

Coker Cemetery History #11

by Bob Battaglia

It has been about 168 years since John "Jack" Coker fought at the Battle of San Jacinto. As we all know this action awarded him the vast acreage on the Salado Creek area in northern Bexar County. As the years went by he was joined there (about 1853) by his brother, Joseph, and his married daughters and sons. The married children brought with them the names of Jones and Rogers. The Rogers later moved to Seguin TX area and are buried there at San Benito Cemetery. Joseph Coker's first daughter to marry in the Coker Community was Sarah Pamela, who married Marshall Moulton Seay July 22, 1854 (Bexar Co Book C, p.188).

The memory of John Coker is still around us. There's the Coker Loop Rd, the Jones-Maltsberger Rd, Coker Elementary School, the Coker Methodist Church, the Coker Cemetery, and the account in the old Texas Almanac concerning "The Burning of Vince's Bridge". Also there are many descendants still bearing the name of Coker. There are other less visible signs of his presence also, such as his original dwelling on the Salado.

John Jeter wrote an article in the April 1982 San Antonio Monthly Magazine entitled "The Coker Controversy". It reviews the story of John Coker but mainly addresses the current situation of his original dwelling. At the time of writing, Ada Maverick Jamison was living in John Coker's old homestead. Excerpting from Jeter's article: "the adobe home, built of 18-inch-thick limestone blocks and hand-hewn cedar logs, was 12 miles north of San Antonio's center and served as the first overnight stop of the cattle drives from San Antonio north to Kansas on the Old Chisolm Trail". The San Antonio Historical Commission placed an historic conservation plaque on the home in 1971. The article is too long to include here, but dwells mainly on the battle Ada Jamison was fighting to keep the home from falling into the hands of commercial/residential land developers. Some time after this article was written, Ada lost the battle and sold the home. Today it is in the hands of land developers. Sadly, nothing now remains of this historic dwelling and the memories within its walls. Does anyone have an early photo of this historic site? I plan to check with the San Antonio Historical Commission to see if they have a file on Coker's home.

Another article in the San Antonio Recorder-Times (Sept 25, 1986) entitled "Famous Family Holds Reunion" was written by David Deatherage. Royce Jones contributed most of the detail about the history of John Coker and the recognition of his service and the placement of the State Historical Marker on John Coker's grave. Royce Jones notes that about 250 descendants attended the two day reunion where old stories and photos were exchanged. There were many descendants who worked hard in the planning phases to make this reunion a success. This event coincided with the 150 year anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto and was a first for the gathering of the Coker descendants.

I have written about this before, but it is always nice to have a bit of down-to-earth history. James L. Dial while living in the Seguin TX area, wrote a letter dated Sept 19th, 1860, to his brother. In one segment he mentions John Coker. It reads "the Cokers who live on the Salado somewhere in the vicinity of San Antonio.....I have never seen one of

them since I saw Old Jack until last summer.” Not much, but it is a very interesting statement coming from a person who is apparently related to John “Jack” Coker from Laurens SC. This is the only clue that probably ties our John Coker to Joseph Coker and Mary Aldridge of Laurens SC. It is recorded that Joseph and Mary Aldridge had a son named John and he is mentioned “as the youngest son, John” in Joseph’s will probated in Laurens. It is recorded that Malcolm Dial married Nancy Amanda, a daughter of Drewery Coker. So if John (the possible father of our John, Joseph and James) was a brother of Drewery, we have the Dial relationship. If he was the father and married Dicey, then we have the parents of our John, Joseph and James. The only other clue is the 1810 Laurens census where Dicey is head of household and has three males living with her. This indicates Dicey’s husband, (John , son of Joseph/Mary Coker) had died by 1810. Another problem with our John, Joseph and James is the age difference between John and James/Joseph – almost 10 years and if we look at the oldest male in Dicey’s family in 1810 census, it could have been even greater. This creates possibility of other children in between who didn’t survive to adulthood or maybe Dicey was the 2d wife of John Coker. I hope someday a document will emerge that clearly shows the answer. There is no doubt in my mind that our John, Joseph and James are grandchildren of the Joseph and Mary Aldridge Coker family. I base this on the Dial relationship. Unfortunately there were several John Cokers around Laurens in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s.