



JAMES BOWIE FLINTLOCK AT FORT FISHER — After the serge of the Alamo, a decisive battle, for Texas independence, the flintlock rifle of Col. James Bowie was found. The rifle has been on display at the Alamo and now is being shown at Fort Fisher in Waco. Gaines deGraffenried, curator for the fort, is pictured above (middle) holding the hand made weapon. Pictured with de Graffenried is Captain Mitchell (left) and Alvin Stem (right) director of the Parks.

Bowie Rifle Display In Waco

A flintlock sporting rifle, once owned by Alamo hero James Bowie, is on display at the Homer Garrison Jr. Texas Ranger Museum at Fort Fisher this month.

The rifle was especially made for Bowie and has a gold edge on the stock, five gold bands, and Bowie's initials carved in a gold plate on the barrel.

The rifle is the property of the Pellegrin family and is on indefinite loan to the museum. DeGraffenried also asked that the location of the family not be disclosed.

At Fort Fisher the gun will join a photograph of Jim Bowie taken in New Orleans and given by his family to author John Henry Brown when he was writing his famed "Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas." Also in the museum is a Bowie type knife picked up on the battlefield at San Jacinto.

As for Jim Bowie, he has long been one of the most controversial figures in Texas history - and legend.

He was born in Logan County, Ky., in 1797, the eighth of 10 children. He moved with the

family to Missouri and then to Louisiana. That was in 1802. Bowie cleared a small tract of land at Bayou Boeuf in Rapides Parrish and earned a living by logging and farming. He also acquired a reputation as a hunter of wild game and a rider of alligators.

Bowie sold his land to take part in James Long's expedition to Texas. About the same time, he and his brothers, John J. and Rezin, turned to smuggling slaves into Louisiana, many

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times buying them from Jean LaFitte in Galveston. The brothers were also involved in land speculation, some fraudulent, in Arkansas.

James became involved with Norris Wright, sheriff of Papides Parrish, who had blocked a loan of money to him. They met in a duel on Sept. 19, 1827, on a bank across the river from Natchez, Miss.

Each man had a group of five or six men with him. One of the men who accompanied Bowie and his brother, Rezin, gave Jim a knife that had been made by his blacksmith. Bowie was badly wounded and Wright began to attack him with a cane sword. Bowie took his borrowed knife and stabbed his opponent.

That was the beginning of Bowie's reputation as a "knife man" and the origin of the "Bowie" knife.

Bowie moved to Texas in 1828. Two years later, he married Ursula Maria de Veremendi, daughter of the governor, Juan Martin Verimendi. His wife's death, the death of their two children and the death of her parents from cholera in September of 1833 greatly affected Bowie.

He had involved himself in searching for the lost San Saba Mines and in fighting Indians. He was elected colonel of the Texas Rangers in 1830 and the next year he and 10 companions were involved in an attack by about 160 Tawakoni, Waco and Caddo Indians. More than 40 Indians were reported dead and 30 wounded in the battle. Only one white man was reported dead and two wounded.

After the death of his family, Bowie joined in the revolution against Mexico. He served in the battle of Concepcion, the Grass Fight, the siege of Bexar and the capture of Martin Perfecto de Cos.

He was elected commander of the volunteer forces at San Antonio and served in that capacity in conjunction with William B. Travis who served as commander of the regular troops. But they shared authority for only a brief time. On Feb. 24, 1836, the second day of the Siege of the Alamo, Bowie was stricken with a chest complaint and confined to his cot.

The accounts of his death vary but one story is generally accepted. Bowie was taken to the southwest room of the chapel before the final assault. There, when the Mexicans entered the room, he was sitting up with his head braced against the wall. He went down fighting with the two pistols and a Bowie knife which had been left with