

## Coker Cemetery History #2

By Bob Battaglia

**James Harrison Coker**, son of Joseph and Malinda Coker, was born Oct 22, 1827 in TN. He died 1892 and is buried at the Coker Cemetery along with his first wife, Sarah Jane Gann. They were married in Cherokee Co. TX Sept 13, 1850. James Harrison was a teacher, a lay preacher and a farmer. He also did legal papers for friends. He taught in the Coker School and some of his grandchildren were in his classes. He was described as a quiet and gentle man, who wore a black frock-tail coat, and walked bent forward with his hands folded behind him. He was strict, it was said. His wife, **Sarah Gann**, died in 1870 at age 39. Tradition has it that she made a good home for her family and left her heritage in her children. They had nine children. One story handed down about James Harrison deals with Indians. He was approached by an Indian asking for a gallon of syrup. James refused, having only one gallon to last all winter. This angered the Indian and that night a group of warriors approached the cabin and spent the night making noise and threats. The frightened family stayed up all night. The menfolk standing guard and the women cutting gun wadding. At dawn the Indians left without further trouble. Sarah was said to be scared of all Indians from there on.

**Nancy Virginia Coker**, daughter of Joseph and Malinda Coker, was born 1834 in Talladega AL and married **David Walker Bennett** Nov 18, 1855 in Bexar Co. TX. She is buried in San Geronimo Cemetery in Seguin TX. Mrs. Alice (Bennett) Garwood, the youngest of the Bennett children, corresponded with me during 1969/70 from Laredo TX. She stated that after the Civil War her father moved the family to a farm about 5 miles east of Seguin. Mrs. Garwood stated that there were eleven children born to the family, but five died in childhood. She said that two of these children were buried at Coker Cemetery, but there were no markers. She also stated that her father's mother and his sister, Margaret, were also buried at Coker without markers. (That would be the mother of David Walker Bennett and his sister.) Mrs. Garwood stated that the Hiram Carroll Rogers family (Mrs. Rogers was a sister to Nancy Virginia), also moved to Seguin at the same time and had an adjoining farm. These two families had a total of fourteen children. Most of them were married in Guadalupe County. Belle (Jones) Pendleton, daughter of James Seaborn Jones, stated "I remember uncle Dave Bennett well. He was a Methodist minister and he would always come when we had a revival meeting. He could pray louder and longer than anybody I ever heard. We could hear him where we lived over to the church". James Seaborn Jones's home was under a half-mile from the Coker Church, about where the S.A. Airport navigation lights are today (west of Hwy 281) .of course in those days it was very quiet around there. My father, Anthony Battaglia, was born in that house in 1897.

**Amanda Emily Coker**, another daughter of Joseph Coker, married **William D. "Seco" Smith** (no relation to Caroline Smith that Wm Leonard Coker married). She was about 14 years old, with the consent of her father. She died at the age of 19. Seco Smith's father, Robert M. Smith, came to San Antonio area in 1856 after several years in Utah &

California. Robert Smith bought a small place from Amos D. Jones which was only two houses away from Joseph Coker's home. Amanda died in 1862, after having three children, and is buried at the Coker Cemetery. Fannie Smith, the oldest child of Seco and Amanda, was born 1859 and died at age 93 in 1952. At age 16 Fannie married 27 year old Joseph Bledsoe Moffett in 1876.. She was the mother of nine children. Fannie and Joseph lived near Medina in Bandera Co. until 1900. They traveled twice a year to Kerrville in a covered wagon to get supplies; this trip took two days one way. The first night they camped at springs at the base of a mountain between Medina and Kerrville. The next day they arrived in the wagon yard across from Charles Shreiner's Store. At the store they would buy clothing, shoes, and other staples. Joseph would buy dried herring, sardines and crackers to eat for supper. He would also go to Chaney's Bar (still standing in the mid 1900's) and get a bucket of beer. Sarah Josephine Smith, the second daughter/child of Seco and Amanda (Coker) Smith, was born about the time Seco and Amanda moved to Medina on the Seco River (1861). William A. Smith, the third child of Amanda and Seco Smith, was born 1862 and died about 1930. At age 24 he married 15 year old Mary Ellen Glenn in 1886. **This narrative is taken from a book "Robert Mays Smith From South Carolina to Texas" by Ethel Uhl Klemeke and Bob Weed. A copy of this book is in the Texana Collection at the San Antonio Public Library.**

**William L. Jones and Amos Dickens Jones** were brothers and married the first and second daughters of Joseph Coker. William L. Jones married **Harriet Elvira Coker** in Talladega AL 1840 and they had two sons: Harrison and James Monroe Jones. Harriet Elvira died in Nov 1846, just before the move from Talladega to Texas. For a long time that was the end of the story, but I have now found descendants of William L. Jones in California. They have a letter written by Harrison, the older son, that sheds a little more light on the family. It names all the brothers and sisters of Amos Dickens Jones and verifies the mother was **Catherine Long**. It states their father, **Seaborn L. Jones's** middle initial was for "Lisbon" .source unknown. In the last Coker Cemetery History I wrote that the Catherine Jones tombstone was Amos's mother. This letter written by Harrison Jones states that Seaborn and Catherine and a daughter named Rose Anna all came to Amos Dickens Jones's home after the Civil War and are buried at Coker Cemetery. That's adds possibly two more unmarked graves. Harrison also states that Joseph Coker was a mechanic, wheelright and blacksmith. He states that **Malinda Brown** was born in PA of Pennsylvania Dutch parents. Research note .could have been Malinda's mother born in PA or her father. This leaves only Dicey as the possible source of Cherokee blood in our ancestors.

Diary entry in the William/Amos Jones diary:

**Jan 9, 1847 .We this day crossed the Sabine River and camped in Texas.**

It is now becoming more apparent that this diary was kept only by William from Talladega to Texas even though on the fly page it states that Amos bought the diary in Jackson MS in 1846. The travels by William after getting to Texas indicate he probably

accompanied the Cokers to Cherokee Co. and came back through San Augustine area to see Amos before departing again for Talladega.