

Born in Sampson County, North Carolina in 1793, Micajah was known to be an excellent marksman. Between the ages of 17 and 18, he volunteered for military service against the British in the War of 1812. He marched to Wilmington, North Carolina, as a member of a volunteer militia company and later joined the United States Army at Charleston, South Carolina. He remained in Charleston in the company of Captain Long until the Treaty of Ghent was signed in 1815.

Even before joining the military as a teenager and before his teens he probably developed this marksmanship as a hunter. In Autry's birthplace of Sampson County settlers first started arriving around 1740. It was densely wooded and had a large deer population for hunting were a man could develop his skills with a rifle. Early in the March, 1836, siege of the Alamo, Micajah Autry was chosen by his company to eliminate Santa Anna, who often sauntered across the ground just beyond the Alamo wall. Autry raised his long rifle, took careful aim as his breathless companions watched, and fired.

In that moment, the history of Texas might have been changed, but in the nervous tension and great hope of killing Santa Anna, Autry's bullet went wild and Santa Anna, who for once lost his dignity, scampered to cover.

In Sampson County there is a town called Ivanhoe named after one of Scott's novels close by Autry's birthplace. The first pastor at the Black River Presbyterian Church in Ivanhoe was from Scotland. Services were given in Gallic for many years, indicating a large-Highland population. The area also contained many Scotch- Irish. Autry would have been brought up listening to Scottish music and surrounded by folks steeped in the Scottish tradition, and speaking in the Gaelic tongue or with Scottish accents.

Micajah was a merchant, poet, musician and lawyer His musical skills were mentioned in Mrs. Mary Autry Greer in writing her recollections of her father, **"Father had a fine ear for music, played well on the violin,** and sketched striking pictures. I think he had taste and aptitude for art, but neither studied nor prosecuted it. He also wrote poetry, but I have only one of his little poems". She also wrote "My father was of a joyous nature and among my earliest recollections is his singing, in a rich mellow voice." Other sources mention he was a diehard romantic who wrote poetry music and played the violin beautifully on summer nights. He also sketched both nature and people in his drawings.

During a business trip to New York City and Philadelphia, he heard of the opportunities in Texas. In 1835 he left his family in the care of Samuel Smith, his stepdaughter's husband, and set out for Texas by steamboat from Nashville. He was in Nacogdoches, Texas, on January 13, 1836, where he enlisted in the Volunteer Auxiliary Corps of Texas. His letter to his wife written on that date indicated that he had set out for Washington-on-the-Brazos with David Crockett and others under the command of Capt. William B. Harrison. He arrived in San Antonio de Bexar with this company on February 9 and joined the Alamo garrison under the command of Lt. Col. William Barrett Travis.

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Mrs. Mary Autry Greer in writing her recollections of her father,
and of the relatives with whom her mother and children were living
We lived with them till the awful news of father's death came

to us one lovely April morning, when snowy white dogwood blossoms and the red bud trees spotted the tender green of the forest that surrounded the house. My little playmate and I were striving to gather the lovely white and pink flowers by throwing up sticks for them, when a voice near us said to me: "You must come to the house. Your father has been killed, and your mother half dead with the news." Breathless I ran, and was greeted with choking sobs as she tried to tell me the tragic news. Father's last letter, (we have it still,) was from Nacogdoches. His companion en route was the celebrated Tennessee orator, Davy Crockett, who proved in deeds his famous motto : "Be sure you are right, then go ahead !" They fell near each other in the sublime holocaust of the Alamo. Neither of them, I think, anticipated war, but instantly volunteered, and were sent by the overland road to the defence of the Alamo. We all know this incomparable, splendid deed of heroism. Little knew the bloody Santa Anna that as the smoke cleared and the ashes of the martyrs were blown hither and thither the radiant Lone Star arose to its place in the blue sky, and consecrated their memories forever. A few weeks later the splendid victory of San Jacinto was won by Houston, and his brave handful of soldiers. My father knew Houston well and voted for him when he ran for Governor of Tennessee.

My father was of a joyous nature and among my earliest recollections is his singing, in a rich mellow voice, as he ran down the piazza steps, "Hurrah ! Hurrah ! For the Good Old North State Forever !" a song written by Governor Gaston of North Carolina.

Father had a fine ear for music, played well on the violin, and sketched striking pictures. I think he had taste and aptitude for art, but neither studied nor prosecuted it. He also wrote poetry, but I have only one of his little poems.

He was a man in word and deed, in action as well as profession. "Peace to his memory" says his one surviving child, and I
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Micajah Autry joined a band of Tennesseans who heeded the cry of Texas in the latter days of 1835. They made their way overland, chiefly on foot, to meet death at San Antonio. He volunteered when he was seventeen or eighteen years old for service in the Army to defend the country against British aggression. During the War of 1812-14 he participated in the march to Wilmington when that city was threatened by the British. Afterward, he joined the army at Charleston, and remained in the service until the Treaty of Ghent was signed on February 17, 1815.

Alamo Marksman

***by Bob Bowman* Alamo Marksman**

Bob Bowman (Bob Bowman is a former president of the East Texas Historical Association and the author of 24 books on East Texas history and folklore. He lives in Lufkin.)

If an East Texas volunteer's rifle shot had hit its mark, the [Alamo battle](#) might have taken a different turn.

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Davy Crockett organized (1835) the Davy Crockett's Volunteers and started for the war front to aid the hard-pressed Texans, taking with him a group of twelve zealots that included Micajah Autry.

English: John Francis Lewis, conjectural portrait, 1950, of Micajah Autry, about to take aim at Santa Anna. (Courtesy The Alamo--Daughters of the Republic of Texas)

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