

WILLIAM READ SCURRY

(1821-1864)

William Read Scurry, public official and army officer, was born in Gallatin, Tennessee, on February 10, 1821, the son of Thomas J. and Catherine (Bledsoe) Scurry. He arrived in Texas on June 20, 1839, and was issued a third-class land grant by the San Augustine Commissioners Board in January 1840. He was licensed to practice law before he was twenty-one and appointed district attorney of the fifth judicial district in 1841. "Young Scurry is appointed District attorney," Adolphus Sterne wrote in his diary, "*bad appointment*. I respect the young man but will not do for that very, very, very responsible office." Scurry became aide-de-camp to Thomas Jefferson Rusk in 1842 and represented Red River County in the Ninth Congress of the Republic of Texas in 1844 and 1845. As a member of the House of Representatives in 1845, Scurry was energetic and effective in his support of the annexation of Texas to the United States. During the Mexican War he enlisted as a private in Col. George T. Wood's Second Regiment, Texas Mounted Volunteers, and was promoted to major on July 4, 1846. After the war he practiced law in Clinton and for a time was the owner and editor, with Joseph Wade Hampton, of the *Austin State Gazette*, which he sold in 1854. In 1856 Scurry and John J. Linn were Victoria County delegates to the state Democratic nominating convention in Austin.

After representing Victoria, DeWitt, Jackson, and Calhoun counties in the Secession Convention, Scurry entered Confederate service in July 1861 as the lieutenant colonel of the Fourth Texas Cavalry and greatly distinguished himself during the Confederate invasion of New Mexico while commanding the Confederate forces at the battle of Glorieta. He was promoted to colonel on March 28, 1862, and to brigadier general on September 12, 1862, and played a vital role in the Confederate recapture of Galveston on January 1, 1863. When he was assigned to command the Third Brigade of Walker's Texas Division in October 1863, Capt. E. P. Petty wrote, "Genl. Scurry has been assigned to our command in place of Genl. McCulloch-He has reached here and assumed command. I am well pleased with him. I knew him well in Texas. He is a fighter and those who follow him will go to the Cannon's mouth." Scurry commanded the Third Brigade at the battles of Mansfield

and Pleasant Hill in April 1864 and was immediately transferred with his command to Arkansas to help to repel the wing of the federal army commanded by Frederick Steele, then marching toward Northeast Texas. Scurry was wounded at the battle of Jenkins Ferry, on April 30, 1864, but refused to be carried to the rear. A federal attack overran the place where he lay, and for two hours his wound was unattended. When his brigade regained the field he asked, "Have we whipped them?" On being told that the battle was won, Scurry replied, "Now take me to a house where I can be made comfortable and die easy." He was buried in the State Cemetery at Austin in May 1864. Lieutenant Governor Fletcher S. Stockdale delivered the funeral oration, and after the war the state erected a thirteen-foot-high white marble shaft over his grave. Scurry was married to Janette (Jeannitte) B. Sutton on December 17, 1846; the couple had seven children. He was the brother of Richardson A. Scurry and the uncle of Thomas Scurry. Scurry County is named in his honor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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