

Still Seeking Deaf Smith A Forty-Year Adventure

Part One focused on two early Deaf Smith biographers, one deaf wax sculptor, statewide Deaf Smith exhibit & tour, and a wealth of free resources.

PART TWO: Deaf Smith descendants, Smith family Bible, Alarum the dog, statue issue, new discoveries with rarely published images and photos!

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“I assumed that I closed the book on my Deaf Smith Collection and my four decades of research when I gladly donated my materials to the Briscoe Center of American History at the University of Texas in Austin in the fall of 2013.” SCB

Before that donation of my research documents took place, TSD Superintendent Claire Bugen was one step ahead when she made sure that the Statewide Outreach Center at TSD (formerly ERCOD) preserved and promoted the collection as a free educational online resource for the state and nation. Since I was a longtime certified history teacher, she asked me to develop professional lesson plans to meet the Texas History curriculum requirements. Then David H. Pierce, president of Silent Network and CEO/Founder of Davideo Productions, tasked me with extra paperwork, writing 333 captions for the remastered Deaf Smith video. It was a very long process, indeed. (Look for the special blurb about the 35th anniversary of the film and play with exclusive images elsewhere in this issue of *The Deaf Texan*.)



Chris and Andy Hull present an enlarged framed copy of the Smith family Bible pages to TSD Superintendent Claire Bugen on November 18, 2017. The unique gift is on display in the Pease Building Conference Room.

Photo credit: Steve Baldwin

Two and a half years after donating the Deaf Smith Collection, I got an unexpected email from my friend Benna Timperlake of Corpus Christi. Benna is a past president of the American Society for Deaf Children and a former executive director of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Center in Corpus Christi. Her oldest daughter Genelle Sanders, a current doctoral student at UT-Austin, used to be an editor of *The Deaf Texan*. Even more surprising is that Benna is a first cousin of Dr. Christopher Kilpatrick Hull, a descendant of Deaf Smith! Benna, whose maiden name is Hull, has followed my Deaf Smith stories in *The Deaf Texan* for years. She connected me with Dr. Christopher K. Hull, a doctor of orthopedic, from Fort Worth. What a delightful surprise!

“Henceforth, the second phase of my adventure begins with Deaf Smith’s fourth great grandson!” SCB

Dr. Chris Hull and I finally connected via emails on July 18, 2016. I gave him a quick fun quiz on his family history, and he passed with flying colors. His bloodline corresponds directly from the Deaf Smith family tree maternal side, especially from his maternal grandmother, Lois Farnsworth Kilpatrick, whose mother was Sarah Roach Farnsworth (1874-1968). Sarah is a direct descendant of Deaf Smith’s 4th daughter named Simona Smith Fisk (1829-1890) from the Smith-Fisk bloodline in San Antonio. Sarah Farnsworth was a prominent three-term president-general of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT). She contributed significantly toward the Texas Centennial Celebration in 1936, with numerous historical markers, plaques, monuments and tombstones that also recognized her historic family and great grandfather

Captain Smith. See photo showing the two female descendants Farnsworth and Kilpatrick with actor Wayne. Wayne!)



Actor John Wayne chats with Deaf Smith descendants Sarah Roach Farnsworth (next to his right) and Lois Farnsworth Kilpatrick (standing immediately to his left). Wayne was filming his epic 1960 film “The Alamo” on location in Brackettville, Texas, when he took a break to talk with members of the Daughters of Republic of Texas. (Two ladies on right are unknown. Maybe DRT members.)

Photo courtesy: Dr. Chris Hull and Andy Hull

After we exchanged familiar and new information, Dr. Hull expressed an interest in visiting TSD and speaking to the students from elementary to high school. Already a member of the Sons of the Republic of Texas (SRT) since 2007 and a 7th generation Texan, he made it a point to travel to school programs and talk about “Captain Smith.” (Deaf Smith was a Captain of the Texas Rangers briefly in late 1836.) Dr. Hull visited TSD twice, and a third visit this past spring was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. He’s an excellent history speaker, and the teachers were in awe of his educational approach and ability to adjust his material with different age groups. They loved his period costume, his beard, and of course, numerous weapons and tools. Interestingly, his go-to personal interpreter was Mrs. Melody Hull, his own sister-in-law, who worked as a classroom interpreter in San Antonio for many years. (Check out this article about Dr. Hull’s public classroom presentation that took place earlier this year: <https://www.reporternews.com/story/news/education/2020/03/05/alamo-history-comes-alive-eastland-county-elementary-students/4965924002/>)



