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WILLIAM H. SANDUSKY IN TEXAS: A POLISH DESCENDANT

by K.F. Neighbours

Early in May 1839, Edwin Walker, commissioner, appointed by President Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar of the Republic of Texas to lay off the new capital city of Austin, departed from Houston for the scene of his duties accompanied by William Harrison Sandusky as surveyor.¹ William H. Sandusky was a descendant of Antoni Sadowski, who came from Poland to the British colonies in North America during the reign of Queen Anne. William H. Sandusky followed in the tradition of his ancestors in Poland in entering public service in Texas.

The Sadowski family seems to have had its seat at Sadowia and used the *herbu*, or coat of arms, of Nalecz. Thomas Sadowski was assigned to the church at Miechow near Cracow in 1452 by Zbigniew Cardinal Olesnicki. Daniel Sadowski became Archbishop of Gniezno. There is heated controversy whether Stanislaus Sadowski came to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1608. He may have returned to England with Captain John Smith in 1609, and is thought to have been back in Jamestown in 1619.²

Marcin Sadowski, Texan William H. Sandusky's direct ancestor, was a chamberlain of Gostyne "in the time of King Wladislaus IV." Marcin Sadowski was also a member of the Polish Parliament or Sejm in 1643; was inspector of the royal estates in the Ukraine; and was then castellan of Gostyne. In 1650 he erected a church and convent for the Sisters of Saint Clare in Lowiezu. According to Edward Pinkowski, Marcin Sadowski was said to have served three Polish kings.³ Tradition holds that Marcin Sadowski was with John Sobieski or King John III at the successful defense of Vienna.

Marcin Sadowski's son, Antoni Sadowski, born in 1669, received in 1709 his birthright to Nalecz from Father Jana Kiwinski, Priest at Staresielskigo.⁴ Antoni Sadowski is thought to have followed his father in the royal service and is said to have served two Polish kings.⁵ According to his great-granddaughter, Mrs. Robert Shanklin, "He was no hand to labour, but was a great scholar. He was said to be able to speak seven different languages, and to have given the name to *Sandusky Bay*, being the first trader that ever went there to trade, with those Indians."⁶

Antoni Sadowski came to New York colony during the reign of Queen Anne. He moved to New Jersey before 1709, where he married Marya Bord (anglicized Mary Bird), a native of Long Island. Later Sadowski moved to a farm of 400 acres on the Schuylkill River in Pennsylvania above Philadelphia. He purchased the farm on January 21, 1712, and farmed it with slaves and indentured servants while he operated Indian trading posts on the frontier and served on occasion as agent to the Indians for the proprietary government. Antoni Sadowski died on April 22, 1736, and was buried in Saint Gabriel's churchyard at Douglassville, Amity Township, Pennsylvania.⁷

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Antoni Sadowski's descendants then became a part of the westward movement. His widow and married son, Andrew, moved to the Virginia western frontier and thence to what became West Virginia. By the time I came along three centuries after Antoni, family tradition had become rather dim but my mother remembered the killing and scalping of her ancestor, Andrew Sadowski. The deed was committed by a renegade white man running with the Indians while Andrew was waiting to catch his horses at a salt lick.⁸

Among Andrew Sadowski's sons were Emanuel, James, Jacob, Samuel, John, Anthony, and Jonathan. James and Jacob were among the first settlers of the Kentucky frontier. James was with James Harrod at the founding of Harrodsburg, Kentucky. Emanuel migrated to the Watauga region of Tennessee. Jonathan died in a British prisoner-of-war camp during the American Revolution.⁹ Samuel was the grandfather of the subject of this paper.

Antoni Sadowski's descendants, taking the anglicized form of Sandusky, continued westward with the frontier until some of them arrived in Texas.¹⁰ One of the most interesting of these was young William H. Sandusky, mentioned at the beginning of the paper. Born near Columbus, Ohio,¹¹ on January 29, 1813, he was the son of John Sandusky and Elizabeth Clarno Sandusky, who was of French descent. John was the son of Samuel, mentioned above. William H. Sandusky came to Texas from Columbus, Ohio. In 1839 he addressed himself as a surveyor and draftsman to surveying and mapping the new capital of Texas, the town of Austin on the Colorado River. Only three years earlier Texas had made good its independence from Mexico on the field of battle at San Jacinto where General Sam Houston defeated and captured President Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, commander of the Mexican Army. Houston became the first elected president of Texas and located the capital of the Republic of Texas at the city named for himself. He was succeeded in office by his arch rival, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, who could not abide a capital city named for Houston.

