

CAIAPHAS HAM

Father-in-Law of Thomas Dewees

Thomas Dewees was one of the three partners of the Dewees and Company ranching operation during the cattle trail driving days. The ranch during this time included large acreage in Wilson, Karnes and Atascosa Counties which at one time included almost 100,000 acres. The other two partners of this ranching operation were John O. Dewees, his brother and James T. Thornton, a bank financier of Kansas City, Missouri.

Thomas Dewees' first wife had died shortly after the death of their second son. He then married the second time to Kate Ham, who was the youngest daughter of Caiaphas Ham. This marriage resulted in the birth of eight children. One of these children was a girl named Claribel Dewees. In time Claribel married Henry Remschel of Kerrville, Texas. This union resulted in the birth of two children, Robert, a boy and Claribel a girl who shared the same name as her mother. It is this second Claribel who was the benefactor of the Dewees Remschel house and property located west of Poth, Texas in Wilson County, which she donated to Wilson County.

Kate Ham's father was a close friend and associate of Jim Bowie, an ardent defender of the Alamo during the Texas – Mexico Revolution. Their relationship developed in their early youth when both were growing up on adjacent plantations in Louisiana. Seldom did a day pass when the two boys did not spend some of their time together. In 1830 at the age of 27, Caiaphas Ham and Jim Bowie left for Texas traveling through Nacogdoches and San Felipe de Austin before reaching San Antonio. Not long after his arrival in Texas, Caiaphas became involved with a friendly tribe of Comanche Indians. Here, he learned of their ways and the finer points of horse trading. Jim Bowie became involved in business transactions in San Antonio and married Maria Ursula de Veramendi the daughter of the vice governor of the province.

Prior to the fall of the Alamo Caiaphas Ham, Jim Bowie, and his brother Rezin were a very adventurous threesome. In 1831, with eight additional individuals, this group of men went in search of a lost silver mine near San Saba. Jim Bowie believed he knew the location of the mine site because of his association with the Indians and had managed to piece together the directions from the different conversations with them. On this expedition they were attacked by over one hundred Indians but the eleven men were able to survive the fight. They lost only one man while the Indians lost over fifty warriors. Caiaphas wounded an Indian chief with a single shot and this was the turning point in the conflict. The next morning the Indians retreated. The Bowie group returned to San Antonio and discontinued their search for the silver mine. This fight has been called the Battle at Calf Creek.

Soon after the group returned to San Antonio, preparations began to fortify the Alamo against the anticipated attack from the Mexicans which were led by Santa Anna.

Jim Bowie, a strong believer in the Texas cause was appointed as one of its leaders with Travis as the head of the defense of the Alamo. Both Caiaphas Ham and Rezin Bowie fortunately missed the battle at the Alamo. Prior to the conflict, Jim Bowie directed them to go to Louisiana to purchase additional horses for the Texas Army.

On his entry into Texas and his visit to San Felipe de Austin, Caiaphas completed the necessary paperwork and was introduced to Stephen F. Austin after which he received a quarter league of land (land grant number 950) in the second Austin Colony. After the battle of Independence, he also received six bounty certificates for his service in Texas' successful victory over Mexico.

In 1837 Caiaphas married Elizabeth Parks McDaniel. Their married union was blessed with six children, five girls and one boy. According to census records in 1855, Caiaphas and his family were residents of Lavaca County with three children. He and his wife were charter members of the First Beeville Baptist Church which was organized in 1869 in Beeville, Texas.

Caiaphas Ham was a very active Mason, joining the Murchison Lodge no. 80 first in 1854. Later he became a member of the lodges in Refugio, Beeville and the Jepta Lodge at Pleasant Hill. Pleasant Hill was located in Wilson County near the current community of Fairview. The Jepta Lodge received its dispensation to form a lodge on October 18, 1873 and was authorized to have its lodge meetings in the Pleasant Hill Church. Three of the petitioners creating this lodge were Caiaphas Ham, Thomas Dewees and Mr. Cavitt.

Caiaphas Kenard Ham was also the father of Mrs. Cavitt of Fairview. She was his second daughter.

Caiaphas Kenard Ham passed away at the age of 93 years at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Tom Dewees in San Antonio, Texas. At the time of his death, he was one of the oldest citizens of San Antonio. He was a noted pioneer and Indian fighter in his early days in Texas. Both he and his wife are buried in the San Antonio Masonic Cemetery.

Caiaphas Ham was given a Bowie knife by Rezin Bowie which is now on display at the Alamo Museum. Also on display is a notebook, eye glasses and an Indian peace pipe dated 1846 – all belongings of Caiaphas Kenard Ham.

Compiled by Gene Maeckel from information in the files of the Wilson County Historical Society Archives, P.O. Box 101, Floresville, Texas 78114 May, 2010. Web site: www.wilsoncountyhistory.org