

Plate 1. Front page of the "Bowie Knife" article adapted for the *American Arms Collector*.

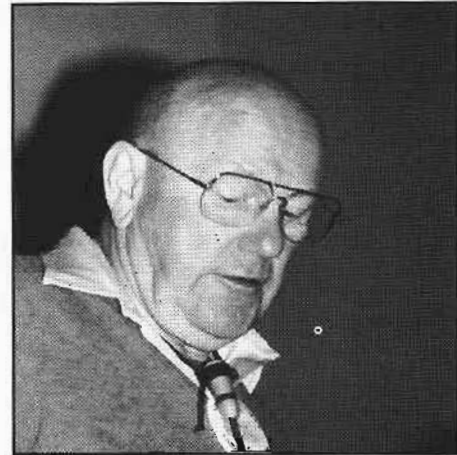
The Story of a Knife

Tom K. Stapleton, M.D.

For many years the Bible for the Bowie knife collector was Miss Lucy Leigh Bowie's article entitled "The Famous Bowie Knife," which was presented to the Bucks County Historical Society in 1916. The article was adapted for publication in the *American Arms Collector* by Ben Palmer in January, 1957 (plate 1). However, it wasn't until the 1970s that articles about Bowie knives began to appear in various publications. Many articles have appeared since that time, but to my knowledge no one has examined Miss Bowie's article in an attempt to verify, refute or explain her statements regarding the knives or events otherwise related in the article. Our purpose at this time is not to verify the history of the Bowie family but to concentrate our study on the knives featured in the article.

As we examine Miss Bowie's original notes, she states in a letter to the Bucks County Historical Society the following (plate 2): "As you probably know the Bowie K is a weapon that has made history in the S.W. Examples of the two most interesting types of that knife are to be found in Baltimore. I would like to submit for your acceptance an unsigned article with photographs written around these knives and about the following ground. The events leading to the evolution and use of the Bowie knife, the Sandbar Duel, etc... The usage on the frontier - the history of these particular knives - Col. Bowie's death at the Alamo and the use of the Bowie knife there." These notes are located in the "Bowie Papers" at the Alamo library. We also find four glass plate negatives, one each of Rezin Bowie and James Bowie, and one each of the two knives, (plate 3). These negatives are of the four photographs featured in her article and these glass plate negatives are consistent with the 1916 period. Three points should be emphasized about these original notes: first, the two knives are found in Baltimore; second, she is giving us a history and description of the two knives; and, third, she is providing a picture of the two knives.

Miss Bowie states, "The original knife had a straight blade 9 1/4 inches long and 1 1/2 inches wide with a single edge down to the guard." The guard had been added after a hunting accident which resulted in an injury to Rezin's hand and thumb. She also correctly states that Rezin Bowie had several knives made by Searles of Baton Rouge which he presented to a Mr. Stafford (plate 4), Gov. F.D. White and Lt. H. W. Fowler (plate 5). Another knife presented to Jesse Perkins by R. P. Bowie is dated 1831 and was made by Shively of Philadelphia (plate 6). This knife is now in the



State Historical Museum, Department of Archives & history, Jackson, Mississippi. As you can readily see, all three of these knives are consistent with the description of the first knife.

Miss Bowie states, "In 1832 the brothers went north: Rezin wishing to consult the celebrated Dr. Pepper of Philadelphia about his eyes." Dr. Pepper was Dr. William Pepper, born in Philadelphia in 1810. He graduated from Princeton College in October, 1828, with highest honors and became the private pupil of Thomas T. Hewson, M.D., a distinguished physician and surgeon of Philadelphia. It is said William Pepper undertook his studies with great industry and zeal. He entered the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania in the Autumn of 1829 and graduated March 29, 1832, having passed a most satisfactory examination. Upon graduation Dr. Pepper worked in the hospital at Bush Hill, a temporary hospital for the treatment of cholera patients, "where he rendered valuable service in the arduous duties appertaining to his position."

He became a member of the Philadelphia Medical Society in 1832. In October of 1832 Dr. Pepper went to Europe to continue his studies and upon his return in the latter part of 1834, he took charge of one of the districts under the care of the Philadelphia Dispensary. The biography of Dr. Pepper states that "He entered with zeal upon the most thorough analysis of disease as presented in our own city. He had a rare ability in diagnosis and more than ordinary good sense in the application of remedies. No matter what the social condition of his patients or the adverse circumstances surrounding them, they never failed to receive the most careful attention. The character of every case was

would it be worthwhile for me to do so
 My idea is to cover

Encl. 1

As you probably know the Bowie is a replica that has made history
 in the S. W.

