

## COKER CEMETERY HISTORY #5

**Jefferson Davis Smith** has a Texas Historical Marker on his grave site. He and his brother Clint were captured by Indians at the ages of 5 and 9 respectively. "The Boy Captives" by J. Marvin Hunter was published many years ago giving a detailed account of their captivity. The San Antonio Light Newspaper published an article about Jefferson dated March 3, 1940. He died about a month later; he was living at 1101 San Francisco St in San Antonio. A few highlights from the article are worthy of remembering. They are as follows:

"It was 71 years ago last week that a band of Comanches crept down a gentle slope in Bexar County and seized Jeff Smith while he was herding sheep on his father's ranch. Stifling his cries, they captured his brother, Clint, four years older, and sped away."....

"For the next 6 years the nomadic travel of the Indian tribes – with their wars and their hunts and their firelit ceremonials – was all the life he knew. He forgot the English language.....and became to the core an Indian. Three years after his capture, the Comanches traded Jeff to the Apaches for a horse, powder and shot; Jeff met the only really close friend he found among the savages – Geronimo."....."He attributes his longevity and present hardy condition to the rigors of Indian ways. The nearest Jeff came to real adventure was in the New Mexico battle in which he was rescued from the Indians by Federal Troops. In this battle he was assigned to guarding the horses and his own horse was shot from under him.....When the tribe scattered, Jeff hid in a cave, but was found by the Federal Troops and was returned to his now-forgotten parents in Dripping Springs." This is a short excerpt from the newspaper article. His picture is shown also.

After his return and slow readjustment, he married Julia Harriet Reed in 1892 in Bandera. They had several children. Clint was also returned to his parents after about 4 years of captivity and he later married and is buried in Rock Springs, TX. I have a copy of a letter written by Clint's wife, Dixie, to my father – dated Jan 1940. She advises there were no more copies of the book and that Clint had just about completed a more detailed book when he died. A Texas Historical Marker was placed on Jeff's grave based on this 6 year ordeal. **Carlene and Thomas Smith**, who are descendants of this family, live in Jourdanton TX. They sent me the genealogy of the Smith family a while back. A sister of Clint and Jeff was Carol who married **William Leonard Coker**, son of **Joseph Coker**.

**The Civil War** had an impact on the Coker Community of the 1860's, but luckily none of the "Coker Family" suffered any deaths. The records are not complete, but we do have record of enlistment on **Mar 22, 1862** of the following: **David Bennett 30, James M. Hampton 30, Amos D. Jones 35, Wm. D. (Seco) Smith 25 and Marshall W. Seay 34. James Harrison Coker** enlisted April 9, 1862, but was released in Oct. 1862. **Amos D Jones** was listed as a sergeant, the

others were shown as privates. They were all assigned to Co. C, 15<sup>th</sup> Texas Cav. It was also called the 32<sup>nd</sup> Texas Volunteer Cavalry.

The Company commander was **Capt J.K. Stevens** of San Antonio. Their area of action ran from Brownsville up to East Texas and into Western Louisiana. The only book written about this 32<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry is "**The Dead Men Wore Boots**" (1966) by **Carl L. Duaine**. Our ancestors are not mentioned in the book, but there is narrative on Capt J.K. Stevens who died in battle in the Louisiana campaign. Our ancestors knew Capt Stevens very well and **David Bennet's** letters confirm this. Stevens, with men gathered mostly from Bexar County, but with Karnes, Medina, McMullen, Uvalde, Atascosa and Comal Counties represented. Stevens, at 33, was one of the older men in the regiment. He was a very popular officer. The main area of battle for Company C was in central and western Louisiana, around Mansfield and Alexandria. It was at the battle around Yellow Bayou that Capt Stevens was wounded and died two days later. The battle of Yellow Bayou is detailed in the book mentioned above.

The following are excerpts of letters written by **David Bennett** to his wife. He was married to **Joseph Coker's** daughter, Nancy Virginia, and was a brother-in-law to **Amos D. Jones**.

**Letter dated May 10, 1863....**camped near Brownsville TX...Amos, Jim and Bill are well..... ( I assume Jim is **James Hampton** and Bill is **William (Seco) Smith**, who was married to another Joseph Coker daughter.

**Letter dated August 19, 1863....**in camp 12 miles from Corpus Christi...."as **James Hampton** is starting home in the morning .....I will use this opportunity to send you a few lines. (There was no mention of Amos in this letter.)

**Letter dated April 5, 1864....**Mansfield, DeSoto Parish LA.....mentions in this letter he received his wife's letter when **Amos** returned with it.

**Letter dated April 12, 1864....**in Mansfield....."the enemy has fallen back near Natchitoches about 60 miles away but looking for heavy fighting in a day or two. **Capt . Stevens detachment with Amos, Jim and William** has not returned yet....looking for them every day.

**Letter dated July 12, 1864 - ....** In camp on Red River 15 miles below Alexandria. I hope this letter reaches you before **Amos** leaves, tell him that Mr Dillard wishes him to bring him a half a quire of writing paper and send me 3 or 4 steel pen points.

On June 3, 1863, Amos Dickens Jones' daughter, Harriet, made a sworn statement at Bexar County. She signed a statement that said her father was a soldier in Capt. J.K. Stevens Company. That her mother was residing on the

Salado Creek and has seven children: Taylor 17, Harriet 15, John 11, Catherine 9, Seaborn 7, Henry 4, and Martha 2. That her father and mother have about 200 acres of land homestead on the Salado; about 500 head of cattle, about 20 head of horses and a few hogs - no other property known to Harriet. It is not known why Harriet did this – maybe she thought Amos was needed at home to manage all this. From above it appears Amos paid a visit around July 1863.