

Ritson Morris and Santa Ana

As Mexican troops advanced toward the Brazos River in 1836, Ritson Morris sent his wife and three children, Virginia, Mary Jane and Dabney, to New Orleans on the schooner *Kosciusko*. Soon after, Mexican troops invaded Elmwood Plantation, capturing two slave girls and looting the home. Mr. Morris, a few slaves and a cook named Savannah escaped by rowing out into Galveston Bay with what valuables they could hastily seize.

A family legend recounts that several days following the defeat of the Mexican army after the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, several men approached the Morris Plantation in the company of a heavily guarded Mexican prisoner, asking for lodging overnight. The next morning, the cook, Savannah, prepared breakfast for the guests. The Morris' had a pet parrot which had a habit of screeching the cook's name in a way which sounded very closely to the Spanish pronunciation of "Santa Ana." The startled reaction of the prisoner to the parrot apparently revealed his true identity to Mr. Morris. The guards divulged they were under orders of General Sam Houston to take Santa Ana to Freeport. Mrs. Morris and the others returned from New Orleans shortly after hearing of the recent victory at San Jacinto. In actuality, the incident took place several months later, in November, during which time Santa Ana was being accompanied to Washington D. C.

Ritson Morris died from tuberculosis on September 21, 1849, leaving each of his six children, Virginia, Mary Jane, Penelope, Ada, Osceola and Edley, one hundred acres of land. In 1852, Virginia married Canadian Alfred Menard, brother of the founder of Galveston, Michael Menard. Several descendants of the Morris family continue to reside in Seabrook today.