

THE REAL RIPPER

By William R. Williamson



WILLIAM R. WILLIAMSON

"The glory of the "knife-men" wearing proudly their ivory handled Bowies in embroidered sheaths has indeed faded. Nevertheless the traditional tales of the frontier — tales yet to be heard all over the Southwest — Bowie's knife has become nothing less than the American counterpart of King Arthur's "Excalibur" or of Sigmund's great sword "Gram" forged with runic rhymes by the dwarf smiths of the old Norse gods. And its origin is wrapped in multiplied legends as conflicting and fantastic as those that glorify the master weapons of the old world." (1)

In addressing the society this morning on the subject of James Bowie and the Bowie knife what location could be more apropos than the queen city of the Mississippi delta, historic and colorful old New Orleans. It was in this area and in this city that Bowie spent his formative years. The New Orleans of Bowie's time was less than genteel, it had become the melting pot of every nation and every color. Gamblers, mulatto tradesmen, plantation men, filibusters, pirates, slave traders, river boatmen trod its streets and sampled its life. If arranged in a circle the saloons, bordellos, cabarets and hostelrys would have surrounded the entire city. One traveler wrote,

"There is, perhaps, no place in the civilized world where the influence of the gospel is more needed than in New Orleans." Dr. Thomas Nichols said, "it is notorious that the worst Southerners are Northerners." Northern businessmen arrived at the St. Charles hotel in a state of highly aroused expectancy. I trust that you yankees gathered here today will make note of this and, while wearing the society pin, act with proper restraint. Another world traveler wrote during the period, "I wandered through the streets of New Orleans with some money in my purse and very little knowledge in my head. Later I was traversing the same streets with very little money in my purse but with my stock of knowledge greatly augmented." In 1819, the year James Bowie was 23 years old, Henry Fearon wrote in "Sketches of America," "To all men whose desire is to be rich and to live a short life but a merry one, I have no hesitation in recommending New Orleans." This was not news to the handsome and dashing young Jim Bowie.

It is not my purpose here today to glorify or to villify James Bowie, both have been done. Nor do I purpose to become hopelessly entwined in the vast spiderweb of legend surrounding the man and the knife which bears his name. Admittedly, it is difficult, probably impossible, to separate the facts and to avoid the pitfalls of untruths, fabrications, and pure fiction published on the subject. Contemporary writers of the period were inclined to slant the facts and embellish the news much as we witness in the media today. Nonetheless certain truths do emerge and I will attempt, unless otherwise indicated, to present accepted historical accounts.

"James Bowie had the flavor, the mettle, the daring in gesture and deed, and the generosity of spirit that make certain actors on the stage of life go beyond themselves into other selves and thus do more and say more than they actually said or did. People used to name their children, their horses, their oxen, their hounds after Bowie. That is fame. Bowie's impact on human imagination, which is to say on social history, was far stronger than on political or military history. His name is kept green on three counts, each enlarged by legend. He is remembered for the knife bearing his name; before he died and then on for decades he was in popular belief the supreme knife wielder of the old Southwest. He is remembered for a search, actually futile, for the Lost San Saba Mine that transmuted it into into the Lost Bowie Mine, which still lures men on. Finally his name remains indelibly linked with the fall of the Alamo. Three other names are so linked, but more — many more — stories sprang up on how Bowie died than on the ends made by Travis, Crockett, and Bonham combined." (2) An additional count which should not be overlooked in "keeping the name of Bowie Green" is the collector of Bowie knives — past, present and future.

If one is of that school of thought which believes that timing is everything then the life of James Bowie is a case in point. Born in Logan county, Kentucky, the then frontier, in 1796, he was propelled in to fame by one fight on a Mississippi river sandbar and rescued from oblivion by his death at the Alamo. James was the eighth child of ten children born to Rezin, his father and to Elve Ap-Catesby Jones, his mother, both were natives of Georgia where they met and married. Motivated by the spirit of change common to frontier and pioneer families they moved to Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri and to a final home in Catahoula Parish of Louisiana. James received his education at home never attending a formal school. That he was intelligent

and spirited there is no doubt. His linguistic ability was demonstrated in later years by his command of the French and Spanish languages. DeBow's Review published in 1852 states James Bowie left the home of his father when about 19 years and settled on Boeuf Bayou in Rapides Parish where he earned his livelihood by sawing lumber and floating it down the Bayou to sell in New Orleans. He was an avid hunter and outdoorsman and is said to have engaged in exciting methods of capturing game as roping deer, wild cattle, and riding alligators.

In 1819 after selling his own land, Bowie formed a partnership with his brother Rezin. The two were very close and the enterprise, development of sugar plantations, continued for some eight years. The brothers had business acumen as indicated by the sale of "Arcadia," one of the plantations, for \$90,000.00. The first steam mill for grinding sugar was introduced into Louisiana by the Bowies. Of an even more speculative nature the two, with another brother John J., engaged in the illegal activity of smuggling slaves into Louisiana. John J. claimed they made, during two or three years in the trade some \$65,000.00. It was in this nefarious dealing that their names became associated with the pirate Jean Lafitte who, after seizing slaves from Spanish ships in the Gulf of Mexico, would sell them to the Bowies for \$1 per pound. In 1825 the brothers extended their talents to selling Spanish land grants in Arkansas. A great controversy arose over the validity of these grants and finally in 1831 the Territorial Court of Arkansas invalidated them. It is not known if the Bowies knew these grants to be forgeries, there were many other speculators involved.

