

Fall
2018

LEGACIES

A History Journal for Dallas & North Central Texas

Forgotten
Stories

The Rise and Fall of North Texas Electric Interurban Railways
Uncle Sam, Schoolmaster: The WPA Nursery Schools in Dallas
Dorothy [Parker] Does Dallas
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in North Central Texas
Taking Dallas Vertical

One of The Many Beautiful Scenes along The Interurban Line,
between Ft. Worth and Dallas.



**Legacies is a joint publication of:
Dallas Heritage Village
The Dallas Historical Society**

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Legacies is made possible

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Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas

is published semiannually. The editor welcomes articles relating to the history of Dallas and North Central Texas. Please address inquiries to Editor, *Legacies*, 1515 S. Harwood St., Dallas, TX 75215; phone 214-413-36651 or email info@dallasheritagevillage.org.

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Front and back covers: For several decades in the early 20th century a network of electric interurban trains transported passengers efficiently throughout North Central Texas. See “The Rise and Fall of North Texas Electric Interurban Railways,” beginning on page 4.



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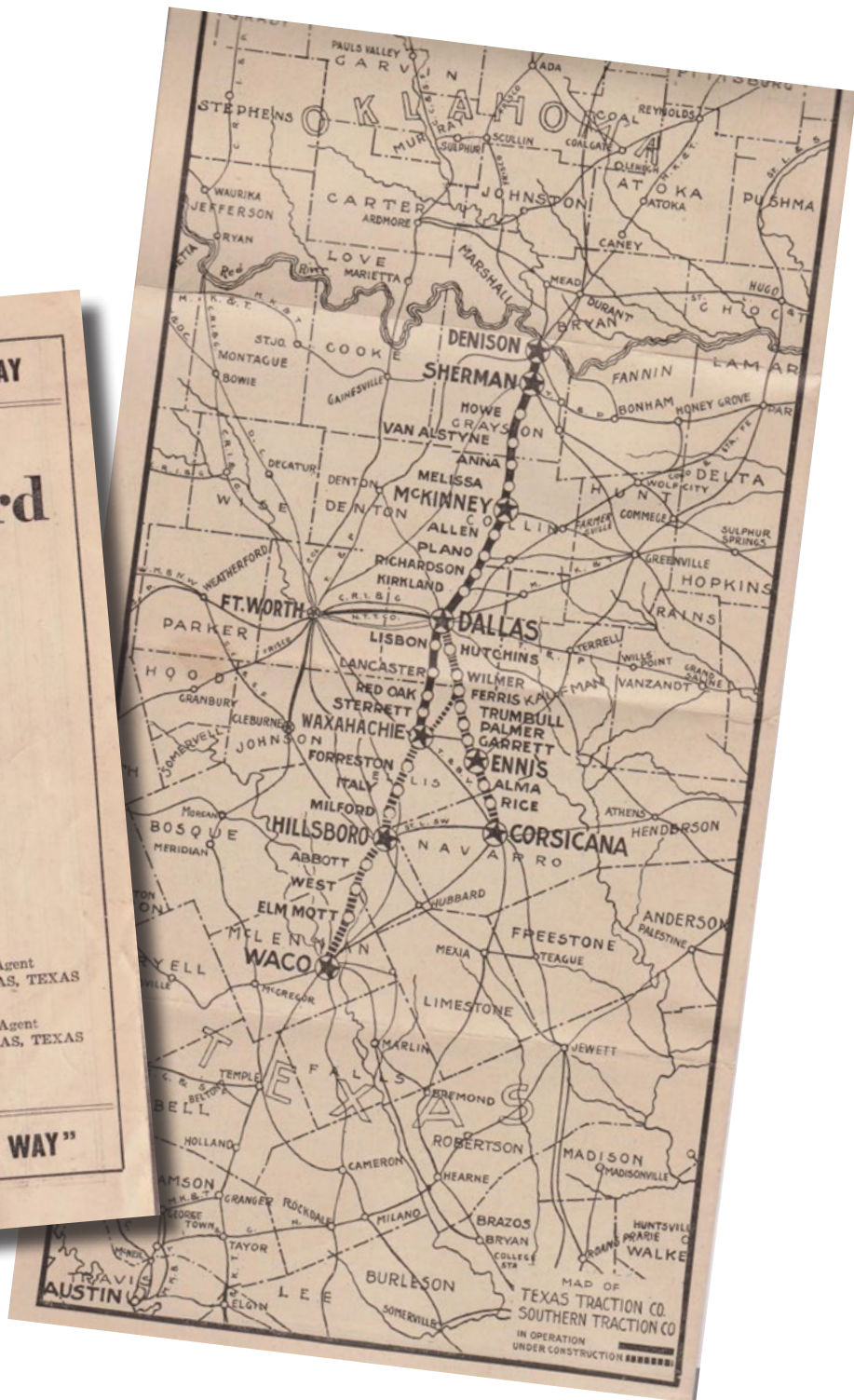
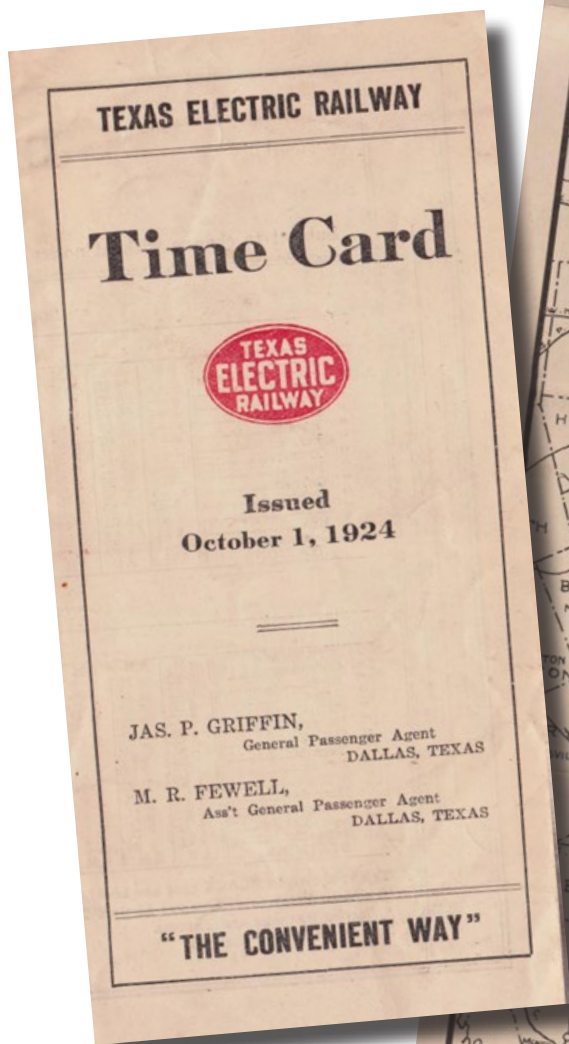
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All previous issues of *Legacies* from 1989 through 2017 are online at the University of North Texas Portal to Texas History. The address is: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/LHJNT>



By the 1920s, passengers could travel on the interurban from Dallas north to Denison and Sherman, south to Corsicana and Waco, west to Fort Worth, and east to Terrell. See "The Rise and Fall of North Texas Interurban Railways, 1901-1948," beginning on page 4.

FROM THE EDITOR

With this issue, *Legacies* concludes its thirtieth year of publication. That's sixty issues, containing hundreds of research articles, profiles, and photo essays. Although many have dealt with well known individuals or events, we have always sought out stories about lesser known aspects of our regional history. By adding color and detail to the tapestry of history, we hope these forgotten stories may help us understand better how to deal with challenges of the present. This issue contains five articles that fit in the category of forgotten, or at least obscure, stories.

The first one, about the network of inter-urban trains that spread out from Dallas in the early 20th century, isn't completely forgotten, thanks to a fine museum devoted to the subject in Plano. But it has been sixty years since the last interurban train operated, and in this era when various forms of mass transit are receiving attention, the story of the interurbans is timely, if also cautionary. Jeff Dunn provides an overview, from planning through construction and operation, to eventual abandonment.

The WPA Nurseries that operated in Dallas in the early 1940s really have been almost completely forgotten, except perhaps by surviving adults who benefited from them. Courtney Welch offers a detailed look at the services given poor toddlers, many of whose mothers worked in World War II defense plants—everything from a daily dose of cod liver oil to a personal toothbrush to nutritious meals.

The innovative theater-in-the-round created by Margo Jones at Fair Park is fondly recalled and mentioned in most histories of Dallas. But the focus has generally been on the plays Jones produced by Tennessee Williams, William Inge, and other playwrights who soon gained

prominence on Broadway. Who knew that she also presented a play by Dorothy Parker, well known for her wit as a poet and columnist? Frank Jackson's article makes clear why her play went nowhere.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. His leadership in the civil rights movement and his stirring speeches in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere are being remembered and celebrated. But his five visits to Dallas have received scant attention. Steven Butler recounts these visits, spanning a ten-year period from 1956 to 1966, and analyzes the local reaction to them. As a sidebar, Butler also writes of the two public visits made to Dallas by Robert F. Kennedy, both while he was serving as Attorney General in his brother's administration.

Finally, we often think of the post-World War II expansion of Dallas and Fort Worth in terms of the geographic spread over the surrounding region, as suburban development has replaced former farm and ranch land. But both cities also have downtowns that grew vertically. Handling increased traffic—both pedestrian and vehicular—became a growing challenge. As Jay Firsching explains, several urban planners proposed separating pedestrians from automobiles, and trucks from both, through networks of underground tunnels and occasional overhead walkways. These proposals were never fully implemented, and today planners question their validity. But remnants remain, a frequent object of curiosity if not use.

Forgotten, obscure, neglected—all these stories are part of the legacy of our past, stories worth remembering.

—*Michael V. Hazel*

The Rise and Fall of North Texas Electric Interurban Railways 1901-1948

BY JEFF DUNN

*B*etween 1901 and 1927, over 500 miles of electrified railways were built in Texas. The largest concentration of these “interurban” lines—350 miles—fanned out from Dallas like spokes on a wheel. Interurbans were built, operated, and managed by private firms without funding or tax breaks from any government entities. These companies paid taxes on their revenues like other companies and together contributed to mobility and economic development in North Texas during a period of significant growth and prosperity. But their overhead was high: the firms assumed the cost of acquiring right-of-way and city franchises and the expense of purchasing and maintaining interurban passenger cars, railway tracks, and overhead wires. In some instances they

also covered the cost of construction, operation, and maintenance of power plants needed to supply electricity to the cars. These costs, together with labor and safety expenses, had to be offset by passenger and freight fares kept low for competitive reasons.

Interurbans competed with steam railroads and motor vehicles. They were generally preferred in comparison to railroads because of their frequent runs and ability to serve rural areas between cities, but competition from automobiles, trucks, and motor buses proved to be the death knell for the industry. Vehicles powered by gas combustion engines that did not run on tracks offered more flexibility and convenience than interurbans. And when governments at all levels

promoted the “good roads” movement after 1915 with federal and state funding for hard surfaced highways, partly paid for by taxes on interurbans, the electric rail industry was doomed.

The rise and fall of the electric interurban industry is a remarkable chapter in the economic and social history of North Texas. Despite challenges, revenues of interurbans serving Dallas and Fort Worth rose from their inception in 1901 to 1920. After 1920, a steady decline followed. The Depression in the early 1930s resulted in receiver-ship or abandonment of all of the lines. Only one interurban, the Texas Electric Railway Company, itself the result of a reorganization of the earlier Texas Electric Railway, managed to stay in operation into the late 1930s and 1940s, but its survival lasted only until 1948. The final interurban run in North Texas occurred on December 31, 1948.

