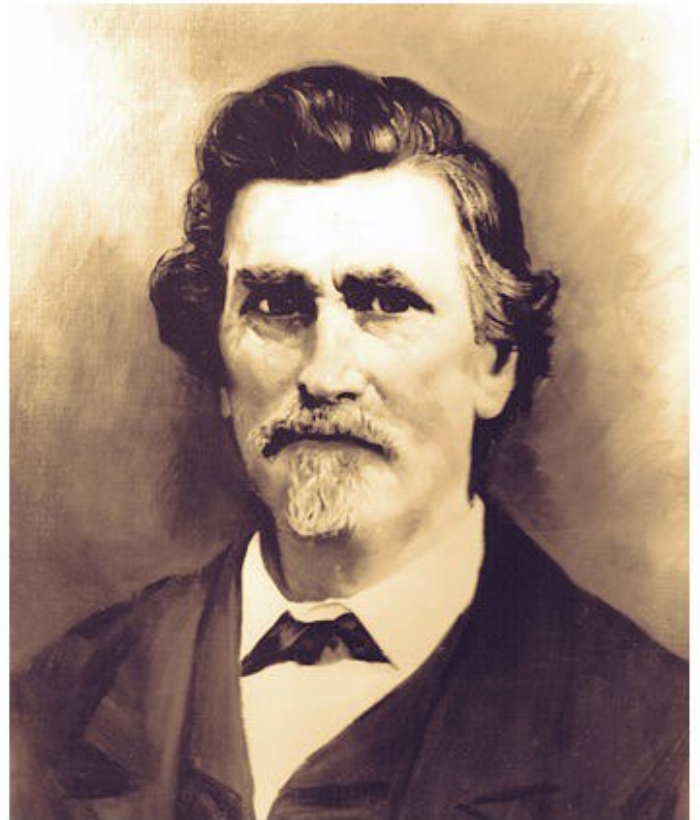


MAJOR WILLIAM HARRISON "HOWDY" MARTIN

William Harrison "Howdy" Martin was born September 2, 1823, in Twiggs County, Georgia, to Benjamin and Charlotte Martin and the grandson of Benjamin Harrison on his mother's side. Benjamin Harrison was a member of the convention that framed the Constitution of the State of Georgia, and was a major of great renown in the Revolutionary War. Martin's family moved to Alabama about the year he was twelve, so his early schooling was there. He eventually studied law and was admitted to the Alabama Bar in 1850. In the spring of the next year it is said that he arrived in Athens, Texas, on horseback with just \$.50 and began his practice of law. Howdy Martin was a shrewd judge of character and many of his legal opponents felt the sting of his ridicule while in court. He would go to any length to get across his point, even to the extent of using "backwood's" English in his orations. From 1853 to 1858, he represented Freestone, Limestone, Henderson, and Navarro counties as a very able and prominent member in the Texas Senate.



On March 31, 1861, William Harrison Martin organized the 13th Texas Infantry Brigade, composed of twelve officers and 78 enlisted men from Henderson County. The Brigade was to be trained in the Fincastle Community of Henderson County, and a great rally was held upon their arrival in Fincastle on May 18, 1861. The Brigade flag, which was made by the ladies of Fincastle, was presented to then Captain Martin. His acceptance speech is said to include the following,

"One Confederate can beat a hundred Yanks. We have 'um fer breakfast and be back fer supper."

Captain W.H. Martin's 13th Texas Brigade was reformed into Company K, 4th Texas Infantry known as Hood's Texas Brigade. His only and younger brother was Robert Martin and in his company. Robert Martin was killed in Tennessee in battle, fighting by the side of then Colonel W.H. Martin.

In April of 1864, he was promoted to major. It is said that Major Martin gained his nickname from his first encounter with General Robert E. Lee. One day as General Lee and his staff were riding down a road, they passed by the Major and his Company. The Major, rather than saluting, tipped his hat and remarked "Howdy". There has never been any evidence uncovered that would indicate that Howdy Martin ever saluted anyone, but he would always tip his hat to everyone he met and say "Howdy".

Information was received that President Jefferson Davis had issued an order to consolidate the Texas Regiments. This would, of course, break up Regimental and Company organizations. In their distress, the Texans

selected Major Howdy Martin as the person to protest this order. The appeal which Major Martin made to President Jefferson Davis was as follows:

“Mr. President, I have been selected by the Texas soldiers to protest against the order of Your Excellency to consolidate the Texas Regiments. The fulfillment of the order would break the hearts of our men. They have been associated for years, since the war commenced. The bones of their comrades are bleaching upon many battlefields in the South. Those still living are bound together by ties of deepest friendship, cemented by the blood of their dead associates. Of the 4,900 men we had at first, only a few hundred are left. They have been rapidly passing away—losing their lives on the skirmish line—on the battlefield and in the hospital. A few have been returned to their homes, broken in health forever. Those of us who remain do not want any cruel separation of brothers in arms.”