President Lamar selected a beautiful but remote site on the frontier where the French minister to the Republic of Texas, Alonse de Saligny, was awakened in the night by screams of a man dying under the Indian scalping knife. The selection of the site of Austin and William H. Sandusky's mapping of it was described in a letter to President Lamar from Commissioner Edwin Waller on June 2, 1839. Waller wrote:

I have just received your favour of the 25th ULT[IMO] per Col. Love. Mr. Pilie [one of the surveyors] left on the 31st for Houston for the purpose of making the maps. Mr. Sandusky who was here a few days since offered to make them for two hundred dollars each, Mr. Pilie at first asked four hundred but after I had received Mr. Sandusky's proposition offered to do them at the same price. I think that a less number of maps would answer our purpose, but it is optional with you what number shall be made.

The location that I have selected does not conflict with the town below [Montopolis] as you fear. I had been advised to place it below but chose the present site which gives a distance between our lower line and the upper line of the other town of at least two miles. This selection of mine has been highly approved by all who have seen it and I doubt not will give universal satisfaction.

The public buildings shall be in residence in time for the next Congress. I have two 16 feet square rooms up now and the rest in progress, therefore entertain no fears on that score.¹²

By August of 1839, William H. Sandusky was engaged in surveying and mapping the site of Austin as indicated by a memorandum to President Lamar by H.J. Jewett, newspaper editor who would be Lamar's private secretary and later a district judge. Jewett wrote:

The annexed description of Austin I have copied and abridged from one handed me by Mr. Sandusky, surveyor and draftsman, who arrived here [at Houston] on Tuesday from that place. There is trouble in the newspaper establishment and there will probably be some issued next week. – I have thought that the latter part of the description, together with what relates to the "laying off" – of the city might be interesting to you – Mr. Sandusky took three pencil sketches from the public square, which he is copying & colouring – If you would like to see them when finished I will send them up to you in haste.¹³

Sandusky's letter to H.J. Jewett, read as follows:

Mr. Editor

I have just returned from the city of Austin, and being aware of the various reports as to its advantages, I feel it my duty to give to the public a true statement of its location.

Austin is situated on the east bank of the Colorado, 40 miles from Bastrop—and about three miles from the Colorado mountains and on a beautiful rich prairie about 40 feet above the level of the river extending back one half mile to the 'bluff', and gradually rising to 60 or 70 feet, where is placed the Public Square (15 acres), with an avenue rising up from the river—of 120 feet wide. Through a narrow valley which appears as if made by nature expressly for this purpose.

[Sandusky was speaking of Congress Avenue.]

The lots are layd, streets & alleys wide, and the several Public Squares, and lots for the Government buildings, selected with good taste, by the agent Judge Waller, who is now engaged in putting up the necessary buildings for Congress — two beautiful streams of limestone water flow through the upper and lower parts of the town, taking their source in the hills from springs which can by little expense be conducted to any part of the city. Stone for building purposes of various [kinds] can be had in and near the city. Timber for building is rather scarce in the immediate vicinity (except on the opposite side of the river), but within six or eight miles there is an abundance. The river averages from 60 to 70 yards wide of a deep but rapid current, and can be made navigable by removing a few shoals, for steam boats of medium size, to the falls five miles above the town.

The Colorado mountains about 3 miles NR. West, from College Hill (in the rear of the town,) are covered with scrubby live oak, cedar and cliffs of rocks, which present a delightful appearance –

Large fields of corn are growing in the vicinity, sufficient for the consumption of emigration this season. The country is settling very fast, and families with their Negroes are daily seen on their way to the "City of Austin," and the surrounding country –¹⁴

The City of Austin, Texas, was named for Stephen F. Austin, the colonizer

and Father of Anglo-Saxon Texas.

Professional jealousy and rivalry raises its head in all professions and in all ages. Heinrich Mollhausen, celebrated artist and traveler, styling himself architect and civil engineer, begged to differ with the Texas authorities about engaging Sandusky to draft the maps of Austin. Mollhausen in his letter to President Lamar on February 6, 1840, threw some light on Sandusky's background. Mollhausen wrote:

Sir

It is with the greatest confidence I approach Your Excellency to pray for an act of justice.

Some time ago the Honorable Jas. H. Starr Secretary of the Treasury informed me that there were to be made three maps representing the vicinity of Austin. During half a year I was in Texas and having met with no other encouragement than the confidence of the Honorable L. P. Cooke I felt very happy to find another opportunity to show my abilities and I expressed to Mr. Starr in writing my great desire to draw these maps, submitting the condition that His Honor alone might fix the price after the work were done, and that I would be entirely satisfied with the payment Mr. Starr would think proper.