In 1827, about the time of the Arkansas land deals, James Bowie became involved in the personal and political differences of one Samuel Levi Wells and Doctor Thomas Maddox. These disagreements ultimately cumulated in the now famous Vidalia sandbar duel and subsequent rough fight which served to catapult James Bowie and his knife into everlasting fame. Dr. Maddox issued a challenge which was accepted by Wells. The date arranged was September 19, 1827, the place was a Mississippi river sandbar, across from Natchez, in Concordia Parrish of La. The principals arrived with the usual seconds and a small group of friends on each side, each group antagonistic to the other. Shots were exchanged by the two duelists without effect and the agrieved pair were satisfied. Differences between members of the attending parties however were at the boiling point and a wild fight ensued. Two men were killed and others badly wounded. Bowie, shot by his enemy Norris Wright, was down but managed to rise as Wright rushed in to finish him with a cane sword. Drawing a large hunting knife Bowie, using his last reserve of strength, was able to kill his attacker. The several wounds that James Bowie received were so severe that his recovery was in doubt. Walter W. Bowie later wrote that James was saved by his unusually strong constitution.

The Bowie knife was launched, the newspapers wrote of the bloody affair with lurid descriptions. Bowie's reputation as a knife fighter was spread rapidly and enlarged all out of proportion to the actual facts. Soon men were asking for a knife like Jim Bowie's, then simply for a Bowie knife. The "Red River Herald" in Natchitoches, La. stated, "all the steel in the country, it seemed, was immediately converted into Bowie knives. All this steel was not enough to satisfy the demand for the knife, eastern dealers and English cutlery firms were called upon to meet the increasing need. Schools teaching the techniques of Bowie knife fighting were established. The knife became not only an instrument of the frontiersman, gambler and adventurer but it was held in high esteem by all strata including politicians, business and professional men. In the day of the single shot pistol with frequent misses and mis-fires the Bowie knife had one great advantage, it was always loaded.

After recovering from the wounds received in the sandbar fight James Bowie's interest in Texas was stimulated by the opportunities for profits in land speculation. At the age of 32 years, in 1828, Bowie rode his horse past the Texas settlements into the heart of Mexican territory, San Antonio. He found his reputation as a knife fighter had preceeded him. "He stood six feet tall and was all muscle. He was pleasing in looks, speech and manner to both men and women, though it is said that he seldom smiled. Letters and other writings by him and Rezin P. Bowie are in clear, sinewy English. After he had been in Texas for awhile, he spoke Spanish as well as French. He was not a ruffian, though he could be rough. He comprehended the cutthroats and gamblers of Natchez-under-the-hill while he dined in patrician houses on the hill or sat in the New Orleans theatre. He was at home with bellowing alligators in the marshes, with mustangs and mustangers on the prairies, and with lawyers who would circumvent God. In Texas he fought Indians and Mexicans. He could pass from frontiersmanship to urganity, moving as a well-bred gentleman in the best society of New Orleans, Natchez, San Antonio and Saltillo. He was convivial and scheming, but seems to have been more eager in the game of gaining than for gain itself. He played cards for money, and considering the facts, especially the debts, of his plunging career, one must deduce that he at times lost heavily." (3)

After making important acquaintances and contacts in Texas, searching for several months for silver mines in San Saba county Bowie visited his old haunts in La. returning to Texas in 1830. On April 22, 1831 he was married in San Antonio to the beautiful Ursula Maria de Veramendi daughter of the vice-governor Juan Martin de Veramendi. Ursula was 19 and James was 35 although he gave his age as 30. In his dowry contract Bowie stated his wealth at \$222,000.00 but failed to declare that titles to lands in Arkansas were forged and

notes on fraudulent sales were worthless. After the marriage Bowie borrowed \$750.00 from Ursula's grandmother and \$1,897.00 from her father and took his young bride on a honeymoon trip to Natchez and New Orleans. Back in Texas his restless nature and business interests kept him riding, searching for lost mines, fighting Indians, down to Mexico, back to Louisiana and Mississippi. During this period his relationship with the Veramendi family was most cordial. It was testified in a lawsuit at a later time he was, "treated as a son and furnished with money and supplies without limit. While he had no regular occupation he lived the life of a man with means, the money furnished by Governor Veramendi."

While Bowie was on a trip east in September of 1833, less than three years after his marriage, his young wife, his two infants, Governor Verimendi and Senora Verimendi were all struck down by cholera at their summer home in Monclova. Bowie, grief stricken, returned to New Orleans in 1834 but was soon back in Texas engaging in politics and speculating in land. His successes in this area were not spectacular, others were more fortunate. As the chasm of disagreement between the Texans and Mexico widened Bowie sided to the end with the Texas colonists. He was a member of the war party and a leader of the revolutionary faction. He was commander of the force which took Piedras at Nacogdoches and commanded, jointly with Fannin, The Texans at Concepcion. Bowie received orders from Gen. Sam Houston to demolish the Alamo and leave. On February 2, 1836 he wrote "Colonel Neill and myself have come to the solemn resolution that we would rather die in these ditches than give it up to the enemy." "While his rank as Colonel in the Texas army may not be well documented, he had in 1830 been elected colonel of a band of Texas Rangers and during the following five years had as commander of volunteers engaged in numerous skirmishes with hostile Indians. He was constantly referred to as Colonel. Gen. Houston gave orders to him as Colonel Bowie." (3) Travis wrote in an official report of February 13th that Bowie "has been roaring drunk all the time . . . interfering with private property, releasing prisoners sentenced by court martial and by the civil court and turning everything topsy turvy."

