

# KAMEY COMMUNITY

## I. CONTEXT

Family lore shared: “We moved for church and education. These were the main reasons for relocating,” said fourth generation Kevin McKamey.<sup>1</sup> What brought this family to Calhoun County, and where is the Kamey Community located today? At the Port Lavaca intersection of Highway 35-S and 87-N, turn right onto US Highway 87-N. Travel northwest for 8 miles and make a U-turn at Kamey Rd. The community’s four streets, G.E. & Helen Rd., Army Store, Shop Road, and Kamey Rd., spread and intertwine.<sup>2</sup> Eight miles from Port Lavaca, an agricultural community grew, toiled, reinstated, and diversified.

## II. OVERVIEW

The community was named for John William McKamey<sup>3</sup>. He was born in Salem, Arkansas on August 8, 1878, to John Samuel Monroe and Sarah Rebecca McKamey. His family valued education and moved four times in order for John to graduate from Baylor University with two diplomas, military science and elocution, on June 6, 1899.<sup>4</sup> Returning to Gregory, Texas, to assist his father in managing the family’s 2,000 acre cotton farm, John and Maude Todd, whom he met at Baylor, were married on November 6, 1901.<sup>5</sup>

John William and his brother, Tunnell, learned that Port Lavaca and Calhoun County offered opportunities. They purchased lots in the Port Lavaca town site along with the mercantile

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Meitzen interview with Kevin McKamey, September 5, 2016, 5:00 P.M. Transcript available at the Calhoun County Museum.

<sup>2</sup> [www.mapquest.com/directions/list/1/us/tx/port-lavaca77979](http://www.mapquest.com/directions/list/1/us/tx/port-lavaca77979).

<sup>3</sup> John B. Haynes, A Survey and Proposed Plan of Reorganization of the School of Calhoun County, Texas (M.A. Thesis, University of Texas, 1939)

<sup>4</sup> Baylor University Military Department, John William McKamey, June 6, 1899 Baylor University Waco Elocution Department, June 5, 1899 Certificates held by Kevin McKamey.

<sup>5</sup> Calhoun County Historical Commission, The Shifting Sands of Calhoun County, Texas, pp. 202-204.

Bay Trading Co. between 1905 and 1907.<sup>6 7 8</sup> J. W. also purchased property and created the Lynnworth Cemetery, now Port Lavaca Cemetery.<sup>9</sup> During this same time period, (1906-1908) the opportunity presented itself to purchase the Kamey land tract. J.S.M. McKamey, John W. McKamey, W.S. McKamey, and Tunnel McKamey, along with J.B. McCampbell, purchased 8,506.5 acres at \$12 per acre from neighbor John Clark.<sup>10</sup> To pay for what they purchased, 3,252 acres were sold to John Welder.<sup>11</sup>

In 1912, Maude and John moved from Port Lavaca to the Kamey Community into “The Old Holt House.” They raised five children: Glenn Ethelbert, Riva May Corbin, Maida Leddon Wiese McKamey, Ivy Lurline Pulliam, and Iris Lynn Wagner. Lynn Worth died in infancy.<sup>12</sup> Three of these children: Glenn, Maida, and Riva May, resided at Kamey at the time of their death.

The Calhoun County soil survey shows the Kamey property with Midland clay loam, (blackland), low lying, with 0 to 1 percent slope.<sup>13</sup> Chocolate Creek had a small bed, like a ditch for a field. The high grass prevented the rapid flow of floodwaters.<sup>14</sup> They farmed cotton, grain sorghum, and raised cattle, branding with “Mc”.<sup>15</sup> “John William McKamey was one of the first

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<sup>6</sup> Calhoun County Clerk’s Office, Deed Vol T p 45.

<sup>7</sup> Walter M. Spiller, Looking Back on East Main Street (Revised Edition), p 176.

<sup>8</sup> Calhoun County Clerk’s Office, Deed Vol W, p 351.