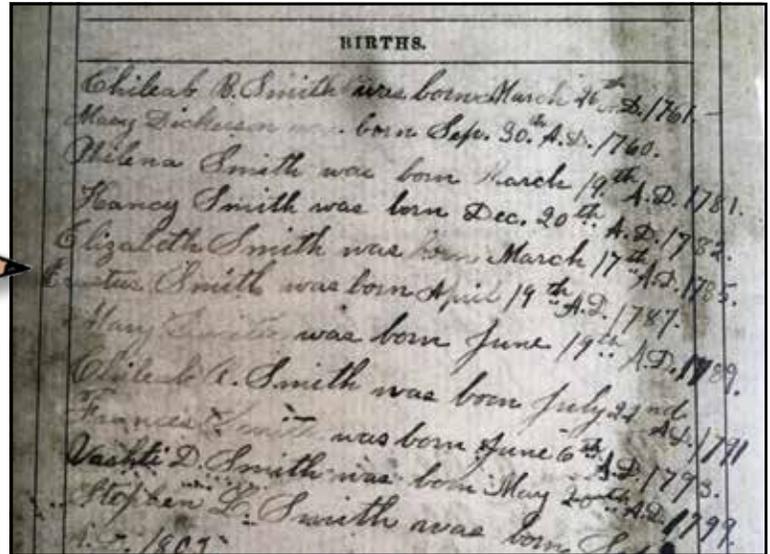
Chris Hull in full period costume standing next to the Deaf Smith wax figure banner in the TSD Elementary Library in April 2018.

Photo credit: Steve Baldwin

“Dr. Hull’s passion for educating school-age students about Texas history and his famous ancestor garnered him respect from members of SRT and me.” SCB

Out of all the research information we exchanged with each other for the last four years, I would like to share some new details about Deaf Smith. Dr. Hull and his brother Andy Hull of San Antonio gave me an excellent copy of a professional research project about Deaf Smith, which contains 22 rare documents and a rich family tree information. Would you believe that they also acquired copies of pages from the Smith family Bible listing vital birth and death records that was located in Houston? (Deaf Smith’s sister Mary and baby brother, Stephen lived in Texas before they passed in mid-19th century.) Because of that impressive genealogy work, the Brothers Hull went a notch above the Cleburne Huston’s definitive 1973 biography about

Deaf Smith. A copy of that priceless booklet was also donated to the Briscoe Center at UT, which I still use to extend my research to the Smith family in the Haddam, Connecticut as well as Massachusetts, my home state. Consequently, there were new questions about Captain Smith's actual birthplace! Not Dutchess County, NY, as the historically stated for a long time on historical markers? Stay tuned about this challenging new research. History never dies, right? We had also hoped to find the 1822 church marriage record between Deaf Smith and Guadalupe Duran. Such a document might reveal the actual birthplaces of the married couple. Unfortunately, the Archdiocese of San Antonio does not have a copy from the Mission San Francisco De La Espada Catholic Church (founded in 1690), which is now a World Heritage Site.



Close-up shot of the Smith family Bible page that lists the birth dates of Deaf Smith's parents and siblings from 1761 to 1802. Pencil tip points to Captain Smith's birthdate of April 19, 1787.

Photo credit: Steve Baldwin

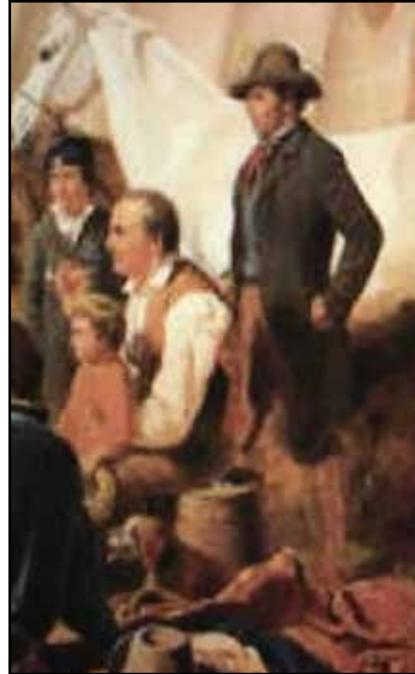
“Texas historians and artists often pointed out that Smith had a faithful hearing dog that alerted him of dangers during hunting, scouting, and surveying trips.” SCB

