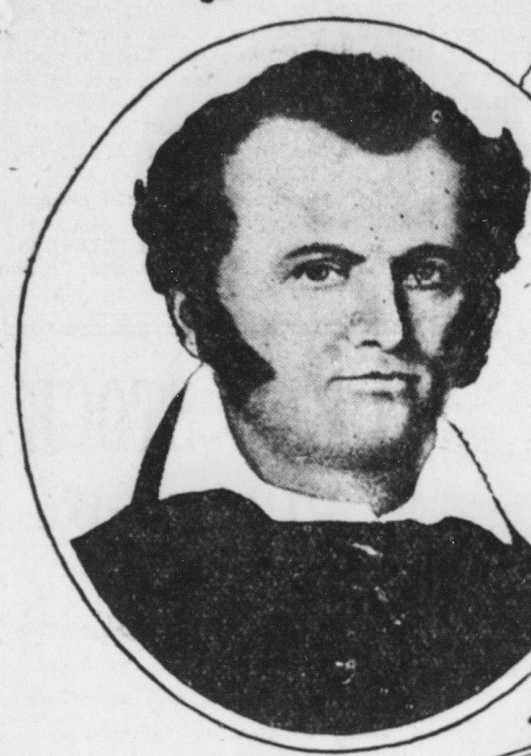


# Who Invented the BOWIE KNIFE?



James Bowie



Al Packer's Knife

A Knife used by Kit Carson

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

**T**HE name "Bowie knife" is as inseparably linked with the history of the American frontier as are the names of those other weapons which played their part in the winning of the West—the "Kentucky rifle" (which, incidentally, should be the Pennsylvania rifle, since it was first made in that state), the Sharps buffalo gun, the Winchester and the Colt's six-shooter. It figured in innumerable bloody affairs, some of which have become classics in Western history. It was a Bowie knife which Wild Bill Hickok was said to have wielded in the fight which gave him the "wid bill" nickname—the so-called "fight" with the "McCandles gang." It was a Bowie knife with which Al Packer, a prospector, killed his four companions while they were snow-bound in the San Juan mountains of Colorado and won for himself the dreadful title of the "San Juan Man-Enter." The Bowie knife has figured in tales of Jim Bridger and Jim Baker, Kit Carson and California Joe, and a dozen other border notables—some of the yarns authentic and others, no doubt, the product of the dime novelists.

It was intended to answer the purpose of blading trees and of a hunting knife. The colonel carried this weapon for five or six years, when the dreadful conflict, yet fresh in the recollections of many, took place in the state of Mississippi, a circumstance which at once gave it an unrivaled reputation. All the steel in the country was immediately converted into bowie-knives.

Several years ago in a "Centennial Edition" of the Arkansas Gazette there appeared an article called "The True History of the Bowie Knife," with a biographical sketch of its inventor, James Black, written by Dan W. Jones, governor of Arkansas from 1897 to 1901, who knew Black intimately for 30 years. This, in brief, is his story:

Black was born in New Jersey in 1800, ran away from home at the age of eight to Philadelphia where he was apprenticed to a manufacturer of silversmith. After serving his apprenticeship and becoming expert at the trade he emigrated to the West in 1818, eventually coming to the town of Washington, Ark., where he found employment with a blacksmith. Washington was a frontier town, where all men went armed, the favorite weapon being a knife. Black began manufacturing knives which soon became famous for the temper of their steel. He was accustomed to make them to order from a pattern of the exact size and shape desired by the customer. He plated them with gold or silver and his price ranged from \$5 to \$52, depending upon how they were plated. But the quality of the tempered steel was always the same, according to Jones, who continues:

About 1821 James Bowie came to Washington, and gave Black an order for a knife, furnishing a pattern, and desiring it to be made within the following 60 or 90 days, when he would call for it. Black made the knife according to Bowie's pattern. He knew Bowie well and had a high estimation of him as a man of good taste as well as of unflinching courage. He had never made a knife which suited his own taste, and he was very anxious to do so.

Consequently, after completing the knife ordered by Bowie, he made another, and when Bowie returned showed both of them to him and explained the difference, at the same time giving him his choice at the same price. Bowie promptly selected Black's pattern.

Shortly after this Bowie became involved in a difficulty with three desperadoes who assaulted him with knives. He killed them all with the knife Black had made. After this, when anyone ordered a knife from Black, he would order it to be made like Bowie's, which finally was shortened into "make me a Bowie-knife." Thus this famous weapon acquired its name. Bowie himself was not a mechanic of any kind. He was killed in the Alamo with Davy Crockett, and the legend runs that his body was surrounded by dead Mexicans whom he had killed with that same knife.

Other men made knives in those days, and they are still being made, but no one has ever made the "Bowie-knife" except James Black. Its chiefest value was in its temper. Black undoubtedly possessed the Damascus secret. It came to him mysteriously and it did with him in the same way.

