



MORTON CEMETERY ACTIVITIES

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MORTON CEMETERY

HISTORY

Morton Cemetery is one of the most historic cemeteries in Texas. It was established in 1825 by William Morton on a portion of his land grant after he buried a fellow mason, Robert Gillespie. Alas, William Morton lost his own life a few years later when he was swept away in the Brazos River Flood of 1833. His body was never found, and his widow sold the land. It has continued to be used as a cemetery every since.



900 MORTON STREET
RICHMOND, TEXAS 77479

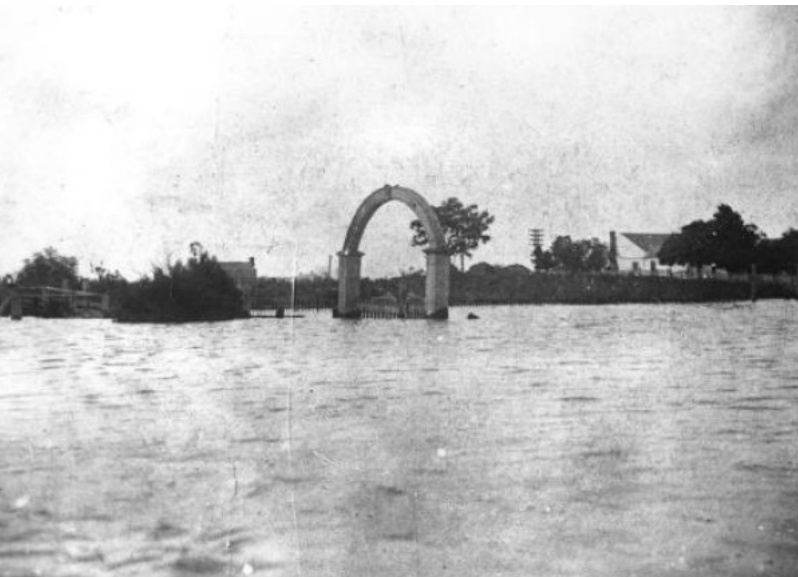
Robert Gillespie

Robert Gillespie, a native of Scotland, emigrated to Richmond in the 1820s. While his exact cause of death is unknown, Gillespie passed away after being taken in and cared for by William Morton and his family. They set aside a piece of land for his burial and founded Morton Cemetery. In 1836 during the Texas Revolution, portions of the Mexican Army were camped in this area. It is said that some of the soldiers attempted to tear down Gillespie's grave but were ordered to stop by their general, a Mason, who saw the Masonic signs on the gravestone.



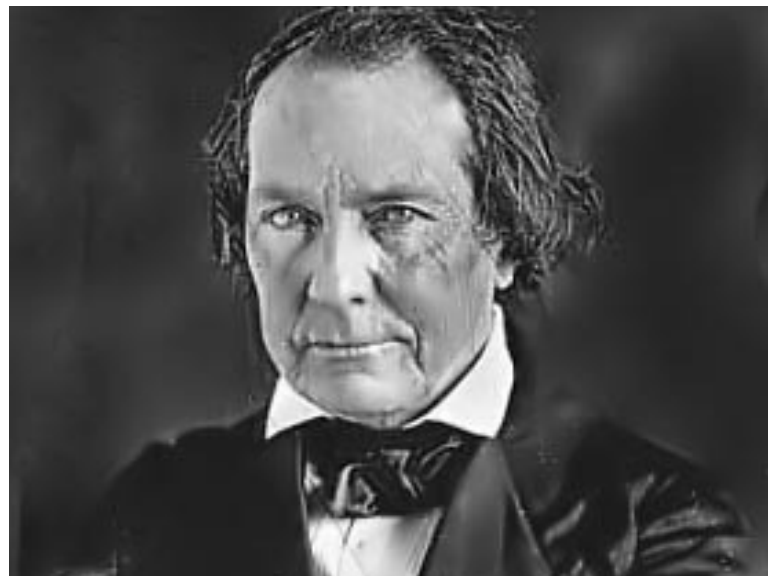
William Morton

William Morton was one of Stephen F. Austin's original colonists, and he received a large land grant with portions on each side of the Brazos River. Following Gillespie's death in 1825, Morton erected a brick tomb for him. It is said to be the first known Masonic landmark in Texas. Alas, William Morton lost his own life a few years later when he was swept away in the Brazos River Flood of 1833. His body was never recovered. Morton's widow sold the land, and it continued to be used as a cemetery. However, no one from the Morton family is buried in Morton Cemetery.



Mirabeau B. Lamar

Mirabeau B. Lamar was a statesman that came to Texas from Georgia. He fought in the Texas Revolution and led the cavalry at the Battle of San Jacinto. Following the Revolution, Lamar was elected Vice-President and later became the Second President of Texas. During his time in office, Lamar was a strong advocate of education and the public school system, earning himself the title "Father of Texas Education." Lamar later embarked on diplomatic missions for the U.S. to Nicaragua and Costa Rica.



