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John James Dix

Texas Ranger
and Confederate Soldier
during the Civil War

By Dan R. Manning

All photos courtesy of Dan R. Manning unless otherwise noted.



On May 17, 1860, at the conclusion of the Cortina Campaign, John James Dix was discharged from the Texas Rangers Rio Grande Squadron.¹ He returned to his ranch on Ramireña Creek in Live Oak County, relieving his twenty-year-old wife Cynthia from her temporary management responsibilities. For four months, she had overseen the livestock operation in addition to caring for their two small children (another child had died at birth). Soon after Dix came home, she suffered the birth and soon the death of a fourth child, a daughter named Mary Isabel.² In addition to the common hardships faced by a pioneer family, an impending civil war also threatened their future.

Governor Sam Houston was staunchly opposed to the separation of Texas from the Union. In Austin, he reluctantly watched the Ordinance of Secession pass through the Texas legislature on February 1, 1861, and then become ratified on February 23. The “Hero of San Jacinto,” who had helped conceive the Republic and form the state, had probably reasoned that the majority of Texans were loyal Unionists since they had voted him into office a year earlier. After he refused to take the Confederate oath, however, he was eased out of his position of power and replaced by Edward Clark in mid-March.

1 Ranger muster roll, Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin.

2 John James Dix family Bible, in possession of Don Rollins, a great, great grandson. Don Rollins collection, Colorado Springs, Colorado (hereafter cited as Don Rollins collection).

The children (4 girls, 6 boys) of John James and Cynthia Dix:

Frances Victoria, b. September 13, 1857, and lived to maturity

John Archibald, b. November 2, 1858, and lived to maturity

Mary Dobie, b. October 11, 1859; d. at birth

Mary Isabel, b. September 2, 1860; d. December 6, 1861

Blanche Alma, b. July 16, 1862; d. August 11, 1863

Ford, b. August 23, 1865, and lived to maturity

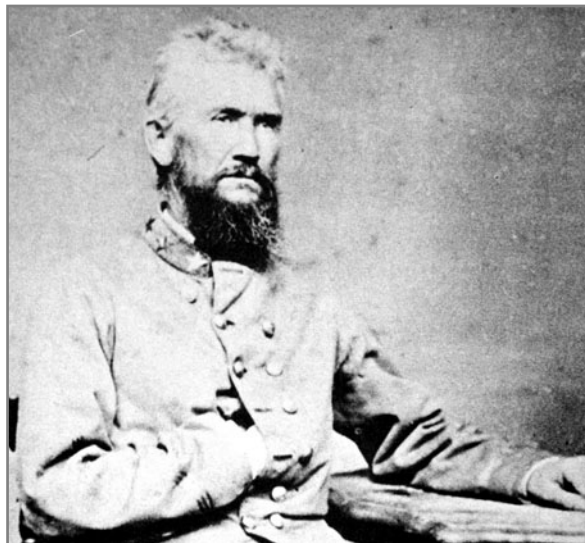
Peyton and Olwyn (twins), b. December 9, 1866 (Peyton), and December 10, 1866

(Olwyn). Olwyn died May 19, 1867, and Peyton died 6 days later on May 25, 1867.

Hayes, b. January 5, 1868, and lived to maturity.

William, b. May 20, 1870 (stillborn)

(Sam Houston, the tired, old veteran of so many military and political campaigns, died on July 26, 1863.)¹



John Salmon "Rip" Ford
Photo courtesy of Robert Nieman

Dix's former Ranger leader, John Salmon "Old Rip" Ford, had been a delegate at the Secession Convention and had received an appointment to the Committee of Public Safety from Chairman Oran M. Roberts. As commander of an expedition to demand the surrender of Fort Brown, Ford left Austin after authorizing Mat Nolan, John Littleton, and John Donelson to raise and organize a force to join him on the Lower Rio Grande.² Ford tactfully negotiated the takeover of Fort Brown without forcing immediate warfare, which had been a distinct possibility. Peacefully, federal troops vacated all Army posts and military warehouses by mid-March.