Perhaps the most interesting discovery was a painting that Dr. Hull tracked down from the *Handbook of Texas* to an art museum in Wyoming. I thought the Brothers Hull were joking that Deaf Smith's hearing dog may have taken part in the Battle of San Jacinto in March 1836. Maybe, but who knows for sure? William Tylee Ranney (1813-1857) was a self-taught western artist who was a fellow soldier with Deaf Smith when they captured and guarded General Santa Anna. In his 1853 painting entitled "Advice on the Prairie," one can see the incredible likeness of Deaf Smith wearing a red scarf with his small beagle named "Alarum" at his feet. The Oxford English Dictionary states that word "alarum" is "used as a call to arms or warning of imminent danger." Remember the expression, "Sound the alarm!"? Interestingly, another self-taught artist is Henry M. Godines (1949-present) depicts Deaf Smith with a bloodhound.

(See the cropped image from his large painting “War Council at San Jacinto.” Prints of his full painting are available at \$22 each.)

Our latest collaboration includes a campaign to add the statues of Deaf Smith and his son-in-law Hendrick Arnold (a freed slave who married Smith’s stepdaughter Martina), among other proposed trail of figures in the Alamo Plaza. We sent letters to president Dr. Michael Duchemin of the Briscoe Western Art Museum in San Antonio and implored him to honor Smith and Arnold with deserving statues. He has not responded and our request for a meeting fell on deaf ears after eight months of waiting. Naturally, we will continue to keep TAD, the Texas Deaf Community, and some legislators informed about our endeavor related to the statue matter at the Alamo Plaza.

Maya Angelou (1928-2014), a popular Black-American poet once said, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” Well, in my case, it’s more about the joy of finding new historical information about Deaf Smith who impacted the course of Texas history from 1821 to 1837.



LEFT: Close-up shot of a larger painting by William Tylee Ranny who was a fellow soldier of Deaf Smith in the Battle of San Jacinto in early March of 1836. The 1853 painting “Advice on a Prairie” shows a likeness of Deaf Smith with his dog “Alarum.”

RIGHT: Here’s another close-up cropped photo of Henry Godines’ painting called “War Council at San Jacinto” that shows Deaf Smith standing prominently with his dog. Noted late 19th century Texas painters William Huddle and Henry McArdle depicted the same Deaf Smith facial features, which were obviously copied from T. Jefferson Wright’s life portrait of Deaf Smith in 1836.

“We are reminded constantly that history never dies due to new research discoveries that continue to educate, inspire and motivate us.” SCB

See y’all for Part 3 with a few more bombshells of new information about Deaf Smith!

Editor’s Note: Watch for Part 3 with more exciting new Deaf Smith information and photos in *The Deaf Texan* fall issue.

Recognizing the 35th Anniversary of the Deaf Smith Play That TAD Introduced to Texas

By Stephen C. Baldwin

Who would believe that 35 years has passed since the long one-act play called “Deaf Smith: The Great Texian Scout”. This is still recognized and talked about by several people? Some of the 700 audience members who witnessed the 45-minute play on May 25, 1985 during the centennial celebration of TAD at TSD might recall the experience. We almost forgot that Texas was kicking off its 150th anniversary at the same time. It was a triple whammy: TAD, Texas and a world premiere for the play!

As the producer/playwright sitting in the back of the R.L. Davis Auditorium, I saw Superintendent Dr. Vic Galloway standing up abruptly after the curtain bow and signing conspicuously, “Is that all?” Maybe he thought the play would last three hours long, just like an old Eugene O’Neill (1888-1953) verbose drama. Unfortunately, while welcoming the conferees, the late TAD President Jerry Hassell plum forgot to tell the audience that the play will be a short one without an intermission. Since it was a Saturday night, we



Act I, Scene 3 shows General Santa Anna (Rodrigo Zapata) asking the Texians to turn in Deaf Smith while a Mexican Soldier #1 (Haden Lambert) stands guard.