Interurbans had characteristics similar to steam railroads and electric city streetcars, but they were their own separate class of railway. Texas law defines an “interurban electric railway company” as a corporation chartered under the laws of Texas to conduct and operate an electric railway between two municipalities in Texas.¹ Streetcars during the era of interurbans also were powered by electricity, but they operated entirely within one city. Railroads ran between cities and long distances, but were powered by steam or diesel rather than electricity and could not make frequent stops and starts. Interurban cars were similar in appearance to electric streetcars and typically operated as single cars rather than as a train, but interurbans were larger and faster than streetcars and required advanced technology.²

Interurbans were a more advanced form of electric streetcars. The latter made their appearance in American cities in the 1880s, largely as a replacement for mule and horse drawn cars and in some instances steam operated cars. All streetcars operated over railway tracks. To electrify the cars, overhead wires (called the catenary system) were placed about 19 to 20 feet above the tracks. They were held in place with poles constructed along one or both sides of the

tracks. Each car had a pole (called a trolley pole) connected to the top of the car on one end and touching the overhead wire on the other end with a wheel or shoe device. This pole—which gave the name “trolley cars”—received electricity distributed along the wire from a designated power station. Electricity supplied to the car through the trolley pole was converted to mechanical energy (turning the wheels) with dynamo motors and other equipment located beneath the floorboard and grounded by the wheels touching the steel track. This technology was improved upon to create the interurban.³

Mule driven streetcars were placed in operation in Dallas in 1872 and Fort Worth in 1876. When electrified streetcars started operating in eastern cities in the mid-1880s, the concept quickly made its way to Texas. The first electric streetcars in Texas were placed in operation on Fort Worth’s streets in 1889 following construction of a power house on the north side of the Trinity near the Main Street bridge.⁴ Dallas saw its first electrified streetcar in March 1890 when the Dallas Rapid Transit Company electric railway opened its five-mile electric powered line on Commerce Street. This company previously operated streetcars propelled by steam “dummy” engines, so-called because the steam apparatus was enclosed on the car in an attempt to avoid scaring horses. The Dallas Rapid Transit was said to have been the first streetcar line in the country to convert from steam to electricity. The local Dallas electric light manufacturing company on Pacific Avenue supplied power.⁵

George T. Bishop and the Northern Texas Traction Company

There was talk of connecting Dallas and Fort Worth with an electric “interurban road” as early as September 1889, several years before the technology for interurbans had been perfected. No immediate action was taken, but *The Dallas Morning News* nonetheless thought the idea was “feasible” and “possibly” profitable. The idea was to create a circuit from Dallas and Fort Worth to

a point half the distance between the cities with a park in the middle.⁶

Aside from uncertain technology, a significant obstacle to building such a line was capital. There simply was not enough wealth in North Texas to build and operate an interurban between Dallas and Fort Worth or anywhere else. Attempts in the early 1890s foundered because of a “financial panic” that seized the nation in 1893.

The downturn in the economy in the 1890s affected Dallas and Fort Worth for the rest of the decade, but prospects for a new interurban emerged on September 19, 1899, when a large number of citizens attended the Oak Cliff city council meeting to hear a petition from George T. Bishop. Bishop, who lived in Cleveland, Ohio, sought permission to construct, maintain, and operate a double-track electric street railway on specified streets of Oak Cliff, in conjunction with the construction of an electric railway from Dallas to Fort Worth with future extensions to Cleburne and Waxahachie. Bishop’s proposal was a serious one, as he had successfully constructed an interurban between Cleveland and Lorain, Ohio, before turning his attention to North Texas. An ordinance granting the petition was adopted five days later.⁷

Meanwhile, Bishop’s partner, John B. Coffinbury, also of Cleveland and a former Cleveland councilman, appeared before the Dallas city council seeking a similar ordinance on behalf of Bishop to permit the proposed line to enter Dallas from Oak Cliff and run along existing streetcar tracks on Commerce Street to the Post Office. This franchise was needed to establish a Dallas terminal for the electric railway. He promised an investment of up to \$700,000 to complete the project. He said this was a new field, and that once a city had such a railway, it could not get along without one. He told the council: the interurban is “the greatest institution we ever had in our country, both for the city and the country.”⁸ In October 1899, a similar Bishop petition to enter and use Fort Worth streets was

sent to the Fort Worth city council.⁹

In contrast to the swift approval received from Oak Cliff, there was hesitation and opposition in both Dallas and Fort Worth. Complicating the proposal was the announcement in January 1900 of another proposed electric line between Dallas and Fort Worth, sponsored by G. Van Ginkel and John T. Voss. Van Ginkel was a native of Holland who came to Dallas in early 1899 from Des Moines, Iowa. In March 1899, he purchased the largest streetcar line in Dallas, called the Dallas Consolidated Electric Street Railway, and began upgrading the line. Voss was president of the Glenwood and Polytechnic College Electric Street Railway Company operating in east Fort Worth. Their proposal was to connect the two existing lines and offer free transfers on their local lines.¹⁰ On January 20, 1900, Van Ginkel appeared before the Dallas Commercial Club and argued, in a speech described by *The Dallas Morning News* as “caustic,” that the Bishop franchise “would destroy property.” Coffinbury, who was also present on behalf of Bishop, objected to that accusation and said his group would begin work within six days once the Dallas franchise was awarded. Coffinbury later said that bonds could not be floated in the east for this project and that attempting to obtain capital in Texas would result in a loss of time. Instead, he and four others were willing to invest the estimated cost to build the line, with any one of them being capable of financing the line himself. Van Ginkel and Voss claimed that their proposal could be funded with eastern capital.¹¹

The Bishop proposal was taken up again by the Dallas council in late January 1900. Although the proposal “precipitated a scrappy fight,” the franchise was approved for a twenty-year term and ratified by the municipal commission on February 1. One of the conditions was the requirement for Bishop to pay the city \$100 per year for the first five years, and \$250 for each of the remaining fifteen years. The Van Ginkel-Voss supporters vowed to continue their efforts, but their supporters admitted a

“knockout at the hands of the commission.”¹² Meanwhile, litigation ensued which was quickly settled, but in Fort Worth objections were raised by some merchants who were concerned that an electric railway to Dallas would draw business from Fort Worth to Dallas. Fort Worth’s council delayed its decision for several months.¹³

Apparently out of frustration with Fort Worth’s delay, Coffinbury announced in August 1900 that he had purchased two Fort Worth city streetcar lines, after outbidding Voss, thus enabling the Bishop interests to secure a terminal in the city and allow them to start work on the interurban. By September 1900, the cost of building the Bishop interurban had more than doubled to \$1.5 million.¹⁴ But plans continued unabated, and in December, Bishop came to Dallas to make the final arrangements to start construction. He said the road would be laid with 70-pound T-rails and the cars would be 48 feet long capable of moving 50 miles per hour.¹⁵ Also in December, Van Ginkel and Voss announced that Fred Howard Porter of New York had completed plans for their interurban and that work would be commenced immediately, along with a reconstruction of the streetcar line owned by Voss in Fort Worth. Their line would be built under the name of the Twin City Union Railways Company. By the end of December work was underway at both ends of the line and they were expecting their first shipment of rails.¹⁶ In January 1901, the rival companies each received franchises from the city of Arlington to route their cars through that city.¹⁷

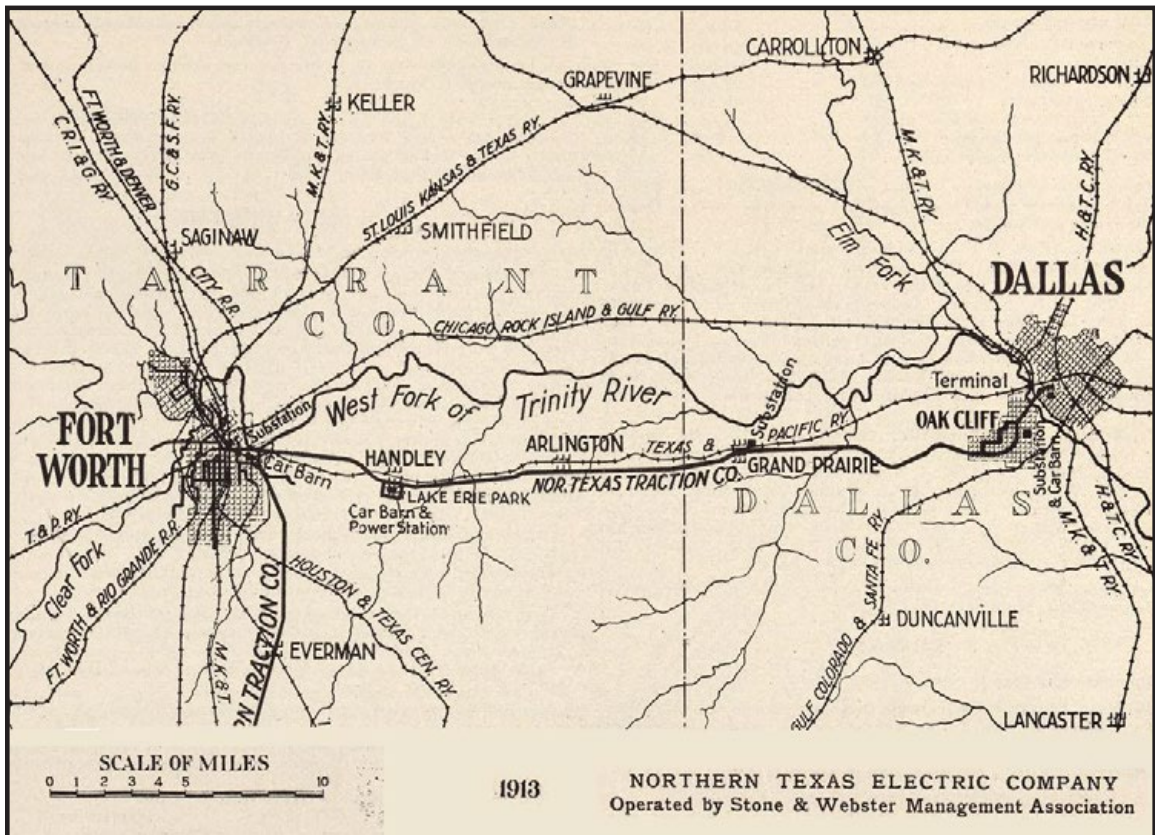
Both the Bishop interests and the Twin City Union Railways Company apparently ran into problems securing right-of-way between Dallas and Fort Worth. Unlike railroads, which had the right of eminent domain to condemn properties when a landowner refused to grant access rights, interurbans were not considered railroads and did not have such rights. Legislation would be needed to grant these rights. A comprehensive bill allowing condemnation was placed before the Texas Legislature in January 1901. The bill passed

both houses, but was vetoed by Governor Joseph Sayers in early February, claiming there were mistakes in the bill. But the failure of the bill did not keep either rival company from working on their lines.

In March 1901, the Bishop-owned Fort Worth Street Railway Company changed its name to the Northern Texas Traction Company in anticipation of using that entity to operate Fort Worth streetcars and the Dallas interurban. Bishop also went back to the Legislature and managed to get a special bill introduced to give the Northern Texas Traction Company the right to extend its Fort Worth streetcar lines to Dallas with condemnation privileges. This bill passed both houses and was signed by Governor Sayers within 48 hours.¹⁸

Bishop’s success was clearly a blow to Van Ginkel. Although he vowed to continue to build his line, by April 1901 rumors were flying that Van Ginkel was negotiating the sale of his interest in the Dallas Consolidated streetcar line. And in June the announcement of such a sale was made public. The sale ended Van Ginkel’s rivalry with Bishop and paved the way for Bishop to build the line without competition. Van Ginkel’s streetcars were sold with help from Bishop himself, who steered his friend and fellow interurban investor Pierre du Pont to invest in the Dallas streetcar system as the buyer. Du Pont was president of the Lorain (Ohio) Street Railway and bought the Dallas Consolidated for a reported consideration of \$800,000, about \$100,000 less than Van Ginkel’s purchase price in 1899.¹⁹

Even though Van Ginkel had been living in Dallas for only two years and had now sold out his business interest, he vowed to stay. He held an “ice cream standup” for 200 of his former employees, complete with a band, free ice cream, and cigars. But only a few days after the sale and party he was tragically killed on June 19, ironically by being run over by one of his former streetcars. His death occurred at night near Exall Lake in what is now Highland Park. The newspaper accounts



This 1913 map shows the route of the Northern Texas Electric Company's interurban line between Fort Worth and Dallas, which paralleled the Texas & Pacific Railroad tracks most of the way, before connecting to the Oak Cliff streetcar ones. The location of Handley, where the power station and Lake Eric were constructed, is also indicated.

reported he was sleeping on the tracks when the car arrived to take him and his family home.²⁰

Denison and Sherman Railway

While attention was focused on the drama surrounding the Dallas and Fort Worth interurban, another interurban in North Texas was making progress quietly and with relatively less controversy. On November 7, 1899, J. F. Withers, president of the Grayson County National Bank in Sherman, announced that negotiations with Chicago and eastern capitalists had culminated in their purchase of the street railway lines in Denison and Sherman with the intention of operating those lines in conjunction with the construction of an electric interurban between the two cities. The line would be known as the Denison and Sherman Railway Company with headquarters in Sherman.

