

# The Coffman Family of N.E. Texas

Gerry Gieger – Crowley TX 2008

**Lovell Coffman** was born 22 August 1800 in that portion of Eastern Tennessee, which was claimed by NC prior to 1790. His father **Jacob Maryon Coffman**, was a farmer and Primitive Baptist Preacher married to **Nancy Walker** of Fauquier County Virginia. A neighbor and friend of General Andrew Jackson, Jacob served in the East TN Militia in the War of 1812-14, for which he received a Land Grant. Lovell's grandfather, **David Harmon Coffman**, and maternal great-grandfather, **Robert Lovell** (ii), were Patriots of the American Revolution. His maternal great-grandmother, **Sarah Marshall**, was of the same lineage as US Supreme Court Chief Justice **John Marshall**. Lovell was well educated and had flowing cursive handwriting.

On 20 November 1820, Lovell married **Cathryn Howard**, daughter of **Baldwin** and **Elizabeth Howard**, who were claimed to be of Dutch descent.

The Coffmans came to Texas before or near the time that Texas declared her Independence. They traveled by wagon from northern Alabama into Tennessee and Arkansas. They crossed an unnamed river in Arkansas on log rafts. Since the river ran deep and swift, they cut trees and built rafts to cross. Never one to pass up an opportunity, Lovell used the log rafts to ferry others across the river for a fee. Soon additional travelers were building rafts and the competition became fierce for the best landing spots, so the Coffmans pressed on westward. With their team of oxen and a lead horse, they crossed the Red River at "old" Jonesboro (no longer exists) in what was claimed at the time to be Miller County Arkansas. ("old" Jonesboro should not be confused with present-day Jonesboro in Coryell County of Central Texas).

A few miles South was Robbinsville (extinct), founded by early Texas Pioneer **John Robbins**, near the present community of Bagwell. Lovell decided to settle there. A Freight-master and Wagon-Maker by trade, he found that the plentiful white-oak timber served him well, since it made excellent axles and wheels. The first wagon which he built in Texas was traded to John Robbins for 300 acres of Land and he purchased 300 adjacent acres from another Texas Pioneer, **Ice**(Isham?) **Farris**. Lovell also purchased 600 acres on Scatters Creek (sometimes called Ward's Creek). Lovell received Head-Right Grant number 96 for 640 acres, but he was only able to locate 320 acres, which turned out to be in present day Titus County. The other 320 acres went unclaimed and returned to the State.

Lovell and Cathryn set out to make a home for their ten surviving children: JAMES b1821AL; LUSIAZA (Louiza) b1823AL; NANCY b1825AL; SEABERN JOSEPH b1828; MARTHA JANE b1830AL who married Henry Drew DeBerry on 14 March 1850; WILLIAM WASHINGTON b1832AL; ANDREW JACKSON b1835AL; AMANDA b1837AL (TN/AR/TX?); MARY FRANCES b1839TX; and JACOB WARREN b1842TX. A baby born in 1827 only lived a few days.

The land was plentiful with game. Deer, elk, turkey, bear, squirrel, and razorback-hogs roamed freely so there was never much worry about meat. The land was fertile for corn, beans, peas and other crops. At that time, cotton had not been introduced to the area. In 1864, Lovell wrote to his brother James ( i ) about the abundance which he had raised.

During the years of the Republic, Lovell served elective office as a Justice of the Peace, and as a County Surveyor, helping establish the County lines for Bowie, Red River, Lamar and Fannin Counties. As a Minute Man in the Red River Militia, he quite possibly was involved in dispatch of the **Jonathan Bird** expedition into Tarrant County, which established Bird's Fort, the first white settlement in Tarrant County. Brig. General **Edward H. Tarrant**, for whom Tarrant County is named, was also based in Red River County, and certainly acquainted with Lovell Coffman.

The son-in-law of Lovell and Caty Coffman, **Henry Drew DeBerry**, and their daughter Martha Jane are the progenitors of the DeBerry family in Red-River County. Henry D. was a Justice of the Peace, a prosperous farmer and an Officer in the Rosalie Guard (Militia), during the US Civil War.

