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“FLAG SONG OF TEXAS” TURNS 120

This year marks the 120th anniversary of the publication of “Flag Song of Texas.” The lyrics were selected from among entries to a 1902 contest held by the Daughters of the Republic of Texas for the “best patriotic, historical poem” on the flag and “suitable to be set to music and sung” by both public school children and students of The University of Texas. Houston journalist Leah Cohen Harby, who was Jewish, won a \$100 award from the Daughters of the Republic of Texas for her winning entry. The DRT then commissioned the music. This issue features historical material on the song, which may prompt a reconsideration of the extent of state patriotism between 1865-1936.

“FLAG SONG OF TEXAS”: LYRICS

Words by Lee C. Hardy
Music by Aldridge B. Kidd

Oh! Prairie breeze blow sweet and pure,
and Southern Sun shine bright,
To bless our Flag, where'er may gleam
Its single star of light;
But should thy sky grow dark with wrath,
The tempest burst and rave,
It still shall float undauntedly—
The standard of the brave.

CHORUS

[Repeats after each stanza]

Flag of our State, Oh! glorious Flag!
Unsullied in peace, and triumphant in
war;
Heroes have fought for you—
Statesman have wrought for you—
Emblazoned in glory, you bear the Lone
Star!
Emblazoned in glory, you bear the Lone
Star!

By deed of arms our land was won,
And priceless the reward!
Brave Milam died and Fannin fell
Her sacred rights to guard;
Out patriot force, with mighty will
Triumphant set her free
And Travis, Bowie, Crockett gave
Their lives for liberty!

AN EARLY SCHOOL USE

“On Texas Independence Day the pupils of Coleman High School rendered an interesting program sent out by that patriotic organization . . . A beautiful Lone Star flag, handsomely mounted, was presented to the school by Mrs. Ledbetter . . . of Woman’s Club, and the reading of “Texas Flag Song” was pronounced with a veteran patriot’s fervor by Mr. Hickman, the High School principal.”—*“Coleman Club Notes,” Galveston Daily News p. 6 (Mar. 20, 1905).*

And when on San Jacinto’s plain
The Texians heard the cry,
“Remember, men, the Alamo!”
They swore to win or die;
Resistless in their high resolve,
They forced the foe to yield,
And freedom crowned the victory gained
On that illustrious field!

Oh! Texas, tell the story o’er,
With pride recall each name,
And teach your sons to emulate
Their virtues and their fame;
So shall your grandeur still increase,
Your glory shine afar—
For deathless honor guards the Flag
Where gleams the proud Lone Star!

NEWSPAPER: “SOMETHING BRIGHT AND PRETTY.”

“Have you seen the “Flag song of Texas” in Hauschild’s music window? The Daughters of [the] Republic of Texas offered a prize of \$50 for the best musical composition set to the patriotic verses of Lee Harby. The “Flag Son” is the result of the genius of Mr. Allridge Kidd, a native of Texas. The music is inspiring and should be introduced into the public-schools of Texas and should be sung as a Thanksgiving ode. It is dedicated to Dr. Prather of the University of Texas. Go get a copy.”—*The Daily Advocate (Victoria, Tex.) p. 2 (Nov. 17, 1903).*

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D.R.T. EXPLAINS THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE SONG

The last page of the sheet music contains the following statement by the D.R.T.'s Music Committee chairwoman explaining the origin and purpose of the new song.

Dr. William L. Prather, L.L.D., President of the University of Texas, placed at the disposal of the historical association, *The Daughters of the Republic of Texas*, a cash prize of one hundred dollars to be offered for the *best original song* on the subject of the *Texas Flag*, suitable to be sung by the pupils of the public schools and the students of the University of Texas, especially on March 2nd, "*Texas Independence Day*." This song to be secured through the efforts of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas by a contest open to citizens of other States as well as those of Texas. The prize was awarded by a board of judges. Each manuscript submitted bearing a fictitious name, the real name being in sealed envelope, and not opened until after the award was made.

It is the desire of the President of the University that each public s[c]hool and the University of Texas (which has adopted it as its banner) shall have its own Texas Flag and raise it on that anniversary, and the students sing this triumphant song to it in token of appreciation of its matchless history, and to teach them the obligation they owe the State which educates them, for Texans have donated one half of their public domain to the cause of free education.

On March 2nd, 1836, Texas declared her independence of the Republic of Mexico and first among the people of the world, declared that the failure of the government to provide for the education of its children was a ground for revolution. She sent forth her statesmen as her warriors to enforce her demands for education upon the field of battle, and ere the butcheries of *Goliad* and *Alamo* had been avenged through the decisive [sic] victory at *San Jacinto*, and civil government established, than she provided for a system of public education with a University at its head and endowed the system with a rich dowry of lands.

Wherever waves the Banner of the Lone Star Republic, laden with the memories of glorious deeds, the triumphant notes of the *Flag Song of Texas* should ring out the loyalty of a grateful people.

