

## Edward F. Mitchusson, Doctor, Soldier, and Relative

When one speaks of the Alamo, the typical, well-known leaders such as William Barret Travis, Davy Crockett, and James Bowie come to mind. Teachers tell the story of the Alamo with an emphasis on these famous heroes and the ill-famed Santa Anna, but little attention is given to the many volunteers and members of the army that gave their lives for Texas' independence. Behind the story of the siege and battle at the Alamo, exist men, whose names and jobs are not known or recognized. Yet these men played roles in the history of the Alamo that were just as important as the roles played by Travis, Crockett, and Bowie. One of these men, Edward F. Mitchusson, a relative on my mother's side of the family, played a significant role as a doctor and a soldier in the Texas Revolution and at the Alamo. In a past, historic event, such as the battle at the Alamo, where very little is known about the actual proceedings that took place, many of the facts perceived to be true about the people involved are inaccurate. Because so little is known about what really happened at the Alamo, very little information exists about Edward F. Mitchusson. Most of the information that does exist is incorrect. In telling the story of the life of Mitchusson, I will attempt to correct discrepancies about his life and errors that are used to portray him and memorialize him at the Alamo. Also, most of the well-known heroes who fought at the Alamo were leaders or popular political figures, but what about the men, like Mitchusson, whose names are never mentioned and who were heroes

through their actions as doctors? Edward F. Mitchusson, unknown to many, was a hero as a soldier and a doctor in the Texas Revolution and at the Alamo, and hopefully the inaccuracies about his life will be corrected with the following research and elaborated points.

Dr. Edward F. Mitchusson was born to John Drury Mitchusson and Lucretia Roberts Mitchusson some time between 1805 and 1813 in Caldwell County, Kentucky (Showalter). He had a sister, named Lucretia Mitchusson Kevil, born on June 25, 1810 and a brother named Jacob Robert Mitchusson, also known as J.R. Mitchusson, born on January 4, 1814 (Showalter). Mitchusson's exact date of birth is not known. It is extremely odd that the exact birthdays of both of Mitchusson's siblings are known, but his date of birth remains a mystery. In a letter written to the president of the San Antonio Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Lurena Kevil Bradley, the granddaughter of Mitchusson's sister, Lucretia, writes that Mitchusson was her grandmother's younger brother (Bradley). If the birthday of Mitchusson's older sister was recorded, then certainly one would think that his date of birth would be recorded. Lurena Bradley states in her letter that her great uncle was only about 23 or 24 when he died in 1836 (Bradley). A different source states that Mitchusson was born February 23, 1812 (Showalter). With this birth date, Mitchusson would be younger than his sister and would have been about 24 years old when he died at the Alamo. This birth date backs up what Lurena Bradley states in her letter, therefore this date is a definite logical possibility. Mitchusson was born and

raised in Caldwell County, Kentucky (Showalter). There is almost no information about the upbringing and education of Mitchusson, but he was a doctor, specifically a surgeon (Groneman 81). There is also very little information known about Mitchusson's life before going to Texas.

There is more information available about Mitchusson's life once he moved to Texas, but the information is still minimal. It is known that he was a single man of about 24 years when he participated in the Texas Revolution (Bradley). According to Lurena Bradley's letter, Mitchusson moved to Washington County, Texas before going to San Antonio and participating in the Texas Revolution (Bradley). Mitchusson joined the army as a private in Captain Edward's Company on November 30, 1835 (Groneman 81). Although it is documented that he joined the army at the end of 1835, his entrance into the army could have been much earlier. A well-documented letter written to Henry Rueg, Jefe Politico of Nacogdoches District, from James Bowie on August 3, 1835 states that "Doctor Mitcherson", one of the common misspellings of Mitchusson's name, will deliver the letter (Jenkins 302). If Mitchusson was going to deliver a letter for Bowie, then he could have joined the army as early as August of 1835 (Jenkins 301, 302). Bowie's letter says, "The Cherokees are anxious that you should send with them as many of the Mexicans that live in Nacogdoches as you can – for more of the particulars I refer you to Doctor Mitcherson who will bear this" (Jenkins 302). While fighting in the siege of Bejar that lasted from December 5, 1835 to December 10, 1835, he was wounded

(Jenkins 240). On January 1, 1836, he enlisted in Captain Chenoweth's Company, and then fought at the battle of the Alamo on March 6, 1836 where he was killed (Groneman 81).

