

Part 1

The Trueheart – de la Garza House and Ranch - the Goeth Ranch of Bexar County, Texas©

James Lawrence Trueheart was born on August 12, 1815 in Henrico County, Virginia to George Washington Trueheart and Fanny Overton Trueheart. He was one of five sons and five daughters. James' grandparents were Daniel Trueheart and Mary Garland, daughter of Edward Garland from a French Huguenot family. Daniel Trueheart settled in the Chicahoming Swamp region of Virginia prior to 1750. His farm was called "Meadow Bridges." Daniel Trueheart's father was Aaron Trueheart, a Scotch Presbyterian minister who had sailed from England between 1720-1740 and settled in Virginia.¹

In 1838, James L. Trueheart, traveled to Texas with his brother John. John settled in Galveston and James came on to San Antonio where he became a prominent citizen. In January, he enlisted in the Spy Company of the Texas Rangers commanded by Capt. John "Jack" Coffee Hayes, He was discharged on May 10, 1841.² Trueheart was elected clerk of the district court on March 4, 1841. A \$5,000 bond was posted by Trueheart, F. L. Gray, Frances L. Paschal, Manuel Yturri Castillo, I. N. Seguin, J.D. Morris, and Lancelot Smithers.³

Subsequent to the fall of the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto, the Mexican government did not fully recognize the independence of Texas and continued to harass the Texans. San Antonio was the location of most of the fighting. Court sessions were routinely held in San Antonio in a low adobe building at the corner of Main Plaza and West Commerce. In September 1842, while Trueheart was performing his court clerk duties, a regiment of Mexican soldiers under General Adrian Woll entered the city. Trueheart along with other officials made their way to the top of the building and fired upon the soldiers. James Trueheart, John Twohig, Samuel Maverick and Ludovic Colquhoun were taken prisoners. Twohig later escaped by disguising himself as a priest, but the other three men were transported as prisoners to Castle Perote in the state of Puebla, Mexico. Trueheart was incarcerated for two years. Upon release from prison, Trueheart reached Veracruz on his way back to Texas on March 29, 1844. In

¹ Draft, National Register Nomination for the James L. Trueheart house, prepared by Imogen Cooper, 2009.

² "Muster Roll of a Spy Company of the Texas Ranger, in 1841," *Frontier Times*, Vol. 4 #5, Feb. 1927

³ Bexar County Deed Record, Book A2: pgs 392-393.

October 1846 he was elected county tax assessor and collector and by September 1848, he was again acting as district clerk. During the period he was held in the Perote Prison he had kept a diary. The diary, ***The Perote Prisoner, Being the Diary of James Trueheart***, was eventually published by the Naylor Press in 1934, having been edited by Frederick C. Chabot.^{4 5}

After returning to San Antonio, Trueheart became involved in real estate activities representing eastern interests in San Antonio. He also continued to be involved in government service. He was appointed as the first federal postmaster on May 22, 1846 and held this office until July 7, 1847.⁶ He was elected unanimously to the office as county assessor and collector of taxes in October 1846, and in 1848 became county clerk, an office he held until 1850. Years later James L. Trueheart also served in Company A Cavalry, 4th Battalion under Captain J.O. Adams⁷ and then served in the Texas Reserve Corps of the Confederate States of America.⁸ In the 1879 San Antonio City Directories and the *San Antonio Daily Express*, there are numerous listings and advertisements placed by James L. Trueheart as “land agent, claim agent and notary public.” The office address is given as South Travis between St. Mary’s and Navarro.

Despite all of his business and professional interests, Trueheart apparently had time for a social life. On February 15, 1848, he and his soon-to-be bride, Petra Margarita de la Garza, applied for a marriage license.⁹

Petra Margarita was the daughter of Maria Josefa Menchaca and Jose Antonio de la Garza. The De La Garza’s were a very prominent real estate and banking family in San Antonio with ties to the Canary Islanders. Jose de la Garza (May 31, 1776-1851?) had received extensive land holdings in Bexar County which included over 8,800 acres of land. He was also the first person to coin money in Texas. On one side of the coin were his initials, “JAG,” and the date 1818. On

⁴ Chabot, Frederick C., *A Twentieth Century of Southwest Texas*, Vol. 2, pgs. 477-478. Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, c1907.