Such is one story of the invention of the Bowie knife, which sounds authentic. But, says another story, the real inventor of the knife was Jesse Cliffe, a blacksmith employed by the elder Resin Bowie (father of the three Bowie boys). Some time after the invention of the knife James engaged in an altercation with Maj. Norris Wright which resulted in Wright shooting at James. The latter was saved when a silver dollar in his pocket deflected the bullet. Drawing his own pistol, James aimed at Wright but the trigger snapped. His father then gave James the knife, saying, "This will never snap." It was this circumstance that led James Bowie always to carry

the knife on his person thereafter. There is still another story of the origin of the Bowie knife—and another inventor of it! This story names as the father of the weapon a Tennessean named John Sowell, who fought with Jackson in the War of 1812 then moved to Missouri and finally settled in Gonzales, Texas, in 1829. Being a blacksmith, he began playing his trade there. Then, the story as told by Sowell descendants in Texas, continues:

James Bowie often passed through Gonzales on his way East after a trip prospecting in the mountains to the West, and he generally had 15 to 20 men with him—all Indian fighters—and they had many encounters with the Comanches and other tribes. In one of these fights Bowie thrust at an Indian with his butcher knife and his hand slipped over the blade, cutting him very badly. This cut suggested the idea of a guard between the handle and blade and he cut a pattern from a piece of wood and in passing through Gonzales stopped at Sowell's shop and asked him if he could make one like it. Sowell replied that he could, and selecting a piece of steel, turned out a knife that pleased Bowie very much. Mr. Sowell asked Bowie if he (Sowell) might give the knife a name. Bowie replied in the affirmative and Mr. Sowell said, "I will name it in honor of you, we will call it the 'Bowie Knife.'"

"Who invented the Bowie knife?" Let him who can, read that conflicting testimony and then give a reply which he can be sure is correct!

### Eruption of Volcanoes

Not all active volcanoes erupt, as did Mount Etna recently, like a boiled-over pot. Many explode, shooting dust and ashes miles into the air. The non-explosive character of Etna is ascribed by volcanologists to the fact that its lava is a relatively thin liquid which allows steam and gas bubbles to escape readily. In explosive volcanoes the lava is thick. It holds back steam and gas stubbornly, causing immense pressure beneath and eventually a violent eruption.

Because practically every active volcano in the world is located not far from large bodies of water, the theory is advanced by Dr. William Bowie of the United States coast and geodetic survey and others that the kneading action of the periodic tides twists the earth, forcing up the lava and causing volcanic activity.

### Planned to Put Girdle of Green About London

John Loudoun, a famous landscape gardener who lived a century ago, was the author of a scheme to put a permanent "green girdle" around London. In 1820 Loudoun proposed to form a tree-planted boulevard round the metropolis. His idea was to widen Euston road—then known as New road—and continue this through Marylebone, across Hyde park and via Stone street to the river, over Vauxhall bridge, and then by way of Kennington, Camberwell and Deptford to Greenwich park, where it was to re-cross the Thames on a high viaduct and return by the City road back to New road. A beginning was actually made, but the cost of the scheme proved too great, and the only portion carried out comprised the imposing turnings off Edgware road known as Oxford and Cambridge terraces.

### Then the Trouble Began

Bertie Baxter had but recently become engaged to a young woman who in three short years had managed to break the hearts of all the young men in Bruxton.

At a certain tea-dance her fiance, who was always telling his friends what a wonderful girl she was, took a companion aside and mentioned the fact that the latest whim of his affinity was a new type of lipstick.

"Oh, yes," nodded the other innocently; "kind of orange flavored, isn't it?"—London Answers.

### Perplexing

M. Poiret, the famous Parisian designer of women's wearing apparel, had been established in his New York branch only a few weeks when he went to an American friend in despair.

"Zis language of yours," he wailed, "I shall nevaire, nevaire master it. Tell me, tell me, my dear friend, how it is zat w'en ze gown does not fit, ze patron has a fit."

### Houses for the Soul

Make yourselves nests of pleasant thoughts. None of us yet know, for none of us have been taught in early youth, what fairy palaces we may build of beautiful thought—proof against all adversity. Bright fancies, satisfied memories, treasure houses of precious and restful thoughts which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us—houses built without hands, for our souls to live in.—John Ruskin.

### Hunt Big Treasure

Location of a great treasure, buried 500 years ago with the coffin of the first Ming emperor, may be traced following the recent discovery of a mysterious tunnel in a hill near Nanking, China.

The tunnel is seven feet high and three feet wide, and is lined with blocks of stone. The secret of the horde of gold jewels and jade entombed with the ruler has puzzled his-

torians and treasure seekers for centuries. When the emperor died, Nanking, his capital, had 13 gates.

Through all these coffins were borne simultaneously and 13 tombs were erected at as many different places, according to records, in order to baffle enemies and ghouls.