Lovell and Caty's two younger sons, Jackson and Warren, died in the service of the Confederacy. Jackson was a Private in General Maxey's 9<sup>th</sup> Texas Infantry and was last seen propping up one of his wounded comrades at Shiloh, Tennessee. It is believed that his is one of the 10,699 bodies placed in the Burial Trenches in Shiloh National Military Park, Tennessee. Warren was a Corporal in the Rosalie Guard (Red River Militia) and mustered into Ross' 9<sup>th</sup> Texas Cavalry. He saw action at Pea Ridge Arkansas and the Corinth Mississippi Campaign. He died in a Memphis hospital and was buried in Elmwood Cemetery, Memphis Tennessee. Neither married.

In 1866 Lovell took a young neighbor boy along for company as he traveled to Jefferson in Marion County. He had set out to pick up freight at the Riverboat landings on the Sabine River. His team of four horses and a well-built wagon could make the round trip in three weeks. As his custom was, he kept money for the freight in his lock-box which was nailed to the wagon. Arriving at the campsite on Caddo Lake, he left the wagon and young boy while he went to the landing to check on the Riverboat's arrival. While he was gone, two men rode up on one of his horses, took his best other horse, broke the lock and left with the money. They left their own old horses. When Lovell did not return, the boy was found by another wagon-master who knew Lovell. Hearing the story from the lad, he alerted the Authorities who searched without success. After ten days, Lovell's body surfaced in Caddo Lake where they had thrown it, after murdering him. No one was ever charged or even caught in the crime. His body was brought back to Red River County where he was buried in old Bluff Cemetery, between Bagwell and Detroit. In July 2006, Lovell and Cathryn's graves were rededicated in a Grave Marking ceremony conducted by The John Tilley Edwards Chapter, Daughters of the Republic of Texas, assisted by The Sons of the Republic of Texas, E.M. Daggett Chapter No. 36, and sponsored by Coffman descendants.

**James Coffman** (i) was born in Eastern Tennessee on 14 March 1802. He married **Anne Elizabeth Robertson** in Madison County Alabama ca1824, and they moved to Eastern Tennessee where they farmed and built a log home. After some years, he went to Nashville to homestead his property and found that someone else had already claimed the land, so he lost his Improvements, packed and moved to Texas. It is believed that he came about the same time if not with, his older brother Lovell. He settled near Pittsburg in Camp County, but the land was later found to be in the newly formed Upshur County.

James and Anne Coffman had twelve surviving children: NANCY b1825; LOVELL b1827; TERESSA b1829; JAMES H. b1831; ELIZABETH Jane b 1883; JOHN H. b1835; JACOB b1837; CASWELL N. b1839; ALETHA FRANCES b1841; AMANDA K. b1843; WILLIAM JASPER b1846; and GEORGE W. b1850. Some of James and Anne's descendants still live in the area around Pittsburg.

Another branch of Coffman's also came to Northeast Texas. They are the descendants of Lovell and James's uncle, **Markham Marshall Coffman** who was born in 1798 in Jefferson County Tennessee. They settled in Bowie County near New Boston. It is not known if these Coffmans knew that their relatives were nearby. Many Coffmans in Grayson and Collin Counties descend from Markham Coffman.

Lovell and James' great-grandfather David was the first to spell his name with a "C." His father was Johan Andreas Kauffman of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, an early Mennonite Elder. It has been postulated that the name change occurred because of the Revolutionary War, when survival meant fighting for the cause, in violation of the Mennonite Pacifist creed.

Some Sources for **Reference Documentation** on this family is available from the following:

- 1) NARA Southwest Regional Office, Ft Worth, Texas - Muster Rolls for Confederate Soldiers (Microfilm); US Census (Microfilm); Pension Files (Microfilm)
- 2) Holdings of the Texas General Land Office, Austin, Texas – Land Grants and Maps
- 3) Holdings of the Texas State Archives Library, Austin, Texas – Republic of Texas Muster Rolls; Election Certificates; Other Miscellaneous Government Documents
- 4) NARA, Washington DC – Muster Rolls and Pension Records of The War of 1812-14
- 5) Red River County Genealogical Society and Library, Clarksville, Texas
- 6) Genealogical Society of North East Texas, c/o Library, Paris Jr. College, Paris, Texas
- 7) GENEALOGY and HISTORY of the KAUFFMAN-COFFMAN FAMILIES of north America, 1584 to 1937, Charles Fahs Kauffman, Author, 1940; (Reprinted 2000 by Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Lancaster, PA
- 8) Fort Worth Public Library Genealogical Division, Ft Worth, TX – CEMETERY RECORDS of RED RIVER COUNTY; MARRIAGE RECORDS of RED RIVER COUNTY;