Examples of the two most interesting types of ^{that type} Bowie knives
 one to be found in Baltimore

I would like to submit for your acceptance an
 unissued article ^{with photographs} written around the time that
 I wrote about the following ^{you are} ~~topic~~, the connection of the
 of the Bowie-Knife, the Sandbar duel & etc. the
 message on the frontier - the history of these
 particular knives - Col. Bowie's death in the
 Alamo and the use of the Bowie-Knife there

If you would be interested in seeing such
 an article about how many words it ^{is} ~~is~~
^{adaptable} ~~adaptable~~ for your use.

In history, snippets of romance have the widest reach
 A little way ^{behind} the line giving a back-ground to the
 the peace frontier

1916 research notes of Lucy Leigh Bowle and draft of letter about Bowie
 knife article. Two knives in Baltimore mentioned. Attached outline
 of article was written on reverse of this paper.

Plate 2. Miss Bowle's original notes for the Bowie knife article.

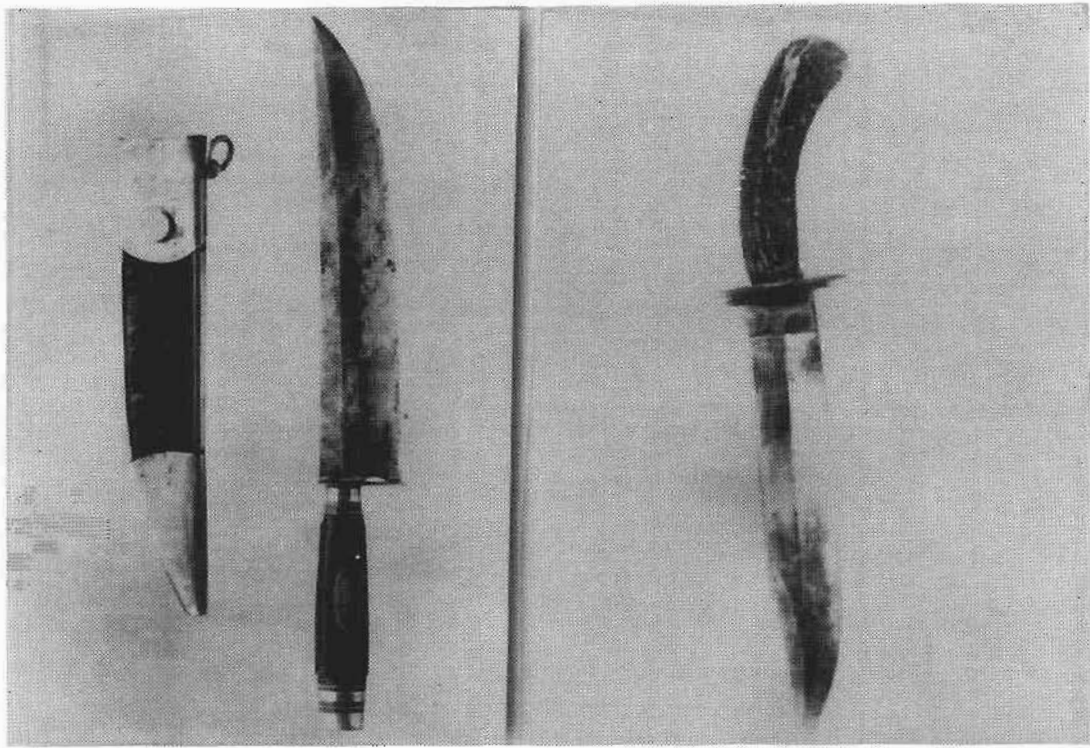


Plate 3. Photos of the two knives from the glass plate negatives in the Alamo library.