⁵ “Perote Prisoners New Chabot Book,” San Antonio Express, 20 May 1934. “Diary of James L. Trueheart, Last to Leave Mexican Castle, Included.”

⁶ *Appointments of U.S. Postmaster 1846-1855*, Vol 19, Ancestry.com

⁷ Trueheart enlisted on August 17, 1863 in Company A Cavalry, 4th Battalion as a 1st Lieutenant. Ancestry.com Muster Roll Index Cards, 1838-1900 [data on-line], Provo, Utah, USA, Ancestry.com Operations Inc. 2011.

⁸ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011. U.S., Confederate Soldiers Compiled Service Records, 1861-1865 provided by Fold3 © Copyright 2011.

⁹ Bexar County Marriage Book A, p.150, Certificate #298.

the other side was a single star. It has been speculated that this may have inspired the “lone star,” which later became a Texas symbol. The small coins were worth the equivalent of a nickel. They were minted in the Garza home located in the area of Houston and Soledad Streets. Today there is a historical marker placed at the site.

As a result of James Trueheart’s marriage to Petra Margarita de la Garza, he became the owner of a large tract of land on the San Antonio River on which was located the San Francisco de la Espada Mission. This land had been part of the original grant from the King of Spain to the Garza family.¹⁰

James Trueheart improved the land, dug out an old irrigation ditch on the property that had fallen into disuse and thus introduced modern irrigation to the area. He placed a number of families on the property in small family plots and began the cultivation of the lands, carrying on farming operations for a long period of time. Vestiges of the old irrigation ditch on the property are visible today both on the ground as well as from an aerial view. (See photo of the old irrigation ditch in this Exhibit)

In 1848 Trueheart built a two-story house of rock on the land which was the first two-story house on ranch land in this part of the state. The house was referred to as “Casa Vieja” [“Old House”]. The house was built with thick walls of local native limestone, plastered on the inside, stuccoed on the outside. There were two main rooms on each floor. The living room and kitchen were on the first floor and two bedrooms on the second floor. Each of the first floor rooms had a fireplace of similar design. The boxed cornices on the roof were quite unique for the time period. Two dome shaped rock kilns were located about four hundred yards from the house where lime was made during the construction of the house. There was also a picturesque stone archway built at the same time that spanned a creek enabling the builders to carry the lime from the kilns to the house.¹¹

There are records of numerous land transactions involving James Trueheart in the Bexar County Deed Records. One example is on December 5, 1847, James Trueheart purchased property from Jose Antonio de la Garza described as a “branch ditch of the Acequia Madre” for \$450. “Said land is entitled to dula y media or thirty-six hours of

¹⁰ Texas General Land Office, Survey: Jose Antonio de la Garza, Abstract 3, File # SC00131:28, Patent #61, Patent Volume #41, 8856.8 acres.

¹¹ This stone archway was located in 2008 by Kay Hindes, City Archaeologist and by Joanna Parrish – see photo accompanying this exhibit; also see HABS photo.

water from the Acequia Madre.” The location was on the west bank of the Acequia Madre in the upper corner three quarters of a mile above the Alamo Fort with the south boundary being the property of the heirs of Manuel Ximenes. The sale was made for \$50.00.¹² Another example is that of James L. Trueheart purchasing on April 5, 1853 from Antonio Garza (sibling to Margarita), an undivided ninth part of a parcel opposite the Mission Espada which had been granted to Jose Antonio de la Garza,(father of Antonio and Margarita). The sale price was \$75.00.¹³

James Trueheart and Jose Antonio de la Garza apparently engaged in joint real estate ventures. Land sales in the 1890’s, after the death of both men, refer to the Trueheart and Garza subdivision which appear to be located in the vicinity of Broadway and Josephine Streets.