When Union General David E. Twiggs surrendered his soldiers without bloodshed, he removed a shield of protection for the border that the U.S. Army had provided since 1848. Consequently, Texans began to restructure a network of self-defense. Home guard units were organized to protect the coastline from Yankee invasions while ranging companies of volunteers patrolled along the frontier to ward off Mexican bandits and Indian raiders. During the summer and early fall of 1861, Rip Ford commanded the Military District of the Rio Grande, a thousand-mile stretch of land from the mouth of the river to a point beyond El Paso.³

Ford also finessed an action to sidestep the federal blockade at Brazos Santiago Island by promoting an unimpeded route for Confederate goods through Texas. The improvised system of commerce enabled steamboats owned by Charles Stillman, Mifflin Kenedy, and Richard King to avoid seizure by flying Mexican flags.⁴

To allow a period of much-needed rest for Ford, Colonel Phillip N. Lockett, who had been a consulting physician during the birth of John James Dix's second child, accepted command of the lower Rio Grande. Governor Clark sent Colonel Charles Grimus

1 John Hoyt Williams, *Sam Houston* (New York: Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1994), 340, 341, 342, 344, 362.

2 John Salmon Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, ed. Stephen B. Oates (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 318.

3 Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, 325-326.

4 Ford, *Rip Ford's Texas*, 329.



Thorkelin de Lovenskiold from Corpus Christi to muster out any of Ford's men who were not transferring into the regular Confederate Army.¹ As Provost Marshall of Nueces County, Lovenskiold tendered a commission to John James Dix in January of 1862, asking him to raise a company for the Confederacy. Lovenskiold regarded Dix as "an honest and good citizen, honorable in all his dealings, and reliable in every way." However, Dix declined the position²

John Dix, the father of John James, was a Union sympathizer. He had encouraged his son to remain near Cynthia and the children rather than travel east to risk his life in battles on foreign soil. According to the elder Dix, "We have our frontier to protect against the uncertain Mexicans, and wily Indians, and I think it cannot be your duty to leave your family on this exposed frontier for any other scene of action."³

John James Dix soon had another calling. In November of 1861, Frances R. Lubbock was elected as the governor of Texas, replacing Clark. He formulated a protective line along the Mexican border and instructed counties to raise 100-man companies for the Texas Frontier Regiment of Mounted Volunteers. Ranking officers were appointed on January 29, 1862. They were Colonel James N. Norris, Lieutenant Colonel Alfred L. Obenchain (soon to be murdered), and Major James Ebenezer McCord. Locations for eighteen outposts and military campsites were designated between March 17 and April 17.⁴ Dix joined the Frontier Regiment and quickly sought other recruits:

TEXAS RANGERS
ATTENTION!
DO NOT WAIT TO BE DRAFTED

The undersigned having been authorized by his excellency, the Governor, to raise a company of Rangers, under the provisions of the frontier of Texas, and approved December 21, 1861, has been granted the privilege to receive men from any portion of the State, with a view to select the very best material the country affords, that efficient service may be rendered. The act requires each man to furnish his own horse, arms and accoutrements, and I need not say that I wish them to be of the best kind available—double-barreled shot guns, light rifles and six-shooters, if possible.

1 Thomas W. Knowles, *They Rode for the Lone Star* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1999), 191.

2 Charles Lovenskiold to John James Dix, affidavit, June 28, 1862, Lanham-Napier collection, Fredericksburg, Texas (hereafter cited as Lanham-Napier collection).

3 John Dix to John James Dix, July 21, 1861, Lanham-Napier collection.

4 David Paul Smith, *Frontier Defense in the Civil War: Texas Rangers and Rebels* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1992), 42, 44, 45.



The pay offered by the State Government is very liberal and equal to the most favored troops in the service—equal to the pay of any troops of the same class in the Confederate Army.

All persons desirous of availing themselves of this last opportunity of serving their State, are invited to rendezvous at Concrete, De Witt co., on the Guadalupe river, on the last day of February, 1862, for the purpose of enrollment and organization the following day, from which time they will be provided for by the Government.