Kinder words were attributed to David Crockett, "I found Col. Bowie in the fortress, a man celebrated for having been in more desperate personal conflicts than any other in the country . . . He gave me a friendly welcome and appeared to be mightily pleased that I had arrived safe. While we were conversing, he had occasion to draw his famous knife to cut a strap, and I wish I may be shot if the bare sight of it wasn't enough to give a man of squeamish stomach the colic, especially before breakfast. He saw I was admiring it and said, "Colonel, you might tickle a fellow's ribs a long time with this little instrument before you'd make him laugh." (4)

The argument over who would command was settled the day after the Mexican General Santa Anna arrived in San Antonio on February 24, 1836. A severe illness overcame Bowie which has been variously diagnosed as tuberculosis, pneumonia, typhoid fever, typhoid-pneumonia and etc. which incapacitated him. Bowie was confined to a cot and Travis assumed full command. The Mexican army occupied the town and during the two week delay before the final assault on the Alamo the defenders worked on the fortifications. It was also on the 24th of February that Travis wrote: To the People of Texas & All Americans in the world: FELLOW CITIZENS & COMPATRIOTS - I am besieged, by a thousand or more Mexicans under Santa Anna - I have sustained a continued bombardment and cannonade for 24 hours & have not lost a man - the enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken - I have answered the demand with cannon shot and our flag still waves proudly from the walls - I shall never surrender or retreat. Then, I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, and everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid, with all despatch - the enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and that of his country - VICTORY OR DEATH. Wm. Barrett Travis, Lt. Col. comdt.

The 185 defenders of the Alamo withstood a siege of almost two weeks by several thousand Mexican troops. The final assault in accordance with Gen. Santa Anna's General Order of March 5, 1836 to the Generals, Chiefs of Sections and Corps commanders was executed on that fateful day of March 6, 1836. The defenses were breeched, savage fighting ensued and when the smoke of battle lifted every Texan not killed outright was put to the sword. A few women who had taken refuge away from the fighting were spared. It is not known how James Bowie died. The popular version envisions him on his cot, half sitting and supported with his back against the wall, emptied pistols at his side and blood stained knife in his hand. The neutral mayor of San Antonio entered the Alamo after the battle and later said Bowie was found dead on his bed in a side room. Walter W. Bowie, as stated in his family history, believed James died delirious on his cot about three o'clock in the morning a short time before the final attack. Two survivors, Mrs. Dickinson and Travis' slave boy said Bowie was shot through the head while he was "unable to lift it from the pillow."

It is unthinkable to believe that Bowie died without his knife whether he used it or not in those final minutes before death at the age of forty years. His body was thrown on the pyre and burned along with the others. The disposition of his knife is unknown despite various claims to the contrary. In all likelihood it was picked up by a Mexican soldier who put the knife to his own use little realizing the identity of its owner and certainly having no concept of its historical significance.

That James Bowie's fortunes were at a lowebb at the time of his death appear confirmed by an inventory of his estate. The list includes a dress coat of motheaten black cloth, other clothing, several books including a Latin-Spanish dictionary, a Spanish grammer, an arithmetic, a work on machinery and "The Revelation of Nature." There was an axe, three saws, a machete and a few other tools. All were sold at public auction for the sum of \$47.12-1/2. There were also two cases of worthless papers and land grants of no monetary value. A coach belonging to Bowie in Monclova was sold for \$800.00 and the money paid on his debts to the Verimendi interests. There were claims and counter claims in the Texas courts for many years concerning properties bought, owned and sold by Bowie.

"Bowie was a legend - a gaudy legend of gaudy violence - before he died. No deus ex machina in Greek tragedy ever extracted a character from peril more neatly than the Alamo extracted Bowie from defeat in life and from tarnish on reputation. For the popular mind, particularly of posterity, the Alamo blotted out all but the heroic and noble from the records." (2)

An examination of contemporary news stories and other writings of the period serve to reflect some interesting observations on the Bowie knife and its use. In December of 1836, a few months after Bowie's death, the Niles Register reported, "The public prints in all sections of the country are teeming with accounts of the most revolting murders and attempts at murder. In Philadelphia (Miss.) between Saturday and Monday last, no less than four attempts at murder with deadly weapons were made. In Natchez, a meeting has been held to suppress street duelling, and in most of the cities the Bowie Knife and pistol are daily used as a means of vengeance, or to arrest the hand of justice."

The Columbus (Miss.) Argus observed, "We are infested with a numerous gang of professional "sportsmen" or, in common parlance, gamblers, who put law, gospel and everything pertaining to good order at defiance. On Thursday and Friday last, the military were called out to assist the civil officers in preserving the peace of the city, and to prevent the wanton shedding of blood. Good Heavens! Has our beautiful and once boasted moral and religious city come to this? Are soldiers with loaded muskets and bristling bayonets required to protect us as if we were in a besieged city? Cannot our wives and daughters traverse our streets without meeting street fighters, armed with double-barrelled guns, pistols, and Bowie-Knives at every corner?"

"Rambles and Scrambles in North and South America" by Edward Sullivan observed the checking of weapons at the entrance of a New Orleans quadroon ball, "You leave them as you would your overcoat on going into the opera and get a ticket with their numbers. You hear the pistol and Bowie-knife keeper in the Arms Room call out: Number 45 - a six barreled repeater; Number 100 - one eight barreled revolver and a Bowie Knife with death's head and crossbones cut on the handles; Number 95 - one Bowie Knife and one Arkansas Toothpick. All this is done as naturally as possible, and you see fellows fasten on their knives and pistols as coolly as if they were trying on a comfornter or putting on a coat."

