

# **“What Became of the Lively?”**

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WHAT BECAME OF THE LIVELY?

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About all that is popularly known of the Lively may be summed up in the following quotation from Yoakum. Referring to the beginning of Austin's colonization of Texas, he says: "Austin's means were limited; but he found a friend in New Orleans, by whose liberality he was greatly aided. Through J. L. Hawkins, the schooner Lively was fitted out with the necessary provisions and implements for a colony, and in November sailed for Matagorda bay with *eighteen* emigrants on board. . . . Austin sought along the coast for the Lively, *but she was never heard of more.*" The errors in this quotation are shown by the Italics. I wish to emphasize the statement, however, that it is far from my intention to find fault with Yoakum and other writers who have followed him for allowing the above inaccuracies to creep into their books. They have recorded the story of the Lively as it was popularly known among most of the old settlers. There is nothing in print, so far as I know, that would have enabled them to correct such errors, and some excuse may be offered for failing to seek documentary evidence which they had no reason to believe was in existence. They should have told us, however, that their information was derived from rumor.

Moses Austin, it will be remembered, obtained permission from the Spanish government of Mexico early in 1821 to settle three hundred families on the Colorado and Brazos rivers, and after his death his son was recognized by the governor of Texas as heir to the grant. In the same year Stephen F. Austin explored the country, selected the lands for his colony, and, in November, 1821, was in New Orleans preparing to lead the first settlers into the new country. As stated in the above extract from Yoakum, Austin was not financially able to carry into execution his cherished plans. He was not long, however, in finding friends who were willing to advance the necessary money, and in November, 1821, he formed a partnership in New Orleans, with Joseph H. Hawkins. It was Austin's plan to enter Texas by way of Red River, Natchitoches, and the San

Antonio Road, collecting his colonists at various points as he proceeded. In the meantime, seed, tools, and other supplies necessary for the settlement were to be sent by sea to the mouth of the Colorado. It was for this purpose that the *Lively*, a small schooner of some thirty tons burden was purchased by the partners in November, 1821; she was loaded with provisions and tools<sup>1</sup>, and, according to the journal of one of the emigrants, Lewis by name, sailed for the Colorado on the twenty-second or twenty-third of the same month.<sup>2</sup>

The little boat carried the following passengers besides the crew: William Little, in charge of the company, the two brothers Lovelace, Holstein and Phelps, nephews of the Lovelaces, Harrison and his servant, Captain Ginnings [perhaps meant for Jennings], Butler, Nelson, James Beard, Beddinger, Wilson, Williams, Mattigan, Thompson, Willis, O'Neal, and two or three more whose names Lewis could not remember. It is interesting to note that several (perhaps six) of these had accompanied Austin on his exploring tour through Texas some months before. The Lovelace brothers, now past middle-age, who had hunted and trapped over a very considerable portion of the southwest and who were known as substantial planters of Louisiana, are said by Lewis to have befriended Moses Austin on his return from his memorable trip to Texas in 1820-1. The acquaintance thus formed, if Lewis' statement is correct, ripened into a business connection by which one or both of the brothers acquired some kind of an interest in the Texas colony. One of them provided Stephen Austin with the greater part of the means for the purchase of the *Lively* and on one or two other occasions furnished him with smaller sums.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statement presented to — Martin, relative to the settlement of the business between S. F. Austin and the late J. H. Hawkins. Austin Papers, Collection of Hon. Guy M. Bryan, A 30.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis' journal was written some fifty-two years afterwards, and is not reliable except as to events in which he actually participated, and even then must be accepted with caution. It is a very long document, and as it records the minutest details, must have been written from notes made on the spot or soon afterwards. My notes were made from a copy in the Austin Papers, Q 16. (Since the above was written a part of the journal has been printed in the *QUARTERLY* for July, 1899. The remainder is printed in this number).

<sup>3</sup> Statement . . . relative to settlement of the business between S. F. Austin and the late J. H. Hawkins, Austin Papers, Q 16.