But I was then informed to ask a certain price for the maps, to be executed in the best style, on a large scale, and with suitable embellishments; well knowing what I'm able to do I asked about 500\$ a piece — a price often paid in Texas for very inferior maps at times when the money had double the value than now.

I knew that in order to make these topographical maps in their full perfection and in order to show the terrain for purchase abroad — it is indispensably necessary to go often along with the surveyors and to take carefully all the necessary data; I knew that here was more required than work of a mere draftsman.

But my price — double paid in silver in the United States for such work — was regarded too high and I was by His Honor informed that in consequence of more favorable terms contained in the proposals of another individual my offer were not received.

But this individual I am told is a clerk in the IID Auditor's Office. (Mr. Sandusky) paid with 2200\$ a year and I venture to express my opinion that it is entirely against the principles of the public service to employ & to pay an officer of the Government for two different purposes, each of which it seems, requires so fully all his time & zeal.

No wonder when this young gentleman can ask a lower price for the work in question, drawing besides such an superfluous salary for the time not appointed to rest & restoration but to other quiet different work — Allured with the favorable reports abroad about Texas and the justice & fairness of Her Government I came here with the sanguine hope to establish an academy for mathematics, architecture & military sciences & thus to become useful to the young republic and so I hope still, although at present so sadly disappointed ...

I beg yr leave to express my full conviction that Mr. Starr acted by no means with partiality for Mr. Sandusky, but that the wish to have these maps executed as cheap as possible made him probably forget that this young gentleman was already otherwise engaged for the Government.¹⁵

From Mollhausen's letter we learn that William H. Sandusky was a young man with the position of clerk in the Office of the Second Auditor in the Department of the Treasury of the Republic of Texas. At the time young Sandusky was concluding with Secretary of the Treasury Starr agreements to make topographical and lineal maps of the tract adjoining Austin with inset maps of Central Texas.¹⁶

From President Lamar's correspondence with Congress later in 1840, we learn that young Sandusky was serving as the private secretary of the president of the Republic of Texas.¹⁷ Sandusky's health soon led him to request of the president another assignment. Sandusky wrote Lamar:

My dear General,

It is with deep regret that I find myself compelled to announce to you the absolute necessity of a temporary absence from Austin, for the purpose of restoring my health. I have been advised by my friends of the propriety of this course: — but at the same time, I assure you it is with great reluctance I am forced so to do. Finding myself almost disqualified to transact any business at present, and without the hope of ultimate relief, unless to some other remedy, without farther delay — I am therefore compelled to throw myself upon you liability, and ask the favor of an appointment to some situation by which I can expenses for a few months.

I understand an expedition is to be sent out in a short time for the purpose of surveying the "Harbor's & C." on the Texas coast of the Gulf of Mexico. In that event, I should like to accompany it, as Pursur or Secretary—but the matter rests entirely with you. — Consequently, I must beg your serious consideration.

Yours ever truly,

Wm. H. Sandusky¹⁸

The notion was obviously still current that traveling was good for the health as was believed in the time of George Washington's brother Lawrence. If Sandusky's difficulty was any sort of respiratory problem, leaving Austin would have alleviated it, as physicians in the twentieth century regard the city as the hay fever capital of the world.

By June 4, 1841, Sandusky had progressed as far as Galveston where he wrote President Lamar:

Dear General

I arrived here on the 22d. My being very much fatigued; and have been quite unwell ever since.— My mother endured the journey much better than myself.

The vessel will not start for about two weeks, as Commodore Moore cannot get ready before that time — Lieu't Seeger tells me that he has been trying for some time to employ a draughtman for the coast survey, but could find none, until I handed him my 'paper', which he seemed to be very much pleased with.

Judge Webb started on the Schr Bernard a few days before I arrived — Saligny is in New Orleans I suppose waiting the final decision of his case. [Alfonse de Saligny was the Minister of France to the Republic of Texas. He had an altercation with his landlord Richard Bullock over a pig. This was the pretext for threatened rupture in relations. It is now believed that the

incident did not have any great influence in the loss of a proposed French loan.]

Sandusky continued:

Politics – [Sam] Houston will get a large majority of the votes [in the Texas presidential election – Lamar could not constitutionally succeed himself] in this section of the country – say about 5/6ths – [David G.] Burnet stands no chance to be elected –

I am at present stopping with my friend Gail Borden – [The developer of condensed milk] you have many worse enemies than him – Genl. I find you have a great many friends in this lower country.¹⁹

concluded young Sandusky.

