



Full Transcription- Letter from John C. Robertson

**To Colonel Benjamin McCulloch concerning the surrendering of U. S. Military
Property following the secession of Texas 1861**

Courtesy of Armstrong Research Center

The following transcription has been recorded from the contents of archival documents relating to Benjamin McCulloch, currently in the collections of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, and Armstrong Research Center. Every effort has been made to record the contents as accurately as possible. This document is intended for research purposes only.

Background Information

This letter, written by John C. Robertson to Benjamin McCulloch on February 10, 1861, contains McCulloch's appointment to Colonel of Cavalry during the early days of the Civil War. After the adoption of the Texas Ordinance of Secession on February 2, 1861, Robertson was appointed the Chairman of the Committee of Public Safety. The committee was tasked with executing the state's secession plans should there be any opposition from Unionists.

However, the opposition detailed in this letter was of a different nature. General David E. Twiggs, a decorated military officer, was the commander over federal troops in Texas. Twiggs had resolved to never fire upon an American citizen and warned officials in Washington that, if Texas seceded, he would turn the army's property over to the state. He asked to be relieved of his command but had not yet received any word by the time this letter was written. In any case, Twiggs' position made him a traitor in the eyes of the Union, and he was dismissed from federal service on March 1, 1861.

Twiggs expressed his willingness to maintain his troops in their quarters until March 2 or until he was relieved of command. Twiggs was determined to march his troops out of San Antonio with all their supplies. Twiggs' military commission and the commissioners from the state did meet to discuss the matter, but Twiggs received his order relieving him from duty on February 15. In light of these events, the Committee of Public Safety commissioned McCulloch to address the matter.

Robertson commissioned Ben McCulloch as Colonel and directed him to ensure that all federal posts in Texas were surrendered to the state. In the letter, he advises McCulloch to "observe your best discretion and judgment in any emergency which may present itself." In February 1861, Twiggs ultimately agreed to turn all federal forts over to the state. According to Robertson, the federal troops were also allowed the option to join the Confederate Army or to "depart the Country peaceably."

Benjamin McCulloch was a renowned soldier and an early Texas Ranger. From his enlistment in John Coffee Hay's Company of Rangers to his distinguished service in the Mexican War, McCulloch's military capabilities and leadership had earned him the respect of many.

McCulloch was later promoted to Brigadier General of the Confederate States Army. On March 7, 1862, during the Battle of Pea Ridge, McCulloch was scouting the location of enemy forces and was shot from his horse, dying instantly. Twiggs was also commissioned into service for the Confederate States Army as a Major General, but his health prevented him from fulfilling his commission and he died near Augusta, Georgia on July 15, 1862.

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To Col Ben McCulloch

Sir

Having received information that the Commissioner Sam A. Maverick and others sent to San Antonio to confer with Genl Twigg, under their instruction had called you up therefore.

The Committee have resolved to confer upon you the military occupation of Colonel of Calvary to date as of 31 instant in the district. Embracing a point in the Rio Grande half way between Forts Duncan & McIntosh are with the frontier to Fort Chadbourne, including San Antonio and all intermediate posts – And in addition to the Commissioner heretofore (with when you are advised freely to confer on all Subjects of interest (sic) as far as possible) you are instructed

That, should it be deemed advisable to retain any position or all of the Federal troops in your District in the temporary service of the State you can do so, and assure them that Texas will use her best endeavour (sic) with a Southern Confederacy to be formed, to have them incorporate into the Army of that Confederacy with the same rank now held by them.

In case any or all of them should express a desire to depart the Country peaceably you may permit them so to do when such a time as will not dishonor them and as will ensure the Public

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Safety, and in such manner as will ensure to their persons and private property safety.

The Committee also desire that the Commission will under the power heretofore given them, furnish you such aid and assistance as may be deemed necessary.

In all other matters not contained in those, or the provisions instructions, you will observe your best discretion and judgement in any emergency which may present itself.

Any information that you may desire to give to the Committee will be sent by Express if possible to John C. Robertson at Galveston

John C. Robertson

Done at Austin Feby. 10th 1891 [February 10, 1861]. Chn. Com. Pub. Safety [Chairman, Committee of Public Safety]