G. W. Lovelace, Sicily Island, to S. F. Austin, enclosing account, Dec. 18, 1835, Austin Papers, Q 23.

The voyage was delayed by gales and contrary winds so that it was some four weeks before the little craft entered the mouth of the Brazos. Here the men and tools were landed and the *Lively* proceeded on her course westward. She was expected to put in at the Brazos on her return, and probably did so, but Lewis knew nothing of it.

Let us follow for a moment the fortunes of the men thus left on the beach at the mouth of Brazos. It is barely possible that they believed themselves on the Colorado, where they had agreed to meet Austin,—certainly they were not sure for many weeks that the river was the Brazos. Almost immediately after landing, Little, the Lovelaces, and some others started up the river in a boat to explore the country and, if possible, open communication with the party that had entered Texas by land. They were gone six days and on their return reported no news. About this time or perhaps a little later we know that Austin spent many weary days on the lower Colorado waiting for the *Lively* at the appointed rendezvous and finally went on his way to Bexar and to Mexico fearing that she had been lost.

On the return of the explorers, the entire party moved up the river a few miles where they spent some three weeks in building boats to carry the tools and other supplies left by the *Lively* farther up to some place more suitable for a settlement. Their provisions were soon exhausted and in a short time their only food was the game brought in by the hunters. About the first of February everything was ready and the party embarked their goods on seven boats and laboriously worked their way up the Brazos. They passed some wigwams, but no Indians were seen; finally they landed where the first high land appeared, just below the "falls." A large log house was at once erected and preparations were made to raise a crop of corn. It was not long, however, before Lewis quarreled with the management and finally returned to New Orleans with a party of explorers who chanced to pass that way.

We thus see that, according to Lewis' journal, the emigrants carried to sea by the *Lively* were not lost, and that they spent at least some months of the year 1822 raising a crop on the banks of the Brazos.

In the meantime, Austin was called away to Mexico in the interest of the settlement and his long absence, delayed as he was by revolution after revolution, served to greatly increase the discon-

tent which drought and poor crops had aroused among the settlers. A great many of those who entered Texas in 1822, unwitting heralds of Anglo-Saxon empire, returned to the United States in the fall and winter, broken in spirit and fortune. We learn from the statement made by Austin in his settlement with the heirs of Hawkins, which I have already referred to, that the men of Little's party were among those who grew discouraged and that all returned to the United States except two or three.

The cargo of the *Lively*, or at least some part of it, finally reached San Antonio and was turned over to Brown Austin and Littleberry Hawkins, relatives of the partners.<sup>4</sup> In one of Stephen Austin's letters to his brother as to the disposition of the cargo, we catch an interesting glimpse of the inside workings of the Mexican administration in Texas. He instructs his brother to sell all the articles for cash or mules except the trunks; these are to be kept safe until he returns, for they contain "some things" for the governor and his lady.<sup>5</sup> This hint is further supplemented by a letter from J. H. Hawkins to Austin:—"Having touched the chord which *charms*, pray how were you last recd by those whose friendship we most need? Did the little presents to our friends meet the welcome hoped for? Did they please? Do they begin to believe we are something more than mere swinish multitude? Did the fair ones grow more fair and the kind ones more kind? These are small **affairs** abstractly, but mingled with others they become affairs of State. Do not suffer yourself to be supplanted in the esteem of those who Govern by lawful rule or those who govern by the magic wand which Dame nature has bestowed upon the weaker yet most lovely of her works."<sup>6</sup> Just what these "little presents" for the governor and his lady were we have no means of knowing, but it is not at all improbable that important results grew out of this method of lubricating the governmental machinery. These trunks possibly held in their small interior the good genii, which, when released

<sup>4</sup> Stephen F. Austin, City of Mexico, to Brown Austin, Bexar, Jan. 1, 1823, Austin Papers, B 6; it is quite possible that the cargo here referred to was that brought by the *Lively* on her second trip, when she was lost.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen F. Austin, Saltillo, to Brown Austin, Bexar, May 10, 1823; Austin Papers, B 5.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph H. Hawkins, New Orleans, to S. F. Austin, Feb. 6, 1822, Austin Papers, A 30. The date of this letter makes it probable that the "little presents" were sent on the *Lively's* first trip.

under favorable circumstances, were to spread their fostering arms from the San Antonio to the Sabine.