Anton Wessendorff

Anton Wessendorff, and two of his brothers, landed in Texas after a long journey from Germany. While his two brothers remained in Galveston, Anton settled in Fort Bend County. In 1858 Anton married Johanna Jenentsky, who was also from Germany, and they had thirteen children. Anton was a skilled cabinetmaker and woodworker and brought his father's carpenter chest with him. Anton opened a small cabinet-making business, but had to close it while he served in the Civil War. In 1865 Anton reopened his store and added a line of lumber and nails as the local demand for these items developed. As a cabinet maker he also began building caskets leading to the growth of his undertaking business. Anton Wessendorff's lumber business would become one of the oldest in continuous business in Fort Bend County.



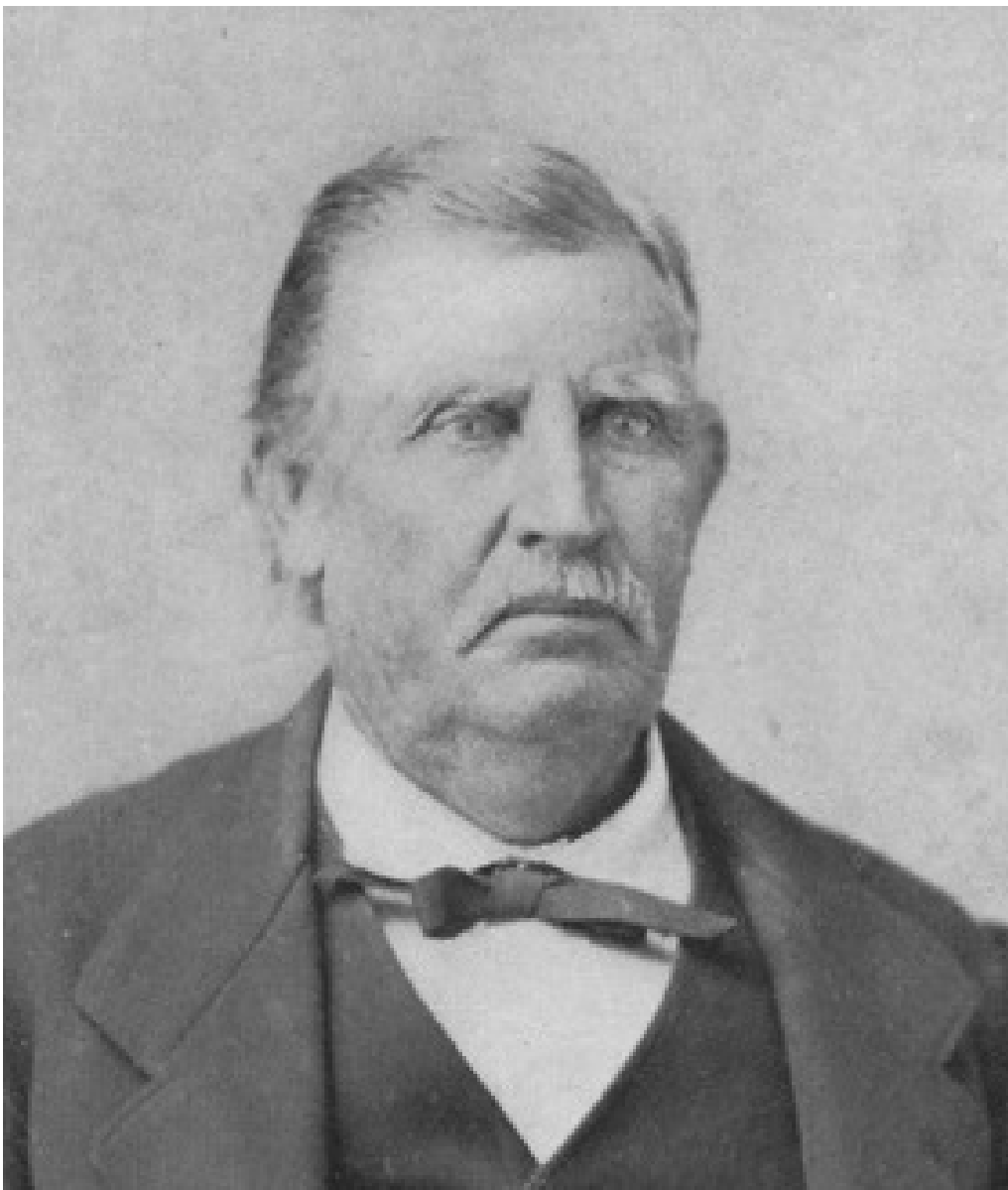
Thomas Jefferson Smith

Thomas Jefferson Smith, soldier, sheriff, and blacksmith, was born in Virginia in 1808, came to Texas in 1835 as a member of the Georgia Battalion. He fought in the Siege of Bexar and was later part of James Walker Fannin's Goliad command. Smith was one of 16 men detained by the Mexicans at Victoria on March 23 to build a boat and was thus spared from the Goliad Massacre and held as a prisoner of war until he escaped during the Battle of San Jacinto. After the Texas Revolution, Smith settled in Richmond, where he operated a blacksmith shop and ran a hotel and livery stable. He served as a Fort Bend County Sheriff from 1853 - 1857. In 1843 Smith married Mary E. Brein, and they had four children. He survived Mary and in January 1854 wed Julia Beale Bassett. They also had four children. In 1883 Smith wrote a detailed account of his experiences during the Texas Revolution. He died on February 16, 1890 and was buried in Morton Cemetery in Richmond, Texas.