JOHN J. DIX
McMullen Co., Feb. 11, 1862.¹

Captain Dix recruited several family members to serve with him in the Frontier Regiment. His brother Benjamin became 2nd Lieutenant, and brother-in-law Thomas P. McNeill was 4th Sergeant. Privates in the company included another brother-in-law, Marvel E. McNeill; his sister-in-law's brother, William Ferrell; and Cynthia's nephew, James H. Roark.²

One-half of Dix's Company K was posted where the Sabinal-Uvalde Road crossed the Rio Frio in Uvalde County, and it became known as Camp Dix. The other half of the company was stationed at Camp Nueces, a point on the San Antonio-Eagle Pass Road where it crossed the Nueces River.³

Patrols, consisting of an officer and five privates, would routinely depart from their campsites on two-day intervals toward an adjacent camp. They were in search of tracks indicating foreign traffic toward populated regions. If a suspicious trail was cut, scouts followed it, while others rode to gather a larger force in expectation of trouble.⁴

The Frontier Regiment managed to kill twenty-one hostile Indians in combat and recapture over two hundred horses during their initial six months of service. Organized for the purpose of warding off Indian raids and renegade Mexican incursions from across the Rio Grande, the ranging companies were eventually called to the onerous duty of chasing down deserters and draft dodgers.⁵

Meanwhile, a non-field Confederate appointment as superintendent of conscripts came to Rip Ford on June 2, 1862, and he endured the undesirable position as the state's

1 Knowles, *They Rode for the Lone Star*, 193. This is a broadside initiated by John James Dix.

2 Muster roll of the Frontier Regiment Texas Mounted Volunteers, John James Dix papers, Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin.

3 Smith, *Frontier Defense in the Civil War*, 46.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Knowles, *They Rode for the Lone Star*, 194, 196.



draft officer for over a year. During his tenure, he discovered that homebound wives were fabricating excuses to gain leaves of absence for their husbands stationed on the East Coast. Ford deliberated an official statement to quell this unpatriotic practice. His directive, the Order of the Sons of the South, was a disquisition of the principals enunciated in the Constitution of the Confederate States. Ford attributed a portion of the dissertation to fellow patriot John James Dix.¹

Six months after the formation of the Frontier Regiment, Dix issued an order for 1st Lieutenant John C. Terrell to supervise the construction of a grain storage and commissary facility.² As the ongoing period of drought afforded little forage for saddle horses and pack animals in the field, the detail was considered high priority. Two weeks earlier, Terrell had sent a message from Camp Dix to Major McCord, complaining of abusive treatment. Sidestepping the regular chain of command, the obvious bootlicker stated that Dix was demanding more “than any two men could possible do.”³ Apparently, he was unused to working to his limit—unlike the discipline followed by his captain, who would not require any task from subordinates beyond his own capabilities.

One month later, Terrell begged Dix’s pardon and acknowledged the true character of his superior officer. A desperate man, in an attempt to prolong his trip to the gallows, falsely accused Dix of misappropriating horses during the Cortina Campaign. Dix requested letters from associates to show proof of his integrity, and Terrell was one of those who complied. Dix then forwarded twenty-seven affidavits to Governor Lubbock. Captain Dix’s credibility was affirmed by the governor, who stated that “the charges preferred are without foundation in fact or truth.” He encouraged Dix to disregard the accusation by assuring him that “this matter is now at rest and that you will most energetically and diligently discharge your duties as the commander of your Company.”⁴

While he was in the field, Dix had made arrangements for his family to stay in Corpus Christi with his parents John and Mary. That did not prove to be an especially safe haven, for the elder Dix was threatened throughout the war with charges of treason. Nevertheless, he would not forsake his religious beliefs, political affiliations, or national loyalties by aligning himself with a secessionist government.

An estimated one-third of the Texas population supported the Union during the Civil War in varying degrees of active or passive resistance. Another approximately one-third stayed neutral, while the remainder favored and fought for the Confederate cause.