Deaf Smith video title cover was designed by Davideo Productions for the remastered 2009 video entitled “Deaf Smith: The Great Texian Scout”

figured that everyone wanted to head for 6th Street and have a grand time after a long day of celebrating the 100th anniversary of TAD. Needless to say, we received a nice round of applause, and no tomatoes were thrown at the talented cast.

Another unforgettable memory involves the thievery of all the theater weapons—pistols, rifles, and swords—that were “safely” locked in the property room down in the basement near the girls’ dressing room. After I discovered the personal stage props missing the next day,

Deaf Smith: The Great Texian Scout, *continued*

I went straight to see Dr. Galloway. There was no time to find replacements around Austin, so the Superintendent ordered the school woodworking teacher, Barney Heintschel to make the props (thanks to Carl and Joanne Brininstool for helping me get his name right). Barney worked all night long making new wooden weapons with 30 hours left before curtain time. We were able to paint the wooden weapons, either black or brown, but nothing really fancy or realistic. The actors were good troopers, and the audience did not laugh at the amateurish wooden “kiddy props.” If you don’t think I know who stole those props, I have a few suspects in mind . . . someday I may solve the mystery when I see a fake sword or flintlock rifle adorning someone’s fireplace mantle. Sherlock Holmes is alive and well!



In Act 1, Scene 4 in the San Antonio Plaza, there is an intentional fire seen from afar destroying the buildings as Guadalupe Smith (Jacklene Giacona), Hendrick Arnold (Mike Walker), Deaf Smith (James Dees), Texian #1 (Luis Duos), and Texian #2 (David Bledsoe) watch in horror.

When you watch the 2009 remastered video on the TAD website, keep in mind that the play was taped with only one camera in Big Spring, Texas, during a final dress rehearsal in the Spring of 1985. You can see the actual theater weapons, such as the swords, Bowie knives, and pistols. Plus, you can see those same weapons in the adjacent screenshots of the play. By the way, Texas Commission on the Arts gave me a grant of \$1500 for those weapons, to be used in producing this historical play/video.

Speaking of the video, it is now available in open captions and offstage voicing. Just go to the TAD website, click on “Resources.” Next, click on the category called “History.” At the bottom of that page, you will easily see the red highlighted “Deaf Smith” label. Unlike paying for Netflix while staying at home during the coronavirus pandemic, you can enjoy your popcorn and soda pop in the comforts of your home while watching a free bilingual movie in ASL with captioned and spoken English.

The play was performed publicly two more times elsewhere. One theater in Jackson Heights, New York, produced the play for school-age children. Unbeknownst to me, the director changed one scene from a folk dancing action into a cathouse instead! Those immoral Yankees (with a sly smile from me)! That was a lesson for me to remind producers not to amend the script

Deaf Smith: The Great Texian Scout, *continued*

without permission. Now I'm laughing after thinking about it after 35 years later. The passage of time is indeed a good leveler or forgiver.

Let me close with some fantastic news about my history play. I just learned from noted dramaturg and author Willy Conley of Gallaudet University that "Deaf Smith: The Great Texian Scout" is one of the plays chosen for his new anthology book. He selected produced works by deaf playwrights in America from the 1930's to early 2000's. The book will be published in England and released in late 2021. As a theatre historian, I believe this work will be the first such literary book that will focus *exclusively* on deaf plays by deaf playwrights by a deaf author.

Most common non-commercial plays are written, performed, briefly toured, then gradually faded away from the public consciousness. In a sense, it also all depends on the mood, taste, and attitude of the playgoers and society. As fate or luck would have it, this play "The Great Texian Scout", is now preserved by TSD, TAD, UT, GU Archives, and in a deaf play anthology book. TAD can look back with pride knowing that after 35 years, our state once hosted a world premiers. More importantly, the legacy of Deaf Smith lives on.

This 1985 playbill cover documents the fact that TAD sponsored the long one-act history play as part of its centennial celebration on May 25, 1985. Late Edwin Easley was the general chairperson who invited and sponsored the SWCID/Howard College cast and crew of 40 people from Big Spring.

Photos & screenshots credit: Steve Baldwin

