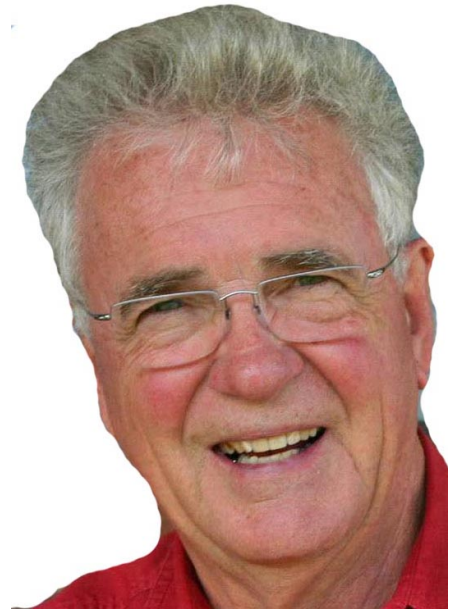


The Theory of Relativity & The Importance of Recording History

By D. A. Sharpe



This is a presentation given to the James Butler Bonham
Chapter of the
Daughters of the Republic of Texas
On Friday, April 14, 2017

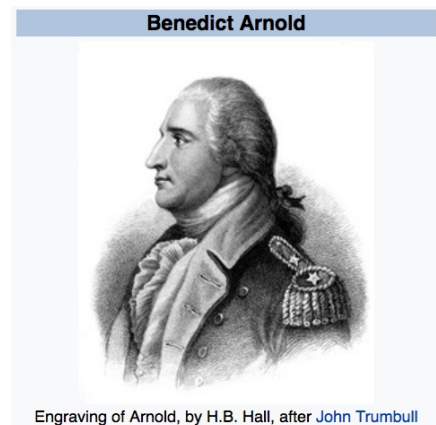
At the
Northway Christian Church
Fellowship Hall
7202 West Northwest Highway
Dallas, TX 75225

The Theory of Relativity & The Importance of Recording History

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Today, this [James Butler Bonham Chapter](#) of the DRT is recognizing the annual [San Jacinto Day](#), that day when we revere the Texians' winning of independence from Mexico in that famous 18-minute [Battle of San Jacinto](#) in the early morning of Thursday, April 21, 1836! We'll give a focus on that majestic event, while having it included in a vastly wider aspect of genealogy and history. We'll particularly focus on [Sam Houston](#)!

Genealogy is the pursuit of learning about to whom you are related in a blood or family sense, particularly peering back into the *distant past*. You can learn of the qualities, motivations, interests, skills and accomplished about people in your ancestry. Unfortunately, you can learn of the failures of ancestors as well, perhaps learning lessons from knowing of those failures. For example, famous military traitor [Benedict Arnold](#) (January 14, 1741 – June 14, 1801) is the great grandnephew of Freelove Arnold, the wife of Edward Pelham. Edward is the son of Herbert Pelham and his second wife, Elizabeth Bosvile. Herbert, who was the first Treasurer of Harvard College, is my 24th cousin, nine times removed. Herbert also is the 11th cousin, once removed, of Edward Southworth, the first husband of my seventh great grandmother, Alice Carpenter, on my Father's side of the family, which descends from her second marriage to Plymouth Colony Governor William Bradford. All in the Theory of Relativity!



Many people to whom I've asked about their genealogy have replied that they know very little. Perhaps they know not past their grandparents or great grandparents. Their knowledge of what they know, in many cases, is hearsay, handed down by verbal conveyance in conversations among family members.

That is why it is important to have family experiences recorded in written form where descendants can read and know more about their ancestors as time moves through in our lives. Virtually everyone in today's audience knows well the value in ancestral history being in written form.

Though I am not an educator, the things I hear about how history often is taught in recent decades has led me to feel that students are being short-changed in understanding history. The modern culture that urges being what is called politically correct hides, I feel, much of the reality that should be in the story. The motivation that we're supposed to keep religion out of the discussions in school instruction has dominated today's classrooms. These two evolvments from the understandings to what I was exposed in school some 60 years+ ago have led to sad viewpoints among young people today.

Some textbooks on American History begin in the Viet Nam War era! That war typically is portrayed in college classrooms in very negative terms, resulting in the veterans who had service in that war often not being respected.

This United States of America is a nation in the broad stage of the whole world. We display some of the most significant elements in national governance that has been known to humankind. Many of the founders of America read histories that whetted appetites for freedom of worship and of having a say in how people were governed. Many of the earliest history writings to which we were exposed are Biblical texts. Many early European scripts and books were created in the early A.D. years. Other writings were in oriental areas, with which I'm not familiar.

The dominance of kings and rulers in the areas of Europe from which most of us in this room came was crushing of the people in many instances. The discovery by Christopher Columbus in 1492 of the New World enticed the imaginations of many, many western world people over the next two or three centuries, rushing to America to what became the United States of America, areas of Mexico and, for a brief decade, the Republic of Texas.