1 Ford, Rip Ford’s Texas, 334, 335, 337.

2 John James Dix to John C. Terrell, August 1, 1862, Lanham-Napier collection.

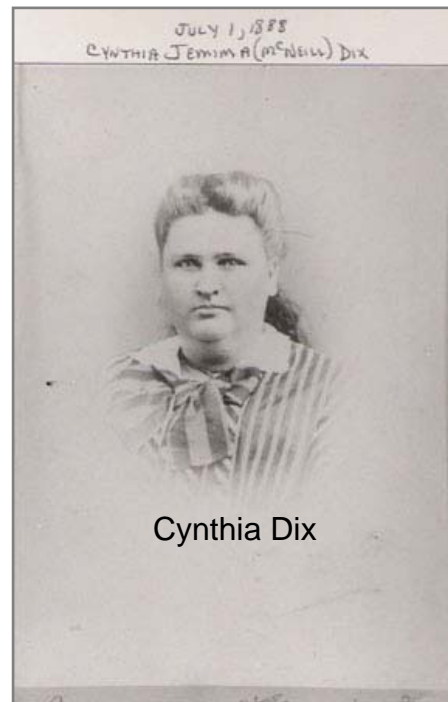
3 John C. Terrell to James Ebenezer McCord, July 12, 1862, Lanham-Napier collection.

4 Frances R. Lubbock to John James Dix, August 31, 1862, Lanham-Napier collection.

Martial law was eventually declared throughout the state in order to keep Unionist activity at a minimum.¹

During August 1862, Corpus Christi was under surveillance from Union ships. John W. Kittredge, a federal captain, requested the citizens to surrender, but they refused his offer. Most residents evacuated before shelling commenced. Two cows and a Newfoundland dog were killed, and a great number of homes were damaged. A bay-shore battery, manned by a dozen amateur artillerymen, fired thirty shots toward the attackers. They eventually hit a gunboat, fending off the projected landing.²

During one Union invasion of Corpus Christi, a tedious altercation ensued when the elder John Dix brought forth an American flag to display its colors from his rooftop. Cynthia, his outraged daughter-in-law, was determined to interrupt the flag-raising ceremony by confronting the head of the household at the foot of the stairs. Armed with a shotgun, she sternly brought him to task by warning, "My husband, your son, left me here with you to protect and take care of, not to insult, and while I am here if you attempt to raise that flag over this house, over my head, I will shoot you off the roof." Upon consideration of Cynthia's threat, Dix failed to fly his banner, proud though he was of its stars and stripes.³ Arrested and imprisoned three times and nearly hanged for being an unflinching Unionist, old John Dix would one day be remembered as "of that peculiar temperament that knew no compromise or half-way ground. If he meant Union he meant it all over, and no argument or opposition could change him."⁴



At her parents' home in San Antonio, Cynthia Dix had given birth to a daughter on July 16, 1862, but the child died on August 11, 1863, as a result of "dysentery from teething."⁵ In a letter of sympathy, the elder John Dix offered his son a few words of

1 Ralph A. Wooster, *Civil War Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 40.

2 Maria von Blucher, *Maria von Blucher's Corpus Christi: Letters from the South Texas Frontier, 1849-1879*, ed. Bruce Cheeseman (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2002), 130, 131.

3 Mrs. Frank DeGarmo, *Pathfinders of Texas 1836-1846* (Austin: Press of Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1951), 34, 35.

4 Obituary of John Dix, *Peninsula Courier & Family Vistant* (Ann Arbor, Michigan), March 18, 1870.

5 Birth and death records of Blanche Alma Dix, John James Dix family Bible, Don Rollins collection.



comfort: “When infants die we have a hope for them that we cannot have for adults, unless we can have some evidence that they have made their peace with God.” Concerned for his son’s state of mind, the old man was also “sorry to hear you say that if you could be certain of the welfare of your family for the future, you would cheerfully go into the army and yield up your life in the cause of your country.”¹

In the house divided, William Henry Harrison Dix, the second-oldest son of patriarch John Dix and his Mary, was probably urged to join the federal Army by his parents and a Yankee wife. He had gained previous experience from September 1, 1852, to March 13, 1853, as a 4th sergeant under Ranger Captain Gideon K. “Legs” Lewis in Nueces County with the Texas Mounted Volunteers.² Harrison, as family members called him, enlisted as a Union private in Company K, 14th Regiment, Illinois Infantry, on December 24, 1863. He was captured at Moon’s Station, a few miles from Atlanta, Georgia, during a skirmish on October 4, 1864, and he endured terrible conditions as a prisoner of war at Andersonville before being paroled nineteen days after Lee’s surrender to Grant.³ (William Henry Harrison Dix resided in Illinois after the war and died there on January 12, 1891.)⁴

