



FORT LEATON—Back View  
Originally This Building Contained Many Rooms, Some  
Of Which Were 25x100 Feet

a very jovial mood, wished Leaton health and prosperity. Feeling that he had won the friendship of the Indians, Leaton retired with a feeling of security and well being. But Leaton awoke next morning to find every horse and mule he possessed had been taken by the Indians.

With consummate skill he planned another feast, but it had a different ending. He invited the same chief and his band to this second feast. The Indians again swarmed to the great banquet. When they were all gathered around the banquet board in one of the largest rooms, Leaton excused himself for a moment from the side of the Chief and as he went out the massive doors clicked behind him. A moment later the muzzle of a cannon that had been concealed behind a false wall was fired and the shot raked the tables. More shots followed, ending in a complete massacre of the Red men caught inside that long room.

Knowing that he would have to win his way by shell and fire henceforth, Leaton mounted the cannon on the top of his house and according to his descendants, the Indians never stole from him again.

Ben Leaton's officials record anti-dates Milton Faver by six years. Just what year he purchased his land from a Mexican named Galindo, we cannot ascertain.

Ben Leaton evidently died about 1852, because in that year his wife, Donna Juana Pedroza Leaton, was in San Antonio settling his estate. She was made administratrix for the three minors, William Leaton, Isabella Leaton and Joseph Leaton.

The next year Mrs. Leaton married Edward Hall, who was appointed administrator for Juana Pedroza Leaton y Hall and the three children.

Time passed, and John D. Burgess appeared in the Hall-Leaton affairs. Hall, acting for the Leaton family, gave a deed of trust on the Leaton property to Burgess for a loan of

\$1,061.00. This was recorded July 16th, 1861. The following year there is a record of Burgess locating three surveys above the survey of John W. Spencer (the site of Presidio, Texas) and he located eleven surveys below the Spencer property, which included 190 to 201. This is a matter of record in the county Clerk's office in Presidio county, and the date is July, 1862.

Having acquired the title to this property, John D. Burgess ordered the Leaton heirs and Ed Hall to vacate. Bitter quarrels arose over the property and Hall refused to depart. One dark night a group of men came to Fort Leaton and killed Ed Hall. Fearing for her own life, and those of her children, Donna Juana moved to Ojinaga. The years rolled by and the Leaton children were taught to hate the name Burgess.

Along came the Civil War. Burgess had been a freighter on the Chihuahua Trail, but the war put an end to that great highway for a period of several years. Burgess was a southerner, but he did not join the southern forces. However, he did all he could to aid their cause. During the war, he attempted to take a train load of supplies from San Antonio, Texas, to Santa Fe, New Mexico. He had twenty wagons and about two hundred head of stock in his outfit and when they arrived on the line between Texas and New Mexico, the Federal troops captured the entire outfit. Burgess barely escaped, and, after a long dangerous trip, finally made his way back to Presidio. This loss crippled him so much financially that he did little freighting until after the close of the war.

Quoting Victor Leaton Ochoa, a grand son of Ben Leaton's:

"Mrs. Hall's two sons, Ben and William Leaton, aged 11 and 12, brooded over the loss of their home after the family moved to Ojinaga, and vowed vengeance on Burgess and the nine men with him when they took possession of Fort Leaton."