This Spring, I've been reading what I consider the best American History book in my experience. It is a 375-page volume that included 1/8th of its pages to Texas History! Its title is, "The American Miracle." Its sub-title is, "Divine Providence in the Rise of the Republic." To me, what is unique in this 2016 publication is the author's presentation of the spiritual aspects in the lives of the historical characters described. At first, as a Christian man myself, the assumption was that the author, Michael Medved (a New York Times Bestseller) was a Christian man. Much to my surprise, I learned of his Orthodox Jewish faith! Even from his Jewish perspectives, he recognized that Christian people had spiritual motivations and guidance in the struggles and exploration of creating a new and a free land.

Michael Medved



Though many of us think of America as a Christian nation, there was a Jewish presence as well. Most famously was Haym Salomon, a Polish born Hebrew who immigrated to New York City during the American Revolution. He became a significant arranger of finances for the Army of General George Washington when so-called American government (not

yet formed) could not provide funding. He was a businessman and broker who finally died in 1785 and is interred at the Mikveh Israel Cemetery in Philadelphia. He became known as the primary financier during the American Revolutionary War. Michael Medved's focus on Texas history is centered on Sam Houston, a stalwart figure for all of us who know Texas history. He towers over highway passer-by Texans near Huntsville where a 67-foot statue of Sam Houston dominates. It sits on I-45, south of Huntsville. Access to visit the statue site needs be off US Hwy 75 to the east.



Sam Houston is the only man who has served as Governor of two different States in the United States (Tennessee and Texas), but also as the President of a nation, the Republic of Texas! Medved nails Houston from the beginning an attention-getting title of his chapter on Texas History, "'Big Drunk' and Lone Star Luck." Sam is described as a man with a broken marriage, and Indian Exile and a scrap that changed history!


What many do not realize is that Sam had a special relationship with Andrew Jackson, President of the United States 1829-1837, right in the middle of the life of the Republic. In fact, it is said that Jackson mentored Houston to a run for the Presidency of the United States. However, that never materialized. Having been a different President of two nations really would have been a feather in anyone's cap!



Sam Houston





Santa Anna in a Mexican military uniform 

A significant portion of Texas independence days' efforts are highlighted in Medved's book. There appeared a haphazardness in Houston's military leadership, particularly on the run east, after Mexico's [General Santa Anna](#) had a devastating victory over Texians at the Alamo. Santa Anna was President of Mexico as well, a young nation that had itself only gained independence from Spain only in 1820. Santa Anna chased Houston's troops over to east Texas. It was characterized as "[The Runaway Scrape](#)." The Mexicans camped overnight at a spot in present day eastern Harris County.

Houston prepared his troops for a sneak attack in the early dawn hours of Thursday, April 21, 1836. The quickness of the attack caught the Mexicans so off guard that the battle lasted only a quick 18 minutes, one of the shortest significant battles in all human history!

It is said that a contributing factor was that Santa Anna was delayed in getting into his fighting uniform, out of his tent, and on to the battlefield. Why the delay? It is said that he was indulging himself. as many self-assured military personalities were known to do. A young lady was keeping company with him overnight in the tent, it could be that he had too much to bare to become battle-prepared! This artist's rendering seems to be in a tent!



Legend has it that the young lady's name is Emily Morgan. As if to publically represent an "in your face" symbol, the hotel in downtown San Antonio, next door to the defeated Alamo is named the Emily Morgan Hotel, built in 1924! Legend also has it that this same Emily Morgan is the person in mind in the song entitled, "The Yellow Rose of Texas."

The Battle of San Jacinto did not establish Texas' immediate independence. Santa Anna, the President of Mexico, was captured and surrendered the following day (April 22), and was held as a prisoner of war. Three weeks later, he signed the peace treaty that dictated that the Mexican army leave the region, paving the way for the Republic of Texas to become an independent country. These treaties did not specifically recognize Texas as a sovereign nation, but stipulated that Santa Anna was to lobby for such recognition in Mexico City. Sam Houston became a national celebrity, and the Texans' rallying cries from events of the war, "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!," became etched into Texan history and legend.

Even though Texas functioned as an independent nation 1836-1846, Mexico's refusal to recognize that independence was not settled until the Mexican American War, (1846-1848). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo declared Mexico's recognition of U.S. sovereignty over Texas and other territories, primarily California of significance, and nearly all of what today is the American Southwest, effective May 30, 1848. The United States suffered 25,000 dead in that battle, whereas Mexico suffered only 13,300.