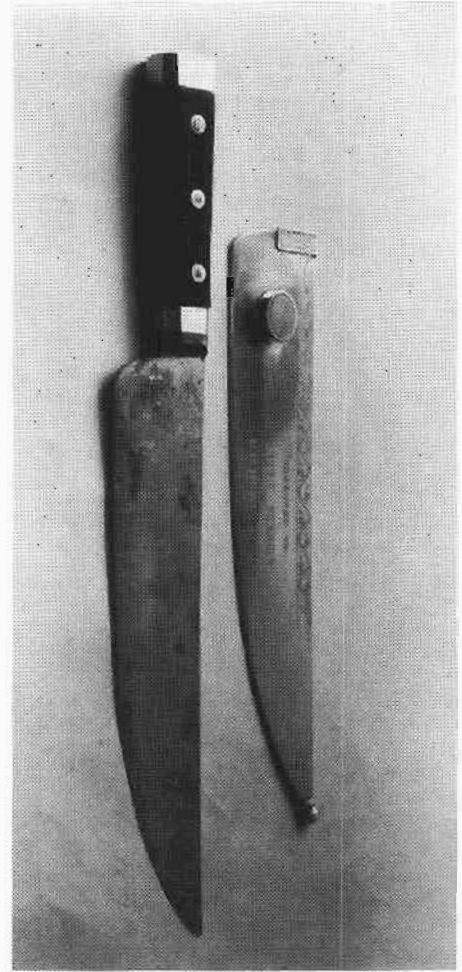
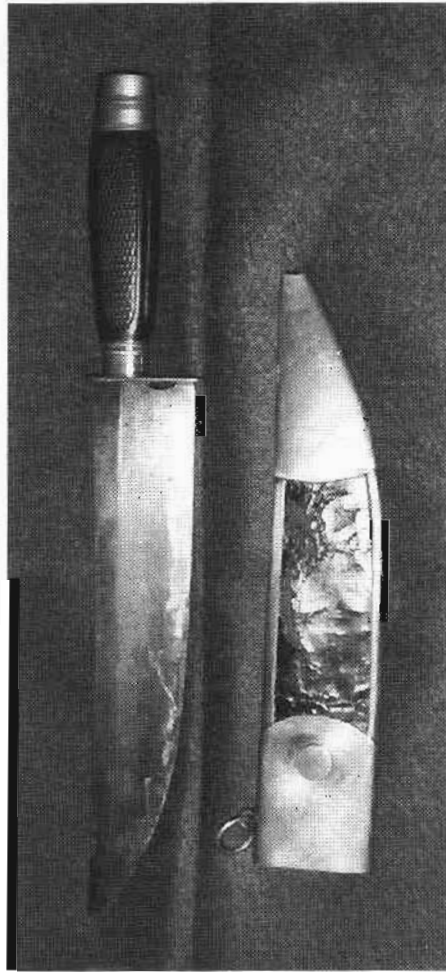
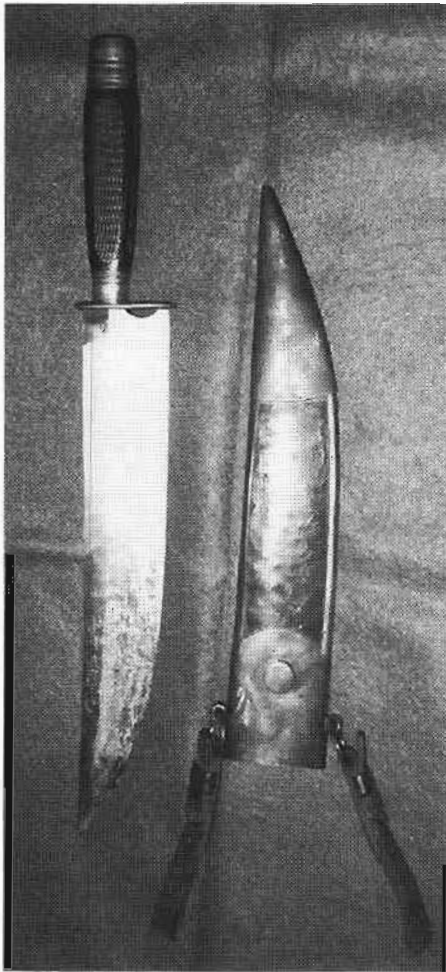


Plate 4. The Stafford knife by Searles; Plate 5. The Fowler knife by Searles; and Plate 6. The Bowie-Perkins knife by Shiveley dated 1831, now in the State Historical Museum, Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.

