

Hood's Texas Brigade

There's something unique about Texans, a fact that was strikingly evident at the Alamo. Native Texans are a tough breed, and many with real "roots" in Texas are the offspring of forebears who fought invading Mexicans, Yankees, and bloodthirsty Indians.

Among the many famous anecdotes that illustrate both their courage and their fortitude comes one from none other than General Robert E. Lee in a quote attributed to him by Joseph Benjamin Polley, author of ***Hood's Texas Brigade***, published in 1910.

In 1861, a British Colonel (later Field Marshall and 1st Viscount) named Garnet Wolseley was dispatched to North America by the ***British War Office*** following an incident in which Yankees boarded a British ship and seized two Confederate diplomats. Wolseley's mission was to evaluate Canada's defenses in case Britain went to war with the Yankees over that incident.

After visiting Canada, Wolseley traveled to the South where he made the acquaintance of General Robert E. Lee and General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson. He wrote of his experiences in an article titled "***A Month's Visit to the Confederate Headquarters***," which was published in ***BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE*** in 1863.

One day, at General Lee's invitation, Colonel Wolseley joined General Lee in reviewing the *Army of Northern Virginia* as it marched from Sharpsburg, Maryland to the Rapidan River in Virginia. Colonel Wolseley indicated in his article that he was particularly impressed by Lee's ability to identify each of his many commands by their home states.

As the ***First Texas Brigade*** passed by, the look on Wolseley's face went from admiration to astonishment because the backs of their uniforms were badly tattered from months in the field. This was particularly true of the seats of their trousers, which were worn to such an extent that they left little to the imagination.

As he usually did, General Lee aptly summarized the situation with this now famous quote that put the incident in proper perspective:

"Never mind their raggedness, Colonel: The enemy never sees the backs of my Texans."

W. B. Travis
San Antonio