Winfield Scott



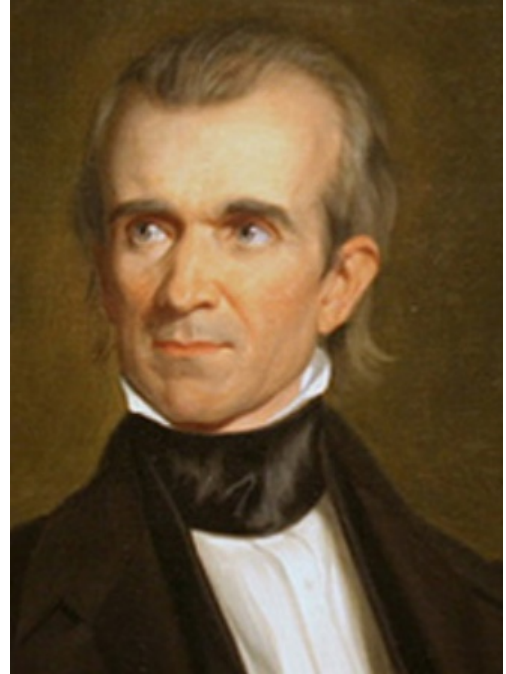
Scott in 1862

Negotiating the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo involved another unusual story, thanks to Medved's book. The peace talks were negotiated by Nicholas Philip Trist, chief clerk of the US State Department, who had accompanied General [Winfield Scott](#) as a diplomat and as President Polk's representative. Trist and General Scott, after two previous unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a treaty with General José Joaquín de Herrera, determined that the only way to deal with Mexico was as a conquered enemy. Nicholas Trist negotiated with a special commission representing the collapsed government led by Don José Bernardo Couto, Don Miguel de Atristain, and Don Luis Gonzaga Cuevas of Mexico.

What is not widely known is, according to Medved, that President Polk did not trust General Scott, and Polk disliked the fact that his Chief Clerk of the U.S. State Department, Nicholas Trist, was so favorably connected to General Scott. President Polk demanded that Trist return to Washington so he could send another negotiator. Trist decided on his own initiative that he could get the treaty concluded, and he ignored President Polk's withdrawal of himself.

Finally, the treaty was successfully negotiated, and Trist returned to Washington with the signed treaty. Besides defining the borders that are in place today, the United States, per Trist's arrangements, agreed to pay \$15,000,000 to Mexico and some \$3,500,000 in claims US Citizens had against Mexico. President Polk originally had authorized Trist to negotiate as high as \$30,000,000. When Trist arrived home, Polk still was so mad at him that he fired him immediately. However, after studying the treaty, Polk accepted it as

good. Still, President Polk remained mad at Trist, and Trist didn't receive his salary during his whole time in Mexico, nor reimbursement for his expenses for the trip. Polk died of illness the following year, but Trist, who thereafter lived in modest poverty, finally was paid the unpaid salary and expenses in 1871!



What was not known at the time to Trist and to President Polk was that the very week in February 1848 the Treaty was sign in Mexico City, an exploring carpenter in California noticed some glittering rocks in a creek near Coloma, California. This 37-year old James Marshall, a native of New Jersey, spent some time having the ricks analyzed for validation. They turned out to be real gold, and the birth of what became the famous California Gold Rush of 1849!

The fever that drove adventurers to California can be seen in comparing the Census figures of 7,500 persons of European descent in the newly acquired United States Government territory. By the mid 1850's, the population had grown to over 300,000!

It was months later in 1848 that Trist travelled back to Washington with the Treaty, sometime in the fall of that year. With Polk's anger with Trist and his firing him, there was not adequate time for Polk to change his mind till a serious illness overtook him in Jane 1849. Also, his one term Presidency had ended March 4, 1849.

My interest in Nicholas Philip Trist is that he is my 28th cousin, 3 times removed! Here is a relationship chart, showing our common ancestor of Englishman Dannett Abney.

It's a benefit for people, particularly young people (the so-called millennials, those born in the 1980 – 2000 years) to be exposed to

history and much of its idiosyncrasies. When any of them can trace their ancestry to significant personalities in history, that can enhance their understanding of their own importance as citizens.

My interest in governance and political events stems, I believe, in the ancestry that has been discovered in my heritage. The Rulers of England are in my lines, showing royal positions in over 1,400 years. Out of 72 kings and queens of England, 63 three of them are related to our family. There are 45 U.S. Presidents who have been elected, and 20 of them are related to our family and two Vice Presidents also have been related to us. All four of the U.S. Presidents sculptured on Mount Rushmore are cousins of mine!

Why do I do genealogy and how? Here is a document to shed more light on that comment. Here is a document that explains what is a third cousin, twice removed!

Thank you for your kind attention and for inviting me to share with you in this way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "W.C. Sharp". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "W" and a long, sweeping underline.

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[Biographical Sketch information](#)

(Pictured here with my lovely bride of 54 years,
[Suzanne Margaret Boggess Sharpe](#)