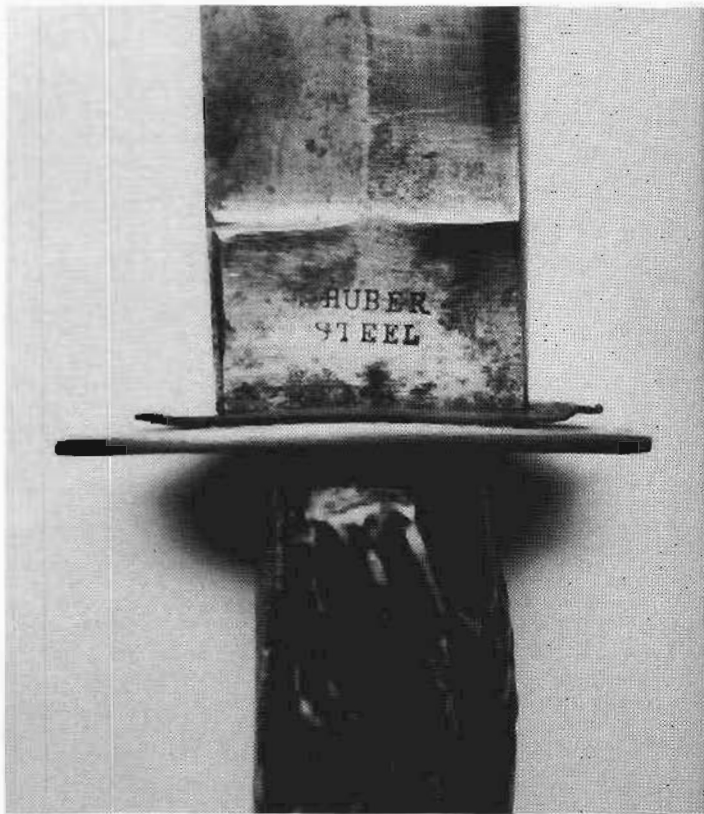


Plate 7. Ricasso of the Huber knife, which is one of the knives featured in her article.

examined with the utmost care and the treatment conducted with a degree of interest that no one could doubt." Letters from Mrs. Soniat of New Orleans, Rezin Bowie's granddaughter, indicated that Rezin's eye problem was considerably improved with Dr. Pepper's treatment.

Miss Bowie states "while in Philadelphia Rezin wrote a

account of the San Saba Silver Mine Indian fight for the Philadelphia *Atkinson's Casket*." This article does not appear in *Atkinson's Casket* until September, 1833, and under the accompanying picture it states that it was "from the *Saturday Evening Post*." It seems that Mr. Atkinson also published *Atkinson's Saturday Evening Post* from 1831 to 1839. The San Saba Silver Mine fight story appears in the August 17, 1833, issue of the *Post*. Under the article is the following: "written for the *Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, August 17, 1833. The following interesting narrative of a fight with the Waccos and Twackanies Indians in Texas, amounting to 164 and a party of Americans, nine men and two boys, eleven in number, is related by Rezin P. Bowie Esq., one of that party, now in this city." With this information it becomes obvious that the Bowies were in Philadelphia in 1832 and 1833.

Miss Bowie continues, "on that same northern trip Rezin gave into the hands of a Philadelphia cutler the model of the Bowie knife." It has been presumed by many that this unnamed cutler was Henry Shively of Philadelphia. However, Shively was well known to the Bowies, as evidenced by the knife dated 1831. It should also be remembered that Miss Bowie is describing the two knives previously shown, neither of which is marked Shively. The other knife featured in the article is marked "H. Huber Steel" (plate 7). This may be the reason for Miss Bowie's inability to name the specific maker.

H. Huber was Henry Huber Jr., a carriage maker, manufacturer of wrought iron plated ware, manufacturer of plated saddlery furniture and hardware merchant (plate 8). Henry Huber, apparently his father, was listed as an inspector of customs. Both of these are listed in the

PAYTON'S
PHILADELPHIA DIRECTORY
FOR
1819.

PRINTED AND SOLD BY W. B. SAUNDERS, No. 112 N. 3rd St. Philadelphia. Also at the Book Store of W. B. SAUNDERS, No. 112 N. 3rd St. Philadelphia.

1823:

Now the City of Philadelphia is enlarged by the addition of the City of Germantown, and the City of Abington, the following is a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the rights of citizenship in the City of Philadelphia, since the 1st of January 1823.

FOR 1828.

Henry Huber Jr. A. saddler 25 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St

1829.

Huber, Frederick A. saddler 25 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St

Domestic Wrought Iron PLATED WARE.

HENRY HUBER, JR.
Manufacturer of Wrought Iron Plated Ware,
NO. 122 MARKET STREET,
SOUTH SIDE NEAR FOURTH STREET.

