

On the Masonic Road

By Bill Crow, Staff Writer

So, you think you have been everywhere and seen all that there is to see ... Think again, there is a small town in Kerr County, Texas that has a reputation of being small (in size only) but big in grit, history, and pride.

In 1821, Stephen F. Austin, known as the “Father of Texas,” made a contract to bring 300 families to the Spanish province, which now is Texas. By 1823, probably more than 600 to 700 people were in Texas, hardy colonists from the various portions of the United States at that time, who settled not far from the Gulf of Mexico.

There was no regular army to protect them, so Austin called the citizens together and organized a group to provide the needed protection. Austin first referred to this group as the Rangers in 1823, for their duties compelled them to range over the entire country, thus giving rise to the service known proudly, as the Texas Rangers.

In the mid 1850’s, as Kerr County was establishing a new county seat, a small community to the south was being established as a major trade area between Comfort, Texas, and Kerrville (later changed to Kerrville) and Bandera and Fredericksburg, Texas.

On November 25, 1859, the first post office was established and called Zanzenberg after the ancestral home of the town founder Dr. Charles Ganahl. Originally opened in the home of Dr. Ganahl, the post office stayed there until 1872 when it was moved to the south side of the Guadalupe River where a sizable community was building. When the post office was reopened it was called Center Point due to its location on the trade routes mentioned above.

Founded largely by settlers from western Tennessee, the community continued to grow as relatives and neighbors from Tennessee converged on the banks of the Guadalupe to call Zanzenburg/Center Point their new home.

On September 1, 1857, the first Native Texan of Center Point, Texas, was born as Daniel C. Nowlin, son of Dr. James Crispin Nowlin and Ann Gathings Nowlin. At the turn of the century Center Point, Texas was a thriving trade center and remained so until, like so many communities in America, it became the victim of progress as the emergence of new highways passed it by.

Most likely you will never hear a Texan make a statement like, “Where the Heck is Center Point, Texas, or what is so important about that little Texas town”? Well if you are from a major metropolitan city or no nothing about Texas history or even less, are from another state you might find yourself in a potential gunfight with the local folk of Center Point, Texas. Center Point Texans are proud folk and rightly so ...

We spoke briefly opening this article about the Texas Rangers, and their proud heritage among Texans. So, what does Center Point, Texas, and the Texas Rangers have in common to be parts of a Freemason Magazine feature article? Well to be specific, three things, aside from being a great community; Center Point shares a proud Texas legacy, a Cemetery, and the greatest Texas Masonic Lodge at the cross roads of commerce and travel from Comfort, Texas, and Kerrville and Bandera and Fredericksburg, Texas, on the Guadalupe River.

“In 1874, the Frontier Battalion of Texas Rangers was formed with Major John B. Jones as its commanding officer. There were six

companies of Texas Rangers in the Frontier Battalion, which when fully recruited; each company consisted of a captain, orderly sergeant, second sergeant, first and second corporals, and twenty-six privates. Jim Gillette, who served in Company "A" of the Frontier Battalion under Jones, wrote his memoirs in a book entitled, "Six Years with the Rangers" and gives us a firsthand account of Major John B. Jones:

Major John B. Jones would travel from one company camp to another patrolling the state and constantly monitoring the conditions and needs of the frontier. Ultimately, he selected Company "A" as his escort. The Rangers were very busy and lived in the saddle, as Jim Gillette's recollections continue:

"The last guard would call the camp early, so we generally had breakfast and were ready to move southward by daylight. We did not stop a single time for dinner on this return trip, just traveled at a steady gait all day long without dinner until nearly night. We all wondered why we marched the live-long day without dinner, but it was not until many years afterward when I became a Mason that I learned the reason for our forced marches. Major Jones was in line to be made *Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons in Texas* and he had to be in Houston on the first Tuesday in December for the annual meeting of the *Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Texas*. If there were other Masons in the company besides Major Jones, I never knew it."