After Mitchusson's death, his younger brother Jacob Robert Mitchusson, who went by J.R., took it upon himself to go to Texas and obtain the one-third league of land that the government owed his brother for fighting in the Revolution (Showalter). He petitioned for administration on the land of Edward F. Mitchusson sometime before April 13, 1838 (Black 95). When Edward died, he only owned his bounty land and pay for his services, he left no will, and there was no administration on his estate, therefore the Republic of Texas recognized J.R. as his brother and made him the administrator of Edward's estate (Black 95). On April 4, 1841, 5 years after Mitchusson's death, J.R. wrote a letter to his sister, Lucretia, and her husband, Drury M. Kevil, in Princeton, Caldwell County, Kentucky from Washington County, Texas (Showalter). He said that he found his brother's land but had not yet received a deed for it from the government (Showalter). J.R. found a few of his brother's documents in which there were receipts from a man named I.J. Wilson for notes of about seven or eight hundred dollars that Edward had left (Showalter). While he was working on his brother's affairs, he met a woman named Elizabeth Connell who he married on April 1, 1841 (Showalter). He wrote that he married her for love and not for money, and he was living with Elizabeth, her father, her five brothers, and her sister (Showalter). In the letter, J.R. expresses his desire for his sister, Lucretia, and

her husband to move to Texas from Kentucky explaining that they could make a much better living there (Showalter). J.R.'s wife, Elizabeth, writes in the letter, "I have a great desire to see you in Texas as I think it to be one of the prettiest countries in the continent and if you could see Texas you could not be hired to live in Kentucky" (Showalter). This statement reflects how Mitchusson sacrificed himself so that his family and others could enjoy the advantages of Texas. Eventually, the government gave Mitchusson's family the land owed to him for his services in the army. His relatives received 1920 acres in Van Zandt County on December 22, 1845, 640 acres on July 18, 1853, 320 acres in Atascosa County on April 26, 1873, and 320 acres in Runnels County on April 19, 1875 (Miller 475, 816).

The role that Edward F. Mitchusson played in the Texas Revolution and the fate that befell him are evident, but the most important question of why Mitchusson chose to go to Texas and fight has yet to be answered. Why did Mitchusson choose to leave Kentucky and his family to go to an unfamiliar place and fight for a cause that would not have affected him had he stayed in Kentucky? There are many possibilities. Although it is highly doubtful that he decided to go to Texas and fight in the war with a relative, perhaps he and a friend or a group of friends made the choice to go to Texas and join the army together. There are a few native Kentuckians who were defenders at the Alamo so the possibility of Mitchusson going to Texas with friends is not completely ruled out. Maybe he had just recently finished his education to become a doctor

and was looking for opportunities to practice his profession or start his career. Perhaps he was like many other young men who decided to join the army and just wanted an adventure. Mitchusson possibly could have just saw going to Texas and joining the army as an easy opportunity to obtain free land and start a new life. Whatever the reason was for Mitchusson going to Texas, it definitely changed his fate, the history of Texas, and the future of the Mitchusson family. It started the beginning of the move of the Mitchusson family into Texas along with helping Texas gain its independence.

Because the circumstances surrounding the battle of the Alamo are questionable, the facts displayed about Edward F. Mitchusson at the Alamo are inaccurate. These inaccuracies have carried over from the shrine of the Alamo to books, articles, and most of the written information about Mitchusson. The most frequent error is the misspelling of his name. There are more than 6 different misspellings of his name documented that consist of Michison, Mitchison, Mitchason, Mitchson, Mitcherson, and Mitchasson (Groneman 81). Lurena Kevil Bradley first attempted a correction to these errors in 1936 in her letter to the DRT (Bradley). Bradley's main intent in writing the letter was to alert the DRT of the fact that most of the information presented about her great uncle was incorrect (Bradley). In her letter, Bradley writes that Mitchusson's "name is badly misspelled on the tablet in the Alamo, also on the monument to the Heroes of the Alamo on the capital grounds at Austin" (Bradley). She also states that Henry-Ryder Taylor's "History or the Alamo" and a list of the Alamo heroes that

appeared in the San Antonio Express earlier that spring had misspelled his name (Bradley). Also, Mitchusson's name on the monument in front of the Alamo is to this day still spelled Mitchasson and has not been corrected even after Bradley's letter was written to the DRT. Although his name has been corrected on the plaque inside the chapel of the Alamo, the majority of the books and articles found on Mitchusson misspell his name along with the monument in front of the Alamo. The correct spelling of Mitchusson's name is slowly but surely replacing the older forms.