Has on hand a large and handsome assortment of all articles in his line, which he will dispose of at a lower rate than the imported Cast-Iron Plated Ware can be purchased.

BRIDLE BITS SCROLLING
STIRRUP IRONS STIRRUP SLIDES
SPURS ORNAMENTS of every
COACH & GIG MOUNTING description
PING WINCHES
TANNED SADDLERY PULSES,
GLASS SADDLERY at Manufacturers
TERRING prices, &c. &c.

And a handsome assortment of imported Plated Ware—also, a small stock of Hardware, Cutlery, &c. all of which will be sold at the most reduced prices.

BESILYER'S PHILADELPHIA DIRECTORY, FOR 1830.

Huber, Henry A. saddler 25 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St

1831.

Huber, Henry A. saddler 25 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St

1833.

Huber, Henry A. saddler 25 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St
Huber, J. coach maker 122 N 3d St

Plate 8. Philadelphia Directory information on Henry Huber Jr.

Philadelphia directory as far back as 1819. But Henry Huber disappears from the Philadelphia directory in 1835. Henry Jr. was also associated with Fredrick A. Huber, manufacturer of saddles. It is also stated that Henry Huber Jr. carried cutlery in his inventory. It seems from his advertisement that Henry Huber Jr. had all the equipment necessary, including his own steel, to manufacture a quality knife.

Dr. Pepper does not appear in the Philadelphia directory until 1835. A map of Philadelphia at that time shows Dr. Pepper's office, Henry Shively's office, Henry Huber Jr's office, and Henry Huber Jr's saddlery warehouse to be located within two square blocks of each other. All this leads one to conclude that Henry Huber Jr. was the unnamed Philadelphia cutler rather than Henry Shively.

Miss Bowie continues her description by stating, "the cutler improved on it and placed Bowie knives on the

market. The blade was shortened to 8 inches, a curve was made in one side of the point and both edges were sometimes sharpened" (see plate 3). These specifications are consistent with the Huber knife and represent the first American true clip-point Bowie with a sharpened false edge known or described prior to 1832. It should be remembered that all other knives presented had straight blades. Other unique features of the Huber knife include a rounded blade top, leather buffer in front of the guard, a brass guard extending above and below the blade ending in scalloped finials, a brass mounted sheath and a curved, pistol grip type stag handle with a checkered pommel. Miss Bowie had stated that "Colonel Bowie's manner of grasping the Bowie knife was considered peculiar; he held it as one would a sword, and once beyond the opponent's guard, the thrust was deadly." The Huber knife can only be held as one holds

As far as I can learn, Bowie was the only Revolutionary leader who came to Washington during this period. He had a secret mission? For a quiet consultation with the president. No man could have been found circumstanced to attract less attention by his presence. A Bowie in Washington each at the National Hotel caused no more comment than as was a Gordon at Aberdeen. The seats of one group of relatives were to the east of the city, the seats of another group were to the west. Megin P. Bowie wished to consult Dr. Pepper in Philadelphia about his eyes and they had decided to place the model of the Bowie in the hands of a Philadelphia cutler. As a visit to his old commander and personal acquaintance would and could seem absolutely casual.

One wonders what had been said "between friends" at Austin's dinner in New Orleans five years before. Now Bowie was not only a man of large wealth but a citizen of Texas and son-in-law of the governor. All we really know and probably all we will ever know is this.

Col. Bowie was in Washington in 1832. Houston went to Texas in 33. In his authorized life he intimidated as strongly as it is possible to intimidate a thing, that is not a statement. He had been invited to go to Texas in 32. That President Jackson had a part in his giving his letter to the president. His letters from Natchitoches February 13, 1833, may be taken as evidence Bowie and Houston had both been under Jackson as privates?. Governor White of Louisiana was a friend of both. No man from Texas whose presence in Washington would cause less comment as Bowie was no more conspicuous in Washington or at the National Hotel than a Gordon? in Aberdeen.

What was more common place than two gentlemen of fortune traveling furth to consult a physician, should stop over to visit their relatives and their old commander. That the old commander was then president with aleaned toward Texas. That the gentleman of fortune was a leader in the Revolutionary party and that Houston, close in the presidents confidence, more or less at loose ends was there at the same time gives rise the suspicion that the meeting might have not been quite accidental as it seemed or he may have not gone to the hotel one group., and you pass the White house in journeying from one to the other

If we knew what passed one of the mysteries of history might be solved. If Austin had come to the White house the entire country would have been up in arms. But a Bowie etc..