So, we see two extremely strong fraternities, Free and Accepted Masons and the Texas Rangers, both sharing the same code of ethics, the common drive to seek truth and light, and above all, be with like men whom they could not only trust, but men they knew who had their back. The Texas Ranger legacy embedded in Free Masonry has continued to the present day to ultimately include virtually every appendant body of law enforcement.

Major John B. Jones, a Mason, a Texas Ranger, Soldier, Patriot, Gentleman, and above all, a Texan, was a member of Corsicana Lodge No. 174 and his sword is honorably displayed in the Lodge to this day.

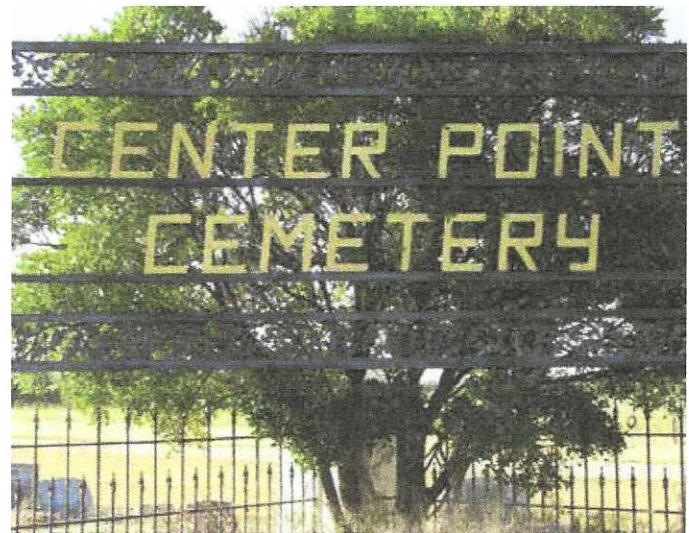
In 2010, the Former Texas Rangers Foundation created the Major John B. Jones Masonic Rangering Company in his honor, in order to pay homage to this legendary Texas Ranger and to acknowledge the great privilege and honor bestowed upon him by the *Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Texas*. The Former Texas Rangers Foundation encourages all Texas Masonic Lodges to join this organization and become an assigned 'Camp' of the Rangering Company.

On the last Saturday of October every year the Major John B. Jones Masonic Rangering Company 'Camps' meets for its annual meeting and soiree in Fredericksburg, Texas at the Texas Rangers Heritage Center. An Entered Apprentice Masons Outdoor Lodge is opened and there are Texas Ranger history presentations as well as a talk by our *Most Worshipful Grand Master*."

Some say the Texas Rangers and the history and legacy of the Texas Rangers is as legendary as the Alamo. There are great essays and history about the Texas Rangers and about the efforts of Major

John B. Jones, the first Commander of the Frontier Battalion to bring the Texas Rangers and Texas Masonry into recognition and brotherhood from two fraternal organizations. History tells us Major John B. Jones served as *Most Worshipful Grand Master of Texas* in 1879.

Did you know Center Point, Texas, is famous as the unofficial cemetery of the Texas Rangers? Take a walk through the tombstones of the Center Point, Texas, cemetery and you'll soon notice many graves with metal crosses standing beside the markers. These crosses signify a Texas Ranger's grave. More Texas Rangers are buried in the Center Point cemetery than in any other graveyard in Texas. With 40 Rangers at rest in Center Point, that's more than in the State Cemetery in Austin. Why are so many Rangers buried here? The answer to that question isn't entirely clear, but it is certain the Rising Star Masonic Lodge has something to do about those little Texas Ranger's Crosses.



"Mike Cox, the author of "Gunfights and Sites in Texas Ranger History," believes it might have begun as a simple matter of convenience. The area has long been a favorite retirement spot. Since a number of Rangers had retired nearby, it made sense they would be laid to rest there. With a fair number already interred in the cemetery, more and more Rangers from other parts of Texas started requesting to be buried there as well. In fact, modern Rangers are known to request to be buried beside their brothers in arms in Center Point. Cox calls the little cemetery the "unofficial Arlington of the Texas Rangers."