In 1863, following one year as a captain with the Frontier Regiment, John James Dix returned to the Nueces Valley. He joined a Home Guard unit led by Captain Norwick Gussett and served as a sergeant in charge of scouting squads until 1864.⁵

In November 1863, General Nathaniel P. Banks landed with a force of 7,000 Union soldiers at the mouth of the Rio Grande, capturing Brownsville. This action temporarily interrupted river trade on a route formerly declared freely navigable. Banks sent detachments upstream to Rio Grande City and along the coast toward Corpus Christi. A large number of Union regulars were transferred across the Gulf of Mexico for a major offensive in Louisiana, which inadvertently allowed Rip Ford to reclaim the captured area. By mid-summer of 1864, Old Rip once more occupied Brownsville, and the Rio Grande was again opened for business under his protection. Union troops located to a garrisoned position at Brazos Santiago, an island near the mouth of the river.⁶

On April 12, 1864, Ford recommended John James Dix to become a commissioned officer in the Confederate Army. By way of qualifications, he confirmed that Dix had

1 John Dix to John James Dix, August 30, 1863, Lanham-Napier collection.

2 Texas Rangers, muster roll, Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin. W.H.H. Dix, age 22, enlisted at Corpus Christi, September 1, 1852.

3 William Henry Harrison Dix, service file, NATF, National Archives, Washington D.C.

4 Dix family chart, unidentifiable maker, 1882, James Kevin Purcell collection, San Andreas, California.

5 John James Dix, autobiographical sketch, 1907, Dix collection, Austin, Texas.

6 Ralph Wooster, “Civil War,” in Ron Tyler et al., eds., *The New Handbook of Texas* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1996) (hereafter cited as NHT), II:125.



raised a cavalry company near the beginning of the war and served on the frontier with a commission from the state government until the expiration of his term of enlistment. He also accredited Dix:

. . . [for] being active in assisting to defend the country west of the Nueces after its abandonment about one year ago, and of the frontier State organization was the only man who volunteered with this command upon its organization for this field of action, and being especially fitted by his intelligence, energy, and industry has been employed since then and until his recent assignment, to an agent of the Comisry [commissary] and Qr Mr Depts [quartermaster departments].¹

Charged with acquisitioning food, arms, livestock, and various other materials, Dix utilized his organizational skills. Huge quantities of beef, pork, lard, vinegar, molasses, coffee, rice, beans, pickles, flour, salt, sugar, and tobacco were procured by him for from 1,200 to 1,500 men. As a designated purchasing agent, he was also responsible for gathering hay and corn to feed saddle horses, pack animals, and wagon teams. One particularly ominous commodity Dix ordered was 500 feet of lumber for making coffins.²

The Civil War had created opportunities for making huge profits in the vicinity of Brownsville and Matamoros. During his collection rounds, Dix received contributions of thousands of dollars in gold and silver from Charles Stillman, Jose San Ramon, Mifflin Kenedy, and Humphrey Eugene Woodhouse, all wealthy businessmen. Even so, those of lesser means also made an effort to support the cause. Old Rip Ford chipped in a Spanish doubloon while thirteen members of the Texas-Mexican population donated fifty cents apiece. Most officers donated Confederate notes from their Army pay. Overcoming Union sympathies, even old John Dix gave seventy-five dollars to support his son's service to Texas.³ No doubt, he had very little to spare, even though it had been reported that federal agents "paid several visits to Corpus Christi," furnishing to "local citizens rations at King Abe's expense. Old Captain Dix it is said gave them a cordial reception to his house," and by accepting foreign aid, he was quoted as not being "patriotic enough to starve."⁴

On March 18, 1865, E. Kirby Smith, commanding general of the Trans-Mississippi Department headquartered in Shreveport, Louisiana, appointed Dix as agent of the

1 John S. Ford to Captain L. G. Aldrich, Sam Lanham collection, Fredericksburg, Texas (hereafter cited as Lanham collection).

