

CAPTAIN GEORGE B. ERATH'S ACCOUNT OF THE
ELM CREEK FIGHT¹

[Entered under January 7, 1837]

[In the material concerning the building of Fort Griffin (also called Smith's Fort, or Little River Fort), which we have entered in this volume under November 1, 1836, we quoted from Erath's Memoirs up through the end of 1836. Now we pick up the thread of his story again in January of 1837:]

Congress having reorganized the ranger force, new officers were added; most of the old ones were retained; some of the inferiors promoted. Colonel [Robert M.] Coleman was deposed by General Houston, and Major Smith appointed to take his place; and in consequence about Christmas time [1836] Lieutenant Curtis arrived at our fort with orders to take command, and for me to hold myself in readiness to proceed at any moment, under additional special orders still to be sent, to Colorado (Coleman's) Fort with notification to Colonel Coleman. The special orders for me came on the 4th of January [1837], but with them McLochlan arrived, bringing the news that about twelve miles away on the waters of Elm Creek² he had seen the tracks of some dozen Indians on foot going down the country. All was bustle and confusion during the night, as we determined that these Indians should not be allowed to go down the country to do mischief.

Besides mine and Lieutenant Curtis's there were but ten horses belonging to the service. Lieutenant Curtis was properly in command, but he did not intend to go, nor let his horse go, but wanted me to go and take eight or ten men on foot. No decision was made during the night and in the morning it was raining, and continued to rain till the middle of the afternoon. By this time or at least with the closing of day it was decided what we would do, and next morning we started after the horses were got out of the woods, perhaps by nine o'clock. I had ten men from the service with their horses, a man by the name of Lishely who was looking at the country, who had been but a short time in Texas, and the two Childers boys. There were four young men from the settlements who started out with me. They had lived in the country before the Runaway, and were back to look after property and were just starting home; so they promised to accompany me as far as I went toward the settlements. These young men left me when we had gone five or six miles, as I was bearing away from the course they wanted to go, which was toward their home at Nashville, sixty miles below.