
The Dream That Saved Wilbarger

ONE cold night soon after he came to Texas, Bigfoot Wallace was sitting in the warm cabin of a settler down the Colorado River when a man wearing a strange-looking fur cap entered, stood bent over the fire a few minutes, and then removed his headgear to warm his head better. At sight of the raw-looking, hairless scalp thus exposed, Bigfoot Wallace broke the social code against asking questions.

"My friend," he ventured, "excuse me, but what is the matter with your head?"

"I have been scalped by the Indians," the stranger replied.

Josiah Wilbarger wore a cap or hat, even at the dinner table, from the pre-dawn hour of rising until bedtime, when he put on a nightcap. The story of his scalping and of the dream that saved his life is still told by descendants of early settlers and may be read in reminiscences of those times.

In 1830, Josiah Wilbarger, lately from Missouri, located on a headright survey along the Colorado River about ten miles above the crossing of the *camino real*—the royal road, as the Spaniards called it—between San Antonio and Nacogdoches. His nearest neighbor was thirty miles or so down the river. Two

years later his friend Reuben Hornsby built, with slave help, a double-log cabin up the river, nine miles below the present city of Austin, and moved into it with his wife Sarah and eight children. Although separated by several miles, the families were close neighbors. The names Wilbarger Creek and Hornsby's Bend fix permanently the locations of these two outposts of colonization.

Early in August, 1833, Wilbarger went up to Hornsby's to join a party of men scouting for headrights. The Hornsby home had already become a kind of land's-end headquarters. After spending the night, Wilbarger, in company with four men named Christian, Haynie, Standifer, and Strother, set out to explore to the northwest. On Walnut Creek they sighted a lone Indian, who ran and escaped into the cedar hills.

After the chase the party turned homeward. Near Pecan Spring, as the place was later named, they halted to noon. Wilbarger, Christian, and Strother unsaddled their horses and hobbled them to graze; the other two men staked theirs with the saddles on, merely removing the bridles. While all five were eating, Indians skulked up in the brush and fired on them, some with only bows and arrows. The white men got behind trees, which were small, and returned the fire, but soon Strother received a mortal wound and a ball broke Christian's thigh. With an arrow through the calf of a leg and a flesh wound in a hip, Wilbarger dragged Christian behind a tree. About this time an arrow went into his other leg. Haynie and Standifer now made for their saddled horses. As they mounted, Wilbarger started running toward them, calling upon them to wait. They saw him pitch headlong to the ground. Then they saw "fifty Indians" rushing for his scalp. They got away and reached Hornsby's house in safety.

There they told how they had seen the savages scalping their