2 John James Dix, memorandum book, 1864-1865, Dan R. Manning collection, Fair Grove, Missouri.

3 Ibid.

4 Galveston Weekly News, January 27, 1864, quoting the Goliad Messenger, January 13, 1864.



Subsistence Department. His duty was to receive pay and allowances as a commissioned Confederate captain of infantry.¹

During the same month that Dix received his promotion, Union Major General Lew Wallace arranged to meet Rip Ford and James E. Slaughter at Brazos Santiago to negotiate a peaceful atmosphere along the Texas-Mexico border. It was reasoned that continued warfare in the region would offer little hope to the struggling Confederacy. Wallace offered amnesty to the Rebel officers if they would pledge allegiance to the United States. As President Abraham Lincoln's agent, the Union general was also attempting to create an effective military force to assist Benito Juarez in overthrowing Mexican Imperialists. The intricate plan failed to attract the interests of those in command of the Department of Texas. Deprived of serious consideration, the conciliatory proposition eventually died.² (Major General Wallace later served as governor of New Mexico and also wrote the novel *Ben Hur*.)

Heavy rainfall did not deter federal soldiers as they obeyed orders from Colonel Theodore H. Barrett on May 11, 1865. Their mission was to overthrow the Confederate stronghold in Brownsville. Around noon, senior officers Slaughter and Ford were informed that 1,600 Union troops could be seen advancing on their position. Slaughter thought a hasty retreat was in order, but Old Rip preferred to bring his brave Texans up to the line of battle. He declared, "You can retreat and go to hell if you wish! These are my men, and I am going to fight." He sternly warned his superior, "I have held this place against heavy odds. If you lose it without a fight the people of the Confederacy will hold you accountable for a base neglect of duty."³

Skirmishing commenced just below San Martin Ranch, twelve miles east of Brownsville, when 300 federal soldiers under Lieutenant Colonel David Branson challenged Captain W. N. Robinson's cavalry. Ford considered the possibility that "this may be the last fight of the war, and from the number of Union men I see before me, I am going to be whipped." He placed himself at the head of all Confederate troops when Slaughter failed to appear. The battle continued throughout the afternoon and, as artillery and cavalry horses began to lose their strength, Old Rip withdrew his forces. He said, "Boys, we have done finely. We will let well enough alone and retire." The action of May 12 ended with neither side declaring a victory on the field.⁴

On the following day, Ford brought up a battery of 6 cannons to improve his odds of overpowering the Union force. He had Robinson's cavalry moved into position as the twelve-pounders began a steady barrage upon the 34th Indiana, a New York regiment

1 John James Dix, appointment to captain of infantry, from General E. Kirby Smith, commander, Trans-Mississippi Department, Lanham collection.

2 Ford, Rip Ford's Texas, 388-389.

3 Ibid., 389-390.

4 Ibid., 390-391.



known as the Morton Rifles, the 62nd Colored Infantry, and several dismounted companies of Texas cavalry under Colonel James L. Haynes. Union Colonel Barrett called for a retreat, suffering 30 field casualties while 81 of his men drowned trying to avoid capture. Ford's men were holding 113 prisoners, who began passing word to their Confederate guards that an armistice had been signed the previous month to end the war. This is how Ford learned of General Lee's surrender.¹

Slaughter eventually arrived at the battle scene and excused himself for having missed the fight in lieu of an expected attack by Cortina from Brownsville. He recommended forcing the fatigued Union soldiers into another altercation. Ford, however, declined because his men were not rested enough to continue. Slaughter advanced with his troops, but he found that the federals had deserted the field in the diminishing daylight to regroup on their campgrounds.²

The long day of combat at Palmito Ranch concluded when a teenage boy was disturbed from sleep by an exploding artillery shell. He swore loudly while shaking his fist in the air and then fired a wild shot in anger to punctuate the final episode of the American Civil War.³

Soon after prisoners were exchanged, a visit was arranged between the opposing forces. In a peaceful manner, a Union lieutenant named Magee entered Brownsville to initiate the interaction. In charge while Slaughter was again absent, Ford cautiously agreed to an informal meeting. To discourage the federal officers from misrepresenting their purpose through conversation with Texans, Ford warned that nothing of a military manner could be discussed.⁴

As guests of the Confederates, six Union officers were entertained for several days in Brownsville. One of them, admittedly out of character and knowing that his wife would have difficulty believing the unlikely circumstances, sipped a friendly eggnog at Ford's private residence.⁵ Fraternizing with the enemy was considered unbecoming an officer, even during a truce.