After landing her passengers and supplies at the mouth of the Brazos, Lewis tells us that the *Lively* sailed away to the west; he believed the captain was anxious to reach some Mexican port and secure a return cargo. It is more probable, however, that the schooner went on in search of the Colorado,—such at any rate is the statement made by H. Elliot, who was on the lower Colorado in the spring of 1822.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, there is little doubt that the *Lively* succeeded in finding the Colorado, and later reported to the party on the Brazos; for Edward Lovelace wrote to Austin on June 26, 1822, from the camp on the Brazos, that a vessel could not approach the mouth of the Colorado nearer than five or six miles.<sup>8</sup> It is not assuming too much, perhaps, to say that Lovelace must have received this information from the schooner on its return voyage. It is certain that the vessel returned safe to New Orleans some time prior to June, 1822; she reported as to the Colorado that “the safe and Capacious Harbour perfectly Land Locked within two Miles of the Mouth of the River more than Compensates for the shoal water at its Mouth where lighters must be used.”<sup>9</sup> It thus becomes evident that the *Lively* did reach the Colorado after having deposited her cargo and passengers at the mouth of the Brazos; unless, indeed, her captain when he made his report was still laboring under the mistake that the Brazos was the Colorado.

The fact that the *Lively* failed to meet Austin at the appointed place was sufficient foundation for the rumor that the vessel had been lost, and the inconvenience to which some of the settlers were subjected by the want of the implements and seed that had been shipped on board the schooner no doubt served to emphasize her loss and give greater currency to the report. The rumors as to the fate of the passengers were various; it seems that most of the old settlers believed all were lost when the vessel went down; but at least one account has been preserved which says that some were drowned in the breakers or were starved to death by the Indians

<sup>7</sup> H. Elliott to Austin, Bexar, March 25, 1822, Austin Papers, E 29.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Lovelace, Brazos, to S. F. Austin, June 26, 1822, Austin Papers, Q 93.

<sup>9</sup> John Sibley, Natchitoches, to Brown Austin, June 6, 1822, referring to a letter from J. H. Hawkins, Austin Papers.

while others were guided to the Colorado by a party of Carancahuas.<sup>10</sup>

The reports which thus became current were never corrected, probably because the party brought by the *Lively* never had communication to any extent with other settlers, and disappeared during the summer and fall of 1822 almost as completely as if they had been swallowed up by the sea. Some of them did indeed return to Texas at a later date, but the story of the shipwreck and of the loss of the *Lively's* passengers had then gained too wide-spread acceptance to admit of general correction. No doubt the immediate neighbors of Phelps and of others who returned to Texas knew the true version of the story, but it came too late to arouse sufficient interest to carry it to other settlements. It was in this way, I have no doubt, that the rumor became accepted as true and finally found its way into our first-published histories.

When Lewis reached New Orleans, after his adventures in Texas, he was told by "my sailor McDonald" that the schooner had returned, had again been loaded, and "that one of the Messrs. Hawkins had started back with her and foundered on the coast in a storm and all was lost;" such was probably the report among the sailors of New Orleans. Lewis, however, seems inclined to attach little weight to "my sailor McDonald's" opinion, for the *Journal* proceeds with the following obscure sentence: "I think from what I gleaned from him, had gone to Matamoras and sold her and the freight; Captain Butler quit her there." I quote the exact words as they are found in Col. Bryan's copy of the journal of Lewis, because this unsatisfactory passage has afforded some ground for the belief that the *Lively* turned pirate. It should be kept in mind, however, that Lewis' journal is full of all manner of errors when he attempts to record events that did not come under his immediate observation; for this reason little credit is to be given his unsupported statement.

