

RUSK, THOMAS JEFFERSON--Born December 5, 1803, in Pendleton District, South Carolina, one of seven children of John Rusk and Mary Sterritt Rusk. The other children were David, Esther Sterritt, Mary Nancy, Jane and Rachel. At the time of the birth of Thomas J. Rusk, his father, a stone mason, was living in a house rented from John C. Calhoun. Mr. Calhoun was attracted by Thomas J. and encouraged him to study law, even teaching him at times and frequently lending him books. It was through his influence that Thomas J. secured a position in the office of William Gresham district clerk of Pendleton District. Thomas J. Continued the study of law at spare times and was shortly afterwards admitted to the bar. He moved to the nearby town of Clarksville and there in 1825 began the practice of his profession. He prospered and on January 4, 1827 was married to Mary F. Cleveland, daughter of General John Cleveland, a prominent merchant in Clarksville. In time Mr. Rusk bought an interest in General Cleveland's store.

In 1834 after having had financial reverses he came to Texas and settled at Nacogdoches. On November 5, 1835 he received title to a league of land in Burnet's Colony situated in Cherokee County. In 1838 he received a headright certificate for one labor of land from the Board of Land Commissioners of Nacogdoches. In the certificate it merely states that he came to Texas prior to May 2, 1835.

At the outbreak of the revolution in 1835 Mr. Rusk organized a company in Nacogdoches of which he was elected Captain. His company of cavalry joined the forces before Bexar in October, 1835. General

Cos, strongly fortified in Bexar, would not attack the Texans and the Texans found that an assault on the town would involve too great a sacrifice of men; hence a regular siege was ordered by General Austin. Efforts made to draw the enemy into the open were futile. Yoakum tells of the part Mr. Rusk played in trying to induce the Mexicans to leave their fortification: "Various attempts were made to entice the enemy beyond his walls. On one occasion a detachment of 190 Texans marched up within the range of the Mexican six-pounders; on another, Colonel Thomas J. Rusk, at the head of forty cavalry, took a position within three hundred yards of their walls and remained there twenty minutes; still they could not be drawn from their work."

Finally on December 5th, about three hundred Texans under the command of Benjamin R. Milam began an assault on Bexar. Rusk had in the meanwhile withdrawn from the siege. On the 6th, General Burleson and Milam sent a despatch to the government at San Felipe requesting "an immediate supply of ammunition, as much powder and lead as can possible be sent instantly ... I hope that good mules or horses will be procured to send on these articles with the greatest possible speed. ... Reinforcements of men, are perhaps, indispensable to our salvation.

On December 10th the General Council passed resolutions calling for additional volunteers for the army and James W. Fannin and Thomas J. Rusk were constituted agents or contractors for supplying ammunition, provisions and other necessities for carrying of the resolutions. They were vested with full power of the Provisional Government. Rusk was directed to proceed east of the Trinity to forward troops to the

theatre of war. At Nacogdoches on January 6, 1836 he appealed to, and later received from, Charles S. Taylor a thousand dollars, a portion of the fees Taylor as a special land commissioner for the State of Coahuila and Texas, had collected from those to whom land had been granted. In his letter to Judge Taylor he said: "I have unfortunately seen a disposition throughout the country to procrastinate the time of mustering a respectable force in the field until Spring. We are at war with an enemy whose success heretofore has been entirely owing to the celebrity of his movements. Many persons are now in our town and many more will arrive in a few days from the U. S. I have no means of mustering them into service for the want of provisions. I am not willing that the country should suffer by any neglect of mine, and you are well as all others must at once perceive the consequences to our cause by the return to the U. S. of men who have volunteered themselves in our cause.

From December 14, 1835, to February 26, 1836 Captain Rusk served as Inspector General of the Army. On February 1, 1836, he was elected as one of the delegates from the Municipality of Nacogdoches to the Constitutional Convention that was to convene at Washington-on-the-Brazos March 1st. There on March 2, 1836, he was elected Secretary of War and as such he participated in the Battle of San Jacinto. From May 4 to October 31, 1836, he was Brigadier-General, commanding the Texas army. On December 9, 1837, he received Bounty Certificate No. 880 for 320 acres of land for having served in the army from October 8, 1835 to February 25, 1836. On May 15, 1838 he was issued Donation

No. 2 for 640 acres of land for having participated in the Battle of San Jacinto. On December 9, 1837 he received Bounty Certificate No. 879 for 640 acres of land for his services from May 4 to November 4, 1836.