In "Tait's Edinburgh Magazine" of June 1846 an English traveler observed, "Above Dubuque, Iowa we refueled, and I walked into a barroom to see the type of people. There were two cutthroat-looking men whom I should not like to meet on a dark night. One fellow was picking his teeth with a frightful looking Bowie Knife; another with a similar weapon, was whittling on a piece of wood. Almost every man on this boat was armed with a Bowie-Knife, a detestable weapon with which the most frightful murders are constantly perpetrated. The owners made no attempt to conceal them, but appeared rather to take pride in their display."

Francis Sheridan in an official report on the Republic of Texas to the British Foreign Office noted in July of 1840. "During my stay on the coast, many murders were committed in the island of Galveston and in the country, and I could never learn that one offender was brought to justice. The Bowie knife is the weapon most in vogue. Most of the Bowie knives in use are manufactured in Sheffield and Birmingham and brought over in British ships. I have seen one from Sheffield with a blade 18 inches long ornamented in beautiful tracery on the steel as 'The Genuine Arkansas Tooth Pick.' I have been offered another, also of British make, the vendor hinting that I ought to pay him a dollar more than he demanded, as it had tasted blood.

Another Englishman Sir William Russell in "My Diary, North and South" refers to that area south of the Mason-Dixon Line as "the land of Lynch-law and Bowie knives." Friends "warned against the impolicy of trusting to small-bored pistols or to pocket six-shooters in case of a close fight, because suppose you hit your man mortally, he may still run in upon you and rip you up with a Bowie knife before he falls dead."

If you ever monkey with my Lulu gal
I'll tell you what I'll do
I'll carve you with my Bowie knife
And shoot you with my pistol too.

These words are inserted, from a song of the period, for you lovers of fine verse.

Alfred W. Arrington wrote this account of how an argument was settled on the floor of the house of representatives in Arkansas. "In 1836 the Bowie knife governed Arkansas. It was not asked of a legislator how many ideas are in his head but how many pistols stick out of his pocket.

The speaker of the House was John Wilson, better known as Horse Ears. When excited by passion, whether love, humor or anger, his ears worked up and down like those of a horse. He had a big cotton farm with plenty of niggers to work it and, like Devil Jack Smith of Mo., his favorite song was:

'Way down in the Cherokee Nation
a pretty little wife and a big plantation.

There's nothing so sweet in God's creation
as the pretty little gals in the Cherokee Nation."

One of Wilson's political opponents was a man named Anthony from Searcy. In an argument over wolf scalp bounties Anthony made a cutting remark about Wilson. "With his ears working up and down, forward and backward, and quivering in a horrific manner, Wilson drawing his Bowie knife, arose from the chair and started toward Anthony. He had never fought more than half a dozen duels; Anthony was not known to have fought any. Wilson's knife was long and keen and "so highly polished that you might have seen yourself reflected in its polish. Its handle was ornamented with a gold base relief of two naked Indians engaged in mortal combat with Bowie knives. While Horse Ears was coming Anthony drew his weapon. It was longer than that of his antagonist and cruder. It was an Arkansas Toothpick. "The most savage weapon before which human eye ever quailed." On one side of the blade was depicted a coiled rattlesnake about to strike; on the other side a bear hugging a man to death while the man fiercely dug out the heart of the bear with the point of his Bowie knife.

Horse Ears came on. Anthony waited. In the beginning each duellist parried so that the wounds received were only slight. Their heavy breathing, the clash of their steel, and the shuffle of their feet were the only sounds in a house of silence. But all idea of defense was soon supplanted by the fierce desire to kill. Anthony cut off the right hand of Horse Ears at the wrist. Horse Ears grabbed the knife in his left hand and lunged. At this moment Anthony aimed his knife at Wilson's breast and missed. Wilson came on and literally disemboweled his victim. He fell on the floor beside the dead man, however, he recovered and for years afterwards the stump wrist of his right arm reminded Arkansians of the duel of '36."

That the Bowie knife was a favored weapon with members of the southern aristocracy there is no question. Attorney Benjamin Hardin when prosecuting Judge Wilkinson and friends after a rough fight in which the judge "did in" one opponent with a Bowie knife described as having a white handle, "8 to 10 inches long in the blade, two inches wide, heavy and shaped at the point like other knives of that name," expressed this view, "Go to Louisville when a portion of the city is enveloped in flames, and you will see a thousand mechanics rushing into the devouring element for the protection of property, while the lawyer and the judge, and the haughty aristocrat walk about as spectators with their hands in their pockets . . . Where, then, are your bowie-knife and pistol-gentry, your duellists, and your despisers of the man who lives by the sweat of his brow?" "Gentlemen one question is, are we to tolerate the bowie-knife system under the false pretense of self-defense? I say, let your verdict act like the ax laid to the root of the tree, and many a prayer will bless you for your timely check of its growth. Many a woman is made a mourning widow, many a child made a pitiable orphan, and many a father childless by this accursed weapon." The jury deliberated for a full 15 minutes before acquitting the defendants.

Stringent laws with severe penalties were passed in several states as the one in Tenn. titled "An Act To Suppress The Sale And Use Of Bowie Knives And Arkansas Toothpicks In This State." The year was 1838 and the "Nashville Whig" viewed the new law with great optimism, "The bill passed in January by the legislature against the sale and use of Bowie Knives, deserves to be reckoned among the most salutary Acts of the late General Assembly. Its provisions will effectually stay the use and sale of one of the most bloody instruments of death known to the present age, and every friend of humanity and good order must rejoice that the practice of wearing this barbarious weapon has been rendered a misdemeanor, and its use in any way, a felony." As might have been predicted the "Nashville Whig" was proved incorrect.

