

## TEXAS HEROES DAY

### *Honoring Texas Military, Past and Present*

The Daughters of the Republic of Texas will recognize Texas military heroes on September 18 with Texas Heroes Day. The DRT has designated the day to honor and preserve the memory of the volunteer soldiers who died defending the Republic of Texas and her independence, and to pay tribute to the men and women of the military, both past and present, who serve Texas. Special emphasis is placed on honoring those of the 1842 Dawson Massacre and Mier Expedition.

September 18 is a day of multiple significance in Texas History. Though Texas had won her independence in 1836, there was constant fear of Mexican invasion. In 1842, the Mexican army staged several raiding expeditions into Texas, and had captured San Antonio. Answering the call for help, Nicholas Dawson led a group of men, most from Fayette County, to fight. On September 18, 1842, thirty-six of these volunteer Texan soldiers were killed on the field of battle in the Dawson Massacre. The battle took place near Salado Creek, a few miles northeast of San Antonio. Three survivors escaped to tell the story, and fifteen others were taken prisoner by Mexican soldiers. The captured prisoners were marched to Perote Prison in Veracruz, Mexico, and of these men, only nine survived to return to Texas.

To retaliate against the Mexican raids, Texas launched a military expedition against Mexican border towns in November 1842. The expedition was ordered to disband in December, but many refused the order, and about three hundred men set out to avenge the Dawson Massacre. They would become known as the Mier Expedition. Crossing the border into the town of Mier, they fought a bloody battle, exhausted their supplies, and had to surrender. They were treated as privateers and initially sentenced to death by Santa Anna. After foreign diplomats interceded and Santa Anna promised mercy, he modified his order for the decimation of the prisoners, or the execution of every tenth man. The "Black Beans of Death" lottery decided the fate of the prisoners. 159 white beans and 17 black beans were placed in a jar. Each of the 176 men was forced to draw from the jar, and those who drew the black beans were executed at dusk that day. The remaining prisoners were put to work; some escaped, some died, and of those left, all had been released by September 1844.

In 1847, a regiment of Texas Rangers was stationed along the Rio Grande following a border dispute between the U.S. and Mexico. The group, which included a white bean survivor, Lt. John Dusenberry, risked their lives to cross the border and retrieve the bones of the executed Mier Expedition soldiers. They brought the bones in four boxes to Fayette County for their final resting place, to honor the man who drew the first black bean, Fayette County native William Eastland. Fayette County citizens were then inspired to retrieve the remains of the Dawson Massacre soldiers, who were buried on the banks of Salado Creek.

On September 18, 1848, the remains of those who died in the Dawson Massacre, Perote Prison, and others who drew the "Black Beans of Death" in the Mier Expedition were buried at Monument Hill, a site in Fayette County overlooking the Colorado River. Sam Houston and other dignitaries were among more than 1,000 people who attended the ceremony, where the remains were buried with full military honors.

For more than 160 years, descendants of these brave Texans have returned to Monument Hill on the Saturday closest to September 18 to honor these fallen heroes and commemorate the anniversary of their loss and burial. Since 2005, Monument Hill State Historic Site in LaGrange has celebrated Texas Heroes Day on the weekend closest to September 18. The annual celebration has grown with the efforts of the Texas Parks personnel, supported by The Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Monument Hill Chapter, and Sons of the Republic of Texas. Activities during the celebration now include artisan demonstrations, re-enactors, and musicians. The Monument Hill Historic Site is located one mile south of La Grange, Texas near U.S. Highway 77. For more information, call (979) 968-5658 or visit the Texas Parks website: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/calendar/texas-heroes-day-1>.

Texas Heroes Day is one of twelve Texas Honor Days celebrated by The Daughters of the Republic of Texas. Others include Mirabeau B. Lamar Day, January 26; Texas Statehood Day, February 19; Texas Independence & Flag Day, March 2; Alamo Heroes Day, March 6; Goliad Heroes Day, March 27; Texas History Month, March 1-31; San Jacinto Day, April 21; Texian Navy Day, 3rd Saturday in September; Gonzales Day, October 2; Stephen F. Austin's Birthday, November 3; and The DRT Founder's Day, November 6. For more information about Texas Honor Days, visit the DRT website: [www.drinfo.org](http://www.drinfo.org).