Jane Long

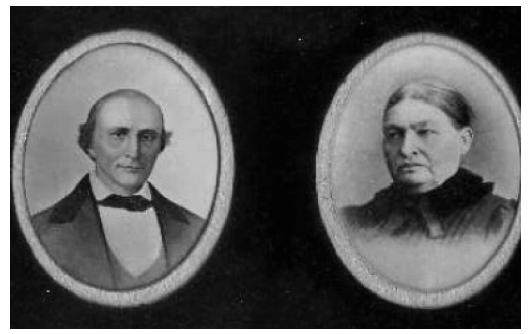
Jane Wilkinson Long, the “Mother of Texas,” was born on July 23, 1798, in Charles County, Maryland. In early 1815, Jane met Dr. James Long, and they were soon married. In 1820 Jane joined her husband at an outpost on Bolivar Point near Galveston Island. Dr. James soon set out on an excursion in September of 1821, leaving an expectant Jane, their daughter Ann, and Kian, a young enslaved girl, at the fort. Jane had vowed to remain at Bolivar Point until her husband’s return; however, unbeknownst to her, he was captured and killed in Mexico City. Jane waited at Bolivar even as other inhabitants at the fort left, and supplies began to run low during the harsh winter of 1821-1822. On December 21, 1821, in an ice-covered tent, Jane gave birth to Mary James Long. From this birth grew the legend that Jane had the first Anglo baby in Texas, thus earning her the title the “Mother of Texas. Finally, in March of 1821, word reached Jane of her husband’s fate, and she left Bolivar Point. In 1832 Long and her only surviving child, Ann opened a successful hotel in Brazoria that soon became a central location for social and political activities in Texas. Notable guests included Stephen F. Austin, Sam Houston, and William B. Travis. In 1837 Jane Long moved to Richmond, where she opened another boarding house and ran a successful plantation and ranching operation. Though she had many notable suitors throughout the years, including Ben Milam and Mirabeau Lamar, she never remarried. Jane spent her remaining years at her home in Richmond, Texas.





William Kinchen Davis

William Kinchen Davis was a prominent landowner and citizen of Fort Bend County. He was born on November 11, 1822, in Alabama. The Davis family moved to Texas in 1830 as members of Stephen F. Austin's colony and settled in what is now Fort Bend County. In 1842, Davis joined Somerville's expedition, which was formed in retaliation for the Mexican army's raids across the Rio Grande. When the expedition dissolved, a group of Texian soldiers, including Davis, formed a regiment and crossed into Mexico. The Texas regiment was captured at Mier and forced to draw beans to determine who would live and die. William Davis drew a white bean, escaping execution, but remained in the Perote Prison until his release in 1844. When he returned home to Richmond, he married Jane Pickens and together they had five children.



Top: Mary "Polly" Moore married Colonel William Ryon, a Mier Expedition survivor, and together they developed the prosperous 40,000 acres Ryon Farm and Pasture Company. Polly was also known to travel across the countryside to provide medical aid and help her neighbors.

Middle: Polly's daughter, Susan Elizabeth, married local businessman, banker, and civic leader "Judge" J.H.P. Davis. They continued to build the family's prosperity. They had three children before Susan's untimely death in 1884.

Bottom: Mamie, daughter of Susan and JHP Davis, married A.P. George and inherited 20,000 acres that supported a thriving cattle, oil, and gas business. In 1945, they created the George Foundation to benefit the people of Fort Bend County.

Walter Moses Burton

Walter Moses Burton was a remarkable man who arrived in Texas enslaved from North Carolina and would go on to be a state senator. Burton was born into slavery and brought to Texas by his owner, Thomas Burke Burton, in 1858. Thomas taught Walter to read and write, and following the Civil War, sold him several large portions of his land. Walter would go on to become a prosperous farmer. In 1869, Walter Burton was the first African-American elected to public office in Fort Bend County, where he served as Sheriff and Tax Collector until 1873. He was also president of the Fort Bend County Union League that was formed to mobilize black votes for Republican candidates, fight against violence towards black citizens, and campaign against the voting privileges of former Confederates. Burton was very well respected and was elected state senator in 1873. He served in the Texas Senate from 1874 - 1882, representing Fort Bend and Wharton counties. During his time in office, he opposed county convict labor and helped to found Prairie View A&M University. Throughout his life, he remained active in state and local politics until his death in 1913. He and his son Horace are buried in Morton Cemetery in Richmond. At the time of their burials, they were the only African-Americans to be laid to rest there.