At all events the next year found Houston in Texas and passing to San F de Austin. Austin was away but Col. Bowie was there

Note: Miss Bowie's notes are rambling and apparently a rough draft of the final report. It does, however, establish the Bowies presence in Washington in 1832.

Plate 9. Translation of Miss Bowie's notes on the Bowie brothers' trip to Washington in 1832.

a sword and leads one to suspect that this knife was made specifically for Col. Bowie at his direction. This is the only knife of its kind known to collectors to my knowledge, so it's obvious Huber did not place this knife on the market. In the late 30s or early 40s he did collaborate with James English, a blacksmith, on Knives marked "J. English & Huber Philadelphia" and also marked "2" or "3" depending on the length of the blade, number 2 having a ten-inch blade and number 3 having an eight-inch blade. These knives are extremely well made, have the same blade configuration as the Huber knife and are very desirable to collectors. In his book, *American Knives*, Mr. Peterson states, "The words Huber Steel also appear on American made knives of the 1830s and early 40s." He refers the reader to a picture of an English and Huber knife. The knife Miss Bowie describes, however, is the only knife known to me that is marked H. Huber Steel.

As we continue to examine the Bowie papers in the

Alamo Library, we find a series of notes written by Miss Bowie relating to a clandestine meeting in Washington with the Bowie brothers, Sam Houston and President Andrew Jackson (plate 9). She states in these notes that Col. Bowie was in Washington in 1832. She also states that the Bowies had decided to place the model of the Bowie in the hands of the Philadelphia cutler. We can surmise from this information that the model of the Bowie was in Henry Huber's hands in 1832. Exactly when the knife was delivered to the Bowies is unknown, but could have been in 1832 or 1833 on their return visit to Philadelphia.

Our research now changes focus as we examine the picture of the Huber knife and the caption under the picture. A retraction as to the location of the knife was printed in the July, 1957, edition of *The American Arms Collector*. This stated that the knife belonged to Norton Asner of Baltimore. Miss Bowie states that the knife belongs to Dr. Charles A. R. Campbell of San Antonio, Texas (plate 10). A newspaper



Type of knife selected by Colonel Bowie for Texas troops. Presented to Don Augustine Barrera by Bowie in 1835. In 1916 in the possession of the former's grandson, Dr. Charles A. R. Campbell of San Antonio, Texas. Now in The Alamo Museum.

Of this time Captain Lacey wrote, possibly in some surprise, that Bowie "never used profane language and never spoke an indecent or vulgar word in the eight months passed with him. As a matter of fact he was a man of singular modesty." He had the faculty of winning and holding the friendship of men. In money matters he was exceedingly liberal where there was occasion for liberality, but was too good a business man not to know the value of money. He was dignified and courteous with something of the Old World in his manner, and absolutely sincere. His mother, sisters, and later his wife were women who commanded his highest respect, and this was reflected in his manner toward all women, in the wild tales of him, never a word has been hinted against his moral character. In fact there was about him no trace whatever of the border ruffian; that these same wild tales have handed down to us, nor had he any dissipated habits. He was over six feet tall, with chestnut hair and hazel eyes.

While in Texas he formed a friendship with the Vice-Governor of Coahuila and Texas, Don Juan Martin de Veramendi, who, though born in Mexico, was of pure Spanish blood and belonged to a noble family of Castile. In September, 1830, the State Congress of Texas naturalized Bowie and under Veramendi's patronage granted him a charter for the erection of cotton and woolen mills at Saltillo; it will be noticed that James Bowie was, above all things, a creator of wealth.

In April, 1831, he married Marie Ursula de Vera-

meni, the daughter of his patron and friend. In his marriage settlements he stated that he was worth about \$222,800.00. He was very fortunate in his wife, Ursula Veramendi de Bowie as she signed herself, because she identified herself thoroughly with her husband's interests. She was sweet and gentle and at the same time a woman of sense and character. Their marriage did not last long, however, because in 1834 she, her two baby boys, and her father died of cholera.

The rest of Colonel Bowie's life belonged to Texas as a delegate to the conventions, adjutant to Sam Houston, and colonel of Texas Volunteers. As a fighter he needs no fictitious reputation. Each battle in his short career demonstrated his ability as a soldier. At Nacogdoches he was successful, at Conception he displayed ability of a very high order as a strategist; at the Grax [sic] fight his superb and reckless dash held the field until Burleson came up with reinforcements. Then followed his death at *The Alamo*.

