

Coker Cemetery History #2

by Dr. Tom DeKunder



The Three Texas Rangers of Historic Coker Cemetery

Texas Ranger markers are on the graves of Zachary Taylor Autry, Samuel C. Jones, and Ransom Capps in historic Coker Cemetery. These markers were placed with permission of the Texas Ranger Association following research done by the ancestors of the three rangers. The three rangers buried in the cemetery had different paths in history to their roles as Texas Rangers in early Texas.

The Coker Settlement was also home to many men with ties to the community to have served in the Texas Rangers. Serving in the Texas Rangers were Zachary Taylor Autry; Benjamin Camp; Joseph Dengel; Davis William Hatch; Samuel C. Jones; Sam Jones' son, Martin Van Buren Jones; Sam Jones' brother, John A. Jones; at least four of John A. Jones' sons; Henry Marion Smith; William Densley Smith; and at least three of the Van Riper brothers, James M., William H., and John Frank Van Ripers. (page 219, *Haunting The Graveyard*)

Zachary Taylor Autry was a Texas Ranger and early settler of Northern Bexar County, Texas. Taylor was born at Fort Smith Arkansas where his father John C. Autry was a U.S. Army chaplain and undertaker. Zachary would later live with the George Maltsberger's family who decided to move to San Antonio when Zachary was only 12 years old. Zachary lived with the Maltsberger family until he was 19 years old when he married Rebecca McBee. From 1870 to 1871, Zachary served in the frontier forces (Texas Rangers) and according to legend Zachary fought in several battles with the Indians. Zachary would later divorce Rebecca McBee and eventually marry Sarah Jane Coker. Zachary died at the age of 45 and left behind ten children from his marriage to Sarah Jane Coker.

Gerald Jones, a descendant of Samuel C. Jones and Ransom Capps, provided the research on his ancestors. He found his data at the Texas Ranger Library and was granted permission to place Texas Ranger markers on their graves. The following information on their history is provided in this brief essay.

Samuel C. Jones was born in TN in 1793 and married in Whitley KY in 1823. He arrived in Texas about 1840 and in Bexar County by 1846. He served in the Mexican War in April 1847 to 1848. (A record of his pension application #WC-6787 is on file with the US Veterans Administration). Later he served in the Texas Rangers in 1859, although already aged 66. His service in the Texas Rangers was a private under William Tobin in the Mounted Volunteers.

Ransom Capps, son-in-law of Samuel C. Jones was also awarded a Texas Ranger cross. He served in Ford's Company, Texas Rangers. He received an Indian Wars Pension # SA-8333348. Ransom Capps was born in TN in 1830. He arrived in Bexar County in 1851 and married Eliza Jane Jones, daughter of Samuel C. Jones. He died in 1921 at almost ninety-two and was buried in Coker Cemetery. In his obituary in the San Antonio Express, he was described "as among the best living pioneers of Texas whose deeds have been immortalized in history and song." (Coker Cemetery History #15 by Bob Battaglia)