



From letters of William Alexander McClintock, of Kentucky, to his family as he crossed Texas on his way to the Mexican War, 1846. (Manuscript compiled by relatives is in the Archives of the Barker History Center, University of Texas.)

"I reached St. Mark's /San Marcos/ at sunset /Sept. 20, 1846/There is the finest spring or springs (for there are no less than fifty in a distance of 200 yards) I ever beheld. These springs gush from the foot of a high cliff and boil as from a well in the middle of the channel. One of these, the first you see in going up the stream, is near the center; the channel is here forty yards wide, the water 15 or 20 feet deep. Yet so strong is the ebullition of the spring that the water is thrown two or three feet above the surface of the stream. I am told that by approaching it in a canoe you may see down in the chasm from whence the water issues. Large stones are thrown up, as you've seen grains of sand in small springs. It is unaffected by the driest season. I am persuaded that the quantity of water which is carried off by this stream in the course of a year is greater than that by the South Licking /in Kentucky/. It is about sixty feet wide by three feet deep on an average, with a current of no less than ten or fifteen miles per hour. Great numbers of the finest fish and occasionally an alligator may be seen sporting in its crystal waters. The town of St. Mark's (that is to be, for it is only born and christened; the first of the four houses it contains having been put up four weeks since) stands on one of the loveliest spots of Nature. Immediately at the rear of it, to the north, a range of romantic woody hills extends away for many miles to the west, terminating at the north in an abrupt cliff from which issues the spring. The spring branch (St. Mark's River) runs half around the the place in a semi-circle, forming the eastern and southern boundary. At the west the prairie rises in easy and regular swells for miles away. These swells are mostly covered with clumps of live oak, or groves of post, or pecan. The townsite, containing a mile square, slopes from the center to the east, south, and west, a number of trees standing singly or in groups cover this area -- many of them hung with graceful festoons of Spanish moss. The margin of the stream and sides of the hills are adorned with innumerable flowers and shrubs. In the edges of the stream, water cresses and palmettos grow to a gigantic size. Great quantities of game are in the neighborhood. It was a few months since a favorite resort and camping ground for roving bands of Comanches. I have met a lad of 17 who was taken when three years old by them, on Red River, and roamed with them nine years. Also, he was engaged in a battle with Texans about three miles from this place three or four years since. His father was one of the Texan party. The lad (his name I cannot remember) was wounded; his father was killed sometime after on the Rio Grande. Sometime after the battle, he felt for the first time a wish to return to the whites. This feeling he could not shake off, and seeing an opportunity he made his escape. After several weeks of danger and privation and hairbreadth "scapes" he reached the settlements on the Brazos. He attached himself to one of the ranging companies on the frontier -- a life more congenial, I should think, to him than all others. He is yet an Indian in his manner, feelings, and appearance.

ST MARKS

"22nd. Dividing the little money we had, five of the party went on to San Antonio. Shipley, Baker and myself remained at St. Marks. Both of them had the chills and fever. I got 20 grains of quinine ... in Austin, I paid 81 1/4¢. This I divided with them. On the 23rd left

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No. 1926

1840 Oct. 21, H. McLEOD, CAMP AT SAN MARCOS SPRING, TO
M. B. LAMAR, AUSTIN, [TEXAS]¹⁰

Camp at San Marcos Spring
October 21st. 1840

Dear Genl.

The late severe rain detained Mr Lindsey, who was to have met me here on Sunday last, until today— the Country too around the spring, is much more heavily timbered than was supposed— The Company under Capt Wehl have done themselves great credit in cutting a road of 3½ miles thro' a dense bottom interlaced with brier, grape vine— (one is in view now measuring eleven inches through) and under growth of the most stubborn kinds— The term *bottom* however does not properly apply, for the spring or springs for there are several being the extreme head of the river, it never rises nor falls, nor are there are annoying insects— The springs rise along the foot of a mountain, whose highest peak (it is irregular) is about 800, to 1000 feet above the grand prairie which it overlooks— Fairy Land cannot excel it in the beauty of its landscape, nor will the highlands of the Hudson compare with the bold, yet softened scenery of its mountain views— Towering hills arise on every side, but the bleak baldness that would chill the blood in a northern clime, is vied here, in the perpetual verdure of the live oak—

I have examined the topography of the whole surrounding Country, & will go over it again tomorrow with Lindsey, & select a commanding position with the necessary advantages of water &c, & lay out the plan of the works—

Since I have been in Camp, not a single mess, has eaten half its ration of beef— The Captain permits the men to hunt in parties of 5 to 8, & they bring in Turkeys deer &c more than enough for the whole command— The men are healthy & cheerful, & do their duty with that alacrity that makes duty a pleasure to their Officers— The sick of other companies who were sent here are nearly all well, & doing duty—

The road thro here is level & dry & will cut off a large elbow of the Old road—

I enclose you Legumes Letter¹⁰ of resignation, which came today by Lindsey— An acquaintance in Bexar writes that they are very anxious to elect their Senator in time for Congress, & they send the Mexican who bears this, to carry the writ of election back express, if you are pleased to grant it—

Should you feel strong enough in a week or so to come out here, you will find much to amuse you, in hunting & fishing & more to admire in

¹⁰A. L. S.

¹⁰This document is not now with the Lamar Papers.

SMHC

This marker is located on Old Bastrop Hwy, CR 266, near the McGehee Crossing. There are three State Historical Markers located there:

The Charles Lewis McGehee Cabin is on one side of the road.

On the other side there is the "Site of the First Town of San Marcos, San Marcos de Neve" marker and the "Don Felipe Roque de la Portilla" marker. But positioned between these two State Historical Markers is this monument to Zebulon Pike, and it includes an 1807 description of the River.

This marker's provenance is unknown.