<sup>9</sup> Shifting Sands, p 203

<sup>10</sup> Calhoun County Clerk’s Office, Deed Vol T, p 271, Vol T, p 579, Vol T p 351.

<sup>11</sup> Calhoun County Clerk’s Office, Deed Vol T p 354.

<sup>12</sup> City of Port Lavaca, Port Lavaca, Texas, 1840-1990, p 291.

<sup>13</sup> United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, Soil Survey of Calhoun County, Texas, 1971, pp 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> McKamey, J.W., Public Hearings Corps of Engineers for Improvement of Streams flowing through Calhoun-Victoria Soil Conservation District, June 3, 1952.

<sup>15</sup> Foester, Brands of Calhoun County, p 47.

to prove that black land cotton was a viable commodity. He proved that cotton could be grown on black, dry ground. This was a new cotton frontier.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the land, most important was the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway right of way on the eastern boundary of their land, which provided for a switch stand at Kamey, Texas. The depot, with a loading platform and siding, was used to ship crops produced in the area: cotton, maize, hay, flax, and onions.<sup>17</sup>

In 1910, Kamey secured a post office for the Kamey’s farm employees. The Post office was discontinued on June 15, 1915 when the mail was dispatched to Port Lavaca.<sup>18</sup> There was a one teacher school and a teacherage built about 1910 in order that the children of the area might obtain an education. Grades one through eight were taught at the school by Maida McKamey<sup>19</sup> until 1948, when Kamey School District was consolidated by the Port Lavaca School System.<sup>20</sup>

In 1914, the community reported one business: McKamey Brothers - General Merchants, Stock Raisers, and Wholesale Hay Dealers. It also reported a telephone connection and 250 inhabitants. These were mainly families who worked on the farm or family members.<sup>21</sup> By 1933, Kamey showed twenty-five citizens and three businesses.<sup>22</sup> In the 1940’s, J. W. began traveling the country, buying Army surplus for the Kamey Army Store. For more than fifty years, the

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<sup>16</sup> Overton, Melony, Port Lavaca Wave, “McKamey Begins Bid for Kamey Historical Marker”, Apr 9, 2016, p A1

<sup>17</sup> Shifting Sands, p 204.

<sup>18</sup> [www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/txpost/calhoun.html](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/txpost/calhoun.html). Postmasters & Post Offices of Calhoun County, Texas 1846-1930.

<sup>19</sup> [www.calcoisd.org/2011-05-04-20-31-55/ccisd-history](http://www.calcoisd.org/2011-05-04-20-31-55/ccisd-history), CCISD History.

<sup>20</sup> Port Lavaca, Texas Commemorative Book, p 290.

<sup>21</sup> Overton, Melony, Port Lavaca Wave, A1.

<sup>22</sup> Haynes, Survey and Proposed Plan.

store operated with “a lot of everything” for he didn’t believe in buying single items.<sup>23</sup> J. W. also had a special gift for his town friends - one sweet onion, one gardenia, and one silver dollar.<sup>24</sup>

J.W.’s son, Glenn Ethelbert McKamey, Sr., graduated from Rice Institute with a degree in Electrical Engineering in 1927. Rather than enter engineering as a life’s work, he chose to farm. While farming the family land near Gregory, Texas, he met Helen Hoskinson whom he married on December 29, 1937. They moved to Port Lavaca where Glenn Sr. took over the management of his father’s farm interests at Kamey. Their home was built at Kamey in 1941, and they raised three children there: Sharon Gail, April Diane, and Glenn E. Jr.<sup>25</sup>

In 1952, Chocolate Creek was no longer able to drain the rapid flow of floodwater. J.W. presented a statement to the Improvement of Streams public hearing with the Corps of Engineers because he did not agree with the flood plan presented by the Corps. Victoria County organized a drainage district which cut large ditches into the creek that brought floodwaters down into Calhoun County. Kamey fields and homes were flooded.<sup>26</sup>

