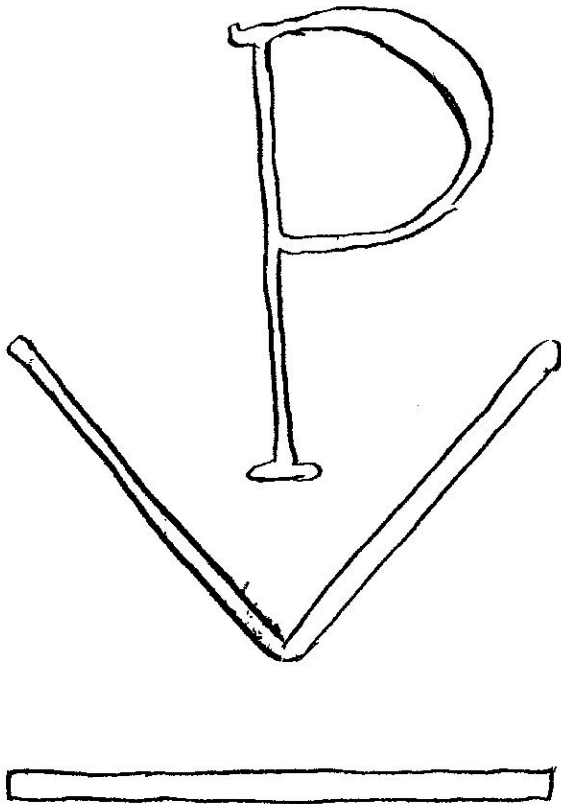
I, John W. Smith, Clerk of the County Court for said county, do hereby certify that the above named John McCreary, whose signature appears as above, is a Justice of the Peace for said county, and as such due faith and credit should be given to his acts. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of office this herewith day of March, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.

Jno. W. Smith, C.C.C.

Recorded 29th March 1838.



Appendix D



*On left hip of  
cattle & horses*

**THE STATE OF TEXAS,**  
County of Bexar.

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the marks and brand of Daniel Fromme  
residing Head of the Lion Creek, Bexar Co.  
are as follows, to wit: Brand thus P ear marks under bit  
and over bit & smooth crop in left ear.

as per margin, being the only marks and brand claimed by him  
and used in the marking and branding of horses & cattle stock and which he this day  
presents for record in the office of the Clerk of the District Court of said county in accordance  
with the law regulating the recording of marks and brands.

Acknowledged and subscribed before me, at office, in Daniel Fromme.  
San Antonio, this 13th day of July  
A. D. 1874, [Signature] WKB  
Clerk D. C. B. Co.

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