

## JAMES REILY

(1811-1864)

James Reily, lawyer, diplomat, legislator, and Confederate Army officer, was born in Hamilton, Ohio, on July 3, 1811, the second of five children of John and Nancy (Hunter) Reily. He had an excellent secondary education and received a bachelor's degree in 1829 from Miami University, where his father was a trustee. He then began the study of law at Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky.

Reily married Ellen Hart Ross, a grandniece of Henry Clay, in Lexington on March 4, 1834. At about the same time he was converted from the Presbyterian to the Episcopal faith. He was also a Mason.

After his admission to the bar, he established a practice at Vicksburg, Mississippi, during the summer of 1835, and there his son John was born. Sometime after March 2, 1836, he moved to Texas, where he received a head right of 1,280 acres. He settled his family in Nacogdoches and served as a major in the Army of the Republic of Texas and aide-de-camp to Thomas J. Rusk.

By January 1838 Reily had become Rusk's law partner, and when Rusk was elected chief justice of the state Supreme Court, they moved their offices to Houston, the capital of the republic. This partnership continued until the summer of 1839, when Reily went into partnership with James Love. About this time Reily served as captain of a volunteer infantry company, the Milam Guards. That year he was appointed by President Mirabeau B. Lamar to sell \$1 million in Texas government bonds in New Orleans but was unsuccessful. In 1840 Reily was nominated by Lamar for district attorney of the Fifth Judicial District, but opposition from the Senate led to a withdrawal of the nomination. Reily represented Harris County in the House of Representatives of the Fifth Congress of the republic, 1840-41, and was appointed by Sam Houston as chargé d'affaires for the republic in Washington, D.C., where he arrived on March 8, 1842. He negotiated with secretary of state Daniel Webster a treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation, which the United States Senate failed to ratify. Although Houston reappointed him to the same post, Reily's confirmation failed because of his outspoken opposition to annexation. During the Mexican War Reily commanded a Texas regiment. On May 6, 1852, he served as chairman of the

state Whig party convention but soon thereafter broke with the party because its presidential nominee, Winfield Scott, opposed slavery. Reily was elected to the House of the Fifth Texas Legislature, 1853-54, as a Democrat and later, under the administration of James Buchanan, was named United States consul to St. Petersburg. He arrived in the Russian capital on August 6, 1856, but, finding the climate not to his liking and the cost of living too high, departed on August 23 and resigned from London on September 23.

Reily was an ardent secessionist. On August 20, 1861, he accepted a commission as colonel of the Fourth Texas Mounted Volunteers. This regiment served in Gen. Henry H. Sibley's Arizona Brigade with Lt. Col. William Read Scurry as its second in command. Reily's first assignment was a diplomatic mission to Chihuahua and Sonora from January through April 1862, and thus he missed his regiment's involvement in the battles of Valverde and Glorieta. His son John, however, served in those conflicts as first lieutenant and commander of the artillery of his father's regiment. Reily rejoined his regiment and was killed in action at the battle of Camp Bisland on Bayou Teche near Franklin, Louisiana, on April 14, 1864.

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