The knife was popular with fighting men on both sides during the Civil War although hardly a decisive factor in the outcome. Frank Moore relates in "The Civil War in Song & Story" the experience of Roger A. Pryor of Virginia. "During the attack on Fort Sumter in 1861, Pryor was one of the party who waited upon Major Anderson, the commandant. He seemed the very embodiment of Southern chivalry. With his belt bristling with revolvers and Bowie-knives, he seemed individually capable of capturing the Fort. Once inside he seemed to think himself master of everything, and in keeping with this pretention, seeing upon the table what he imagined to be a glass of brandy, siezed and drank it without ceremony. Surgeon Crawford approached him and said; "Sir, what you have drunk is poison — it was iodide of potassium — you are a dead

man! Prior immediately collapsed — revolvers, Bowie-knives and all — and passed into the hands of the surgeon, who by purgings, pumpings, and pukings, defeated his own prophecy in regard to the fate of the chivalrous one.”

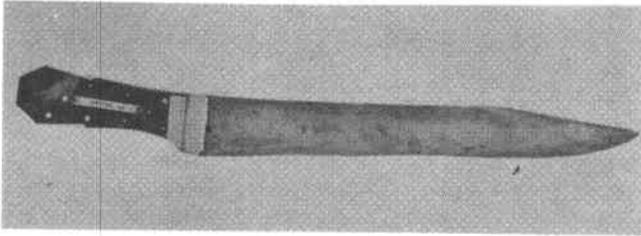
Cassius Marcellus Clay, cousin of Henry Clay, and pre-Civil War anti-slavery firebrand, was a veteran of many bloody encounters with his favorite weapon — the Bowie knife. When Clay wrote, “The Techniques of Bowie Knife Fighting” about 1870 he was writing from experience. Clay advised the reader to, “begin a Bowie knife fight by getting a left-arm headlock on his opponent and severing the jugular vein.” Should this opening maneuver fail, perhaps foiled by a particularly agile adversary, Clay stated, “one should resist the temptation to strike at the bony cage of the chest and should drive to the hilt on a line with the navel — a move which produces great shock, and almost invariably puts an end to the encounter.”

That Clay followed his own suggested techniques with the Bowie knife is illustrated by his last fight when about 90 years of age. One night three thugs forced their way into the old mansion Whitehall intent on robbery. Clay was awakened and with his favorite Bowie knife in one hand and a Colt’s revolver, given to him by President Lincoln years before, in the other sought out the intruders. One was fortunate and escaped, one received a ball from the Colt’s and died in a hallway. The following day the third was found lifeless outside on the grounds, the victim of a “navel encounter” with Clay’s pearl handed Bowie knife.

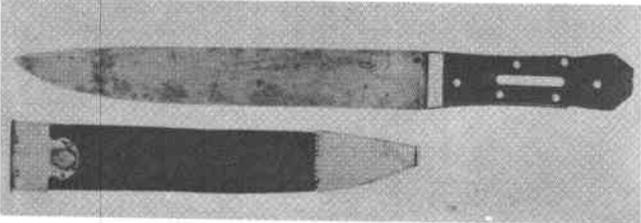
The popularity and use of the Bowie knife was established in the 1830s, expanded during the 1840s and reached its peak in the 1850s. The knife diminished in favor after the Civil War and by the mid 1870s was, for the most part, relegated to its original role as a hunting knife. Man made laws were not responsible for its demise. The times had changed, law and order prevailed to a greater extent but the killing efficiency, mechanical reliability, and wide distribution of the revolver was the nemesis which retired the Bowie knife.

There are many interesting facets to the Bowie Knife story on which I have not touched on this morning. The knife in California is a story in itself, the Confederate Bowie is another. Unmentioned are the cutlers, the various forms of the knife, the steels and materials used and etc. and etc. It was my thought the membership would, in this instance, be more interested in the historical aspects than in knife specifics. In the time remaining I would like to present a series of photographs with comments on each knife which will, in part, encompass more data on the knife itself and the cutlers.

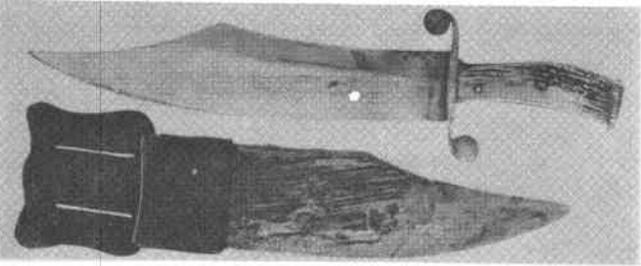
- (1) J. Frank Dobie, Bowie and the Bowie Knife, Southwest Review, 1931.
- (2) J. Frank Dobie, Fabulous Frontiersman - Jim Bowie, Montana magazine, Sprint 1959.
- (3) J. Frank Dobie, James Bowie, Heroes of Texas, Texian Press, 1966.
- (4) Colonel Crockett’s Exploits and Adventures in Texas, author unknown but legendary in character.



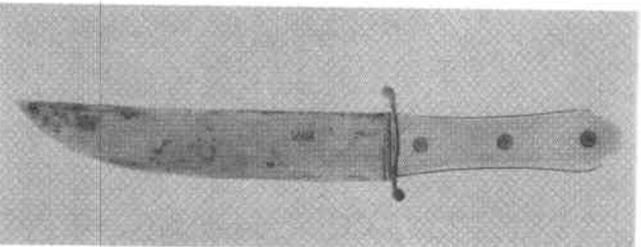
1. Fine American coffin-hilt Bowie knife of the early 1830s. Escutcheon plate engraved "Bowie No. 1." Unusual blade-hilt angle aligns the 13-2/8" blade on a parallel plane when knife is held with true edge up. Hardwood hilt with silver mounts. Walter O'Connor collection.



