

Historical notes on Captain James Grant and Mary Hayes, Corpus Christi Texas by Melvyn Jones son of Helen Grant.

According to relatives Captain James Grant was born in 1825 somewhere in Ireland. As Betty Armstrong tells the story his family left Ireland to escape the potato famine and move to Halifax, Nova Scotia. James did not like having to move and as a young man would hang out at the shipping docks. There he made friends with some of the crew members. Wanting adventure he convinced his new friends to allow him to stow away on a ship bound for Mexico. Once discovered by this Captain as a stow away he was put to work as a cabin boy. He told the captain that he wanted to go to Mexico. The Captain instead left him off somewhere in the Port Aransas area of Texas. Somewhere into the trip he was discovered and was placed off the ship at Port Aransas, Texas.

Another version of the story is that the ship was wrecked on Mustang Island where all members of the crew were forced to depart. Whatever the story James Grant ended up in the Corpus Christi / Port Aransas area at age 14 around 1839.

Once in Texas he again began hanging out with the sailors and ship captains. For the next 12 or 13 years he most likely worked in the shipping industry thus learning his skills as a sailor and ship captain. As the stories go he learned where the sand bars were and was able to help guide ships into and out the port of Corpus Christi.

In 1850 on the census of Cameron County, James was listed as a single person at the age of 26.

As a sailor he frequently sailed to New Orleans. There he met Mary Hayes who was living in a Catholic Convent. They were married on June 5th, 1852. As the story goes Mary had lost her parents to a bubonic plague that was raised in a Catholic orphanage in New Orleans.

Sometime between 1860 and 1880 James and Mary moved to Mustang Island. There they were ranchers raising herds of goats and cattle.

Their first child Edward was born August 19, 1853 and died shortly thereafter.

Their second child William was born April 30, 1855 and baptized in Brownsville on May 20, 1855.

Their third child, Mary, was born February 27, 1857 and baptized in Brownsville April 8, 1857.

The next census was in Cameron County in 1860 and listed the following:

1. James Grant, age 33, mail carrier, born in New York.

2. Mary Hayes Grant, age 30, house wife, born in Ireland.
3. William Grant, age 8, born in Ohio.
4. Mary Grant, age 4, born in New York.
5. Bridget, age 2, born in England.

The next census was in Nueces County in 1880.

1. James Grant, age 60, occupation: boatman, born in Nova Scotia
2. Mary Hayes Grant, age 53, born in Ireland.
3. William Grant, age 25
4. Mary Grant, age 19.
5. James Grant, age 16
6. Margaret Grant, age 14 “also called Maggie”
7. John and Edward Grant (twins) age 11

Around 1870 William and James Grant took a herd of cattle to the Corpus Christi Pass. The pass was not deep enough for the schooner to pass and the cattle refused to be driven into the water. The Grants slaughtered their herd on the beach, packed them in salt and shipped them to Panama.

During the civil war James smuggled supplies from New Orleans to Corpus passed the Union blockages. It was common knowledge in Corpus Christi that if you needed supplies check with James Grant.

After the Civil War the Union sent black soldiers to the Corpus Area to maintain the law and order. The citizen and the confederate soldiers their did not like this new order to events. So most of the that the soldiers were transferred out to a new post. It was told that Captain James Grant was the person who was hired to transport these troops out of the area on his ships.