There is no doubt, however, that the vessel made the trip referred to by McDonald. Thomas M. Duke, who afterwards became the first constitutional alcalde of Austin's colony and who was prominent for many years in various capacities, both civil and military,

<sup>10</sup> Recollections of Mrs. ———, who was among the first immigrants to come to Texas by sea. (Austin Papers, S 37.) This rumor may possibly refer to the wreck of the *Lively* on her second voyage.

was one of the passengers of the *Lively* on this second trip. He tells us that the vessel, loaded with supplies and immigrants, sailed from New Orleans for the Texas coast in May or June, 1822, and that she was wrecked on the western end of Galveston Island. Her passengers were taken on board the schooner *John Motley* and put ashore at the usual landing place near the mouth of the Colorado. No mention is made by him of any loss of life.<sup>11</sup> This was probably the end of the schooner; we hear nothing more of her, and it is known that Austin believed that she was lost on Galveston Island.

One of the most interesting features of Lewis' journal is the glimpse it affords us of active exploration along the coast of Texas during the year 1822. The *Lively's* passengers came in contact with no less than six parties that had sailed, for one purpose or another, to the west of the Sabine. On the outward voyage they had been compelled to put into Galveston Bay, and in the darkness they were able to discern the outlines of another vessel in the same shelter. For some reason they became suspicious of the character of the stranger and the next morning, when they found themselves alone in the bay, suspicion became conviction that the strange vessel was a pirate. On another occasion, while the party was engaged in building boats some miles from the mouth of the Brazos, they were astonished at the approach of a small boat from the direction of the sea. The occupant, Fitzgerald by name, who had made the voyage from Calcasieu in a forty-foot boat, asked and received permission to join the party. After the landing was made at the "falls" and the log house erected, two of the boats returned to the mouth of the river to await the *Lively* and to bring up the remaining stores. While there they were joined by a stranger whose name was Morton, who told them that he had sailed from Mobile in his own schooner with his wife and five children, that the vessel had gone ashore on the west end of Galveston Island, that his family and sailors had all escaped ashore where his family still remained, the sailors having gone westward for help. The entire party volunteered to go to the aid of the distressed family. Though two of the rescuers were drowned by the capsizing of a boat the Mortons were brought to camp and finally established themselves near the settlement at the "falls." The name of William Morton appears among Austin's original three hundred settlers, and is possibly the Morton

<sup>11</sup> Recollections of Thomas M. Duke. Austin Papers, Q 2.



here referred to. Later on, a party of four men attached themselves to the settlement; and still later a boat containing several prospectors came up the river, and Lewis, discouraged and at loggerheads with the rest of the party, joyfully recognized some old acquaintances among them. He returned to the United States with these friends. On their return voyage they put in at Galveston bay and remained for a time near the "Sander Sento," where they found a camp of immigrants who had just landed with the intention of making Texas their home.

In conclusion, the story of the *Lively*, it seems, should be corrected to read somewhat as follows: Late in the year 1821 Austin and Hawkins sent out this little vessel loaded with supplies and a number of immigrants (more than eighteen); the destination was the mouth of the Colorado, where Austin was expected to meet the vessel, but for some unknown reason the party and the supplies were landed at the mouth of the Brazos. The immigrants constructed boats and moved up to the "falls," where they raised a crop; nearly all became discouraged and returned to the United States during the year 1822. In the meantime the *Lively* probably sailed on to the Colorado and then returned to New Orleans, where she again received a cargo of supplies and passengers. While passing Galveston Island, the unfortunate vessel was wrecked and probably went to pieces, though her passengers were taken off by the schooner *John Motley* and were landed at the usual place near the Colorado. If one cares to indulge in speculation, it needs little effort to picture the *Lively* bearing to Texas the golden keys that were to admit Austin's settlers to the favors and good-will of the Mexican government, and this is perhaps the most important fact in the history of the little schooner.