In contrast to the Dallas-Fort Worth line, which would require 35 miles of track, the Denison-Sherman line would only involve a distance of ten miles. Plans were made to build a power plant between the two cities with a “first-class park and summer resort” nearby. According to Withers, “the experiment of inter-urban railways will be tested upon a magnificent and up-to-date scale.” The charter for the company was filed and approved in August 1900.²¹

Evidently the short distance between Sherman and Denison did not affect the ability of the line to obtain right-of-way privileges without condemnation; therefore the veto of the interurban bill in 1901 did not stop progress. In February 1901, the cars for the interurban arrived in Sherman. They were 40 feet long with separate compartments for whites and blacks.²² The



George T. Bishop, the man behind the line between Fort Worth and Dallas, constructed an amusement park called Lake Erie next to the power plant at Handley. In addition to swimming and boating, visitors could enjoy vaudeville performances and other activities at a large pavilion.

cars were heated and lighted by electricity with electric push buttons to stop the cars, and painted orange with an interior finish of birds-eye maple and cherry.²³ By the end of April 1901, the line was completed and the power house machinery started. The first trip between Denison and Sherman, which was made in 34 minutes, ran at 10 P.M. on April 30. Although short in length, the Denison and Sherman Railway took the honor of being the first interurban in Texas.²⁴ The 40-acre lake built to supply water to the power house, called Wood Lake, became the promised resort. This resort was a popular destination spot complete with a special swimming area and pavilion for dancing, vaudeville shows, roller skating, and religious camps.²⁵

Northern Texas Traction Company Completes the Dallas-Fort Worth Interurban

Work continued on the Dallas-Fort Worth interurban through the summer and fall of 1901. It became apparent that the original proposal to build a separate line through Oak Cliff and a new bridge over the Trinity River would be too

costly. For this reason Bishop negotiated for the Northern Texas Traction Company to purchase the Dallas and Oak Cliff Electric Railway, and this effort succeeded in January 1902, thereby giving the company control over Fort Worth and Oak Cliff streetcars as well as the interurban.²⁶ The interurban line was built in a manner similar to the Denison and Sherman interurban and the electric streetcars in Fort Worth and Dallas, with electric power generated at a power house constructed by the company at Handley, east of Fort Worth. To compete with the resort at Wood Lake, Bishop constructed his own resort at the lake adjacent to his Handley power house, which he dubbed "Lake Erie," after the real Lake Erie at his hometown of Cleveland.²⁷ The company ordered eight cars, each painted deep orange, seating 46 people each. They were constructed in Cleveland at a cost of \$7,000 each. Like the Denison and Sherman cars, these cars also had separate compartments for blacks and whites.²⁸

The rails were placed from the courthouse in Fort Worth to the Post Office in Dallas, crossing to the south side of the Texas and Pacific railroad tracks at Handley and following that railroad



This image of the interurban tracks between Fort Worth and Dallas shows the electric lines on the right that powered the trains. The dirt country lane on the left would soon attract more automobiles, providing competition to the interurban.

for most of the distance. Near Oak Cliff the interurban veered south and connected to the Oak Cliff streetcar system on Jefferson Street and crossed the Trinity on the existing streetcar viaduct. Cars entered Dallas on Jefferson Street (now Record) and turned right on Commerce before reaching the depot near the Post Office at St. Paul Street.²⁹

Although a demonstration run between Dallas and Fort Worth was successful on March 1, 1902, the interurban was officially opened to the public on July 1 following a festive gathering and barbeque for 300 politicians and businessmen at the Handley power plant.³⁰ Passenger traffic at first was heavy, with one way fares of 70 cents and round trip tickets \$1.25. Cars left downtown Dallas every two hours from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M., with each run taking one hour and 40 minutes each way. Service increased to hourly runs a month later. Almost immediately the interurban caused the Texas and Pacific Railway to reduce its fares between the two cities.³¹ The Northern Texas Traction Company line proved

to be extremely popular and profitable, and talk soon began of new lines in North Texas.³²

On the heels of the opening of the Dallas and Fort Worth interurban, the Boston engineering firm of Stone & Webster made its first investment in North Texas. In late 1902, this company purchased the three existing streetcar lines in Dallas—the Dallas Consolidated Electric Street Railway, the Metropolitan Street Railway, and the Rapid Transit Railway—together with the Dallas Electric Light and Power Company, the local power company supplying electricity to these lines. In March 1903, Stone & Webster secured an option to purchase the stock of the Northern Texas Traction Company and in September 1905 the option was exercised. This purchase gave Stone & Webster control over the Fort Worth and Oak Cliff streetcar systems, the interurban, and the Dallas light company. Stone & Webster later expanded its Texas investments by purchasing the Houston-Galveston, Beaumont-Port Arthur, and El Paso-Ysleta interurbans which were built later.³³



This special, four-car interurban train may have been taking merrymakers to Lake Erie.

Texas Traction Company

In 1905, while president of the Dallas Securities Company, J. F. Strickland began making plans for a 60-mile electric interurban between Dallas and Sherman to be operated under a company chartered as the Texas Traction Company. The line would parallel the tracks of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad and connect with the Denison-Sherman interurban on one end and the Dallas-Fort Worth interurban on the other, allowing electric rail transportation between Denison and Fort Worth by way of Dallas. Strickland secured financing from local wealthy individuals supplemented with capital from investors in eastern states.³⁴ By March 1907, crews were working in both directions from McKinney, where the power house was built. Substations were constructed at Howe, Melissa, Plano, and Richardson. Strickland did not seek a franchise to enter Dallas on city streets, but instead negotiated a contract with local streetcar companies to use their tracks to enter the city. The cars entered Dallas on what is now Matilda Street and initially ended at Bryan Street

at Munger Addition, where passengers were required to transfer to city streetcars operated by the Dallas Consolidated Electric Street Railway Company. The Dallas Consolidated cars took passengers down Bryan Street, Haskell, Main, and Preston before turning west on Commerce toward the courthouse. A depot was located on Commerce nearly opposite Field, five blocks west of the Northern Texas Traction Company's depot. Later the interurban was able to take passengers directly into Dallas without transferring to the streetcar line. On the northern end, the line connected with the Denison and Sherman Railway in Sherman. The company initially purchased twelve interurbans, 60-feet each, from the St. Louis Car Company.³⁵

On June 30, 1908, about 500 stockholders of the Texas Traction Company and others converged on McKinney from both directions for the inaugural run. Of these, 200 left from Dallas, all of them in the "excursion spirit, as evidenced by purchases of peaches in baskets and, tickling each other with toy spiders and generally celebrating the occasion, sometimes with song and

as a rule without coats.” At McKinney, the mayor greeted the crowd by predicting that McKinney was going to be “the center of a great electric system, and don’t you forget it.” The Texas Traction Company officially opened to the public on July 1, giving Dallas its second interurban and the longest in Texas. The ride between the terminals in Dallas and Sherman took three hours each way. From its inception the company tried to buy the Denison and Sherman Railway. As a compromise, in May 1909, the two companies agreed to allow the Texas Traction Company to assume management of the Denison-Sherman line and by 1911 an agreed purchase price was reached, enabling seamless travel from Dallas to Denison over the same line.³⁶

Tarrant County Traction Company

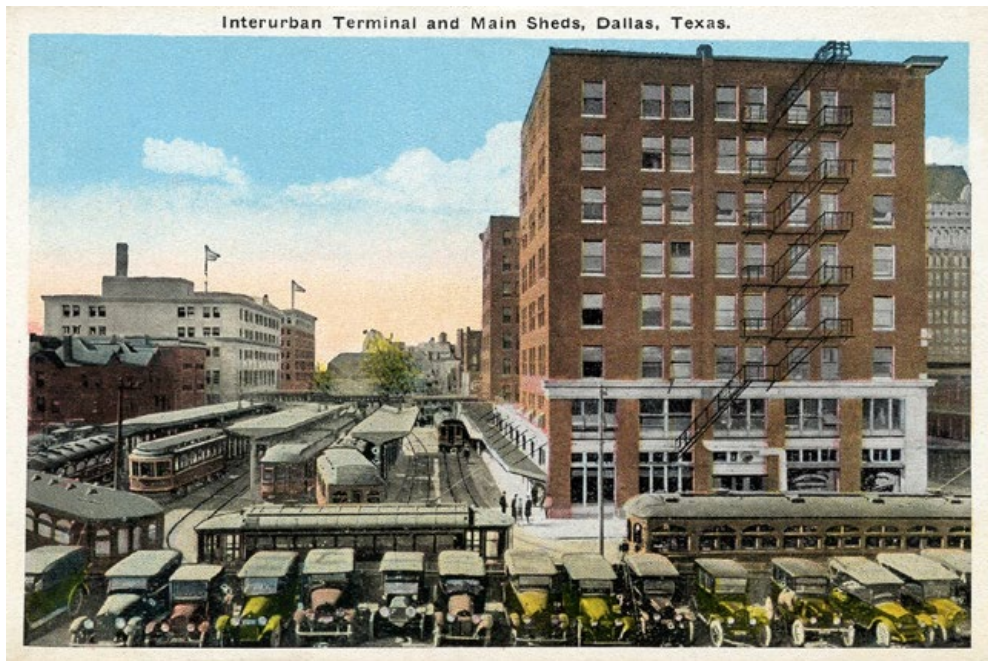
Fort Worth business leaders wanted an interurban connection to Cleburne as early as 1907, but it was not until 1911 that Stone & Webster entered into a \$1,000,000 contract to begin construction of the line. In June 1911, the company chartered the Fort Worth Southern Traction Company to handle construction and operations as an affiliate of the Northern Texas Traction Company. The company started laying tracks in 1912 with a tracklaying machine capable of placing one mile of track per day. The 30-mile project was opened in September 1912 using older cars from the Dallas-Fort Worth line. They were painted olive green with yellow molding. Passengers called it the “PeaVine Line.” Cleburne was never intended to be a final destination. Within a few days of opening this line, Stone & Webster began surveying an extension to Hillsboro with the ultimate objective Austin or San Antonio via Waco and Temple. But these ambitious plans were never fulfilled. In 1914, the Fort Worth-Cleburne line was reorganized with a new name: the Tarrant County Traction Company.³⁷

Dallas Southern Traction Company and the Southern Traction Company

Stone & Webster continued to expand its operations in North Texas with the announcement of an interurban between Dallas and Waxahachie in early 1911. This line was planned as an extension from Dallas much like the Cleburne line from Fort Worth. Stone & Webster organized the Dallas Southern Traction Company, chartered in August 1911, to construct this line.³⁸

Meanwhile, a new company called the Southern Traction Company, affiliated with the Texas Traction Company and with J. F. Strickland as president, was chartered in March 1912. This company announced plans in June 1911 to build two new interurban lines from Dallas. Both would follow the same tracks to Ferris, where they would branch into two directions, with one continuing to Corsicana and the other to Waco by way of Waxahachie and Hillsboro roughly following present-day Interstate 35 West. These announcements meant that Waxahachie would be served by two independent interurbans from Dallas.³⁹

Construction on Stone & Webster’s Dallas Southern Traction Company line commenced in September 1911 and the tracks were completed by late summer 1912. Interurbans were running over the new line in September in anticipation of an October public opening date. Meanwhile, Strickland was able to raise \$5,000,000 from capitalists in St. Louis to finance the Southern Traction Company and work commenced on its Corsicana and Waco lines in March 1912. About 80 percent of the grading on both lines was completed in September 1912 when Strickland’s Southern Traction Company announced on October 1 that it had purchased Stone & Webster’s line to Waxahachie for \$1,000,000, the cost of construction. This purchase resulted in a more direct route to Waxahachie and the abandonment of the line from Ferris to Waxahachie, which was



When the eight-story Interurban Building opened in downtown Dallas at Jackson and Browder in 1916, it was considered the largest and most modern interurban station in the country. Today the building houses residents.

no longer needed. Passengers began traveling over the Southern Traction Company's new line between Dallas and Waxahachie on October 2, 1912, the day after the sale was completed, thereby opening the third interurban line serving Dallas. The cars made the trip in one hour and twenty minutes each way to and from the Texas Traction Company's terminal on Commerce Street. Stone & Webster's Dallas Southern Traction Company ceased to be an operating entity after the sale.⁴⁰

The extension from Waxahachie to Waco took another year to build but was opened on October 12, 1913, following an inspection trip that featured wild celebrations, parades, speeches, and brass bands in Hillsboro and Waco. During these festivities Strickland dubbed the network the "Home Interurban" because the line was wholly operated and largely financed by men who lived in the towns through which the lines were located. This nickname was later used in company advertisements. The cars traveled the 97-mile route between Dallas and Waco—the longest route in the South—in four hours and

fifteen minutes, but through cars would soon be used to cut the time to three hours. These interurbans had separate smoking compartments, toilets, and heaters beneath each seat. Seven days later, on October 19, 1913, the Southern Traction Company opened its line from Dallas to Corsicana, representing the fourth interurban line radiating from Dallas.⁴¹

The Interurban Building

Just as the steam railroads were consolidating their terminals in Dallas with the new Union Station, opened in 1916, the interurban and power companies joined together to build their own terminal a few blocks to the east. The eight-story Interurban Building was opened on September 1, 1916, on Jackson and Browder streets. This building would house offices for the Northern Texas Traction Company, Southern Texas Traction Company, Texas Traction Company, and Texas Power & Light Company, and was considered one of the largest and most modern interurban stations in the country.⁴²

Texas Electric Railway

Stockholders of the Texas Traction Company and the Southern Traction Company, managed by J. F. Strickland and known as the “Strickland lines,” decided in early February 1916 to merge the two companies, which consisted of 251 miles of track, including 16 miles of streetcar lines in Denison, Sherman, McKinney, Waco, and Corsicana. The successor entity was to be called the Texas Electric Railway. The charter for this new company anticipated extensions of the interurban lines from Waco to Austin and San Antonio, and from Waco to Houston. The merger became effective January 1, 1917. Meanwhile, Strickland angled for control of the city streetcars in Dallas as well as Dallas Electric Power and Light, which he achieved in March 1917. He organized the Dallas Railway Company and Dallas Light and Power Company in September 1917. On October 1, the Dallas Railway Company purchased from Stone & Webster the Dallas Consolidated Electric Street Railway Company, Metropolitan Electric Street Railway Company (also called the “North Belt”), and Rapid Transit Railway Company (also called the “South Belt”), and consolidated those companies, while also entering into a 50-year lease of the Oak Cliff lines from the Northern Texas Traction Company. As a condition for receiving Dallas council approval for these transactions, Strickland agreed to build two new interurban lines from Dallas of at least 30 miles each.⁴³

