

HOUSTON, TX CHRON 8/31/86

LONE STAR LEGACY

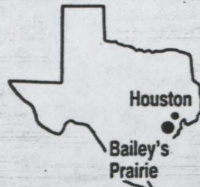
By Mike Blakely

Bailey's ghost

They say the ghost of Brit Bailey first appeared in 1836, four years after his death. His spectral image floated above his death bed and terrified the new owners of his homestead. In the 1850s "Bailey's Light" first appeared. It rose from the odd grave at the prairie's edge. Once a horseman chased it all night but couldn't close the distance.

"Old Uncle Bubba," the former slave servant of Brit Bailey, said the ghost-light would appear every seven years.

In 1939 someone reported seeing the glowing orb — basketball-sized — hovering in the trees near Bailey's Prairie. In 1946 it showed up again in the same spot. Someone saw it



from the highway in 1953 and again in 1960. If you subscribe to Uncle Bubba's rule of seven, Bailey's light should rise again in 1988, five miles west of Angleton on Highway 35.

Brit Bailey came to Texas from Kentucky in 1821 — two years before Stephen F. Austin's first colonists arrived. Austin didn't recognize Bailey's claim to his homestead along the lower Brazos and gave the land to another settler. Kentucky had convicted Bailey of counterfeiting and Austin wanted him out of the colony. Of course, Brit Bailey refused to go.

Austin went to Bailey's Prairie personally to evict the squatter but backed down from the muzzle of Bailey's rifle.

"Is it not a fact that you once served a term in the Kentucky penitentiary?" the colonizer demanded.

"Taint that I'm ashamed of," answered Bailey. "It's the term I served in the Kentucky Legislature which sets heavy on my conscience."

Austin never did get along with Bailey but finally granted him legal claim to his league

of land in 1824. Austin also respected Bailey's ability to parley with the local Indians. "Always be friendly, but never back up," was Bailey's credo. He served the colony as an Indian fighter in the 1824 Battle of Jones Creek against the Karankawas and also fought in the 1832 Battle of Velasco, the first blood-letting between Anglo settlers and Mexican troops.

A few months after that battle, Brit Bailey lay on his death bed with cholera. In his last days he dictated a will with some strange stipulations. Bailey's coffin went feet-first into an eight-foot shaft as requested. Instead of "There lies old Bailey," he wanted folks to say, "There stands old Bailey, facing west, rifle and pistols at his side."

Old Uncle Bubba tried to slip a jug of whiskey in the coffin at his master's secret request. But the widow Bailey found the libation and yanked it from the box. That's why, said Uncle Bubba, old Brit Bailey can't stand easy in his grave. He's still huntin' that jug of whiskey.



Scott
Parker
could it

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