

# **The Courts and Sparks Families in Southeast Texas**

The marriage of James Courts, son of Thomas and Ann Johnson Court, and Julia Ann Sparks, 13 year old daughter of John Sidney and Melinda Jones Sparks, brought together two of the founding families of lower East Texas. Thomas and Ann, with James as a baby, came to Sabine Pass about 1829/30. The historical marker in Sabine Pass Lion's Club Parks states that our Court Family and another family named McGaffey were here "as early" as 1832. Not only were they in Texas before it became a state, they were here during the time that it was part of Mexico, and in 1836, when it became a Republic in its own right. Our family can truly say we are mutli-generation Texans.

The Sparks arrived in Texas, traveling by covered wagon from Tennessee, in 1838, when Julia Ann was just two. They settled on Pavel's Island first, then came ashore at Sabine Lake and became the first permanent anglo inhabitants of what was called "Aurora", and which eventually became Port Arthur.

The Pioneer Spirit prevailed as both families withstood early life on the Gulf Coast. Yellow Fever, mosquitos, hurricanes and tropical storms, alligators and other wild creatues combined to make life harrowing and an adventure at the same time. Some of those stories will be included in other history items.

James and Julia began their married life in Aurora, and eventually built their own cabin. Julia's brothers, sisters, and some cousins married and remained in the area of Aurora. James' siblings stayed in the area of Sabine Pass and Port Arthur as well, although several moved away after they reached adulthood.

James and Julia had 13 children, most of who have descendents still

living here in the Golden Triangle. We have located descendents of the other children as well.

James and Julia are featured in the Museum of the Gulf Coast in the section on "Aurora." Pictures of both of them and several other family members (Sparks) are on display.

Debbie Courts Spurgeon  
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