Texas Interurban Railway

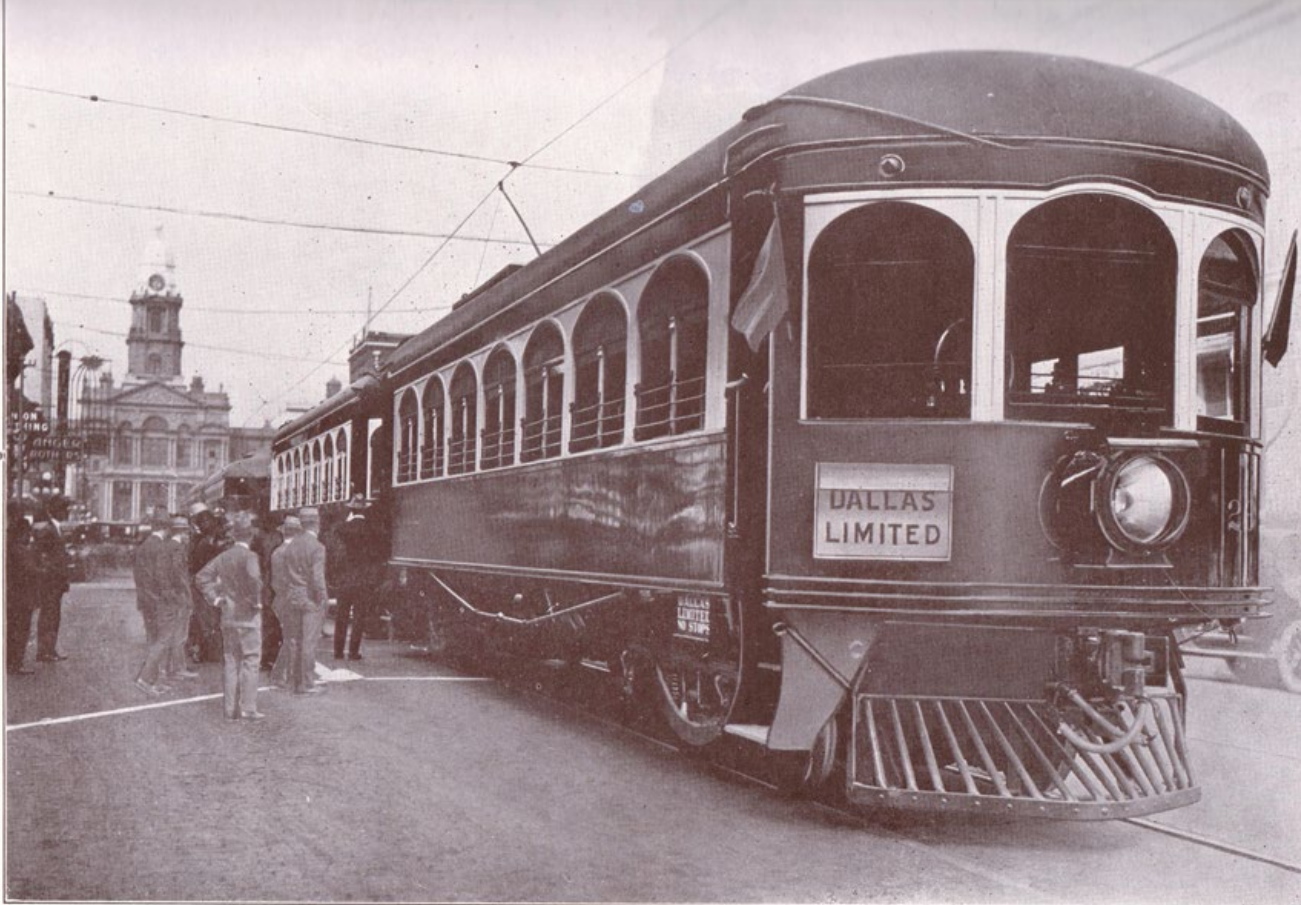
Strickland’s agreement to build two new interurban lines was given near the height of the interurban movement. By 1920, competition from automobiles and trucks, spurred on by government subsidies for paved highways, started the long decline of the industry. This decline was already evident in 1920 with the demise of the Eastern Texas Traction Company, an interurban that had started construction of a line from Dallas to Greenville by way of Garland and Rockwall in

1913. This company ran out of funds and became insolvent in 1919.⁴⁴

Strickland used World War I as his excuse for delaying construction of the new interurbans, but the city kept pressing. In 1921, his financial backer, General Electric, tried to get out of the deal by offering to forfeit the \$550,000 bond posted to secure the promise, but the city refused, instead offering another extension. Strickland reluctantly agreed to build the lines, selecting to construct the first line to Terrell. He considered taking over the defunct line to Greenville for the second interurban, but opted instead for a line to Denton. Both the Terrell and Denton interurbans would be built by a new interurban company called the Texas Interurban Railway.⁴⁵

An interurban between Dallas and Terrell was planned as early as 1910. The Stone & Webster interests in 1913 estimated the cost would be \$1,000,000. But this line did not become a reality until the Texas Interurban Railway commenced grading in January 1921. Track construction began in June 1922. The line opened to passenger service in January 1923 with stops in Mesquite, Forney and Terrell.⁴⁶

An interurban line between Dallas and Denton was first proposed in 1906 and revived several times between 1910 and 1915. But the Denton line did not become a reality until Strickland chose the route for his second mandated interurban for the Texas Interurban Railway. The Denton line was unique among interurbans in that it was the first electric railway in the country to be operated over tracks also used by steam railroads. The tracks were built by the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad in the late 1880s. The company built a large catenary system of overhead power lines that enabled the tracks to be used for both steam railroad and electric interurban traffic. Litigation over a portion of the route delayed construction, but work finally began in January 1924 and was completed less than seven months later. Power was supplied by Texas Power and Light.⁴⁷



Faced with growing competition from automobiles, the North Texas Traction Co. inaugurated the Crimson Limited express service between Dallas and Fort Worth in 1924. It featured a parlor car attached to the main car, furnished with spittoons and wicker seats.

The Denton interurban opened on October 1, 1924, to great fanfare and enthusiasm in each of the towns on the route: Farmers Branch, Carrollton, Lewisville, Garza (later known as Lake Dallas), and Denton. When officials from Dallas rode the inaugural car to Denton in what was called a “jollification party,” the people of Garza presented them with a 100-pound watermelon. At Denton they received a large floral horseshoe as a token of good luck and best wishes. The Texas Interurban Railway operated four cars over this branch with the trip between Denton and Dallas requiring one hour and forty minutes each way. In October, the company considered an extension of the line to Gainesville and Wichita Falls, an extension of the Terrell line to Tyler, and the electrification of the Santa Fe railroad line from Dallas to Cleburne, but none of these projects would materialize. In fact, only a few months later, in February 1925, the railway

announced that bus competition might cause the Denton line to be abandoned altogether. Both lines lost money from the start.⁴⁸

Decline and Abandonment

An editorial in *The Dallas Morning News*, April 15, 1925, entitled “Future of the Interurban,” agreed with predictions that no new interurbans would be built in Texas. It was quite telling that the *News* should say, in the midst of Prohibition, that “[o]ne would be more practically engaged in promoting the building of a distillery than in promoting the building of an interurban.”⁴⁹ But the existing lines in North Texas tried to innovate to hold on to passenger traffic. The Northern Texas Traction Company inaugurated its Crimson Limited express between Fort Worth and Dallas, complete with a parlor car attached to the main car. The parlor car featured wicker seats and spittoons. This service won a national service award,

called the Coffin Award, in October 1924. The Texas Electric Railway also instituted parlor cars and express service called “Bluebonnets.” In 1928 the Texas Electric Railway started hauling freight as a means of enhancing revenues, but this was not sufficient. The economic downturn resulting from the Depression proved to be the final blow.⁵⁰

In 1931 the Texas Electric Railway fell into receivership but managed to stay in operation. Later that year the Tarrant County Traction Company closed its line between Fort Worth and Cleburne and the company shut down. In 1932, the Northern Texas Traction Company went into receivership, and although the Fort Worth–Dallas interurban remained in operation, the company was forced to close the interurban on Christmas Eve 1934, when the last cars ran between Dallas and Fort Worth. In 1935, the Texas Electric Railway managed to emerge from receivership and continue operation under the new name of the Texas Electric Railway Company. But it, too, suffered from automobile competition. In 1941 the company was forced to close the Dallas–Corsicana line. World War II proved to be profitable, possibly because gasoline rationing made automobile traffic more expensive, but the adverse trends returned after the war.⁵¹

On April 10, 1948, a northbound car collided with a southbound car north of Vickery, injuring 49 passengers. Although there were no fatalities, the crash doomed the line. One week later stockholders voted to close the interurban. The process took many months because approval was needed from the Interstate Commerce Commission, but this approval was finally received in December. On December 31, 1948, the last interurban line in Texas made its final runs between Dallas and Denison and Dallas and Waco. Practically all of the interurban lines were replaced with motor bus service and the Interurban Building became the Dallas bus terminal.

The interurban era ended as a victim of the automobile, truck, and motor bus which were

subsidized by heavy public spending on concrete highways. In contrast to the revival of electric street railways in Dallas and other cities in the 1990s, the interurban era has yet to make a comeback. In a treatise published in 1960, the interurban phenomenon in the United States was summed up by claiming that “no industry of its size has had a worse financial record.” Interurbans played an enormous role during their heyday, and the nostalgia for these railways continues today, but their rapid rise and dramatic fall within the span of less than four decades is now considered a dramatic example of a failed industry.⁵² ■

NOTES

¹Texas Transportation Code Section 131.011.

²An early comprehensive history of interurbans in America describes and contrasts these forms of transportation. See George W. Hilton and John F. Due, *The Electric Interurban Railways in America* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, 1960).

³See generally, *ibid.*, 44–90.

⁴Vance Gillmore, *And work was made less . . . A brief history of Texas Electric Service Company* (Branch-Smith, Inc., Fort Worth 1976), 17–19.

⁵*The Dallas Morning News*, March 23, 1890 (hereafter cited as *DMN*). For early histories of Dallas streetcars, see *DMN*, October 1, 1910, April 26, 1948, January 15, 1956, and *Dallas Daily Times Herald* (hereafter cited as *DDTH*), July 13, 1919.

⁶*DMN*, Sept. 5, 1889.

⁷*DMN*, Sept. 19, 1899. Sept. 24, 1899, Sept. 27, 1899, Oct. 7, 1899.

⁸*DMN*, Jan. 19, 1900. Coffinbury’s name is sometimes spelled Coffinberry.

⁹*Fort Worth Morning Register* (hereafter cited as *FWMR*), October 7, 1899. *DMN*, Oct. 7, 1899.

¹⁰*DMN*, Nov. 5, 1899, Jan. 25, 1900. The sale of the Dallas Consolidated Electric Street Railway was reported to be \$900,000 in the *Western Electrician*, April 8, 1899, p.206.

¹¹*DMN*, Jan. 21, 1900, Jan. 25, 1900.

¹²*DMN*, Jan. 23, 1900, Jan. 24, 1900, Feb. 2, 1900.

¹³*DMN*, Mar. 24, 1900, Mar. 30, 1900, Mar. 31, 1900, Apr. 9, 1900. *FWMR*, Oct. 8, 1899.

¹⁴*FWMR*, Aug. 31, 1900. *DMN*, Aug. 31, 1900, Sept. 21, 1900. Fort Worth Council eventually granted a franchise to enable the Fort Worth streetcar line to be extended to Dallas. *FWMR*, December 29, 1900. *DMN*, Apr. 6, 1901.

¹⁵*DMN*, Dec. 7, 1900.

¹⁶*DMN*, Dec. 8, 1900, Dec. 20, 1900. *FWMR*, Dec. 19, 1900, Dec. 26, 1900, Dec. 27, 1900, Feb. 3, 1901.

¹⁷*DMN*, Jan. 9, 1901.

¹⁸*FWMR*, Feb. 13, 1901, Feb. 16, 1901, March 10, 1901,

Apr. 5, 1901, Apr. 6, 1901. *DMN*, Feb. 6, 1901, Feb. 16, 1901.

¹⁹*FWMR*, Apr. 11, 1901, May 3, 1901. *DMN*, Feb. 17, 1901, April 12, 1901, May 25, 1901, May 26, 1901, June 1, 1901, June 8, 1901, June 12, 1901, June 13, 1901. See also David Farber, *Everybody Ought to be Rich: The Life and Times of John J. Raskob, Capitalist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [2013]), 44, and *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, Vol. 72 (1901): 1080.