In selecting his cabinet, President Houston named General Rusk as Secretary of War, the position he had formerly held under President Burnet. From this position he resigned after a few weeks, his private affairs requiring his entire attention. His constituents, however, insisted that he represent them in congress and against his wishes he did so, serving in the House of Representatives in the Second Congress from September 25, 1837 to May 24, 1838. In 1838 he refused the earnest solicitations of his friends to offer for the office of President of the Republic. General Lamar who was elected, did not announce as a candidate until General Rusk had stated that he would not run. In August, 1838, General Rusk with 600 horsemen quelled the rebellion of Mexicans and Indians under Vicente Cordova at Nacogdoches and vicinity. On December 12, 1838, at a joint meeting of Congress, Rusk was elected Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas. This office he resigned June 30, 1840. On July 16, 1839, in command of a regiment, he participated in the decisive battle with the Cherokees in which the famous Chief Bowles was killed and his band driven from Texas. By joint ballot of Congress January 16, 1843, Rusk was elected Major General of the Militia. At the expiration of his term he refused to stand for reelection, desiring to devote his entire time to his law practice. On February 25, 1841, General Rusk

Rusk and James Pinckney Henderson had formed a partnership with offices at Nacogdoches and San Augustine. General Rusk was chosen president of the convention which met at Austin, July 4, 1845 to frame the constitution for the State of Texas and was by the first Texas Legislature elected to the Senate of the Congress of the United States. General Sam Houston was the other senator elected and in the Texas State Senate Rusk received one vote more than did Houston. Senator Edward Burleson voted for Rusk but voted against Houston. Rusk took his seat in the Senate of the Twenty-Ninth Congress March 26, 1846, to serve until March 3, 1851, and at the expiration of his term was reelected. He was elected President pro tem of the Senate of the Thirty-Fifth Congress March 14, 1857, in special session.

Mrs. Rusk and her children emigrated to Texas in the early part of 1835 with David Rusk, a brother of Senator Rusk. Mrs. Rusk died of tuberculosis April 23, 1856. She was born August 14, 1809. General Rusk ended his own life at his home in Nacogdoches, expiring at 2 o'clock on July 29, 1857. He and his wife sleep side by side in Oak Grove Cemetery, Nacogdoches at the foot of a tall granite monument erected by the State of Texas. Rusk County was named in honor of General Rusk.

The State of Texas in 1936, with Centennial funds, had a joint monument erected at the graves of John and (Mary Sterritt) Rusk, parents of Thomas J. Rusk, in the cemetery in Pendleton, South Carolina. Children of General and Mrs. Thomas J. Rusk were (1) Benjamin Livingston, (2) John Cleveland, (3) Thomas Jefferson, (4) Cicero,

(5) Alonzo, (6) Thomas David, and (7) Helena Argin Rusk.

(1) Benjamin Livingston Rusk was born in Georgia, February 24, 1828. On April 17, 1853 he was married to Rachael A. Crain, daughter of Diles Burditt and Rachel A. (Fulgham) Crain. Their children were (a) Alice Helena, born February 19, 1855, (b) Cicero Benjamin, born July 4, 1856, (c) Mary Euphemia, born March 29, 1858 and (d) Giles Thomas Jefferson Rusk, born January 28, 1860 and died May 25, 1861.

After the death of his wife, Mr. John C. Rusk, was, on December 11, 1862, married to Cornelia E. Lawson (?), who was born July 19, 1845. Their children were (a) John David, who was born January 15, 1864 and died June 6, 1865; (b) Margaret Helena, born December 22, 1865; (c) David Cleveland, born November 19, 1867 and died April 27, 1878; (d) Saritha (?) born July 15, 1870; and (e) William Benjamin Rusk, born July 15, 1872 and died October 6, 1872. Mr. John C. Rusk was living in Van Landt County in 1896.