Founded in 1872, the cemetery now holds over 1,452 graves. The first Texas Ranger to take his rest in Center Point was George Moore, who died in 1886. A road trip out to Center Point to take rubbings on the historical tombstones is a great way to spend an afternoon in the Hill Country. A partial list of Rangers buried at the cemetery includes: W. D. C. Burney, N. Coldwell, J. A. Gibbens, H. T. Hill, F. L. Holloway, R. J. Irving, Sr., R. J. Lange, J. H. Lane, S. T. Lane, Jr., T. Lane, M. A. Lowrance, J. L. McElroy, S. G. McElroy, A. S. Moore, F. M. Moore, G. K. Moore, G. R. Moore, G. W. Moore, H. C. Moore, James Moore,

FEATURE

J. T. Moore, M. F. Moore, D. C. Nowlin, J. C. Nowlin, R. W. Nowlin, P. Alonzo Rees, N. O. Reynolds, W. H. Rishworth, J. L. Sellar”

Rising Star Masonic Lodge No. 429 and its members are a significant part of the Center Point, Texas, landscape. This great Lodge is deeply involved in leadership and community service and awareness and the Lodge identifies itself by a mural depicting the Lodge Building and several Masons on horseback, as was the means of travel when the Lodge was chartered in 1875. The mural, on its own merit, is recognized by Texas Masons across the state and by visitors worldwide.

Chartered on June 5, 1875, Rising Star Masonic Lodge was first located in a building which was destroyed by fire in 1900, along with all the Lodge records. Lodge meetings were held in the Guadalupe Valley bank building from 1902 until the Lodge moved the current site in 1964.

Charter members of the Lodge were Miles A. Lowrance, Joshua D. Brown, William D. C. Burney, H. B. Dollahite, Alonzo Rees, A. S. Moore, John F. Moore, Sidney B. Rees, Theodore Wiedenfeld, Stephen G. Wray, George W. Wools, James M. Witt, Samuel H. Wellborn, F. M. Moore, and Thomas C. North. (1986)

The first six Worshipful Masters of Rising Star Masonic Lodge were all Texas Rangers. Some rode from Hondo, Texas taking three days to get to Center Point, riding during the full moon. It is said that the qualifications of a Mason and a Texas Ranger were parallel as Texas was rising in the early days of the frontier.

Each year the Lodge strongly supports and works in the John B. Jones Ranging Company annual meeting in Fredericksburg. Significant representation and participation from both the Rising Star Ranger Lodge Degree team and Fredericksburg Lodge are always noted and appreciated.

Rising Star “Ranger” Lodge is “Ranger Camp No. 1” of the John B. Jones Ranging Company. This is a key connection of Masons and



Texas Rangers present and historical. The annual meeting for John B. Jones Ranging Company will be held Saturday October 29th 2022 in Fredericksburg on the grounds of and near the Ranger Heritage Center. Rising Star Ranger Lodge will open a tiled outdoor Lodge under the big oak tree during that meeting.

Rising Star Masonic Lodge has many objectives and special venues for its members and visitors from all over Texas as it celebrates with outdoor Masonry in the Beautiful Texas Hill Country at Camp Alzafar along the Guadalupe River. The outdoor flora, and degree team work is spectacular. Masons all over Texas have attended and they say the outdoor Lodge meetings are a sight to behold.

And, if that is not enough to catch your interest and plan a journey to center Point, Texas, the Cemetery and Rising Star Lodge No. 429, if you are there for a Stated Meeting, or just visiting, you will meet great men, many or most who are Masons, get a great meal, and if you are very lucky, be mystified by a magician.

The Worship Master is Drew Elson.

He and the Lodge welcome all visitors. Stated Meetings are the third Thursday of each month, meal 6:30 PM: meeting 7:30 PM. You can contact the Lodge at:

421 San Antonio St, Center Point, TX
PO Box 429, Center Point, TX 78010-0429
(830) 688-3348
Email: 429RisingStar@gmail.com

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Texas Masons are great men and fellowship is our connective tissue to build and maintain our Brotherhood. Do something for someone each day and your life will take on a greater meaning for you and the person that was blessed. It's Great to be a Texas Mason. ★