²⁰*DMN*, June 15, 1901, June 20, 1901. *Des Moines (Iowa) Daily News*, June 20, 1901, June 24, 1901.

²¹*DMN*, Nov. 8, 1899. *Fort Worth Telegram* (hereafter cited as *FWT*), Aug. 2, 1900.

²²By 1890, Texas had a “Jim Crow” law requiring railroads to provide separate cars for whites and blacks, but because interurbans technically were not railroads, that law was not applicable to the Denison-Sherman interurban. Nonetheless, the norms of the day called for segregation of public transportation and evidently the owners of the line determined that the only practical means of segregation was to provide for separate compartments on the same car. This practice was codified under Texas law in 1907 when the 1890 law was extended to interurbans for the first time.

²³*DMN*, Feb. 11, 1901.

²⁴*DMN*, Apr. 30, 1901, May 2, 1901,

²⁵*Denison Herald Democrat*, Jan. 20, 2016. *FWT*, Apr. 26, 1903. The pavilion at Lake Erie opened in June 1903. *DMN*, June 12, 1903. See also *DMN*, April 10, 1904, May 5, 1905.

²⁶*DMN*, Jan. 12, 1902. The price was said to be \$110,000. *FWMR*, Jan. 12, 1902.

²⁷*DMN*, Sept. 29, 1901.

²⁸*FWMR*, Apr. 3, 1902.

²⁹*DMN*, July 7, 1902. Map

³⁰*DMN*, Mar. 2, 1902, Apr. 30, 1902, June 17, 1902, June 18, 1902, June 19, 1902, July 1, 1902. *FWMR*, June 17, 1902, June 18, 1902, June 19, 1902.

³¹*DDTH*, July 6, 1902. *DMN*, July 7, 1902, July 23, 1902. *FWT*, July 29, 1902.

³²*DMN*, Oct. 16, 1902, Nov. 11, 1902, Mar. 5, 1905. The line was “said to be a gold mine, paying 20 per cent per annum,” *FWT*, Sept. 16, 1905.

³³*DMN*, Dec. 12, 1902, Mar. 18, 1903, Nov. 6, 1906. *FWT*, Mar. 17, 1903, Sept. 13, 1905, Sept. 14, 1905. Stone & Webster paid \$2,000,000 to the Cleveland investors who built the line. See also Stone & Webster annual report (1914), p.24.

³⁴*DMN*, Aug. 3, 1905.

³⁵*DMN*, Apr. 21, 1907, Mar. 2, 1908, Apr. 24, 1908, June 24, 1908, June 27, 1908. *Worley’s Street Map of Greater Dallas*, 1909. *The Interurban Guide of Dallas*, published by The Interurban Guide Co., Dallas, Texas (July 13, 1913).

³⁶*DMN*, June 28, 1908, Feb. 23, 1909. A detailed description of the line and powerhouse can be found in *Electric Railway Journal*, Vol. 32, June 6, 1908, p.374.

³⁷*FWT*, Nov. 11, 1908. *FWST*, Feb. 28, 1910, Mar. 9, 1911, Mar. 18, 1911, Feb. 23, 1912, Sept. 1, 1912. *DMN*, Nov. 13, 1908, Dec. 15, 1908, Mar. 11, 1911, June 27, 1911, June 28, 1911, Mar. 5, 1912, Aug. 30, 1912. See also Robert A. Griffith, “An Electrifying Idea in Johnson County, Texas,” unpublished manuscript, revised Feb. 28, 2009, accessed on January 10, 2018 at <http://burlesonhistory.com/An%20Electrifying%20Idea.pdf>.

³⁸*DMN*, Aug. 11, 1911, Oct. 21, 1911. The Dallas Southern Traction Company was authorized to construct, maintain and operate an interurban line between Dallas, Waxahachie and Ennis.

³⁹*DMN*, June 22, 1911, Feb. 28, 1912.

⁴⁰*DMN*, Sept. 27, 1911, July 5, 1912, Sept. 21, 1912, Sept. 28, 1912, Oct. 2, 1912, Oct. 4, 1912.

⁴¹*DMN*, Sept. 27, 1913, Sept. 30, 1913, Oct. 1, 1913, Oct. 19, 1913.

⁴²“Opening Interurban Terminal Station, September 1st 1916,” brochure published by the Northern Texas Traction Company, Southern Texas Traction Company, and Texas Traction Company, accessed at Dallas Public Library. See also “Interurban Building,” Dallas Landmark Commission, Landmark Nomination Form (Nov. 10, 1999) and *DMN*, May 29, 1913, Jan. 1, 1916, Jan. 19, 1916, July 2, 1916, Aug. 24, 1916.

⁴³*DMN*, Feb. 9, 1916, May 25, 1916, Spt. 28, 1917, Sept. 30, 1917, Sept. 23, 1917, Oct. 13, 1917. *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 6, 1916, Sept. 23, 1917 (hereafter cited as *FWST*). See also, “Strickland Lines Consolidate,” *Electric Railway Journal* (Feb. 3, 1917), p.225, and “Dallas Railway Company,” in *Texans and Their State, A Newspaper Reference Work* (Fort Worth: The Texas Biographical Association [1917]), p.105.

⁴⁴*The Interurban Guide of Dallas*, published by The Interurban Guide Co., Dallas, Texas (July 13, 1913). *DMN*, August 6, 1919.

⁴⁵*DMN*, Jan. 16, 1921.

⁴⁶*DMN*, May 29, 1910, June 5, 1910, May 17, 1913, Dec. 16, 1920, June 14, 1922, Oct. 14, 1923, Oct. 12, 1924.

⁴⁷*DMN*, Nov. 29, 1923, Jan. 11, 1924, June 13, 1924, Oct. 12, 1924, Oct. 11, 1925.

⁴⁸*DMN*, Feb. 23, 1924, Sept. 5, 1924, Oct. 1, 1924, Oct. 3, 1924, Oct. 12, 1924. See also Rodney J. Walter, M.A., “A Brief History of the Interurban Railway in Denton, Texas,” *The Denton Review* (The Historical Society of Denton County, Fall 1992), p. 3.

⁴⁹*DMN*, Apr. 15, 1925.

⁵⁰“The Crimson Limited,” brochure published by the Northern Texas Traction Company (n.d., circa 1925), from Jeff Dunn Collection; *A Texas Idea and How It was Put Across* (Stone & Webster, Inc., Boston, 1925); Hilton and Due, *The Electric Interurban Railways in America*, 377. *DMN*, Oct. 23, 1924, Oct. 12, 1927. *FWST*, Nov. 2, 1927, June 6, 1928.

⁵¹*DMN*, January 10, 1931, May 1, 1931, August 23, 1932, Nov. 25, 1934, Dec. 25, 1934, Jan. 1, 1941, Feb. 5, 1941, *FWST*, Dec. 28, 1935. Hilton and Due, *The Electric Interurban Railways in America*, 377.

⁵²*DMN*, April 11, 1948, April 13, 1928, April 18, 1948, April 21, 1948, July 4, 1948, December 28, 1948, January 1, 1949. Hilton and Due, *The Electric Interurban Railways in America*, 3-4. The Texas Electric Railway Company began operating a bus service between Dallas and Waco in 1949 under the name “Texas Electric Bus Lines.” The Interurban Building constructed in 1916 had been shared by buses and interurbans prior to the last run of the interurban in December 1948, but was known as the Union Bus Terminal by 1949. *DMN*, January 1, 1949.

Uncle Sam, Schoolmaster The WPA Nursery Schools in Dallas

BY COURTNEY WELCH

*I*t is well known that the Great Depression brought financial and emotional hardship for millions and that the New Deal programs that were created sought to provide relief and recovery for the unemployed. But what was done for the children of the Depression? Children were not spared the effects of the Great Depression, and the federal efforts to assist them are not generally known or often left out of the scholarship about the New Deal. Their need was great and ever-growing: for example, in October 1933 there were approximately “5,184,272 children under 16 years of age in 3,134,272 families on relief which translated into 42 percent of this demographic. By June 1934 this number had grown to 7,000,000 children in 3,835,000 families.”¹

One major program to aid young children and their parents was the Emergency Nursery School Project, nicknamed the Nursery Project,

which was administered by the Federal Emergency Recovery Administration (FERA) from 1933–1935 and then by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) from 1935–1943. Although technically an educational enterprise, the Nursery Project was in reality a social relief action. The program sought not only to address children being ill-nourished but also their absence of safety, rest, and play—focusing on reestablishing the necessity of having a childhood during this economic depression.

In order to aid this helpless population, Harry Hopkins, head of the FERA and later the WPA, approved 3,000 federal nursery schools; this marked an unprecedented federal intervention into the curriculum development of nursery schools and an expansion of its social service care mission. Between 1933 and 1943, the Nursery Project ensured that low income children between

the ages of 2 and 4 received nourishing meals, medical attention, and a foundation in personal and social skills. These nursery schools had representation in all 48 states and provided relief and educational programs to approximately 44,000 to 72,000 children annually, depending on the year.²

Local administrators chose to emphasize the educational benefits of the nursery project in order to justify hiring thousands of teachers. These nursery schools not only provided employment for teachers but also for cooks, janitors, house cleaners, and handy-men.³ Teachers in the nursery school classroom recognized that without good mental and physical health the children had no real chance of achieving any lasting learning.⁴ In a 1938 article published in the *Progressive Education* magazine, the Nursery Project's National Director, Grace Langdon, wrote that "by its very nature the nursery school under the relief set-up is essentially a community service agency."⁵ Subsequent records of the WPA were supportive of Director Langdon's assessment, stating that the nursery schools typically rated nutrition, play, rest, and health care as higher priorities than educational instruction, thereby having the program officially reclassified as part of its public activities division.⁶ Though funded at \$6 million, by 1938 the Nursery Project had spent close to \$10.7 million nationally.⁷

The Nursery Project first appeared in Texas in 1934. Waco and Austin were the first cities chosen, but the nursery school project quickly spread to other counties across Texas. Located in thirty-nine cities and organized by nine districts, the nursery schools had a segregated representation of white, African-American, and Hispanic schools. But whereas white nursery schools existed in all districts, African-American nursery schools were only represented in six districts and Hispanic nursery schools in only two districts. District Four, which included Dallas nursery schools, was one of the two districts that had a representative school for each ethnicity.⁸ The following case study of WPA nursery schools in Dallas illustrates the need for these social services

as well as the successes and challenges of re-establishing the nutritional, physical, and mental health of these children.

In Dallas, the district supervisor for the WPA nursery schools was Mary Lillian Leatherwood and the assistant director was Mabel B. Pitts.⁹ They held authority over all the schools participating in the Nursery Project. The white nursery schools were named as the Dallas White Nursery School and Compton Citadel Nursery School and were located at 3701 Jamaica Street and 2112 Browder Street respectively. According to the WPA District Four Nursery School Project Report, the Dallas White Nursery School was opened in September 1940 in a building formerly occupied by the WPA Housekeeping Aide Project. Thirty-eight needy children were enrolled the first week. The equipment for the project was created by the local Toy Project, and the upstairs floor provided an ideal place for the sleep room. The Dallas Day Nursery and Infant Welfare Association established the Infant Welfare Clinic #5 in one of the upstairs rooms of the building, and weekly clinics were held for all needy pre-school children in the district. A similar clinic was established at the Compton Citadel Nursery School and on average would serve dozens of children and parents each week.¹⁰

In the fall of 1940, the Salvation Army moved its nursery school from a rented building to a well-equipped cottage on the property of the Compton Citadel. This new building was donated to the Salvation Army by Judge Charles Volantus Compton and his daughter, Mrs. Albert Warner. Judge Compton was a Dallas civic leader involved in the YMCA, Salvation Army, and the Dallas Bar Association, as well as a voice for prison reform in Texas.¹¹ The nursery school was renamed the Compton Citadel Nursery School. The school building was one of two cottages that Compton financed; the second structure was built for the Salvation Army officers.¹²

The African-American and Mexican nursery schools were classified as the Dallas Negro Nursery School and the Dallas Mexican Nursery

School and were located at 2822 Foreman and at 2011 Cedar Springs respectively.¹³ The Dallas Negro Nursery School was opened in December 1940 due to the support and persuasion of Professor Thomas William Pratt, instructor at PrairieView State Normal College, and Reverend Cornelius Cleophas Choice of Bethlehem Baptist Church. Reverend Choice provided the space necessary for the nursery school in his church. A January 25, 1941, article in the *Dallas Express* reported that “the welfare department furnished equipment and food, while the WPA pays the salaries of the workers. The school was at first equipped to take care of only sixty children and six workers but now the class size has doubled.”¹⁴

The Dallas Mexican Nursery School was not completed until December 1941, and according to the WPA District Four monthly report, “the building [was] a six room residence . . . [in which] the dining room is furnished with ivory tables and ivory chairs. The seats of the chairs are painted yellow, red and green. The lockers and playroom shelves are ivory outside and have fiesta colors inside.”¹⁵ The Nursery Project, like other WPA projects, was segregated. The photographs and brief records that survived indicate that the routine and activities were the same, but the student to teacher ratio was greater in African-American and Mexican nursery schools. Article coverage in *The Dallas Morning News* favored human interest stories about the white nursery schools, whereas the African-American and Mexican nursery school were often used as footnotes in the various articles.