(3) Thomas Jefferson Rusk, Jr., was born in Georgia, January 12, 1832 and died October 14, 1834.

(4) Cicero Rusk was born in Georgia October 5, 1834. He was killed while serving in the Confederate Army in the War between the States.

(5) Alanzo Rusk was born August 12, 1837 and died August 17, 1838.

(6) Thomas David Rusk was born April 3, 1841. He died in Harrison County.

(7) Helena Argin Rusk was born November 27, 1845 and died at the age of about eighteen.

Maggie H. Rusk, daughter of _____ and _____ Rusk
was married December 21, 1882 to J. T. Darden. Their son John David
Darden was born October 9, 1883.

The names and addresses of SOME of the grandchildren of Mr.
and Mrs. Thomas J. Rusk are: Mrs. T. P. Davis, 802 Johnson Street,
Terrell, Texas.

RUSK, THOMAS J. - Some of his surviving descendants are: Aleck K. Rusk, 80, of Canton, and Virginia Ann Tunnell, 2 month-old baby, Grand Saline, were oldest and youngest of the descendants. Others were Lora McNeil, Melba McNeil, Lena Mullins, Larue Ballard, Ruth Walters, Ellis Walters, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Walters, Ellis Walters, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Walters, Lorens Smith, Austin Smith Jr., Mr. and Mrs. S. H. Rusk, Harold Rusk, Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Kellam, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Kellam, Bobby James Kellam, Jackie C. Kellam, A. K. Rusk, Iris Keahey, Jaunice Keahey, Russell Tunnell, M. A. Keahey, Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Rusk, Tommy Jean Rusk, Geneva Rusk, Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Tunnell, M. L. Tunnell, Jack Terry, Agrin Rash, Elizabeth Ann Rash, Birdie Wilson of Colfax, Lillie Merchant, John R. Kellis, J. W. Gentry, John Lintz Merchant, Mr. and Mrs. Tillman Walters, Dr. and Mrs. T. R. Keahey of Canton, Mr. and Mrs. Dee Roy Tunnell, Mr. and Mrs. Forest Tunnell of Colfax, Mrs. Birdie Wilson of Ben Wheeler, White Tunnell, Houston Rusk, Bobby Joe Rusk, Mr. and Mrs. Norton Keahey of Colfax, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Kellam, Mrs. Mary Rusk McNeil, Sonny Boy Kellam of Tyler, Mrs. O. W. Pitts of Edgewood, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Rusk, Sr. and Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Rusk Jr. of Dallas, Mrs. Ray Garner of Longview, J. W. Gentry of Canton, Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Rusk, Geneva Rusk, Tommy Jean Rusk, Mrs. Mary Rusk, McNeil, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Geddie, John Geddie, John Kellis of Canton, Mrs. Kirkpatrick of Grand Saline.

RUSK
 MOTHER AND FATHER
 OF
 THOMAS JEFFERSON RUSK
 1803-1857
 Pioneer
 Soldier
 Statesman
 of
 Texas

ERECTED BY THE STATE OF TEXAS

1936

(West face)

MARY STERRITT

Wife of

John Rusk

(North face)

JOHN RUSK

Builder of

Old Stone Church

1797

(South face)

11-24-36
 Monument, Special design. Mr. David E. Burress, Pendleton, South
 Carolina, will show the contractor where it is to be erected.

Approved: _____

Rusk, Thomas J.

Houston Tri Weekly Tel

July 28, 1856 or about that date

Copy all about Rusk

#880 for 320 acres Dec. 9, 1837

Oct. 8, 1835 - Feb 25, 1836

#879 - 640 acres Dec. 9, 1837

May 4 - Nov. 4- 1836

Have not secured

Nacogdoches 359 for Rusk

Mrs. T. P. Davis

802 Johnson

Terrall, Texas

In Headright Certificate No. 214 issued Feb. 8, 1838 for one
labor of land for one labor of land by the Board of Land Commissioners
of Nacogdoches County it is simply stated that he came to Texas
previous to May 2, 1835. (File No. 730 Red River First Class Headright)