

## COKER CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

### Progress Report 1857-1995

Tragedy fell on the Coker family September 24, 1857 when Loucious Monroe Coker six year son of Mr. James Harrison and Mrs. Sarah Jane Coker, died from a rattlesnake bite. Little Loucious's Grand father Mr. Joseph Coker offered to put the grave on his property. A High knoll near the Salado Creek was selected to mark little Loucious's grave. Mr. Amos D. Jones was asked to chisel a large limestone headstone. The limestone headstone is still standing and the largest monument in the Cemetery.

Four years later, January 4, 1861 Mr. John "Jack" Coker hero of the Battle of Jacinto died.

This became the second grave on the property that Mr. Joseph Coker had set aside for a grave yard for the family.

For the next 138 years members who had someone buried in the Cemetery and volunteers have been cleaning and caring for the Cemetery grounds. Family members volunteered on an annual basis and their ladies brought picnic lunches for the volunteers. Only recently have we had a caretaker.

In the early thirty's {30's} Mrs. Clara Shannon Miller saw the need of a water well for the Cemetery.

Mrs. Clara Miller spent many hours raising funds for this purpose by soliciting donations and serving many Mexican food dinners. She accomplished her task. The water well was drilled in the year 1933 and still used today. In the late depression years ,about 1938, A man Mr. "Tex" Sullivan came to the Cemetery and asked the trustees, Mr. D. T. Harrison, Mr. Edward Kelly and Mr. Luther Townsend for permission to hunt rattlesnakes on the cemetery grounds. Without hesitation he was given permission.

For years Mr. Sullivan lived in a tent on Cemetery grounds and caught rattlesnakes. These snakes were sold to the snake garden near Brackenridge Park.

Mr. Sullivan earned extra money by cleaning and caring for member's graves. Mr. Royce Jones and Mr. Ray Williams in 1964 were elected to serve on the Board of trustees of Coker Cemetery along with Mr. Edward Kelly and Mr. Luther Townsend. Mr. Royce Jones was then elected to serve as secretary and Mr. Ray Williams was elected to serve as treasurer.

Mr. Luther Townsend transferred the Balance \$785.11 Coker Cemetery funds to Mr. Ray Williams, Treasurer. August 7, 1967 A special meeting with forty members present was called.

The purpose of the meeting was to propose the incorporation of the Coker Cemetery. September 15, 1967 Coker Cemetery Association received a certificate of nonprofit incorporation from the State of Texas.

The first officers of the Coker Cemetery Association were: Mr. Royce Jones, President and Secretary, Mr. Luther Townsend, Vice President and Mr. Ray Williams, Treasurer.

On April 9, 1968 The State Historical Committee approved the request and inscription for a 16" x 12" plaque for John "Jack" Coker. The Dedication of the Historical Marker was held. Boy Scout Troop # 285 presented the colors. Mr. Royce Jones led the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America as well as the pledge to the Texas flag.

Mr. C. Stanley Banks was the speaker followed by Rev. G. Robert Grimes with the dedicating prayer. A committee on April 26, 1972 composed of Mr. Arthur Nagel, Chairman, Mr. W. W. Harrison, Mrs. J. A. Maltsberger, Mrs. Frank Sandau and Mr. S. E. Townsend gave a report on method to create a fund to insure the permanent care of the Cemetery. For the fund to be effective a gift \$6.00 or more per grave plot given semiannually would be required.

May 6, 1973 two additional trustees were added to the current three. This made five trustees, Mr. Royce Jones, Mr. Luther Townsend, Mr. Ray Williams, Mr. Sidney Autry and Mr. Arthur Nagel.

May 18, 1975 Mr. David Altwein gave the Cemetery a plot locator.

March 31, 1980 Treasury Balance on hand \$24,534.59. Mr. Ray Williams was able to buy a small, storage building. This storage building was placed on Cemetery grounds next to the water well.

At the annual meeting April 27, 1980 four new trustees were elected to the Board, Mr. Carl Coker, Mr. Clarence Gerfers Jr., Mr. Gary Nagel and Mr. James Williams.

This brought the total number of trustees to eight.