James Trueheart was the acting executor of the will of Jose Antonio de la Garza. A will was written on 4/13/1837 with a codicil being added on 5/27/1837. A distribution of land occurred on May 15, 1851.¹⁴

James Trueheart and his second wife: Margarita had five sons and one daughter: James Lawrence Trueheart, Jr.(1854-1926); John Overton Trueheart (1855-1936); Edward Garland Truehart (1850-1949); Henry Martin “George” Trueheart (1866-1929); twin to George, Jose Anthony Rafael Trueheart (1866-1940); and Frances Overton Trueheart (1861-1933). James L. Trueheart died on November 30, 1882 and is buried in San Fernando Cemetery #1. There is a large Trueheart monument as well as individual tombstones for family members. On January 18, 1883, the children, James, Jr., John, Edward and Fannie, released all claims on their inheritance from their father to their mother, Margarita.¹⁵

Both the Trueheart and the De La Garza families were members of the Catholic Church with many family members attending St. Patrick’s Church. Margarita’s oldest sister, Rudecinda, entered the Ursuline Convent, took the name of Sister Mary Magdalena and rose to the position of Mother Superior.

At the death of Margarita de la Garza Trueheart, c1899, her children took over the responsibility of three promissory notes that she owed to

¹² Bexar County Deed Records, Book F2, pgs 459-461.

¹³ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 12, pgs 495-496.

¹⁴ Bexar County Deed Records, Book B I, pgs 497-498.

¹⁵ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 21, p.458.

Ursuline Academy.¹⁶ The notes had been initiated in 1890, 1892 and 1895 and totaled \$2,504.00. As security for payment, the children, James, John, George (H.M.) Antonio, Edward and Fannie and her husband, Antonio Canales put up as collateral four parcels of their property on July 24, 1899. This property included the James and Margarita Trueheart ranch in southern Bexar County (Blue Wing Road) which encompassed 759 acres at the fork of the Medina and San Antonio Rivers. The second property was described as being a house and lot in the City on the west side of North Flores about 175 feet north of West Houston in City Block 19 bounded by the old Cassiano homestead. The third property was described as Lot 8 in City Block #408 on the north side of Travis Street between St. Mary's and Navarro Street. The fourth property was described as Lot #8 in City Block #564 on the west side of Live Oak Street near Dawson Street. The terms of the agreement was that the money was to be repaid with interest as well as 10% fee to the agent within one year from the settlement of the estate of Margarita G. Trueheart. At the time this document was signed, James, John and George were all in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Antonio R. Trueheart was in Mexico City and Fannie Trueheart and her husband, Antonio Canales were in Webb County, TX. The notes were fully paid in May 1902 and the property was subsequently transferred back to the family members.¹⁷

One can only speculate why Margarita owed so much money to the Ursulines. In the 1890's there was an economic depression that in retrospect rivaled the depression of the 1930's. In some rural agricultural areas, the aspects of the depression began as early as the 1880's. It is possible that Margarita as well as her family had serious financial problems. Since her husband, James Trueheart had died in 1882, she may have been in need of money on which to live and did not want to ask her children for assistance. Perhaps she felt it was easier to ask for a loan from the Sisters at the Ursuline Academy where her sister had been Mother Superior.

With the death of Margarita de la Garza Trueheart in 1899, her children began the process of probating the M.G. Trueheart Estate. The court ordered that the large portions of the property be sold. On May 8, 1902, Edward G. Trueheart, as executor of the estate, sold 272 ½ acres of the Trueheart ranch, out of the original Jose Antonio de la Garza survey to the San Antonio Hunting and Fishing Association. The sale price was \$7,800.

¹⁶ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 183, p.215.

¹⁷ Bexar County Deed Records, Book 206 p.329.

Trueheart-de la Garza House and Ranch – Goeth Ranch – Part 1

(Please see Part 2 for a continuation – Goeth Ranch)

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