The last communication found from Sandusky was from Galveston to President Lamar on October 18, 1841. Sandusky wrote Lamar:

Dear General,

I am not going to trouble you with one of those long letters you *Hate* so much to read, but just going to ask you the favor of a copy of "The Parting Kiss," or a newspaper that contains it. I admire it so much, that I wish to keep it among the collections of poetry you gave me, which I am copying very neatly in an album for a *keepsake*. Get Mr. Foutaine (if he is your private sec'y) to copy it if he pleases.

No news here of consequence, – healthy, money scarce – Navy preparing to sail for the "Federal Nation" Com[modore] Moore is about starting to New Orleans for naval supplies – much talk, "Who will be old Sam's *Cabinet*?"

The money that was stolen from the Custom-House (\$3000) have been found, except \$50–, and the individual in the brig. (The prison –)

My health is still improving, since I saw you – Write and let me hear how you are. Give my respects to Mr. Fontaine & Jewett.

Yours sincerely

Wm. H. Sandusky²⁰

President Lamar fancied himself something of a poet. It occurred to me to wonder what his poem "The Parting Kiss" would read like to so excite young Sandusky's interest. So I hied myself to the library to find the poem in the *Telegraph and Texas Register*, where friend John M. Kinney indicated it was. "The Parting Kiss" turned out to be not a poem but a melodramatic short story in which a suitor called on a young lady while waiting for his stage coach. Instead of writing a poem of his own in her album as requested by the fair, young thing, the suitor falls into a romantic reverie in which he recalls some poetry which he ascribed to others. One sentimental verse ran:

Fare thee well since thou must leave me,
But oh! Let not our parting grieve thee,
For I will still be thine believe me.

The suitor was reminded of another message which he ascribed to a Mrs. Hemans requesting rhetorically:

Bring flow'rs, bring flow'rs for the bride to wear.
 They were born to blush in her shining hair,
 She is leaving the scenes of her childish mirth.
 She has bid farewell to her Father's hearth,
 Her place is now by another's side
 Bring Flow'rs for the locks of the fair young bride.

The suitor's fantasy took a morbid turn in which he dreamed that his beloved is marrying another. He cocked his pistol to shoot the phantom rival, but:

At this moment the fair Fanny [for that was the damsel's name] caught me by the hand and giving it a gentle and affectionate pressure, she said, 'Come, come, are you not going to write in my album? It has been almost an hour since you sat down for that purpose.' 'Write in your album Fair Creature,' said I, 'Why yes. I will write in your album.' And so saying I aroused me from the reverie into which I had fallen finding that the above dreadful circumstances existed only in a dream of imagination. Again I dipped my pen in the stand, and having nothing poetic about me, I penned the above. The stage horn summoned me as I finished, and I just had time to print on Fanny's lips the parting kiss.²¹

Shades of Goethe's Werther were not far behind.

Lamar did not send young Sandusky a copy of "The Parting Kiss" because it had "become the subject of Texas gossip most unpleasant to" Lamar. Two years later Lamar sent Sandusky twelve poems which "Sandusky beautifully penned in an album." When Philip Graham published *The Life and Poems of Mirabeau B. Lamar*, in 1938, Sandusky's album in the possession of descendants in Waskom, Texas, was the source of part of Lamar's poems.²²

Apparently after his service in surveying the coast and harbors of Texas, William H. Sandusky announced in the press in 1844 that he was establishing himself permanently in Galveston where he would "execute all kinds of maps, charts, landscapes, plans of cities and towns, also instruments of writing of every description in the neatest style and on the most liberal terms."²³ One of his maps of Galveston was published in 1845 by G. and W. Endicot of New York (for sale for \$3,000.00 in 1977 by Walter Reuben, Inc.). Another of his maps of Galveston was published by Wagner and McGuigan of Philadelphia.²⁴ In 1845 he became Import Inspector in Galveston.

On his work as an artist, we might notice that his sketch of Austin, made in 1839, was published in the newspapers of his day, that reproductions of it still exist giving interesting details of the infant capital city, and that other of his important original drawings, such as *Oak Point* and *Sketch of the Alamo*, remained in the possession of his family.

According to the records of the county clerk of Galveston County, Texas, William H. Sandusky, and Jane McKnight, seventeen-year-old native of Pennsylvania, were united in marriage by J. H. Henderson,²⁵ on July 21, 1842. To this union were born three children. According to the United States Census for Galveston in 1850, these children were seven-year-old Elizabeth Sandusky, five-year-old James Sandusky, and three-year-old Ellen Sandusky.²⁶

William H. Sandusky died in 1846. Jane Sandusky was granted letters of administration of her husband's estate on March 30, 1847, by John S. Jones, probate judge of Galveston County.²⁷ Sandusky's widow later married a lawyer, E. Woolridge, a native of Massachusetts, and resided in Galveston.