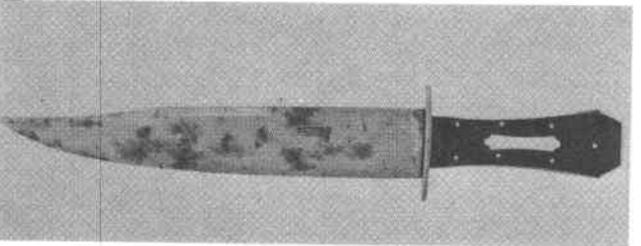
2. Not all Bowie knives possess guards. Made in the early 1830s by Rose - New York this rare specimen has a 10-5/16" blade, coffin hilt of rosewood and silver mountings. Sharp false edge extends almost to name stamp. Author's collection.



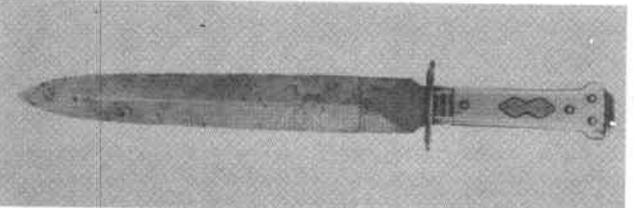
3. "All the steel in the country it seemed was immediately converted into Bowie knives." A huge knife of Texas ancestry, 1830s, by unknown maker with 12" blade and staghorn hilt. Robert Abels collection.



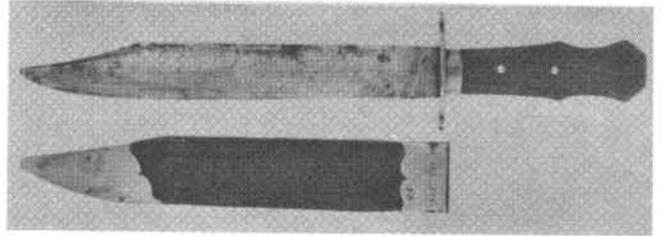
4. Only two examples of Bowie knives by the American cutler Thomas Lamb are known to me. Lamb worked in Washington, D.C. in the 1840s and stamped the blades, Lamb - W. City. Blade length is 7-13/26", full tang with ivory scales. Dr. K. O. Leonard collection.



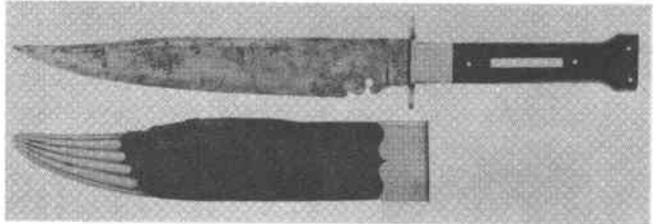
5. American influence is indicated in the modified coffin-hilt of this English made knife by W. & S Butcher - Sheffield. Wm. and Samuel Butcher were early in supplying U.S. demands. Blade length is 9-13/16", rosewood hilt with German silver mounts. Robert Abels collection.



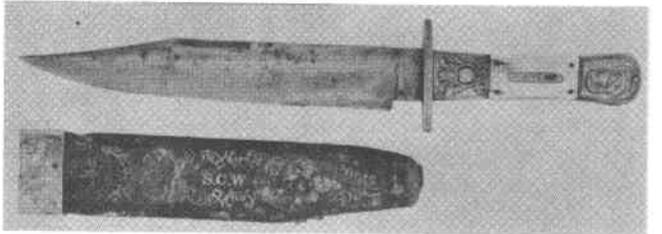
6. "Arkansas Toothpick" stamped under name of cutler, Joseph Holmes - 5 Smithfield - Sheffield. A large knife with 11-1/2" blade, German silver hilt with ivory scales made circa 1837. An outstanding example of early spear-point Bowie. Author's collection.



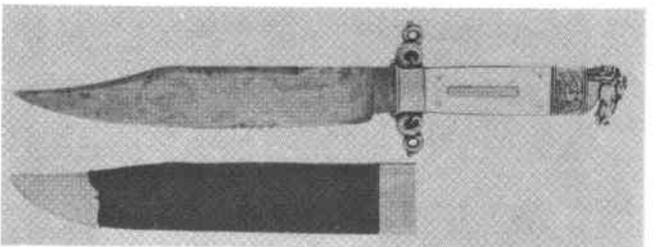
7. "I'm a real Ripper" etched on the 10" blade of this Bowie by James Rodgers-Sheffield. One-piece rosewood hilt, German silver mounts, 1850 period. Robert Abels collection.



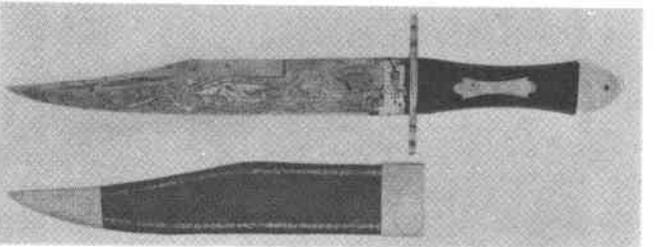
8. No satisfactory explanation has yet been offered for the unusual cut-out on blade, near guard, found on some early Bowies. It may have some use connected with hunting but of doubtful value as a blade catcher. A 9" blade on this W. Butcher - Sheffield knife, circa 1835. Author's collection.



