

Captain James Gillaspie Monument

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Read by Cheryl Spencer, Library Associate in Special Collections.

This is Cheryl Spencer, Special Collections Associate in the Thomason Room at Newton Gresham Library at Sam Houston State University. Our talk today is on the Captain James Gillaspie Monument.

On Sunday, May 2, 1937, a dedication service was held at the marker erected as part of Huntsville's Centennial celebration. The monument stands beneath the towering pine trees, just west of the entrance to Oakwood Cemetery. It was placed on land once owned by the Gillaspie family. The monument was erected in honor of Captain James Gillaspie, who served as commander of forces from Walker County during the battles for Texas Independence, Indian Wars, and the War Between the States.

James Gillaspie was born in Amherst County, Virginia, January 13, 1805. He lived for a while in Tennessee before coming to Texas in 1836. He joined Captain Joseph L. Bennett's company in February 1836, and fought for Texas freedom from Mexico. He served under General A. Sommerville in 1842. After Texas was annexed to the United States, he raised a company from Montgomery County. He later served as an Indian fighter. In 1861, when the War Between the States began, Captain Gillaspie commanded a troop to defend Galveston. It is said that Gillaspie was a natural soldier.

In 1849, Gillaspie married Susan Farris, daughter of Hezekiah Farris, an early Walker County settler. This couple had four sons and three daughters. Gillaspie was a rural mail carrier in 1838. He transported "weekly mail" from Houston to Cincinnati for \$1,485.00 per year, to be paid quarterly. This was known as Route 1. He was probably the first rural mail carrier to serve the territory which later became Walker County. It took most of one week to make the trip from Houston to Cincinnati. The roads were rough, the Indians threatened, highwaymen were abundant, and the streams sometimes were swollen by rains.

Gillaspie next served as Superintendent of the Texas Penitentiary. He was responsible for planting and the erection of the Central Prison plant located in downtown Huntsville. He resigned from this duty to serve in the War Between the States. He returned from the war and resumed these duties. He served in this capacity until his death in October 1867. He, his wife, and one son died of yellow fever. Gillaspie was a Methodist, a Mason, a brave and valiant soldier. He contributed greatly to the early development of Walker County.

The marker contains names of men who served with Gillaspie in the various battles. The marker was dedicated to all young men and their families who had helped make Texas "One and Indivisible."