In his brief thirty-three years, William H. Sandusky had followed in the tradition of public service set by his Polish ancestors. His surveying and mapping under the direction of the Texas Commissioner Edwin Waller of the beautiful capital city of a great state was alone an accomplishment worthy of notice. William H. Sandusky made a contribution to the Polish heritage of America of which we all may be proud.²⁸

NOTES

¹Dora Dietrich Bonham, *Merchant to the Republic* (San Antonio, 1958), p. 89.

²Edward Pinkowski, *Anthony Sadowski: Polish Pioneer* (Philadelphia, 1966), pp. 2-3; Kaspra Niesieckiego, *Harbarz Polisk*, W. Lipsku, Nakladem 1 Drukiem Biretkopfa 1 Haertela, 1841, VI, p. 227; reprint, III, p. 36; Philip L. Barbour, "The Identity of the First Poles in America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 21, pp. 77-92.

³Pinkowski, *Sadowski* p. 3.

⁴Lucjuse Niedzwiecki, Gdansk-Oliwa, ul. Kubsia Puchatka 110, Poland, to Earl K. Ray, McPherson, Kansas, n.d. quoted in Ray to KFN, December 11, 1966. Notes and Letters Files of KFN, 1714 Elizabeth Street, Wichita Falls, Texas.

⁵Pinkowski, *Sadowski* p. 3.

⁶Draper MSS. 11 CC 217, No. 4, Mrs. Robert Shanklin, Madison, State Historical Society.

⁷Pinkowski, *Sadowski*, Will and Testament of Antoni Sadowski December 29, 1735, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, County of Philadelphia, Inventory in the Estate of Antoni Sadowski, May 13, 1736, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, County of Philadelphia; original records of Saint Gabriel's Church, Douglassville, Pennsylvania; RG-21 Series: Executive Correspondence, No. 71, Governor Patrick Gordon to Nicolas Commission, Division of Public Records, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

⁸Mrs. Eben Neighbours to K.F.N.; Ephraim Sadowski. Draper MSS. 11CC141, Madison, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁹Kentucky Historical Marker, Lebanon; Kathryn Harrod Mason, *James Harrod of Kentucky* (Baton Rouge, 1951), p. 243; County Court, Washington County, Tennessee, November 23, 1778.

¹⁰Frank W. Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans*, Eugene C. Barker, ed., (Chicago, 1914) V, 251f.

¹¹*The Polish Texans* (Institute of Texan Cultures 1972), p. 6; Pauline A. Pinckney, *Painting of Texas: The Nineteenth Century* (Austin 1967), p. 148.

John's father was established by Mrs. David L. Beall to author, December 22, 1972, citing deed records and record of power of attorney of Samuel Sandusky to son John in records of Jessamine County, Kentucky. Also, Samuel's will in *Will Book A*, pp. 223-227, Jessamine County, Kentucky.

¹²Charles Adams Gulick, Jr., and others, eds., *The Papers of Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar* (Austin, Texas State Library, n.d.), III, p. 11.

¹³Gulick *The Papers*, V. 309. Austin Public Library has William H. Sandusky's painting in Austin.

¹⁴_____, III, p. 91.

¹⁵_____, V, p. 405f.

¹⁶Seymour V. Connor, *Texas Treasury Papers: Letters Received in the Treasury Department of the Republic of Texas, 1836-1846* (Austin) I, Nos. 580 and 617; II, No. 835.

¹⁷*House Journal, Texas Fifth Congress, First Session, 1840-1841, Part I, p. 239.* According to the *Polish Texas*, Sandusky also served briefly as artist, draftsman, and later as registrar of the General Land Office.

¹⁸Gulick, *The Papers V*, p. 471.

¹⁹_____, *V*, p. 476; Joe B. Frantz, *Gail Borden: Dairyman to a Nation* (Norman, 1951), p. 167.

²⁰_____, *The Papers V*, p. 491.

²¹*Telegraph and Texas Register*, February 17, 1838.

²²Philip Graham, *The Life and Poems of Mirabeau B. Lamar* (Chapel Hill, 1938), p. 88f.

²³Pinckney, *Painting in Texas*, p. 150f.

²⁴Thomas W. Streeter, *Bibliography of Texas, 1795-1845* (Cambridge, 1960), Part iii, Vol ii, 1838-1845, p. 557.

²⁵Marriage Book No. A, p. 34.

²⁶Seventh United States Census, Galveston, Texas, 1850.

²⁷Records of the County Clerk's Office, Galveston County, Texas.

²⁸Paper read in New Orleans at the Polish American Historical Association in 1972.