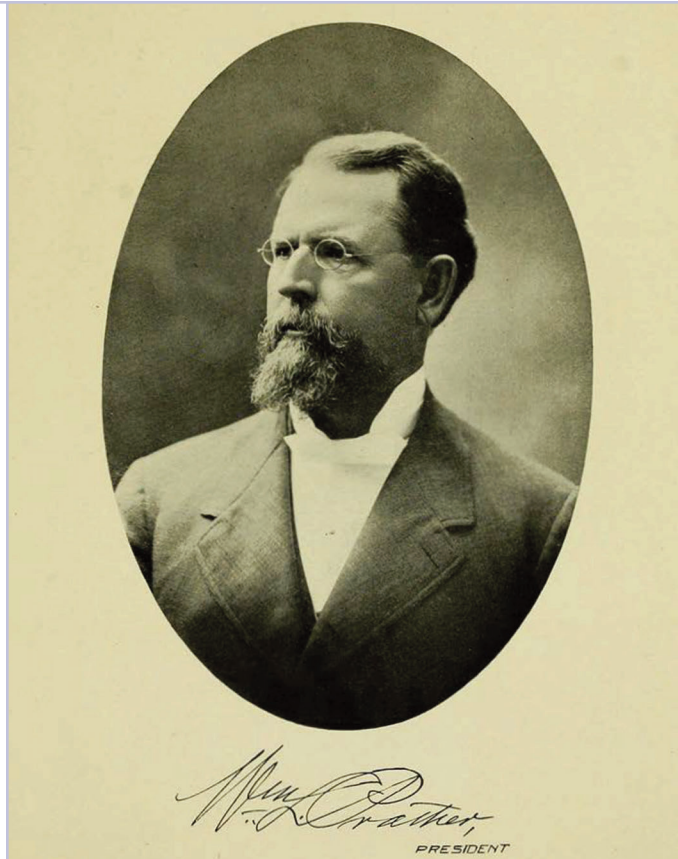
BELLE FENN,
Music Committee,
D.R.T.

HOUSTON, TEXAS

1905 MUSIC COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORT

"The sessions of the executive board of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas are always delightful occasions, socially, and of intense interest to the members of this committee, who gather, all too rarely, from different parts of the State, thus to discuss the affairs of the association. A recent meeting of this board, held at the Rice hotel, proved to be of unusual interest, because of important and encouraging facts brought out by reports from the various committees represented. . . .

Miss Fenn, chairman of committee on music and songs, gave a very gratifying report on the work of getting out the prize flag song of Texas, stating that this exquisite piece of music is for sale by the music houses of the State. The board highly appreciates the persistent and patient service of Miss Fenn in this particular field and hope that she may yet see her labors amply rewarded by the popularity of the song which she has been so faithfully instrumental in placing before the public, and that soon every school house in Texas will resound on our anniversaries with the rich charm of this song[.]"—"Clubs and Societies," *Houston Post* p. 28 (Feb. 28, 1904).



William Lambdin Prather,
President of The University of Texas (1900-05).
Cactus Yearbook, 1905

1903 MUSIC COMMITTEE REPORT ON ADOPTION

"Two years ago, you will remember, there came to this association while in session at Austin, April 30, 1901, a loyal friend and representative of Texas and her history, Dr. William L. Prather, making it known to all that he desired the public schools and universities of Texas to honor to the Lone Star State, its past, present and the time to come, and that on the 2d of March, the anniversary of the day that the Texas patriots declared that failure of the Mexican Government to provide for the education of its people was a ground for revolution, and declared it is an axiom in political science that unless a people are educated and enlightened it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity of self-government. And that each public school and the university shall on that anniversary raise the Texas flag and sing a triumphant song to it in token of appreciation of its glorious history, and to teach the children of Texas the obligation they owe to the State which educates them.

"To perpetuate in deed his loyalty, Dr. Prather made his generous offer of \$100 cash prize for the best educationally patriotic song to the Texas flag. . . .

"The creation of this song is an important event among our people, and it has required much time and ability to secure it. . . .

"You all recognize that music is not a luxury to be enjoyed by a few, but a necessity, a refining influence for all.

"The Texas Flag' song and this contest has been an inspiration to our poets and musicians, and is the means of spreading musical culture throughout the State.

"Texas, so vast in resources, is not less rich in the intellectuality of her people.

"The musical status of Texas is rapidly advancing. A few years and our homes and churches, our schools, our parks will afford us music of the highest standard: and through it all the influence of our Texas Flag Song will be boundlessly strong.

"May his blessing rest upon this song, and that it meet the glorious requirements, is my heartfelt wish. Respectfully,

"BELLE FENN."

—"Flag Song of Texas," *Galveston Daily News* p. 5 (Nov. 23, 1903).