

Liberty Hill legends

Marker dedication recognizes historic cemetery

By ERIN CASTANEDA

Underneath an old Oak tree on a patch of land just past Bear Creek in Liberty Hill this week, Scott Martin sat near his great-great uncle's grave.

Mr. Martin's great-great uncle, Sampson Connell Jr., at age 13, helped Texas win independence from Mexico in the 1836 Battle of San Jacinto.

Legend has it Sampson Connell Jr., his father Sampson Connell and his brother David Cook Connell also took the last load of supplies by wagon to the Alamo before it was attacked by the Mexican army.

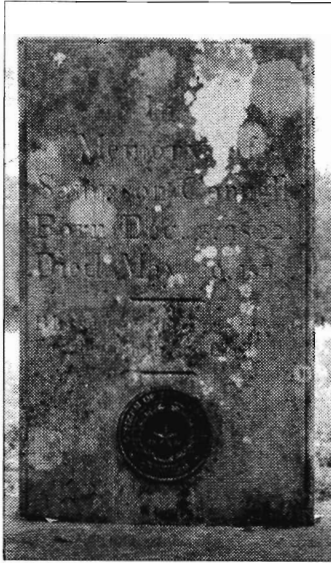
"These three guys in one day increased the size of Texas," Mr. Martin, 65, said.

On Thursday afternoon, Mr. Martin and his brother-in-law Richard Cordi, 66, worked on the Connell Cemetery, making it presentable for a Saturday ceremony that will formally honor the cemetery as a historical site and the pioneering Texas family buried there. The public is invited to attend the ceremony at 10:30 a.m.

"It adds another chapter in Texas history," Mr. Cordi said.

They pulled weeds, patched up gravestones, and dug a hole and cemented a historical marker sign that describes the Connell family.

After the San Jacinto battle, Mr. Connell Jr. was given 320 acres of land for his efforts, said Chris Dyer, director of the Williamson Mu-



Historical marker at Connell Cemetery, Bear Creek.

seum. The family cemetery was part of his homestead. He also served in the Civil War.

Mr. Connell Jr. was born in 1822 and died in 1873.

The cemetery appeared to be long forgotten when Mr. Cordi and his wife started to investigate their family roots. Mr. Cordi, a retired nuclear engineer from Amarillo, said he's studied genealogy and visited more than 40 cemeteries.

"I like the mystery," he said.

He called on the Liberty Hill Boy Scout troop to help clear out the brush and debris there.

"They did a beautiful job," Mr. Cordi said.

This family cemetery is one of many across the state, Mr. Martin said.

"It takes people like us to" help document the cemetery

"These three guys in one day increased the size of Texas."

Scott Martin

Descendent of Sampson Connell Jr.

and have it historically registered, Mr. Cordi said.

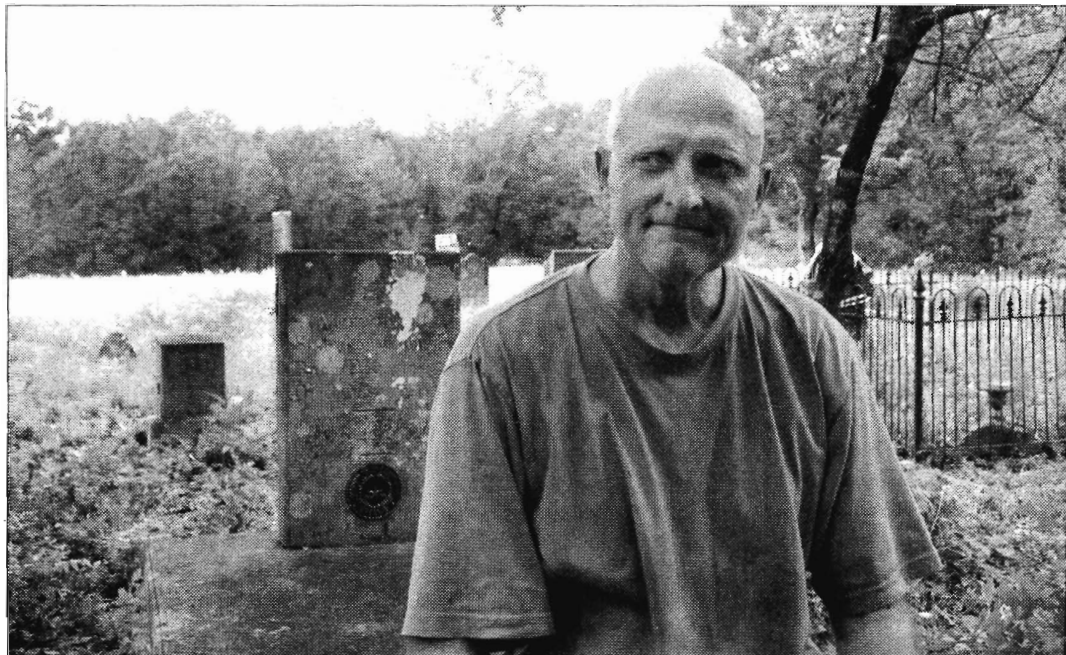
The Williamson County Historical Commission helped Mr. Cordi and Mr. Martin pay for the \$1,000 marker. Mr. Dyer said the marker will help protect the cemetery and educate visitors about its history.

To get to the cemetery, drive west on State Highway 29, go north on Bear Creek Ranch Road also known as County Road 200. Cross Bear Creek and take the first left on County Road 203. The cemetery is a short distance on the right.

The Williamson Museum is also hosting its annual Pioneer Day event from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Old Settler's Park, 3300 East Palm Valley Boulevard, May 9 in Round Rock. Pioneer Day is a free family event that allows people to experience what life was like as a pioneer. There will be several hands on activirliving history presentations, games, animals and live music.

Just before noon a pioneer-style lunch will be cooked on site in Dutch ovens. The meal is \$3.

For more information visit www.williamsonmuseum.org or call 943-1670.



Brothers-in-law Richard Cordi, 66, and Scott Martin, 65, led efforts to have a historical marker placed at the site of the Connell Cemetery at Bear Creek.

Mr. Martin's great-great uncle Sampson Connell Jr., who at age 13 fought at the battle of San Jacinto, helping Texas win its independence from Mexico, is buried at the cemetery.

