

**The History
Of
Black Jack
Grove**

Cumby, Texas

FORWARD

This history of Cumby is taken from research compiled by Mrs. June Tuck from the Hopkins County Historical Society. She worked diligently with the Daughters of Black Jack Grove in getting the historical marker placed at the City Park. Other materials were provided to Mrs. Tuck by Mrs. Bessie Stewart, Mrs. Nannie Mary Strickland, Mrs. Florence Irons, and Mrs. Treva Morgan. Countless hours of research were conducted and personal interviews were held with people in and around Cumby. Newspaper articles and Census Records were also used. It is with great pride that the Daughters of Black Jack Grove present this history to you.

CUMBY, TEXAS

Black Jack Grove, now known as Cumby, is located fourteen miles west of Sulphur Springs, in Hopkins County.

In the 1830's the area already had the name of Black Jack Camping Ground, because of the Black Jack trees. Even though earlier writers have written that the Indians would not go into the grove of trees, they did camp near them. The main reason the area made such a good camping ground was that Black Jack Grove is located at the highest elevation above sea level in Hopkins County. The Indians would bring their families with them into this area and set up camp. The hunters would hunt in the northern part of the county along the prairie and in the Sulphur River bottom area. When they got their supply of meat, they packed up and went back to their main camping ground west of Hopkins County. Several Indian traces passed through Hopkins County: one going through the southeast corner across Hopkins County, through Black Jack Grove. Later this trace became the main freighting route through Hopkins County—between Jefferson and Sherman.

As early as 1838, Rangers serving under the Republic of Texas used the grove of Black Jack trees as a camping site when in the area. In 1839, a band of Comanche Indians came through this section on the war path, and not far from where Mt. Vernon is located today in Franklin County, murdered and scalped a family. There was at that time, stationed near what is now Daingerfield, a company of Texas Rangers. When they heard of the depredation of the Indians, they went in pursuit of them. Nearing the grove of Black Jack trees, they saw that the Indians had scattered in different directions in order to throw the Rangers off their trail. The Rangers stopped at the old camping ground they knew. While they were there, one trooper became sick, and in a few days he died. They buried him in the woods, a little to the north of the camp. This grave was dug into a few years before 1934. Since no marker exist of this grave, it is supposedly the grave of the Ranger who died and was buried there in the spring of 1839. The incident was told by Mr. R. C. Greaves of Campbell, Texas, a brother to the late S. D. Greaves and a son of Mr. R. C. Greaves, who in 1839 was a member of this company of Rangers under the command of Captain Stout. The grave was in the far corner of the present day cemetery.

Some of the first settlers of the Black Jack Grove area were Johnson Wren, D. W. Cole, Robert Greaves, Merit Branom, John Matthews, James Box, and Henry Bingham.

Eliz Wren, wife of Johnson Wren, sold to D. W. Cole, by bond, land commonly known as Black Jack Grove, patent to D. W. Cole, No. 184, in 1849. Elizabeth Wren sold to D. W. Cole 316 acres, September 20, 1851, commonly known as Black Jack Grove, patent to G. C. Roberts No. 788. This section of land, No. 788, is part of the present day business section of Cumby. It starts at the north side of the present Main Street, extending north, taking in all the old section of the town site of early Black Jack Grove. The first street north of Main Street, running east and west, is Tarrant Street. Tarrant Street is the old road through Black Jack Grove, making it the first and oldest street in Black Jack Grove. In this section of land, D. W. Cole sold town lots.

The first stores in the Black Jack Grove area were on a hill near the old camping ground. D. W. Cole had a store there. D. W. Cowden also had a store at the present day town site, which faced north toward Tarrant Street. When D. W. Cole sold the town lots, he referred to them as "a certain town lot in the town of Black Jack Grove, on the Masonic Square". Later the town area moved one block south to the present Main Street.

Henry Bingham erected the first tavern, which also served as a hotel. The Tavern and Hotel served the guest even though it was a very crude structure, being built of clapboards. Jabe Bingham built the first mill in 1851. In 1852 Esquire Green moved to Black Jack Grove. He had a tavern for a while, and also ran a mill. This mill was an old ox mill. The only steam mill in this locality was operated by John R. Baker in 1867. The first doctors were Dr. Scott and Dr. McGee. Captain Merit Branom was one of the early merchants. General Sam Houston would stop at his home when in this area.

Black Jack Grove also had its share of saloons. When liquor licenses were required they went to Stinger and Cole, H. J. Halbrook and Mckinley, J. A. Brewer, W. G. McKinley, and Kneiff and Fry.