In order to create consistency, each district was required to provide training for new and returning teachers. District Four reported that the nursery school manager conducted weekly training conferences for the staff members of the various nursery schools. The most popular topics emphasized in training related to child behavior and strategies on how to engage the students through storytelling and play. The Head Teacher was required to have previous teaching and

supervisory experience in order to set the training curriculum and she conducted the sessions. According to the 1940 *Bulletin on Emergency Nursery Schools*, the requirements for nursery school teachers were advertised as:

They should be young women who are interested in young children, who are able to endure taxing activity without fatigue, and not subject to frequent colds which would necessitate absence from school . . . some of the qualities desirable in a nursery teacher are: patience and self-control, clear, unhurried speech, modulated voice, steady nerves, attractive appearance, ability to laugh with the children, adaptability and a sense of fair play.¹⁶

In 1940 the Texas Region Four report stated that 74 percent of the WPA teachers had had previous teaching experience and welcomed the opportunity to work on class management and curriculum concerns.¹⁷ At the August 1940 Dallas meeting, all the teachers present were provided with educational booklets that included stories and activities that would help to improve and strengthen the story periods of the day.¹⁸ By October 1940 the District Four nursery training sessions were regularly held at the Dallas Compton Citadel Nursery School. The Nursery School Project provided “parenting” classes in which the teachers would cover similar topics. In a letter to Mrs. Leatherwood, Mrs. Nell Smith, mother of a three-year-old nursery school child, wrote that “the mother’s group . . . had changed her child guidance techniques . . . She had always thought if she would scream at her child, that it would be easier to manage the situation. After observing the calm, unemotional behavior of the teachers in the nursery school, and the absence of “don’ts,” she had seen how much easier it was to guide her child.”¹⁹

According to the *WPA of Texas Nursery School Manual*, the nursery schools were to be open and available seven hours a day, five days a week, except on certain holidays. In order to help with



First thing after arrival at nursery school in the morning, inspection teacher Elizabeth Mumford is pictured giving a spoonful of cod liver oil to Jerry Harris, while Judith Keifer awaits her turn. Cod liver oil was known to strengthen the immune system and provide vitamins D and A often missing from the children’s diets.

the child’s development, each nursery school was to follow a specific schedule of daily activities.²⁰ The activities and the time allotted for them were firmly set by the WPA guidelines in order for the children to be confident in moving from one activity to another.²¹ According to the *WPA Texas Nursery School Manual*, a typical daily schedule started at either 7:30 or 8:00 A.M., and the activities were arranged as follows:

- Morning Inspection
- Dressing and Toileting
- Outdoor play period for large muscle development
- Mid-morning lunch, including cod liver oil
- Indoor play period for small muscle development
- Music and story hour for aesthetic development
- Noonday meal
- Afternoon rest
- Mid- Afternoon lunch
- Free-play period²²

The morning inspection was essential in identifying children that were in a health-related crisis and was the primary method of checking the children’s health. This inspection was strictly adhered to since the *WPA of Texas Nursery School Manual* maintained that “no child will be admitted to a Works Progress Administration Nursery school until a licensed physician has made a through physical examination.”²³ A trained nurse or teacher assessed each child’s nose, throat, eyes, and skin for any sign of disease or malady each morning. Since these children often did not have the opportunity to be seen by a doctor or dentist, Director Langdon encouraged local doctors and dentists to donate their services in the nursery school and clinics.²⁴

Within a two-week period in 1940, the WPA reported that nearly a quarter million examinations and treatments were performed in nationally WPA-operated medical or dental clinics and



Activities at the WPA Nursery Schools were documented by a photographer in April 1940. This photo is of children at the Negro School eating a snack. The children were fed four times a day.

nursery schools throughout the United States. These WPA nursery schools provided avenues for these children to receive vaccinations for small pox and diphtheria. Regionally, the Dallas Day Nursery and Infant Care Association reported in a *Dallas Morning News* article that within the first nine months of 1940, the Dallas WPA Nurseries had 500 children enrolled and that the nursery workers maintained five clinics which had completed 5,050 clinic visits and 11,960 nursing home visits.²⁵ By 1942, the Nursery Project reported that nationally its facilities had conducted 82,500 tests for specific diseases and 17,000 immunization treatments.²⁶ Between December 15, 1941, and January 16, 1942, the Dallas nursery schools provided 258 complete physical exams, including dental checks, skin tests, and vaccinations.²⁷

Administration of daily doses of cod liver oil was another attempt to reestablish good health among the nursery school children. Cod liver oil was commonly known to help prevent rickets and strengthen the immune system. Since many of the nursery school children were from families

that were food insecure, a daily dose of cod liver oil provided a needed and immediate substitute for the vitamin D and A rich foods missing from their diet. Because some physicians also asserted that this treatment provided improvement to depressive or anxious moods, nursery teachers believed it would have a calming effect on the children if given at the beginning of the day.

Nursery school teachers constantly assessed the health needs of their students, identifying hunger and the lack of nutrition. Daily nursery school meals included many of the staple nutritious foods to which impoverished families had limited access. The children were fed four times a day starting with breakfast, then the mid-morning meal and a noonday meal, ending with the mid-afternoon meal. These mid-time meals were more than snacks and required a kitchen staff for the entire day. For example, breakfast typically began with milk or orange juice and grain cereal. By the noon and mid-afternoon meals, children had been provided access to eat meat, fish, fruits and vegetables.²⁸ WPA guidelines

mandated that the daily menu for the nursery school child should include all of the following:

- Milk – one quart if possible
- Cereals – part whole grain
- Orange juice or tomato juice
- Fruit in addition to orange or tomato juice
- Vegetables – two daily, one root and one green (serve vegetable raw frequently)
- Potatoes
- Eggs, especially the yolk, or liver, lean beef or fish
- Butter
- Cod liver oil²⁹

After morning meals the teachers would instruct and often introduce the children to tooth brushing methods. In many cases, the children had never owned a toothbrush let alone seen a dentist, so along with establishing nutritional habits, instructions on how and why to brush teeth were explained and encouraged.

On October 15, 1940, Ruth Cox, manager of the Dallas White Nursery school, and lead teacher Audrey Buford gave a short talk on the nursery school routine to the Dallas Mother's group to discuss their children's reactions to the nursery school. Several of the mothers remarked that "their children who had never used a fork, came home the first day they had attended nursery school and asked to be given a fork for the evening meal."³⁰ The nursery school experience exposed these children to the daily uses of etiquette that would begin to socialize them to the common expectations of food utensils and consumption. Another consequence of the children's nursery school experience which was noted several times in the various monthly reports was that the children insisted on their families saying grace before the meal, mimicking what occurred before meals at the nursery schools. Even though mealtime prayers were not a required WPA instruction, it became a common practice. One story recounted in the December 15, 1941, report that

David, a three-year-old boy enrolled in the Dallas Negro Nursery School [who] now



David Saunders combs his hair while David Crumby brushes his teeth at the Dallas White Nursery School. Many children had never owned a toothbrush or seen a dentist.

required his family to sing grace with his family. . . [therefore] they stand by their chairs with folded hands just as David does at nursery school. While singing grace at supper one night, his nine year old sister sat down. David stopped singing immediately and said "She's sittin' down God."³¹

Along with poor nutrition, these children often suffered from sleep deprivation. Many nursery school children shared sleeping arrangements at home with siblings and family members. Therefore a two-hour nap time became commonly and strictly administered at nursery school. Shades were drawn and toys were put away to make room for the cots or mats which were provided to these children by the federal government.³² Each child not only received a play mat or cot of their very own, but the nursery school staff would make sure that each child was given two sets of one-piece striped coveralls that would be their uniform at nursery school.

These uniforms were sewn by local Dallas women employed by the WPA Dallas Sewing Welfare Program. The sewing project was



Sallie Joe Cox joins other children in “singing grace” before the meal at the Dallas White Nursery School. Although not required, saying grace before eating became a common practice.

classified as a welfare project, and in the eight years in which it existed, the national WPA program produced 382,800,000 garments for men, women, and children, and 117,800,000 household articles. Within each state the work was organized as a state-wide project under the direction of various supervisors.³³ Dallas District Four supervisor Grace E. Williams ran the sewing project out of the 15th and 17th floor of the Allen Building on 400 South Poydras Street. This segregated project had white seamstresses working on the 15th floor and any worker of color working on the 17th floor. These women worked in two shifts from 6:45 A.M. to 3:15 P.M. and from 3:30 P.M. to 11:45 P.M. with thirty minutes off for a lunch break. They typically earned \$35 a month. By 1939 the Dallas District 4 sewing project employed 2,694 women and ran 480 machines.³⁴

The Great Depression deprived children of security, nutrition, and the normal carefree elements of play. The importance of play was a burgeoning educational theory that was taking root in the child development curriculum of the

1930s. Pre-school pedagogy had begun to emphasize the educational value of play, which in many cases was a new theory to inexperienced teachers. The Nursery Project served as an advocate toward the encouragement of playtime. Focusing on this development “of the need for sense experience, the need for motor skills, the need for vocal expression, the need for social experience and the need for creative effort . . . [therefore activities] such as exercise curiosity, running, climbing, pushing, pulling, and learning to get along with others” was strongly encouraged in the children’s indoor and outdoor play.³⁵ To encourage the social indoor play, appropriate toys were required, so the WPA created local Toy Loan Centers that would not only serve the nursery schools but the community at large.

The Toy Centers were financed and administered out of the WPA Recreation program budget. Workers were hired to build, paint, sew and create toys for both the general public and the play programs at the nursery schools. These Toy Centers operated much like



Children at the Nursery Schools took naps each afternoon. Because many children suffered from sleep deprivation, a two-hour nap time was strictly administered.

public libraries in which children could “check-out” a toy for a week’s time and then return it for another. Normalizing play through these Toy Centers encouraged the growth of creativity and imagination. The Dallas nursery schools were served by the West Dallas Toy Center located at 1109 West Commerce Street and run by Audrey Hale. From September 16 to October 15, 1940, the West Dallas Toy Center had 1,318 borrowers, which was the second highest of the five other Texas Toy Centers.³⁶ There is no evidence that the Toy Centers were segregated but were supportive of the local community needs. Testimony given by West Dallas Toy Center Director Hale in her October 1941 report indicated that she

has always deplored the fact that most of our toys, the playhouse and craft material were for girls and there was so little to attract the boys. This condition has been an unfortunate one because we not only have many more boys than girls, but our boys have much more leisure time to get into mischief. . . . But now thanks to the efforts of Judge Rawlins and the

generosity of Mr. B. F. Payne, a local oil man, we have a never ending source of interest and occupation for our boys in the craft shop.³⁷

From the start of the administration of the public activities programs, the WPA followed a demonstration policy method. Specifically, when establishing a nursery school, the local directors and staff would emphasize to the community the usefulness of this program, in order to prepare the community for the time when the WPA’s financial responsibility would wane. The 1943 final report on the WPA programs indicated that when the federal money ended, “the local community [would] have a chance to decide whether it wishe[d] to have public nursery schools; if so, it should increase its contributions every year and be prepared to take over the work entirely when the WPA aid is withdrawn.”³⁸ From its inception the federal intent for this project was to provide these social services on an emergency basis with the hope that the local communities would assume the responsibility of



After inspection each morning, children removed their clothes and put on their nursery school clothes for the day. The one-piece striped coveralls were sewn by local Dallas women in the WPA Dallas Sewing Welfare Program. The teachers pictured assisting their students are Audrey Buford and Ruth Cox.

its continuation. By January 1942, national enrollment in the Nursery Project had decreased to 35,229 children, with Texas having the largest single enrollment of 2,739 children.³⁹

With federal expenditures being redirected to the war effort, the grave problem facing the WPA nurseries was the imminent federal discontinuance of furnishing surplus commodities to these nurseries. In order to raise funds, the Dallas WPA nursery schools held open-house weeks in which community leaders were invited to visit the schools and encouraged to become financial benefactors that could replace the WPA commitment.⁴⁰ According to E. L. Bale, the president of the Dallas Day Nursery Association, if there was no financial replacement for the WPA, then it “simply [meant] that we will have to cut down on the number of children we care for.”⁴¹ To further encourage more community involvement, the Dallas Day Nursery Association in conjunction with the WPA put ads in *The*

Dallas Morning News for volunteers to apply for the position of nursery worker. The Association promised immediate training and employment. In September 1942, the Dallas WPA free training course was limited to fifty people and lasted for five weeks. After the completion of training, each participant would be required to give at least one day’s work to the nursery schools along with any war work that they had previously committed to performing.⁴² Due to the length of the training and assurance of only one work day a week, the number of applicants was low. The survival of the Nursery Project mandated that it had to redefine itself.