This is not the place to discuss the military side of the battle of *The Alamo*; the conflicting elements that went into the making of that tragedy have no place here. But let us picture those 150 beleaguered men in the mission surrounded by 4,600 Mexicans, "detached from all Texas settlements more than seventy miles; the intervening territory swept by Mexican cavalry." What Colonel Bowie's esprit was to that little garrison is told by the following entries in Crockett's journal:

"February 26, 1836, Col. Bowie has been taken sick from over exertion and exposure; he did not leave his

Plate 10. Photo of the Huber knife in the article with the controversial statements.

article dated December 27, 1884, reveals the story of a Bowie knife given to Dr. Campbell by his grandmother. The knife was given to Dr. Campbell's grandfather in 1832 by James Bowie. Another article dated January 24, 1915, states that the knife was given to Dr. Campbell's grandfather by James Bowie in 1835 and now two knives were involved. One knife was apparently lost and the other is the subject of these newspaper articles. Dr. Campbell is pictured holding this knife (plate 11). Other pictures of a knife in the Alamo papers appear to be the same knife. The knife pictured with Dr. Campbell is made by Broomhead & Thomas of Sheffield and makes one think the latter date of 1835 is more likely. There is no evidence to indicate that Dr. Campbell ever owned the Huber knife. I am unable to fully explain why Miss Bowie stated the knife belongs to Dr. Campbell since her original notes state that both knives are to be found in Baltimore. One explanation could be that Miss Bowie was trying to conceal the true identity of the owner. The other statement about the knife, i.e. "the type of knife Col. Bowie selected to equip the Texas Troops," has been handed down through the Bowie family for several generations and obviously was the story told when the knife was given to the

Baltimore Bowies.

Establishing the ownership of these knives has presented a problem because of lack of documentation. The knife made by Searles of Baton Rouge was originally owned by Rezin Bowie. It was presented to Lt. H. W. Fowler of the U.S. Dragoons sometime between 1836 and 1841. It was subsequently owned by Dr. Crim of Chicago and purchased by Washington Bowie Jr. at an auction of Dr. Crim's estate in 1905. Personal communication with Washington Bowie 5th reveals that this knife was in the possession of his father Washington Bowie Jr., actually Washington Bowie 4th, until it was donated to the Alamo in 1951. It is not known if another person owned the knife between Lt. Fowler and Dr. Crim, however, according to a newspaper report the knife was sold to Dr. Crim by an unnamed actor. This accreditation comes from sources listed in the bibliography.

The Huber knife was acquired from Dr. Jim Lucie of Fruitport, Michigan, in 1986. Dr. Lucie had purchased the knife from Mr. Norton Asner of Baltimore in 1982. Personal communication with Mr. Asner states he was given the knife by Richard D. Steuart in 1951, shortly before Mr. Steuart's death. He stated that Mr. Steuart told him it was a very



Plate 11. Photos of the Campbell knife from the San Antonio Express dated January 24, 1915, and December 26, 1929.

important knife and maybe the most significant knife known. It appears that the knife probably came to Richard Steuart from Berkley Bowie. Both Mr. Steuart and Berkley Bowie were noted arms collectors as well as close friends. Richard Steuart also dedicated one of his arms books to Berkley Bowie. Miss Bowie finally gives us a clue to the ownership of the Huber knife. In a letter from Mr. H. B. MacKoy of Cincinnati, dated 1916, thanking her for a picture of the Bowie knife, Miss Bowie penciled in, "a copy of Berkley's" (plate 12). It is my opinion the knife could have been handed down through the Bowie family from Berkley Bowie's grandfather, Allen Perrie Bowie, who would have been a contemporary of James and Rezin Bowie.

Mr. Ben Palmer states that Miss Bowie began her research on this article in 1899 or 1900 and investigated every

tale and rumor about James Bowie. From her letters and notes she apparently also communicated with every living Bowie relative. One has the impression that a great deal of personal communication was involved with owners of the knives as well as the past history to these knives. It seems obvious that Miss Bowie had other information that is not found in the Bowie papers at the Alamo Library.

Our research is still an on-going process. In an attempt to obtain documented information, every lead, no matter how casual, found in Miss Bowie's notes is still being investigated. I am convinced, however, that this research has identified a knife which is a very important piece in American Bowie knife history. It is certainly the first of its design and if we are to believe Miss Bowie it is the only knife known to date made specifically for James Bowie.