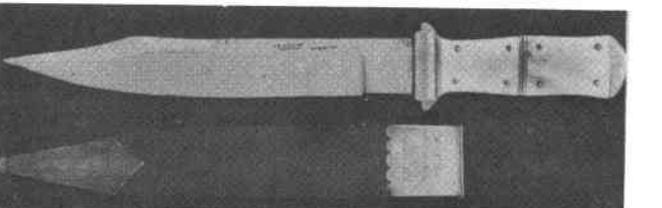
9. "I Ask No Favors And Shun No Responsibilities" surrounds bust of Gen. Z. Taylor on pommel of knife by S. C. Wragg - 25 Furnace Hill - Sheffield. Taylor was a favorite motif for use on knives by Sheffield cutlers during the late 1840s. Blade length is 8-7/8." two-piece ivory scales, German silver mounts. H. Gordon Frost collection.



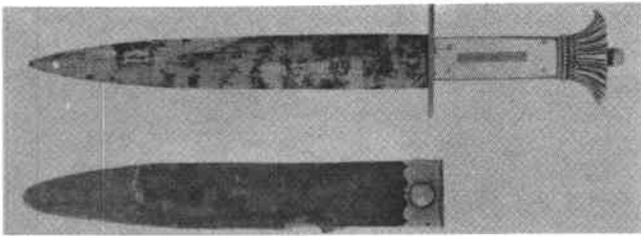
10. "Go Ahead" etched on blade of this knife by R. Bunting & Sons - Sheffield was the motto of Davey Crockett. A quality Bowie with German silver mounts, ivory scales, 8-13/16" blade made circa 1845. Robert Abels collection.



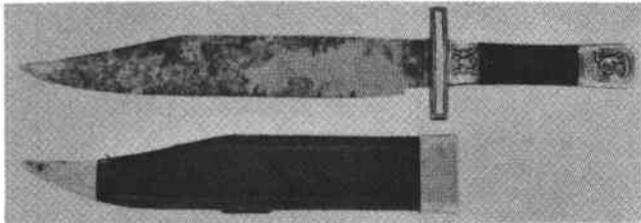
11. "California Gold At The Diggings" with other etchings adorn this blade designed to entice purchase by California bound adventurers in the 1850s. Made by G. Woodhead - 36 Howard St. - Sheffield, blade length is 9-1/16", full tang has combination of polished horn and ivory scales. Clay Bedford collection.



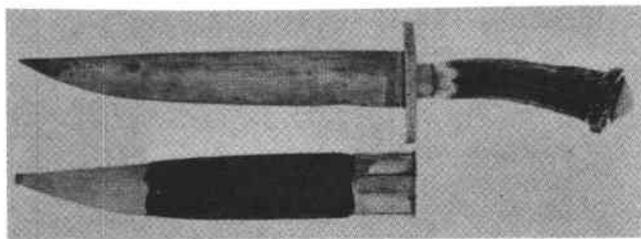
12. The American cutler J.D. Chevalier - 360 Broadway - New York made this exceptional fine Bowie. Presentation inscription dates the knife - 1857. Blade length is 8", German silver hilt with pearl scales. Authors collection.



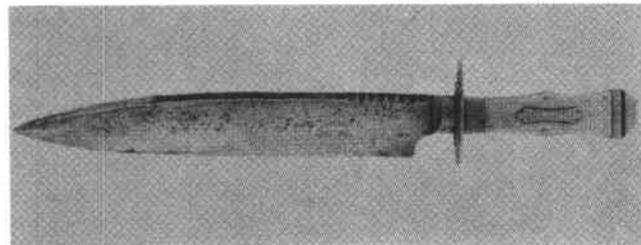
13. A quality spear-point Bowie by W. Butcher - Sheffield. Only three knives are known, to me, which incorporate the unusual 'fish-tail' pommel design. One is in the West Point Museum. Blade length is 9-13/16", scales of pearl and mounts of German silver, Author's collection.



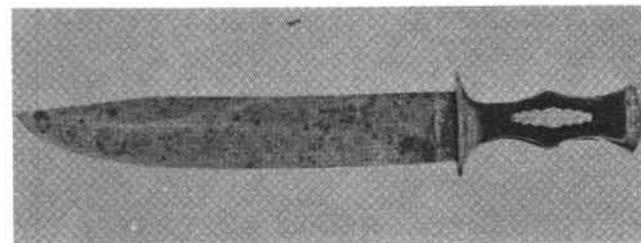
14. The Louisiana pelican graces pommel of this 9" bladed Bowie knife by Parkin & Marshall - Sheffield. This protector of life and honor would have pleased the most discriminating southerner. Hilt scales of polished buffalo horn and mounts of German silver. Wylie Todd collection.



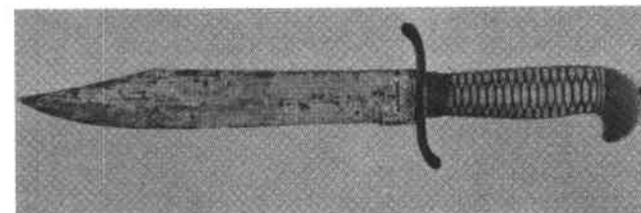
15. Rezin Bowie Presentation Knife to America's first internationally famous actor Edwin Forrest. Forrest, a friend of both James and Rezin from their early days in New Orleans, later gave the knife to Joseph Davis in 1849. The 10-1/8" blade is stamped Chevalier's California Knife - J. D. Chevalier - New York, staghorn hilt with brass mountings. Robert Abels collection.



