

Coker Cemetery History #7

by Bob Battaglia

Coker Cemetery history extends beyond those ancestors actually buried there. The immediate families of those buried there are certainly part of the history of the early Coker Community. As I mentioned before, some of **Joseph Coker's** daughters are buried at San Geronimo Cemetery in Seguin.

This is true of one of **Amos Dickens Jones's** daughters, **Malinda Catherine (Kate) Jones** who, in Jan 1870, married **James M. Van Riper** (1843-1905). They are buried at the Masonic Cemetery on W. Commerce St in San Antonio. James (Jim) Van Riper had five brothers, four of whom served in various areas of law enforcement.

There is a quite lengthy article in the San Antonio Evening News dated March 28, 1924, outlining the service of the **Van Ripers** in various areas. I will extract bits of information for this summary. In 1850 **Gary Van Riper** arrived in this area after leaving New York for the riches of California. He lost his hold on a gold mine and headed for Texas where he bought some land on the dry Salado. There he raised his six sons to manhood.

James M. Van Riper was probably the best known of the family. He stayed on the ranch until 1861 and then joined Co. C, 21st Texas Cavalry. He returned home at war's end as a corporal and picked up his life as a stock raiser and farmer on the Salado near **Amos Jones**. In 1873 he was a member of the Texas Minute-Men, who were chosen for their records of bravery and ability. **Kate Jones**, who was still living when this article was written, recalled the days of hurrying alarms and nights of terrifying uncertainty due to the Indian raids that took place mainly during full moon periods. These Minute-Men did much to rid the area of these small raiding bands of Indians.

In 1876, **Jim Van Riper** was appointed a deputy sheriff under Sheriff Knox. Then for 8 years he served under the following sheriffs: McCall, Stevens, Nat Lewis and John Campbell. Jim served two years as a deputy US Marshall and a river guard in the US Revenue Service at Eagle Pass. In 1899 he returned to enter the San Antonio Police Dept. In 1901 Mayor Hicks appointed him City Marshal – Chief of Police.

One of the more famous episodes was when **Jim Van Riper** rode out to Bandera to apprehend a stage robber named Jim McDaniel who had escaped from jail. Jim headed a posse that had information that McDaniel's girl-friend was in Bandera. They located the home of the girl and determined that McDaniel was inside. The posse remained out of sight fearing a charge would enable the robber to get away in the dark. After dark the robber came out and spent the night in a gully near the house – to keep from being surprised. As dawn arrived the posse crept up to the gully and ordered McDaniel to "throw 'em up". Instead, McDaniel rolled over and emptied his Winchester at the posse and then drew his Colt and emptied it. No one in the posse was injured but as they approached him he was breathing his last and said "Well, Jim, I didn't kill any of you

“.....”? In learning he had failed, he tore off his dangling trigger finger (severed by a bullet) and threw it over his shoulder, rolled over and died. He was buried in a pine box near where he had died.

There is a long article in the San Antonio newspaper about Jim Van Riper when he died Dec. 16, 1905. It recounts other encounters he had with outlaws in those early years.

Jim Van Riper and **Kate Jones** had two sons who also served as Chiefs of Police. When this article appeared in the San Antonio Evening News, one of the sons, **Albert Van Riper**, was Chief of Police.

Mrs. Kathryn (Van Riper) Fister, who I talked with in the late 1990's still remembers Kate (Jones) Van Riper. Kate had to baby-sit Kathryn while Kathryn's mother taught school. Mrs. Fister lives in San Antonio. She was the daughter of the other Chief of Police, **Charles J. Van Riper**. Kathryn also remembers **Florence Davison**, wife of **Lee Bee Jones** and described her as "short, pudgy, and very English – dainty". Kathryn described Lee Jones home in Coker community as having a long front porch.

As a side note, a cousin of Kate Jones named **Frank Jones**, was also a San Antonio policeman around 1915. Frank was son of **Seaborn Wesley Jones**, a brother of **Amos Dickens Jones**. Seaborn Wesley Jones had settled in Patterson, LA after serving as a lieutenant in the Civil War. Frank Jones evidently returned to Louisiana in the 1920's.