General Robert E. Lee endorsed the Texas Brigade saying,

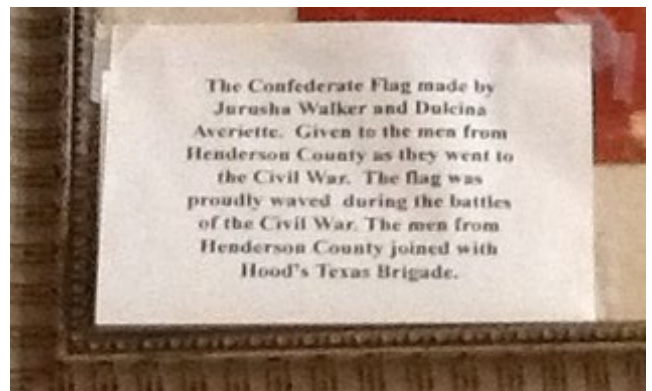
“I have never asked that the Brigade to hold a position that they did not hold it.”

After careful consideration, President Jefferson Davis gave this order:

“Major Martin, go back to your Texas Soldiers and comrades and tell them that as long as there is a soldier left to carry the battle flag, their organizations shall not be abandoned.”

According to the Texas Historical commission, Major Howdy Martin fought in the Eastern theater of operations until the end of the fighting. Martin fought in the battles of Elkhorn Landing, Seven Pines, seven days before Richmond. Also, he was in the battles of Manassas, Sharpsburg, Gettysburg, Chickamauga, and the Wilderness. After the signing of the surrender terms at Appomattox, Major Howdy Martin and Captain W. T. Hill led the remaining members of Hood’s Texas Brigade back to the Lone Star State.

Martin returned to Henderson County and resumed his practice of law. On February 12, 1867, Martin married Martha E. Gallimore of Navarro County and over the years the couple had seven children. He led a quiet life with his family until in 1872. During the four days election under the administration of Mr. E. J. Davis, he was elected by his district to administer the office of District Attorney at Law for Kaufman, Henderson, Smith, and Anderson counties and served two terms. After filling this office with marked ability, he again retired to private life. He devoted himself to farming pursuits until public office called him to service one more time. He was elected in 1887 to the U.S. House of Representatives to fill an unexpired term in the Congress of the United States, made vacant by the election of the Honorable John H. Reagan to the United States Senate. Congressman Martin and Senator Reagan were life-long friends.



This flag is on display at the Henderson County Historical Museum.

In the 50 and 51st Congress, Martin served his people with much credit and ability. It is said that Martin was quite an orator during his time in public office. When he got up on the floor of the House in Washington to deliver a speech about a tariff, "they called time-out so they could gather everybody in a crowd to hear him. He was that well thought of."

Major Howdy Martin retired to his farm near Athens a third time in 1891, but two years later moved his family to Hill County. Martin was a member of the Hill County Camp of Confederate Veterans until he died at his final home in Hill County on February 5, 1898, and was buried at the Hillsboro City Cemetery.



Major Howdy Martin's final resting place at the Hillsboro City Cemetery, Hillsboro, Texas

4-30-97

Dear Friends in Athens, Texas Historical Society, I have today spoken to Mr. Brown about the enclosed photo. It was taken for me by Philip Thomas, and is a portrait of my great-grandparents, William Harrison (Howdy) Martin and Martha Elizabeth (Laidmore) Martin.

It may be the only portrait of the two of them together without their family. It is an absolute likeness, portrait of which I hold the original. I painted it by a technique that I have worked many years to perfect. The original is painted in several media.

My grandmother was Sybil Gertrude (Martin) Hartzog. My father, was Harrison Carroll Hartzog, her son. I am Beulah Marian (Hartzog) Marshall. I have portraits of John C. Calhoun and Andrew Jackson hanging in the Calhoun County Museum and at Jackson School here.

I do hope that your group will find interest in my effort and that it will add to your historical references of my grandparents. Thank you for accepting it.

Marian Marshall
PO Box 102 TX 77070

Dated 4-30-1997, Marian Marshall from port Lavaca, Tx, explains the portrait of her grandparents & donates it to the Historical Society

On February 11, 1898, The Athens Weekly Review printed a Tribute to the Honorable William Harrison Martin. The Hill County obituaries reprinted the Athens Weekly Review article and the following is just a portion of it,

“At his home, on his farm in Hill County, near Hillsboro, in the 76th year of his eventful life, on Saturday, February 5, 1898, the brave spirit of the loved and honored William Harrison Martin to the country known as Howdy Martin, took its flight from the scenes of life to the Courts above. He leaves surviving him his wife and seven children, three of whom are happily married, and the balance remaining on the homestead with their mother.”



Two oil portraits of W. H. "Howdy" Martin and Martha Gallemore Martin hanging in the home of Martha Hartzog. The portraits were painted in the 1890s after he was in the US Congress and the daughters had studied art at the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington DC. No one knows which daughter painted which portrait. But Martha grew up with them and inherited them.