Lengthening the impromptu armistice, Union guests were led on an excursion across the Rio Grande. Dix was one of the escorts who guided the group into Matamoros, where they witnessed a Sunday-morning military mass and firearms salute. General Tomás Mejía arranged for a full-dress review of his troops, stationing himself on the gallery of a two-story house. The party of Americans viewed passing Mexican soldiers from the opposite side of the main plaza. Those marching in ranks recognized differing

1 Ibid., 392-393.

2 Ibid., 391-392.

3 Ibid., 392.

4 Ibid., 396.

5 Ibid.

uniforms and asked, “Is it peace in the United States? What does it mean?” They were rewarded by Ford’s quick response: “I am only trying to show these friends of mine something of the Mexican Empire.”¹

During a final unofficial peace negotiation, breakfast was prepared for the combined assemblage and served to them in the rear of John Church’s Matamoros restaurant. Ford made a grand show of parading his guests past seated French military personnel, who appeared surprised, much to Old Rip’s amusement.²

Following the friendly truce, Ford completed the disbanding of his Cavalry of the West in mid-May of 1865. He accredited John James Dix with having been an officer who “rendered essential service” and remained “on duty till the troops broke up and went home. He was always an advocate of right and justice to all men.”³



Mary & John Dix
with their youngest son, Olwyn Trask.

One of Ford’s postwar activities was the seizure of \$20,000 in silver from Slaughter, who had secretly arranged for the sale of war surplus cannons to Mejia. Old Rip promptly distributed the money among his men after counting out a portion for himself as partial back payment for services rendered to the Confederate States of America. With Mejia’s consent, he remained in Matamoros after the war, diligently arranging paroles for many of his fellow Texans.⁴

Through an ironic twist of justice, John James Dix’s father, who had been captured for being “a traitor and communicating with the Yankees” on December 31, 1864,⁵ received an appointment as Nueces County judge. He had narrowly avoided prosecution because his indictments had been absolved upon the timely federal occupation of Corpus Christi.⁶

Even though his father had been absolved, John James took his immediate family members to live with him in Brownsville. Cynthia, pregnant with their sixth child,¹ was

1 Ibid., 397.

2 Ibid.

3 John Salmon Ford, memoirs, typescript, Vol. VI, 1070, Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin, VI:1070.

4 W.J. Hughes, *Rebellious Ranger: Rip Ford and the Old Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 242-243.

5 Thomas J. Noakes, diary, Local History Room, Central Library, Corpus Christi, Texas.

6 Frank Wagner, “John Dix, Sr.,” NHT, II:657.



forced into semi-seclusion in makeshift quarters with her husband and two small children (three children had died in infancy.)² They eventually returned to Rancho Ramireña, where Dix once again made a modest living by raising livestock until moving to Corpus Christi to focus on his surveying career. After relocating to San Diego in 1876, Dix served for many years as the Duval County district surveyor. The business was put on hold during the 1890s when Dix was elected to one term in the state legislature before finding employment for two years at the Texas General Land Office in Austin.

Dix's days of battlefield combat were over, as were those of his good friend Ford, who gained opportunities to represent his region in Texas politics. The old veterans, who had once fought side-by-side, corresponded throughout the "sear and yellow leaf of life."³ For many years, they exchanged historical comments and humorous quips, always remaining on the best of terms. According to Ford:

We have been thrown together so often; have been associated in some right ugly affairs; have never even quarreled, or entertained bad feelings for each other, and have entertained for each other that friendship which never wanes—the devotion of one soldier for another.⁴

In his final days, Old Rip" bluntly regarded "Viejo Dix" to be "the remains of a once veritable Ranger, who fought for Texas because he loved the noble land, and hated whoever hated her people." ⁵

1 Don Rollins collection. Ford Dix, namesake of John Salmon Ford, was born August 23, 1865, in Corpus Christi, Texas. On January 9, 1892, he received a commission from Adjutant General W. H. Mabry to perform duties as a Special Ranger during the Catarino Garza rebellion. Adjutant general service records, Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin.

2 Cynthia J. Dix to Mary E. H. Dix, January 30, 1865, Dix collection.

3 John S. Ford to John James Dix, September 20, 1896, Lanham collection.

4 Ibid.

5 Ford to Dix, July 17, 1897, Lanham collection.