December, 1981 Mr. Joel Schweers a member of Scout Troop #285 located at Coker United Methodist Church, completed a project that was a survey recording the names and dates on all Coker Cemetery grave markers. Information gained from this survey provided Coker Cemetery with a valuable card file. This Card file is still in use today.

1982 Mr. Clarence Gerfers Jr. mailed a list of those Association members who gave memorial donations to the Association.

April 18, 1983 Mr. Marshall Montgomery completed an all weather road through Coker Cemetery.

Mr. Clarence Gerfers Jr. in 1984 began an annual mail out to Association members listing Cemetery contributions.

May, 5, 1985 Annual Meeting goals set for Cemetery maintenance funds of \$50,000.00 was met and exceeded.

Balance on hand was \$53,284.80

Mr. Clarence Gerfers Jr. was congratulated on the design of new envelopes used for request for Coker Cemetery donation mail outs.

Mr. Nagel was thanked for his handling of moving the Butane gas tanks from cemetery property.

Mr. Ray Williams in 1987 obtained bids for manufacture and installation of two overhead gate arches, one at each Cemetery Entrance. The low and accepted bid was Heimer Blacksmith Shop.

A motion was made and seconded and approved to include in the minutes of the meeting to commend Mr. Carl Coker and Mr. James Coker, for painting all the wrought iron in the Cemetery.

Mr. Clarence Gerfers reported the May 17, 1987 Sesquicentennial Celebration for Mr. John & Mr. Joseph Coker was a tremendous success.

Mr. Sidney Autry, Potentate Alzafar Shrine Temple, was extended thanks for use of the Alzafar Shrine Temple auditorium.

Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert Stempel were commended for their many hours of work organizing this celebration. Thanks was extended to all who worked and participated in this project.

Mr. Robert Tomasini in 1988 arranged for a survey of the Coker Cemetery.

Mr. Mitchell G. Tommasini donate the cost of the Cemetery survey.

May 6, 1990 Mr. Arthur Nagel arranged for an aluminum cast marker for Mrs. Malinda Brown Coker to be placed next to her husband Mr. Joseph Coker in the Coker Cemetery.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Nagel traveled to Jacksonville, Texas and arranged for a red granite marker to be place at Malinda Brown Coker grave site in old Jacksonville Cemetery located on Kickapoo Road.

Malinda Brown was Born 1811 and died May 24, 1853 in Jacksonville, Texas June 12, 1990 seventeen grave markers were cleaned, leveled and repaired after a vandalism spree in the Coker Cemetery by persons unknown

October 1992 Mr. Clarence Gerfers Jr. and Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy J. Taylor after many months of negotiation made an agreement to buy 0.458 acre of land with assess to North Loop Road. The Board of Coker Cemetery Association Trustees, then convened and approved purchase which would be authorized pending approval of Association members. November 8, 1992 at a called meeting of Coker Cemetery Association, Members endorsed and approved the purchase. Contract for the purchase was closed December 4, 1992.

Wednesday, January 5, 1993 A committee was appointed to audit the Association financial records and report to the trustees and to the Association members at the annual Association meeting. Three Association members were appointed with Mrs. Gail Stempel, assisted by Mr. Tex Tomasini and Mr. James Williams. The audit committee reported to the trustees April 4, 1994 and to the Association membership April 10, 1994 annual meeting. The report was approved as presented.

April 25, 1994 Annual meeting, Board of trustees was increased to nine with the election of Mr. Tex Tomasini to the Board.

June 1993 The Coker Cemetery Grounds committee hired Mr. Aureliano Garcia to trim all trees in the Cemetery. August 10, 1993 Mr. Royce Jones appointed a committee of three: Mr. Sidney Autry, Mr. Clarence Gerfers Jr. and Mr. James Williams to rewrite the bylaws of Coker Cemetery Association. Mr. Sidney Autry, would serve as chairman. The Bylaws have not been reviewed or amended since September 15, 1967 when the Association was incorporated. After many hours of work the new Bylaws were submitted to the Coker Cemetery Association membership for the first reading April 10, 1994 and second reading and approved by the members May 29, 1994.