Another common mistake portrayed about Mitchusson is his home state. Most sources, as well as the monument in front of the Alamo and the plaque at the Alamo in the Long Barracks Museum, list Mitchusson as a Virginian. Although some sources state that he came from Missouri or Mississippi, Virginia is the state that is most often portrayed as his birthplace (Groneman 81). In her letter, Bradley writes that her grandmother's younger brother came from Kentucky (Bradley). It is possible that Mitchusson could have been born in Virginia and then moved to Kentucky with his family. Although it is possible that Mitchusson was born in Virginia and moved to Kentucky, it is highly doubtful because there are census records that indicate that the Mitchusson family was living in Kentucky as early as the late 1790s or early 1800s. Even if Mitchusson was not born in Kentucky, records show that the Mitchusson family came to Kentucky from South Carolina, so his native state would still be incorrect (Showalter).

Another inaccuracy accepted as fact about Mitchusson is his age. Most sources say that he was born in 1806 and died in 1836 at the age of 29 or 30 (Groneman 81). According to Bradley's letter, Mitchusson was much younger than 29. Bradley says that he was her grandmother's younger brother (Bradley). Bradley's grandmother, Lucretia, was born in 1810 so if Mitchusson was born in 1806 like most sources state, then he would not be the younger brother of Lucretia, but her older brother (Showalter). Also, Bradley states that Mitchusson was 23 or 24 years old when he died (Bradley). A separate source states that Mitchusson was born on February 23, 1812, which would make him younger than Lucretia and around 24 years old when he died in 1836 (Showalter). It is upsetting to see that Lurena Bradley's letter, with all of the information that corrects the common mistakes about Mitchusson, was written 65 years ago, and still not much has been done to remedy these discrepancies. Hopefully, with the evidence provided, people who learn about Edward F. Mitchusson will be taught that he was a 24-year-old doctor named Mitchusson from Kentucky instead of a 30-year-old doctor named Mitchasson from Virginia.

When the Alamo comes to mind, most people think of James Bowie, William Barret Travis, and Davy Crockett as the heroes that define the battle. Rarely does one hear about the other 186 men who gave their lives for Texas. These unknown men were heroes too and did just as much, if not more, as Bowie, Travis, and Crockett to help Texas win its independence. Not only was Edward F. Mitchusson a hero in the sense that he was a soldier and gave



his life for Texas, but also in the sense that he was a doctor who played a significant role in the Texas Revolution. In his book, A Century of Medicine in San Antonio, Dr. Pat Ireland Nixon describes Mitchusson as a medical hero in the Texas Revolution (Nixon 68, 284). Nixon wrote that Mitchusson was a surgeon and along with Dr. Amos Pollard and Dr. John W. Thompson, he aided in Texas' medical needs during the Texas Revolution (Nixon 50, 51). Nixon maintains that, "as is always the case when danger impends, it [the Texas Revolution] had its representatives and they were Dr. Amos Pollard, Dr. D. Michison, and Dr. John W. Thompson" (Nixon 50). Nixon portrays Mitchusson as a great hero in the medical sense in the same way that most writers portray Travis, Crockett, and Bowie as heroes in the leadership sense. Because Mitchusson played a significant role in the medical treatment of the soldiers who fought for Texas' independence, he is considered a medical hero.

In conclusion, although there is not an apparent reason why Edward F. Mitchusson left Kentucky to go to Texas and fight in the Texas Revolution, it is clear that he played a significant role in the Texas Revolution and at the Alamo as a doctor and as a soldier. Because there is so little accurate information about the Alamo, very little is known about the people involved in the battle, including Mitchusson, and the information that is known about them is often inaccurate. With any luck, when people read about Edward F. Mitchusson as a defender of the Alamo, they will learn that he was very young, only about 24 years old, he was from Kentucky, and he was a doctor and a hero for his role as

a doctor. Hopefully, he will not be known as the 30-year-old doctor from Virginia as so many books and documents portray him, and the many misspellings of his name will be corrected so that he is only known as Mitchusson and not Mitchasson or the many other forms of the name. If his information can be corrected and made more accurate, then maybe information on others involved in the battle can be corrected. Then the events that happened at the Alamo can become clearer and people will come closer to understanding what really happened at the Alamo and separating what is myth and what is historic fact.

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