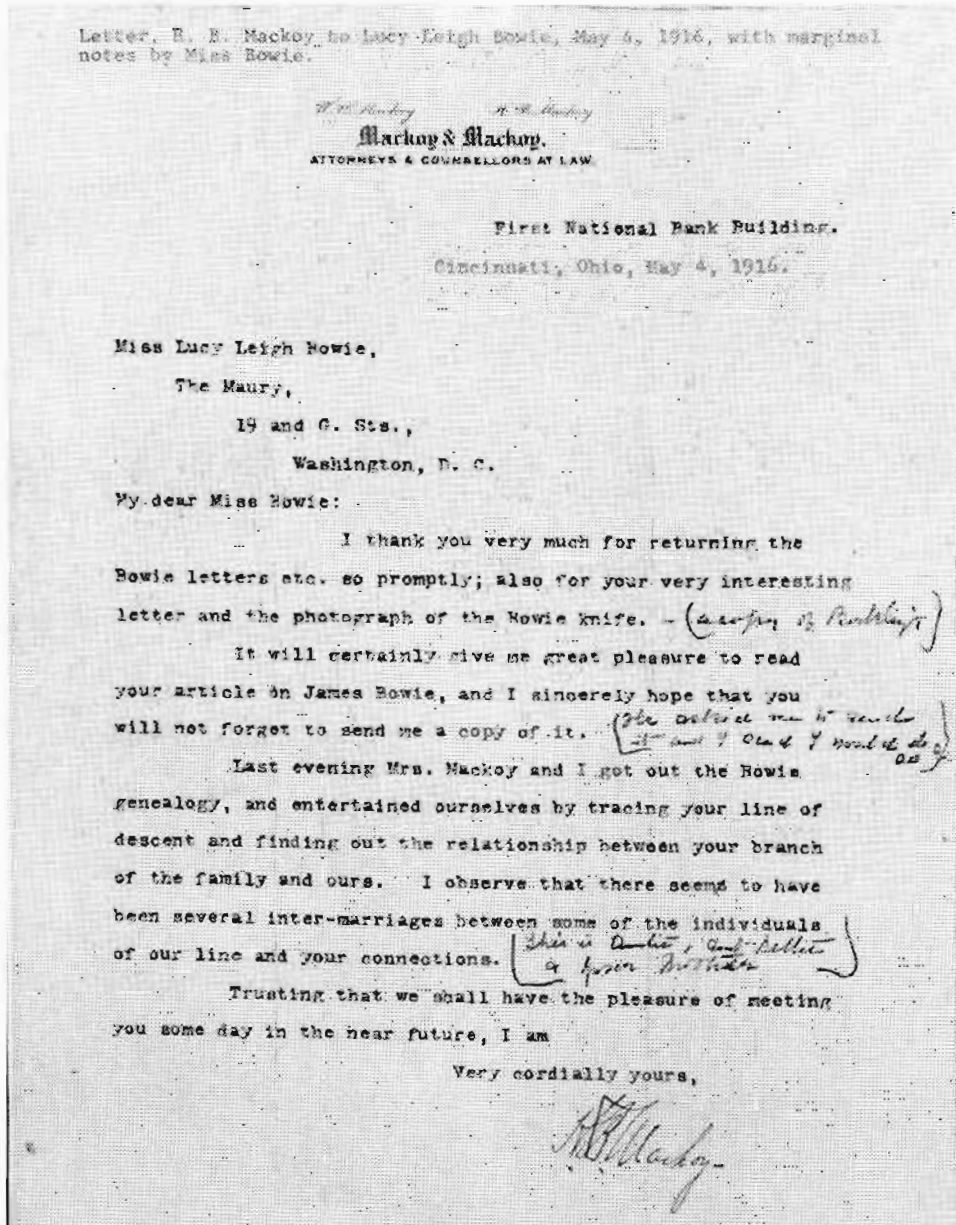


Plate 12. Copy of letter from H. B. MacKoy to Miss Bowie thanking her for the knife picture. Her notes state "A copy of Berkley's".

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- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
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| Norton Asher | Baltimore, Maryland |
| Dr. Jim Lucie | Fruitport, Michigan |



*Cataldo Mission
"The Old Mission of the Sacred Heart"
Cataldo, Idaho circa 1848*

"The Old Mission of the Sacred Heart" - Cataldo, Idaho, ca. 1848. Drawing by J. Harold Bailey.