Mr. Clarence Gerfers Jr. presented policies for burial in Coker Cemetery. These policies were approved along with the Bylaws January 5, 1993 by the trustees. Mr. Gerfers also revised all forms being used by the Association. Sunday, October 31, 1993 on the 110th Birthday celebration for the United Coker Methodist Church, a tour of the Coker Cemetery was conducted by a committee of three. Mr. Carlton Coker, Chairman assisted by Mr. Clarence Gerfers and Mr. Sidney Autry.

Comments were made by descendants at selected graves. Boy Scout Troop # 285 served as tour guides.

Mr. Ray Williams received bids for the removal of the house from the 0.458 acres. The house was removed by February 1994.

March 4, 1994 Mr. Sidney Autry and Mr. Royce Jones made application for the new Tract of land 0.458 acres to be exempt of taxes. Bexar Appraisal District Tax exemption was approved in the year 1994.

April 10, 1994 the Coker Cemetery Association approved the audit committee report given by Mr. Royce Jones in the absence of Mrs. Gail Stempel, committee chairman.

Mr. Tex Tomasini gave a good report on the cleaning of the Cemetery. A number of people helped with this big project with trucks, chain saws, etc.

Mrs. Oda Kelley and Mrs. Janie Montgomery prepared food and drinks for the workers.

Mr. Royce Jones and Mr. Autry negotiated with Mr. LeRoy Kaderli to remove the remaining foundation, clear brush along the west fence, place residue in and level the low area at the northwest corner of the Cemetery. Mr. LeRoy Kaderli completed this work March 1994.

Mr. Sidney Autry reported that the Kuehlem Survey Company had been hired to combine the original Cemetery with the 0.458 Acres new property. Mr. Kuehlem made several proposals, the lay out of the proposed roadway, stake A enter line, and establish a grid for the existing Cemetery.

June 1994 Mr. Sidney Autry was named to contact a fence company for the purpose of installing a fence on the new property. Several bids were received and the low bid was Felix Fence Company. Felix Fence Company was given the contract to install a new fence on the North Loop Road side and to enclose the new property. A new fence was installed along the Taylor property line. A new drive gate and a walk in gate on the North Loop were constructed. One of the Cemetery Arches was moved and placed over the new gate on North Loop Road. Saturday, July 23, 1994 A Historical marker was dedicated for Jefferson Davis Smith who was kidnapped at the age of nine (9) years by Indians in 1871. Mr. Royce Jones was the master of ceremonies. Arrangements committee was; Mr. Sidney Autry, chairman assisted by Mr. Carlton Coker and Mr. Clarence Gerfers Jr.. Boy Scout Troop # 285 presented the colors. Alzafar Shrine Band played the appropriate music arrangements and fan far.

Mr. Henry Guerra was the speaker. Rev. Harold G. Sassman Coker Methodist Church gave the dedication prayer. For the two hundred plus people who attended, this was a highlight for Coker Cemetery.

Financial Balance as of December, 1994 was \$117,674.00.

February 1995 Mr. Clarence Gerfers was named by the Coker Cemetery Trustees to hire a plumbing company to repair a leak and up date the water lines at the well. The water lines were to shallow and needed lowering for the new road to pass over. The rerouting made it, possible for all of the valves to be placed in the well house. Blossom Plumbing company completed this project February 3, 1995.

Friday February 10, 1995 Mr. Tex Tomasini cut and laid a new gravel road from the new Cemetery entrance. The new road was built to completely circle the outer bounds of the Cemetery.

Mr. Tex Tomasini donated his service and labor to operate the machines that were used in the project.

This very important project was completed Friday, February 10, 1995.

At the Conclusion of this report which covers over one hundred thirty eight years (138) years, I wish to give my personal thanks to each member of the Board of Trustees. All eight (8) trustees possess a distinctive talent in his own right. Each has without hesitation given of his valuable time and support to the Board. This has been A dream team working together for the betterment of this Historic Coker Cemetery. I have been proud indeed to have served these thirty years. Thanks to each of you.

Submitted this date

April 9, 1995

V. Royce Jones, President  
Coker Cemetery Association