John William died in 1955. At that time, his estate reported sixty-one bales of cotton, 423 tons of hay and maize, and 262 head of cattle and livestock.<sup>27</sup> John William’s son, Glenn Sr., then managed not only the farm, but took over management of the Kamey Army Store. Glenn Sr. used his electrical engineering knowledge to create a continuous lighting pattern for the Kamey Army Store. He fixed or built everything needed for the farm.<sup>28</sup> Glenn farmed cotton, maize,

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<sup>23</sup> Popplewell, Louise, Victoria Advocate, “Army Store All That Remains of Kamey,” January 27, 2005 6A.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Belle Meitzen interview with Sharon McKamey Long, September 29, 2016, 3:35 p.m., transcript available at the Calhoun County Museum.

<sup>25</sup> Port Lavaca, Texas Commemorative Book, p 289.

<sup>26</sup> McKamey, J.W., Public Hearings.

<sup>27</sup> Schedule F - Other Miscellaneous Property, Estate of J.W. McKamey.

<sup>28</sup> Mary Meitzen interview with Kevin McKamey.

sunflowers, soybeans, and corn. These were processed at the Farmers and Moreman Gins where he served on both boards. Glenn Sr. believed in the power of CO-OPS.<sup>29</sup>

J.W.'s Grandson, Glenn Jr., married Myra Jean Murphy in 1969. Their three living children are Jeffery, Rachael, and Kevin. Glenn, Jr. continues to reside at Kamey where he worked with his father Glenn Sr. in farming and trucking (McKamey & Son Trucking). After the death of his father in 1996, Glenn Jr. continued the farming operation.<sup>30</sup>

The U.S. Highway 87 widening project from two to four lanes from Victoria to Port Lavaca razed the once bustling community of Kamey in 2005. The Army Store, warehouses, Kamey School, and "The Old Holt House" were torn down. Glenn Sr. and Helen McKamey's home was relocated on Placedo Creek.<sup>31</sup>

Great grandson Kevin, chose to carry on the family tradition. He lives at Kamey with his wife Erin and children Kayla, Kasey, Blaine, and Gavin. He and his father own Kamey Grain, a grain operation, and McKamey & Son, the farming operation. Kevin was one of the first farmers to utilize the Global Positioning System on tractors. He introduced "No Till" and "Limited Tilling" farming practices. Kevin and Erin are developing Kamey Acres for a fall festival featuring a four-acre corn or sorghum interactive maze. The Kamey "Mc" brand was reinstated for cattle, donkeys, and goats. In addition, the Bay Trading Co. for antique sales was restarted. Today, McKamey & Son farm 2400 acres. Diversification and ingenuity led to bagging seed corn to sell as deer corn to help boost the Kamey operation when the price is depressed.<sup>32</sup>

### III. SIGNIFICANCE

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<sup>29</sup> Mary Meitzen interview with Sharon McKamey Long.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Meitzen interview with Glenn McKamey, Jr.

<sup>31</sup> Popplewell, Louise, Victoria Advocate.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Meitzen interview with Kevin McKamey.

“Kamey Community was built on the backs of hard working men and women who took a chance and dreamt of a better tomorrow for their kids and family,” said great grandson Kevin McKamey.<sup>33</sup> John William McKamey, proving cotton was a viable commodity for the dry blackland, opened a new farming era for the coastal plains area. For over one hundred and ten years, Calhoun County citizens have interacted with the Kamey Community and their families through farming, ranching, education, religion, social affiliations and buying surplus items at the Kamey Army Store. The Kamey Community Historical Marker will bring forth events to share with county residents and visitors for generations to come. “Our family moved for church and education. The last two generations stayed.”<sup>34</sup>

#### IV. DOCUMENTATION

See End Notes

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<sup>33</sup> Overton, Melony, Port Lavaca Wave, A1.

<sup>34</sup> Mary Meitzen, Interview with Kevin McKamey.