In order to continue the Nursery Project, the federal government creatively authorized child care service grants under the passage of the 1941 Defense Public Works Law, otherwise known as the Lanham Act. The Lanham Act made available \$300 million for the expansion and continuation of educational and health facilities needed in local

communities because of the war effort.⁴³ Between 1943 and 1946, the federal government approved \$52 million in grants, and at its peak in 1944, there were 3,102 federally subsidized childcare centers enrolling 130,000 children. This act intended to create community facilities in war-impacted areas, which by 1943 would include childcare for women working for the war effort. The Lanham Act did not specifically include child care facilities as a service necessary for war work; therefore, the Federal Works Agency (FWA), parent agency of the WPA, suggested that nursery school operators needed to stress that the childcare centers supported working mothers which in turn would strengthen the defense industry.

Although the U.S. entry into World War II provided unprecedented employment opportunities, the federal government was reluctant to recruit and employ large numbers of mothers with small children due to the lack of childcare. Even though the issue of childcare was concerning, the need for war production workers was greater. During the first five months of 1942, 3,477 Dallas women were placed in regular employment, averaging almost 700 a month. This monthly average increased to almost 800 during the summer of 1942 when 2,387 more women became involved in war work. The majority of these Dallas women had worked in the WPA sewing projects, and now the war department had reassigned these workers to produce items such as tents, blankets, knapsacks, and canteen covers as well as clothing for the war effort.⁴⁴

By April 1, 1943, the Dallas WPA nursery schools cared for 600 children. The Dallas Board of Education proposed in the spring of 1943 that under the provision of the Lanham Act, the nursery schools could be funded by a local sponsoring agency and the federal government would match these funds. In 1943 the Dallas Director of Working Mothers, Thelma Whalen, announced that five former WPA nurseries would be reopened because of a \$39,000 grant received from the Lanham Act fund. Along with

these five nurseries, the grant money would also reopen Avion Village, which was located in the North American Aviation area in Grand Prairie, Texas. Avion Village was not only a site for a WPA nursery school but also a location for WPA housing for impoverished and displaced Texans. In order to measure the local community's possible financial support, Julius Dorsey, superintendent of Dallas public schools, conducted a survey in the neighborhoods where the WPA nurseries were located to determine if the parents would be now able to pay a fee of \$2.75 a week for the care of their children.⁴⁵ The majority of parents surveyed claimed that because of their steady war work they were able to pledge the financial commitment if it became necessary.

Fred M. Lange, executive secretary of the local Dallas charity, War Chest of Dallas County, wrote a *Dallas Morning News* editorial in January 1943 pledging additional community support for more nursery schools, stating that he and others were committed to the protection of children during wartime because "mothers of small children take jobs in industry in answer to the call for more workers, adequate facilities and finances must be secured . . . it is for this reason that the War Chest has taken steps to open new nurseries. The cost of equipping these units and providing necessary supervision is a community responsibility."⁴⁶

Ultimately the federal government realized that the welfare of young children of working mothers was a vital concern for the good of the war effort. Women having to leave war work or job hopping because of the needs of childcare would destabilize the labor force. In order to keep mothers with young children in war work, the Dallas Office of Civilian Defense created in 1943 the Working Mothers' Center, which was located at 1416 Young Street. The Center's purpose was to provide care and support for the mothers and continue fundraising efforts for the various nursery schools. Dr. Woods, the Dallas board president of the Child Guidance Clinic, stated that "the value of this service cannot be overestimated both from the stand point of the



Teacher Ruth Cox is photographed playing with her students on an outdoor swing set. Both indoor and outdoor play were viewed as critical to a child's educational experience.

child's welfare, happiness, and future service to the community, and in easing the mother's mind so she can devote her best efforts to her war job."⁴⁷ Overall wartime childcare programs could be found in 635 communities across the nation. Hours of operation varied among the centers, but 70 percent accommodated factory schedules by staying open 24 hours a day, six days a week. In 1944, these programs had a national enrollment of 52,440 preschoolers.⁴⁸

So what in the end did the Nursery Project accomplish? This Dallas case study illustrates that the creation of the Federal Nursery School Project was a social relief experiment that stimulated popular demands for the enlargement and extension of state and local educational and childcare services, as well as leaving an indelible mark on the study of child development. In the WPA nursery schools, the absence of mandated specific educational content gave the teachers greater freedom and opportunity to adjust their training and activities to the needs of the children in their care. This concentrated effort to provide food, structure, and medical care to Dallas's neediest children did not reach all who had need

due to racial bias or financial constraints, but it was a groundbreaking federal attempt to include children as a more visible part of public policy. The WPA Nursery Project demonstrated its value as an efficient and beneficial mode of childcare and social development that forced a federal response during wartime to continue the benefits of this childcare. In the end, through the continuation of funding from local, state and national levels, Dallas residents were provided with resources that would improve the lives of their children and would allow parents the peace of mind regarding the care of their children in order to participate in war work which led to a consistent war work force and child development opportunities. The Great Depression had devastated Americans during the 1930s and clearly shaped the lives of its children. A lasting legacy for children enrolled in the Nursery Project was that they were the first generation to experience a government that actively recognized a federal responsibility for protecting, providing, and shaping the lives of the nation's youngest citizens in re-establishing the right to childhood. **L**

NOTES

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Dorothy [Parker] Does Dallas

BY FRANK JACKSON

*D*orothy Parker's literary career was largely bi-coastal. A renowned member of the New York literati, she eventually heeded the siren call of Hollywood money and migrated to the left coast. Dallas and the rest of flyover country was not part of her habitat, but eventually she paid a visit, albeit not till 1949 when she was 56 years old.

Born in 1893, Parker published her first poem in *Vanity Fair* in 1914. She also wrote for *Vogue* and *The New Yorker*. To this day, long after the triumph of designer eyewear, she is still remembered for the couplet "Men seldom make passes/At girls who were glasses."

During the 1920s, she was one of the core figures of the Algonquin Round Table, an informal club of publishing and theatre people (notably, Charles MacArthur, Alexander

Woolcott, Robert Benchley, Heywood Broun, and George S. Kaufman). The group met regularly at the Algonquin Hotel, still in business at 59 West 44th Street in Manhattan, and an official New York City Historic Landmark.

For the most part, Parker's literary output consisted of short stories and poems, plus book and theatre reviews that were arguably more entertaining than their subject matter. After Parker moved to Hollywood, she worked on a number of screenplays, credited or otherwise, for top directors. Among the better known films were Alfred Hitchcock's *Saboteur*, Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, William Wellman's *A Star Is Born*, and William Wyler's *The Little Foxes*. Before her visit to Dallas, she was nominated (with Frank Cavett) for an Oscar for Best Original Story for the 1947 movie *Smash-Up*,



In this advance publicity photo, Ross Evans and Dorothy Parker are pictured, with their dog Flic, at their home at the Chateau Marmont on Sunset Blvd. in Hollywood.

the Story of a Woman. Susan Hayward, in the title role, received a nomination for Best Actress.²

Much less celebrated were Parker's efforts as a playwright, but she co-authored five plays. Four were produced, but none was a hit. *The Coast of Illyria*, written in 1948, was her first attempt at a play in twenty-five years. Co-written with Ross Evans, her most recent lover, the play brought her to Dallas in the spring of 1949.

Evans' contribution was more as a researcher than a writer, but he was young, handsome, and a heavy drinker—a type favored by Parker. An ambitious young man (a radio announcer and former English major), he likely figured out that being Dorothy Parker's collaborator/escort was a pretty good career move. Their relationship is reminiscent of the William Holden-Gloria Swanson partnership in *Sunset Boulevard*. Coincidentally, that classic film was in preparation by writer/director Billy Wilder in 1949.

Whether Evans or Parker came up with the name of the play, the reference was more literary than geographic. The coast of Illyria refers to the northwest Balkan peninsula on the Adriatic coast; more importantly, it refers to the area where Viola and Sebastian, the sibling protagonists of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, were shipwrecked. The counterparts of Viola and Sebastian were British authors/siblings Charles and Mary Lamb. They were never shipwrecked, but their lives were something of a train wreck.

The Lambs and the four other main characters in the play were Romantic Era writers, most of whom would be familiar to English majors. The most recognizable are the Lambs (who included *The Twelfth Night* in their widely read *Tales From Shakespeare*, sort of a proto-Cliff Notes for young people). Another character is Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose "Kubla Khan" (recited in part by Coleridge in the play) and "Rime

of the Ancient Mariner” were standard reading for high school English students. Somewhat less familiar today (the play takes place in an unspecified year early in the 19th century) are Thomas de Quincey, William Hazlitt, and George Dyer.

Much like the members of the Algonquin Round Table, the writers in the play gather regularly at the London home of Charles Lamb, who is taking care of Mary, his manic-depressive (or bipolar, if you prefer) sister. That diagnosis may be a bit mild, as Mary had been put away after murdering their mother.

Also like the members of the Round Table, the writers were fond of altered states of consciousness. Charles Lamb, for one, was fond of brandy—too fond, as he once authored an article called *Confessions of a Drunkard*.³

Opioids were also popular. Coleridge enjoyed laudanum (a derivative of opium) as well as alcohol. As for Thomas de Quincey, his best-known book is *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*.⁴

Obviously, opioid dependency is nothing new. Neither are shameless tell-all literary works. As Lamb says in the play, “It’s a filthy fashion, this race for publishing one’s degradations.”⁵

In short, “A more neurotic assortment of geniuses never shared a leg of mutton,” wrote *Dallas Morning News* arts critic John Rosenfield in his review.⁶ The names of a number of famed writers (William Wordsworth, Lord Byron and Robert Southey) are dropped during the play, but only the following are characters in the play. The characters and the actors who portrayed them in the Dallas debut of *The Coast of Illyria* were: Charles Lamb (1775-1834) – Wilson Brooks Mary Lamb (1764-1847) – Romola Robb George Dyer (1755-1841) – Harold Webster Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859) – John Hudson Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) – Edwin Whitner William Hazlitt (1778-1830) – Clinton Anderson

Few local theatregoers may recognize these performers after all these years, but at the bottom of the cast list, the minor role of Mr. Critten-

den was credited to an actor who was about to embark on a half-century of roles in movies and TV. Former paratrooper Jack Warden, then 28 years old, logged time in Dallas after studying acting during the late 1940s with the help of the G.I. Bill. He was nominated for Best Supporting Actor in 1976 for *Shampoo* and in 1979 for *Heaven Can Wait*. He was nominated for an Emmy award three times (twice for the lead role in *Crazy Like a Fox*) and won the award for portraying Chicago Bears coach George Halas in the TV movie *Brian’s Song*.⁷ During the Theatre ’49 season, he also played the lead role of Joseph Bently, a Victorian banker, in *Sting in the Tail*, a farce by Tom Purefoy.

The Coast of Illyria was produced as part of the season of Theatre ’49, the brainchild of Margo Jones, whose advocacy of regional theatre revolutionized the lively arts in Dallas. Starting in 1947 with her repertory group, Theatre ’47 (the number changed with the calendar year till her death in 1955), each season was a mixture of standards and premieres. Notably, one of the oldies in 1949 was *The Twelfth Night*.

Jones was intrigued by *The Coast of Illyria*, which she received on May 18, 1948, and scheduled it for a three-week run starting Monday, April 4, 1949, at the Gulf Oil Playhouse in Fair Park. Given Dorothy Parker’s reputation, her presence in Dallas attracted some attention. She and co-author Ross Evans arrived in Dallas on March 27 for rehearsals. They stayed at the Stoneleigh Hotel, where Margo Jones lived.

According to Brendan Gill, who wrote the introduction to her omnibus volume *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, she was “a writer whose robust and acid lucidities had been much feared and admired.”⁸ If locals were hoping to overhear her sling a few zingers, they were disappointed. According to an unnamed *Time* magazine correspondent:

Dorothy surprised the cast with her gentleness. With Evans, she fled the theatre between acts to avoid stares by the curious,



Cast members posed with the authors before the opening. Back row, left to right: Edwin Whitner (Samuel Coleridge), Clinton Anderson (William Hazlitt), Harold Webster (George Dyer), and Wilson Brooks (Charles Lamb); front row, left to right: John Hudson (Thomas deQuincey), Dorothy Parker, Ross Evans, and Romola Robb (Mary Lamb).

acknowledged compliments with a mild “Bless you.” Said one actress: “She’s sweet. She’s even shy. She’s a love.”⁹

While local theatregoers might have been disappointed by Parker’s reticence, the media reactions to her play were positive. In reviewing the April 12, 1949, performance, a *Variety* reviewer (identified only as Berg) said the play was “written with intelligence and good taste. The lines are sharp-edged and convincing.” He said it was “by far the best original script presented by Theatre ’49 to date.”¹⁰

Dallas Times Herald critic Clay Bailey called it

“a terrific play, which supplies a mounting series of excitement, dramatic as well as comical. . . . the movement of the opus is spirited, logical and completely convincing.”¹¹ In his *Dallas Morning News* review, John Rosenfield declared it “filled with literary substance and good theatre.” “The final walk-around by the actors,” he observed, “was an ovation and the cries for authors were universal and genuine.”¹²

Parker and Evans went back to Hollywood on April 8, 1949. They were likely in good spirits, as their contract called for 5 percent of the box office gross and local audiences were responding to the



This scene from the play featured Harold Webster, Frances Waller, Wilson Brooks, and Romola Robb.

play. Attendance varied from 112 to 198 during the play's run of 32 performances, including its April 4-23 opening and its subsequent run of May 16-June 4. An interesting sidebar is that the 199 seats in the facility (200 seats would have tripled the Actors' Equity payments) were donated by actress Jennifer Jones's (no relation to Margo) father, Phillip Ross Isley, who owned a chain of movie theaters.