### Mouse Brought Death

Frightened at a mouse, Mrs. John Shillan stepped back into a threshing mill at Gartleson, Scotland, recently, and was killed.

## Mosquitoes Die Quicker!

At last a quicker way to kill bothersome dangerous mosquitoes. Flit! More people use it because it kills quicker. The handy Flit sprayer floats a fine vapor freely in the air, which is harmless to humans and stainless to finest fabrics.

## FLIT

The sun is as fickle in most of its characteristics as—well, supply your own simile. It has been found, however, that this inconsistency is probably a periodic function, so that the sun will vary from maximum to minimum in its behavior over a fixed period of years.

For example, Dr. Charles St. John of the Mount Wilson observatory in California, has discovered that the period of rotation of the sun has been increasing. The sun, in other words, is slowing down. In 1876 the equatorial speed of the sun's rotation was 2.28 kilometers per second. In 1915 it was 1.96, and by 1928 the sun had slowed down to 1.89 kilometers per second. It is believed, however, that this decrease will not be constant, and that beginning in 1929 the sun will gradually pick up speed again until it reaches a maximum period of rotation within the next few years.

**The Type**

We are told of the good mother who was disturbed over her son, who had been in Italy studying for three years. "I am so afraid he'll get so Italianized he won't come home."—Boston Transcript.

Nothing is gained by abusing those whose opinions are different from your own.

### Variation Noticed in Sun's Rotation Period

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### Who Wants to be Bald?

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Good Substitute "If you couldn't have wealth, what would you choose?" "Credit."—Brooklyn Eagle.

## Western Newspaper Union

(A Delaware Corporation)

### Fifteen-Year 6% Convertible Gold Debentures

Dated August 1, 1929 Due August 1, 1944

Interest payable February 1 and August 1 without deduction for normal Federal income tax not exceeding 2%. The Company will agree to refund to holders, upon proper application, any State income tax not exceeding 3% per annum, and in Massachusetts not exceeding 4% per annum, and personal property and security taxes in certain States as provided in the Trust Indenture. Redeemable at any time as a whole or in part on 60 days' published notice at 105 and accrued interest. Coupon Debentures in interchangeable denominations of \$1,000 and \$500 registerable as to principal only. Central Hanover Bank and Trust Company, Trustee.

Debentures will be convertible, at the option of the holder, at any time prior to maturity, or up to five days prior to earlier redemption, into Common Stock at the rate of 40 shares for each \$1,000 principal amount.

H. H. Fuh, Esq., President of the Company, summarizes from his letter to us as follows:

#### BUSINESS

Western Newspaper Union, successor to a company of the same name and a business founded in 1865, serves more than 10,000 daily and weekly country newspapers, maintaining fully equipped plants in 36 key cities of the United States from California to Massachusetts. The Company supplies these newspapers with ready printed inside pages or with columns of prepared plate, containing various feature stories, serials and special articles selected by the newspaper publishers; places national advertising in their papers and prepares cuts and copy for local advertising campaigns.

The Company also does a large volume of commercial printing, prints in their entirety various magazines and trade journals and is responsible for the mechanical production of many of the feature services of The Associated Press.

#### FINANCIAL

During the past 20 years net profits of Western Newspaper Union, after all charges including depreciation, but before Federal taxes, averaged more than \$680,000 annually, and in no single year were such net profits less than \$450,000.

Net profits after depreciation, but before Federal taxes, for the past 4 years, as certified by Messrs. Arthur Andersen & Co., after eliminating operations of the paper mill, which is being sold coincident with this financing and after other adjustments arising from the reorganization as stated in their certificate, were as follows:

1925	\$741,336
1926	935,383
1927	571,249
1928	765,825

Such net profits as above have averaged about \$758,448 annually, and for the year ended December 31, 1928, amounted to \$765,825, equivalent to more than 3 times the annual Debenture interest requirement.

After deducting from such net profits in 1928 Debenture interest requirements, Federal Taxes (parent company) at 12% and Preferred Stock dividends, the balance amounted to over \$352,000, or about \$2.35 per share on the 150,000 shares of Common Stock to be presently outstanding.

The net assets of the Company, available for these Debentures, based on the balance sheet, as at April 30, 1929, adjusted to give effect to the present financing, including the sale of the paper mill, were in excess of \$8,500,000.

#### MANAGEMENT

Since the death in 1916 of the former owner, George A. Joslyn, his widow and other heirs have owned the majority of the Common Stock of Western Newspaper Union, control of which is now being acquired by the executives who have been responsible for its successful operation during the past 13 years.

All legal details will be passed upon by Messrs. Tenney, Harding, Sherman & Rogers of Chicago and by Messrs. White & Case of New York.

### F. A. Willard & Co. Ames, Emerich & Co., Inc.

New York Philadelphia Chicago New York

We have accepted as accurate the information and statements contained in the above mentioned letter and summary, but no errors, omissions or misstatements in said letter or summary shall give rise to any right or claim against us.

July, 1929.