

BENJAMIN MARSHALL BAKER



This picture of Ben Baker is found on the "Wall of Faces," Gettysburg Museum, Gettysburg NMP.

Born to Dr Job McNamee Baker and Sarah Carter Baker, Benjamin Marshall Baker, born March 12, 1837, in Morehouse Parish Louisiana, was the fifth of seven children who lived to adulthood. The family left LA that year and moved to Marshall Texas where Dr Baker was the first minister of the First Methodist Church.

Ben, with older brother James and younger brother Hicks, after studying the newspaper business in San Antonio, opened the first weekly newspaper in Columbus Texas, *The Colorado Citizen*. This newspaper is still published today as *The Colorado County Citizen*.

In the summer of 1861 along with many young men from Columbus, Ben traveled to Camp Van Dorn, in Harrisburg Texas to begin training for the Confederate Army.

In September 1861, Echo Company B, 5th Texas Infantry arrived at Camp Rocketts, on the James River near downtown Richmond, VA. where they were formally mustered into the Confederate Army "for the war," along with the 4th and the rest of 5th companies of the Texas Infantry. The 1st Texas Brigade had arrived in VA earlier. The three regiments became Hood's Brigade, (named for their favorite commander, John Bell Hood), Army of Northern VA. Under the leadership of General Lee, from June 1862 on, this brave unit earned the reputation as Lee's Grenadier Guards, his shock troops. One can look at their monument on the Texas State Capitol grounds and read General Lee's quotes about this famous, tenacious, hard fighting brigade, whom he depended on in many battles.

The newspaper closed for lack of supplies and ads in November 1861. James and Hicks joined Ben in April 1862. The brothers fought together in the 5th until Ben was seriously wounded at 2nd Manassas. He would rejoin the company before the Battle of Fredericksburg. Hicks was the regimental color bearer at Sharpsburg, carrying the flag out of the East Woods into the Corn Field where he was killed. James was wounded in that same battle and invalided out of the CSA Army. Ben would continue fighting in thirty battles and engagements and skirmishes; wounded again at Gettysburg, again at Chickamauga and again at Bermuda Hundred. One can find Ben's picture on The Wall of Faces in the Gettysburg Museum, Gettysburg National Military Park. The Texas Brigade received their paroles at Appomattox CH on April 13, 1865.

Ben returned to Columbus where he and James had to sell the paper to a wealthy citizen of the town. This new owner did not know how to run a newspaper, so Ben continued as the publisher. In fact, he continued with that job through three consecutive owners. In 1872 he had saved enough money to buy his newspaper back and was the owner-editor until he died. In Columbus, on his thirty-seventh birthday, Ben married Jenny Cunningham, daughter of Judge Leander Cunningham, a veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto. Jenny was twenty-six. They had three children: my grandfather, Drew and two daughters. Ben was a leading citizen of the town; an alderman, the mayor and the county hero of the WBTS. He was affectionately known as "Colonel" Baker, though his rank at the end of the war was 1st Lt. Only ten men of over one hundred enrolled in Co. B returned home.

He was a Southern Cross of Honor recipient and a charter member of Hood's Texas Brigade Association. Known for his kindness to all and his willingness to help young men learn the newspaper business, *The Houston Post* stated in one obituary that he was a well-respected, conservative newspaper editor in South Texas. He died at home on December 8, 1907. His funeral was the largest the county has ever seen. The school closed as the band played and marched, along with leading dignitaries in his funeral cortege. Ben is buried in the Odd Fellows Rest Cemetery in Columbus, Texas.



Ben's tombstone marker Odd fellows Cemetery

Bibliography Notes for story of Ben M Baker:

Letters written by Ben M Baker to brother James Baker, from July 1861- November 1861. Printed in their newspaper, *The Colorado Citizen*. <http://www.ColumbusTexasLibrary/localhistory>

35 pages of muster rolls for Ben M Baker from Fold 3

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