Under the name of Black Jack Grove, the citizens of the community decided they needed a post office. They had their first Post Master appointed February 9, 1848—John W. Matthews. He lived three miles north of town, and kept the post office in his residence. Mail was received once a week by horse back. In 1855, James Brown was appointed Post Master. A young man by the name of Bill Robin was clerking for him. Robin read a book written by Mrs. Ann Steel, published about the year 1800 under the title "Theodosia". Robin became so attached to the book that he managed to get the name Black Jack Grove changed to Theodosia in 1857. Changing the name caused quite a bit of agitation among the residents and in 1858 the name was changed back to Black Jack Grove. In 1896 there were two Black Jack Groves in Texas, with each having a post office. This resulted in conflict, so the citizens changed this Black Jack Grove to Cumby on March 27, 1896. Cumby is named after Politician Bob Cumby.

The Masonic Lodge was chartered in Black Jack Grove January 24, 1856 as Hopkins Lodge No. 180. D. W. Cole served as Worshipful Master ten times. The first building owned by Hopkins Lodge 180 was erected in 1860, the lot being donated by D. W. Cole. From 1856 to 1860 they met in the open by moonlight on top of a knoll one mile north of town, on a farm owned by D. W. Cole.

The Presbyterian Church was organized by some families from the Cumberland Presbyterian Church located in the Mt. Zion Community. The land was bought for the church January 3, 1882. The present church erected in 1924. The church became a Presbyterian Church U.S.A., instead of Cumberland in the 1900's.

The Methodist Church charter members worshipped in an old school house that stood in what is now part of Cumby Cemetery. Later they worshipped with the Presbyterians. Deed for the property was executed June 25, 1892, and the First Methodist Church was erected on Frisco Street in 1894. The present church was erected in 1929.

The Black Jack Grove Baptist Church records were burned. The first account found of its existence is in the Minutes of the Old Concord Baptist Church. The churches at Twin Oaks and Black Jack Grove were united in 1876 to sit as an advisory body to consider the dissolution of the Concord Church. In 1893 the church erected its first house of worship. The present First Baptist Church was built in 1943.

The first school house was a little log structure. The next school was a vacant store house used also as a place to worship. In 1895 to 1905, Black Jack Grove had a college. Professor R. L. Taylor was in charge of the Independent Normal College. Later Professor Curlee had the College. And it was called Curlee College. The beautiful two-story building has since been torn down.

In 1880 a railroad called East Line and Red River Rail Road was built through Black Jack Grove. It was a small type, with narrow gauge and very light locomotives and small cars. They had four locomotives, three being named Dick Hubbard, Throckmorton, and Tom Campbell.

The first Nation Bank was organized in 1901, with J. A. Brewer as the first President. Cumby State Bank was organized in 1907.

The first electric lights were installed in 1913.

Parham Drug Store in Cumby was the home of O. J.'s Beauty Lotion. The young ladies of the town would ask O. J. Parham for his "special beauty lotion". Thus the start of O. J.'s Beauty Lotion. The Parham's moved to Shreveport to market O. J.'s Beauty Lotion in 1910.

When the Civil War started, Black Jack Grove raised Military Force Company K, Ninth Texas Infantry. It was mustered in, on July 3, 1861, and its flag was presented by Miss Texana Trimble. Of the company, Jim Williams was chosen Captain; Mose Brown, First Lieutenant. All the young men in the area went to fight for the south. Many did not return.

Cumby was incorporated May 13, 1911. One-hundred thirty (130) votes were cast—86 votes in favor of incorporation, 44 against incorporation.

Cumby can boast of the fine early day settlement it had. In 1860, the census showed 4 grocery stores, 5 merchants, 2 physicians, one lady doctress, 6 wagoners, 2 millers, 2 blacksmiths, 1 saddler, 3 teachers, 2 carpenters, 2 preachers, and 1 brick mason. The cemetery, started when the community was settled, is the only cemetery in Cumby.

It is a large well kept cemetery. It has been said that Jabe Bingham was the first person buried there in 1851. If so, he does not have a stone. The earliest marked grave is the grave of Urbane Alexander, born February 6, 1813, died December 20, 1853.

Cumby still has its large farm lands around it. There is farming done, as all land is in pasture to raise beef cattle or dairy cattle. As for the down town area, some would call it a

ghost town. It is the only town, besides Sulphur Springs, in Hopkins County, that has many of its old buildings dating around 1910 still standing today.