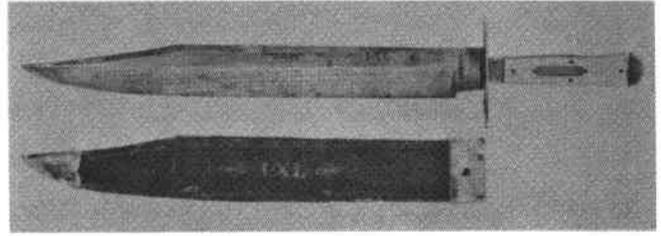
16. A large Bowie knife stamped Samuel Bell - Knoxville - Tennessee is 17" overall with a 12" blade. Hilt has ivory scales and all mountings are of German silver. Bell may have had these made in Sheffield as features are characteristic of Sheffield knives. Robert Abels collection.



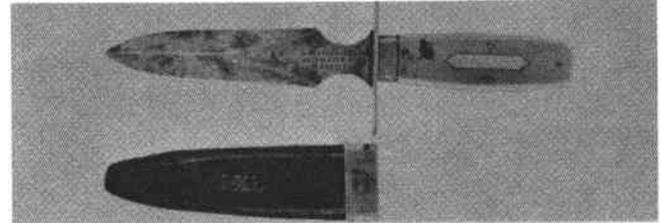
17. "Superior Bowie Knife" stamped on blade of this large knife by Marshes & Shepherd - Pond Works - Sheffield. A very old firm and early in the Bowie knife business yet their knives are exceptionally scarce. The 10-1/2" blade has a one-piece guard-hilt of German silver with stag scales, circa 1845. John Hammer collection.



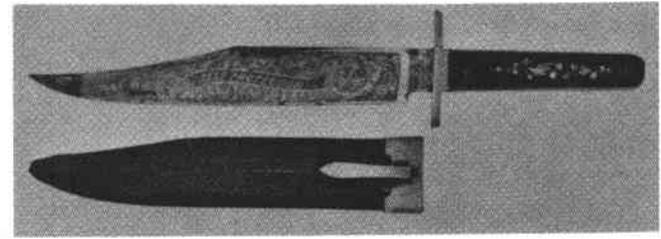
18. The only 'known' specimen of a large Bowie by the American maker Rochus Heinisch the pioneer of fine cutlery in Newark, N. J. The 10" blade signed only R. Heinisch is probably a military experimental of Civil War vintage. Hilt and guard are separate metal castings. Author's collection.



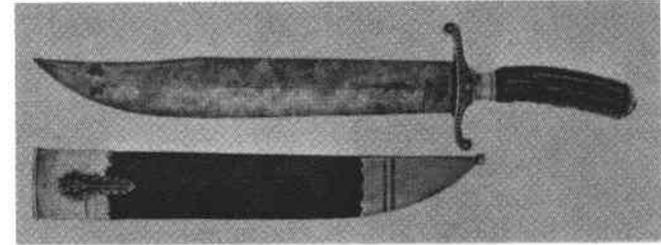
19. Geo. Wostenholm & Son's Celebrated "California Knife." Wostenholm's I*XL brand became world famous during the 19th century. They were the most prolific suppliers of quality Bowies to the American market. Blade is a long 13-5/16" with German silver hilt, pearl scales, dates the 1850s. Robert Abels collection.



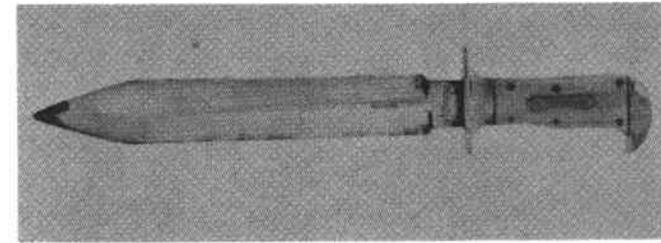
20. Spear-point dagger of unusual design by G. Wostenholm & Son - Washington Works - Sheffield. This particular knife was used in an unfortunate triple slaying. Blade length is 5-1/4", hilt of German silver with two-piece ivory scales, dates 1850s. Lou Kostoff collection.



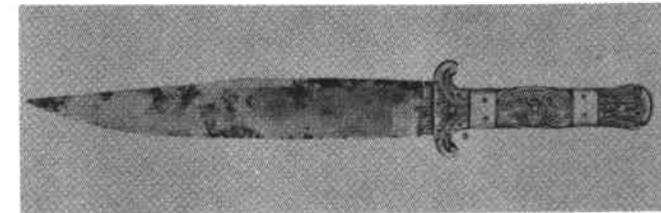
21. Bowie knife with fancy etched 8-5/16" blade by J. Moreton & Co. - Sheffield circa 1870. Polished black buffalo horn scales inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl designs, a lost art in Sheffield today. Author's collection.



22. German made Bowie by Fernando Esser - Elberfeld. The Germans enjoyed very little success competing with the English in the American Bowie knife market. Large and fine quality German pieces are rare. Blade length of this knife is 12-3/8", staghorn hilt with German silver mountings. Author's collection.



23. W. Greaves & Sons - Sheaf Works - Sheffield made this fine piece. It has the only blade I have observed with an original, heavy, thick 'close plate' of protective silver. Spear-point blade with one-piece hilt-guard of German silver with ivory scales, made circa 1845. Lou Kostoff collection.



24. Fancy hilted Bowie knife stamped with the name of I. Read - Lambert St. - Sheffield circa 1850. The 9" blade is etched with mottos including "Draw Me Not In Haste" and a flying American eagle. Don Ewing collection.