

Three of the Veterans of the Republic of Texas Navy Buried at the Texas State Cemetery

Charles F. Fuller Lieutenant, Texas Marine Corps (Died February 11, 1842)

Charles F. Fuller, lieutenant in the Republic of Texas Marine Corps, is believed to have been a native of Washington, D.C. After moving to Texas, he worked in the Navy Yard in Galveston and, after enlisting in the Republic of Texas Navy and Marines, he was commissioned as a lieutenant and was assigned to the schooner-of-war, the *San Antonio*.

After sailing throughout the Caribbean in early 1842, the *San Antonio* was called to port, but, before returning to Texas, the crew first landed in New Orleans to drop off survivors of the *Sylph*, an American ship that had wrecked. While in New Orleans, the crew also set out to obtain supplies for the other ships in the Navy, the *Austin* and the *San Bernard*. On February 11, 1842, the high officers went ashore but denied leave to the crew for fear of desertion. Lt. Fuller was left in command.

Seymour Oswald, sergeant of Marines, who had been punished several times for insubordination and who was drunk on contraband liquor, argued with Lt. M. H. Dearborn, the officer in charge of the deck, after his mandate for leave was denied. An argument ensued, and Lt. Fuller came up on deck to investigate. He placed Lt. Dearborn in charge of the restrained Marine guards to try to prevent a mutiny, but Oswald, outraged at Fuller's actions, proceeded to attack him with his hatchet, but missed. During the struggle, Fuller was shot and killed by Seaman Benjamin Punipelly, and two other midshipmen were wounded.

Oswald and his cohorts, after locking the other officers below deck, left the *San Antonio* in two boats but were quickly apprehended by the U. S. revenue cutter, the *Jackson*, whose captain heard the shot that killed Fuller. All of the men who took part in the mutiny spent the night in jail, though two were later returned to the *San Antonio*. The remaining men spent the next year in jail until Commodore Edwin W. Moore could figure out what to do with them.

That next year, Commodore Moore, in April, 1843, finally held proceedings to court martial and punish the mutineers of the *San Antonio*. New Orleans officials refused to release some of the men, and others died when the *San Antonio* was lost at sea. The remaining eight men were charged with mutiny, murder, or an attempt to murder, and desertion. Frederick Shepherd, who turned state's evidence against the others, was acquitted and released, but died three weeks later in battle. John Williams, William Barrington, and Ed Keenan were found guilty and were given 100 lashes with the cats-o-nine-tails. Antonio Lando is, William Simpson, Isaac Allen, and James Hudgins were found guilty of all of the charges and hanged on April 26, 1843, from the yardarm of the *Austin*. Sergeant Oswald, who started the mutiny, escaped from the New Orleans jail, and Seaman Benjamin Punipelly, who killed Lt. Fuller, died while in custody, before being turned over to Commodore Moore.

This was the only mutiny to take place in the Texas Navy.

With no family to claim his body, Charles F. Fuller was buried in the Girod Street Cemetery. Fuller's headstone in the cemetery read:

Sacred to the memory of
Charles F. Fuller
Lieutenant Texas Navy
who fell in the execution of his
duty in suppressing a mutiny on board

the Schooner of War San Antonio
11 Feb 1842

Fielding R. Culp
Midshipman, Texas Navy
(circa 1823–October 4, 1842)

Fielding R. Culp, midshipman in the Texas Navy, was born circa 1823, in Kentucky, to Daniel and Sarah Richardson Culp. After moving to Texas, he enlisted in the Republic of Texas Navy and was commissioned as a midshipman on the brig, the *Wharton*.

The *Wharton*, originally called the *Colorado*, was renamed to honor Republic of Texas veteran, John Austin Wharton. The brig was 110 feet long and twenty-eight feet wide and was able to carry 17 officers and 123 sailors and marines. The three year old ship traveled the coasts between Texas and the Yucatan enforcing the Mexican blockade. After returning to Galveston in early 1842, Commander John T. K. Lothrop lost most of his crew due to the terms of their enlistments and desertions. By May of that same year, with only nine sailors, the *Wharton* set sail for New Orleans for repairs.

The crew stayed in New Orleans for nearly a year while their ship underwent a complete overhaul and more sailors were recruited. During this time, the men, even with such a small number, grew increasingly disgruntled. The combination of bad tempers, too much idle time, and cramped quarters often led to disagreements and fisticuffs amongst the men. Culp was involved in one such episode.

Though the nature of the disagreement is not known, Culp and fellow midshipman, George W. White, came to blows and carried their dispute to the New Orleans dueling ground, Dueling Oaks. On October 1, 1842, Culp and White, according to the next day's edition of *The Daily Picayune*, fought with pistols at a distance of ten paces. With his first shot, White shot Culp and left him severely wounded. The newspapers followed his plight and reported, ironically, on the morning of his death that he was, "still living, and hopes are entertained of his recovery."

After being transported to the City Hotel, Culp languished for three days until he died at noon on October 4, 1842. He was buried that same day in the Girod Street Cemetery with full military honors. The newspapers reported that detachments from the First Company of Native Americans, the Marion Rifles of the Washington Battalion, the Louisiana Greys, the Montgomery Guards and the Cannoniers were all in attendance.

Culp was buried alongside Republic of Texas Marine Lieutenant Charles F. Fuller in the Girod Street Cemetery. Culp's headstone in the cemetery read:

Fielding R. Culp
Born in Kentucky
Died Oct. 4-1842
Aged 19 Years.

Robert Oliver
Captain, Texas Marine Corps
(January 13, 1816–October 11, 1842)

Robert Oliver, captain in the Texas Marine Corps, was born January 13, 1816, in North Berwick, Scotland. After immigrating to the United States and settling in New Orleans, Oliver enlisted as a sailor on the *Invincible* in February 1836. He then joined the army as an ordinance sergeant. When he left the army, he was a 3rd lieutenant,

and became a clerk in Congress and various departments of the government, including captain of ordinance. In September 1840, he became purser on the *San Jacinto*. He was later raised to captain in the Marines, which rank he held while serving aboard the sloop-of-war, the *Austin*, which had been sailing up and down the Mexican coast in search of prizes.

While in Mexico, Oliver contracted congestive fever, or malaria, and, died fifteen days later, on October 11, 1842, after the *Austin* docked in New Orleans. That next day, October 12, Oliver's body was transported to the city, where he was met by the military and officers of the revenue cutter, *Woodberry*, and buried in the Girod Cemetery, next to two other Republic of Texas Navy and Marine veterans, Lieutenant Charles F. Fuller and Midshipman Fielding R. Culp.

His headstone was inscribed with the following text:

Robt. Oliver
 Capt. Texas Marine Corps
 Born Jan. 13, 1816
 at North Berwick Scotland
 Died Oct 11, 1842
 Honored, loved and esteemed by
 all who knew him

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