Rosenfield was premature, however, when he said of the play, "It is hardly possible that its history will end where it started, on the Gulf Playhouse's tiny arena stage."¹³ Unfortunately, the initial exuberance faded and the reviewers had second thoughts. The wettest blanket was *New York Times* theatre critic Brooks Atkinson, described as "the Mr. Big of the drama-reviewing field" by Clay Bailey of the *Times Herald*.¹⁴

Atkinson was visiting Dallas while conducting a cross-country survey of regional theatres. He had visited Margo Jones two years before for Theatre '47 and raved about the operation. In 1949, he again had kind words for her. "Theatre '49 is a genuine artistic, economic and cultural success," he pronounced.¹⁵ He happened to be present for a performance of *The Coast of Illyria* and was less than enthusiastic about the play. He said the play was "an ordinary drama about some extraordinary people" and "an evening of ordinary theatre."¹⁶ He described the acting as "competent but not distinguished."

It would be a stretch to say that the play's subsequent descent into obscurity was the direct result of Mr. Big's opinions. Nevertheless, Atkinson's reviews were widely read and his discouraging words cast a pall over the play and its prospects for future productions.

John Rosenfield, writing as a stringer for the *New York Times*, dialed down his initial enthusiasm by opining that the play was "well cast within the limitations of a resident company" and later claimed that the production was too lugubrious,

that the play was "considerably more risible on paper than on Margo's stage."¹⁷ The production spotlighted "the groaning animadversions of assiduously unhappy poets was plainly written for sparkle and humor."¹⁸ Atkinson also noted the characters' "egotistical melancholy."¹⁹

Had *The Coast of Illyria* become a hit, the fact that it was first performed in Dallas might have made for an interesting footnote in American theatre. Despite the best efforts of Parker's agent, the renowned Leland Hayward, potential Broadway and London productions fell through as the play went through a number of revisions and name changes.

The play was scheduled to be performed at the Edinburgh Festival of Music and Drama. Now better known as the Edinburgh International Festival, the event, like Margo Jones' Theatre '49, was in its third year. Famed British actress Flora Robson (later Dame Flora Robson) was lined up to play Mary Lamb but dropped out after the play went through too many revisions. Producer Henry Sherek begged off, lamenting that he could not interest a "first class" director in the play. Sherek decided to sub *The Man in the Raincoat* by Peter Ustinov. Ustinov is a celebrated figure in theatre and film, but this play was not one of his more celebrated efforts. (The festival was noteworthy, however, for the premiere of *The Cocktail Party* by T.S. Eliot).

We cannot say that if *The Coast of Illyria* had been performed in Edinburgh, London, or New York, it would have caught on and become an international hit. The University of Iowa Press published the play in 1990, and a theatre group at Ohio State University put on a production in 2015, so it is not quite a "lost" play. It just isn't "found" very often.

In the years after the Dallas debut, Parker asserted, "*Coast* was just plain silly. It was so full of atmosphere that there was nothing else in it. Nothing happened at all, nothing whatever."²⁰ Of

course, “nothing whatever” happened in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, which premiered less than three years later, and is now a classic.

So *The Coast of Illyria* had other problems. The play might have enthralled some English professors, but that is nowhere near enough of an audience to sustain a play for any length of time. Even John Rosenfield noted that “the appeal of both characters and dialogue is fundamentally literary and could be lost on a heterogenous audience.”²¹

Despite Parker’s astuteness as a theatre critic, success as a playwright was the one frustration in her literary endeavors. In an interview that appeared in the Summer 1956 issue of *The Paris Review*, she stated, “I’d like to do a play more than anything. First night is the most exciting thing in the world. It’s wonderful to hear your words spoken.”²² She had surely witnessed it firsthand while reviewing Broadway plays and couldn’t help but note that her efforts, whether for Hollywood or print media, did not receive such instantaneous feedback.

Her sentiments were echoed by her co-author, Ross Evans. After the triumphant Dallas debut, Evans crowed, “We’ve tasted blood. We don’t want to do anything ever again except write for the theatre.”²³ As it turned out, he never did. After he broke up with Dorothy Parker in 1950, he became as obscure as the play he had co-authored.

Despite the post-Dallas disappointment, Dorothy Parker didn’t give up on the theatre. With Arnaud D’Usserau, she co-authored two more plays: *The Ladies of the Corridor* ran for 45 performances on Broadway in 1953, but *The Ice Age* (1955) was never produced. She never wrote another play. Perhaps she realized that if she hadn’t authored a hit by age 62, it wasn’t in the cards.

The Coast of Illyria hasn’t attracted a great deal of critical attention, but the autobiographical elements in the story have intrigued a few critics. Romola Robb, who portrayed the troubled Mary Lamb in the Dallas production, observed,

“When I worked with Parker, I kept thinking she saw herself in Mary Lamb.”²⁴ Some have noted that the play, with its themes of abandonment, loneliness, and self-medication was written in the wake of Parker’s divorce from Alan Campbell (she subsequently remarried him).

The themes reflect Parker’s Dickensian childhood. Her mother died when she was an infant and she was brought up by a strict father and stepmother and educated at a convent school. She was something of a lost soul seeking sanctuary inside a hard shell. “She was one of the wittiest people in the world and one of the saddest,” noted Brendan Gill.²⁵ Perhaps her fundamental pessimism was on display when she wrote the following line for Coleridge: “When we say the worst has happened, the gods reach for another thunderbolt.”²⁶ For emphasis, the line is repeated by Charles Lamb in Act 2.²⁷

Dorothy Parker died in 1967 at age 73. She had a pretty good run, considering her excessive consumption of alcohol, an occupational hazard for more than a few successful writers. Another trait she shared with writers is a congenital inability to manage money. Considering how much money she earned during her lifetime, Dorothy Parker’s estate was quite modest. Strangely, she left what she had to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She had never met him but admired him. After King was assassinated a year later, the estate was turned over to the NAACP, and the fate of her cremated remains was in limbo.

Ironically, the theme of abandonment continued long after she expired. Her ashes remained in the file cabinet drawer of an attorney for fifteen years in order to bypass the mortuary’s storage fees. Eventually, the NAACP created a memorial for her at their headquarters in Baltimore, and her ashes remain there today.

Maybe she hadn’t succeeded as a playwright, but she came up with a memorable exit line. The epitaph on her memorial plaque in Baltimore reads, “Please excuse my dust.” ■

NOTES

¹Originally published in the *New York World* on August 16, 1925.

²Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com).

³Originally published in 1813 in *The Philanthropist*, a British quarterly.

⁴Originally published in two installments in *London* magazine in 1821.

⁵Dorothy Parker and Ross Evans, *The Coast of Illyria*, a Play in Three Acts (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990), Act I, Scene 2, p. 99.

⁶*The Dallas Morning News*, April 5, 1949 (hereafter cited as *DMN*).

⁷Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com).

⁸*The Portable Dorothy Parker*, ed. Brendan Gill, Penguin (New York, 1976), p. xiv.

⁹*Time* magazine, April 18, 1949.

¹⁰*Variety*, April 13, 1949.

¹¹*Dallas Times Herald*, April 5, 1949 (hereafter cited as *DTH*).

¹²*DMN*, April 5, 1949.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*DTH*, April 13, 1949.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*New York Times* (hereafter cited as *NYT*), April 13, 1949.

¹⁷*NYT*, April 6, 1949.

¹⁸*DMN*, April 15, 1949.

¹⁹*NYT*, April 13, 1949.

²⁰Radio interview with Richard Lamparski, quoted in the Introduction to *The Coast of Illyria*.

²¹*NYT*, April 6, 1949.

²²Dorothy Parker interviewed by Marion Capron in *Writers at Work; the Paris Review Interviews*, ed. Malcolm Cowley, Viking Press (New York, 1959), 79.

²³*Time* magazine, April 18, 1949.

²⁴Introduction to *The Coast of Illyria*, p. 69.

²⁵*The Portable Dorothy Parker*, ed. Brendan Gill, Penguin (New York, 1976), xxvi.

²⁶*The Coast of Illyria*, Act I, Scene 2, p. 105.

²⁷*The Coast of Illyria*, Act II, p. 151.

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in North Central Texas

BY STEVEN R. BUTLER

“The Declaration of Independence does not say some men...it does not say all white men...it does not say all Gentiles...it does not say all Protestants...it says all men are created equal! If the American dream is to be a reality, the idea of white supremacy must come to an end now and ever more.”

—*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*
*speaking in Dallas, January 4, 1963*¹

*A*lthough history most closely associates him with cities such as Atlanta, Georgia; Washington, D.C.; Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma, Alabama; and Memphis, Tennessee—the place where an assassin took his life fifty years ago this past April—during Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s more than twelve-year tenure as America’s foremost civil rights leader, he traveled extensively delivering sermons, giving speeches, and imparting advice and encouragement to ordinary Americans and community leaders all over the United States, including the two principal cities

of North Central Texas—Dallas and Fort Worth.

The first of King’s five recorded visits to “Big D” occurred in 1956, a little more than four months following the start of the now legendary Montgomery bus boycott, which began in December 1955 after seamstress and NAACP secretary Rosa Parks, tired after a long day of work, refused to give up her seat to a white man on a segregated city bus. Rev. Caesar Arthur Walter Clark, an outspoken black clergyman and anti-segregationist in Dallas who had already “shocked Anglo leaders by . . . running for school

board,” invited the 27-seven-year-old minister of Montgomery’s Dexter Avenue Baptist Church to address the members of Clark’s own congregation. Whatever white Dallasites may have thought about the head of the controversial Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) coming to town to address members of the local African-American community seems to have gone unrecorded (neither *The Dallas Morning News* nor the *Times Herald* took any notice). Regardless, on Sunday, April 22, King took the pulpit of the Good Street Baptist Church, located on the southeast corner of Good and Bryan Streets, to deliver the annual “Youth Day” sermon. Although it appears the budding civil rights leader’s remarks are lost to history, a young photographer named R. C. Hickman, whose work regularly appeared in the *Star Post* and *Dallas Express*, Dallas’s two African-American newspapers, was on hand that day to capture the moment for posterity. From his vantage point a few steps away from the left side of the pulpit, Hickman’s camera captured an image of a dapper and remarkably youthful King, his head tilted slightly to one side, left hand resting on the Bible before him, speaking no doubt in his trademark melodious tones to Clark’s flock, while members of the choir, seated immediately behind him, listened intently (except for one distracted woman whose gaze was momentarily directed toward the photographer).²

Although King, accompanied by his wife, and also Reverend and Mrs. Ralph Abernathy, may have changed planes at Love Field a few months later while on his way to California to attend the national convention of the NAACP, it was not until the following year that he returned for the purpose of making a speech—this time at a much larger venue and also to a much more sizeable audience. Additionally, and no doubt on account of the success of the Montgomery bus boycott the previous year, on this occasion the white establishment of the city paid attention, with both *The Dallas Morning News* and *Times Herald* sending reporters to cover the event.

The reason for King’s second Dallas visit was

the fifty-second annual meeting of the National Baptist Sunday School and Baptist Training Union (BTU) Congress.³ Prior to the convention, the *Dallas Express* announced his coming and called attention to the fact that owing to the success of the Montgomery bus boycott, the Atlanta-born minister had “drawn world acclaim.” A head and shoulders photograph of the serious-looking young minister, located in the very top center of the paper’s front page, accompanied the announcement.⁴

King’s arrival in Dallas on Tuesday, June 18, 1957, came only three days after a visit to New York City, where the nascent civil rights leader had been named “Man of the Year” by the Utility Club and feted at the Waldorf Astoria,⁵ which was a far cry from the Hotel Lane on Flora Street, a much more modest establishment located on the northern edge of Dallas’s business district. After King and his good friend and fellow clergyman Ralph Abernathy had checked in, *Dallas Express* photographer Marion Butts captured an enduring image of the smiling young clergyman as proprietor Peter Lane warmly greeted him. When Lane took over the former Don Hotel in 1954, he and his wife had been photographed by R. C. Hickman celebrating with another distinguished guest, entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr.⁶ Apparently, Lane’s hotel was *the* place for well-known or well-placed African Americans to stay overnight in a city where at that time no white establishment would accept them as guests, no matter how prominent or how much money they might have in their pockets. King and Abernathy’s four days in Dallas were no doubt spent in the company of the more than 10,000 other Congress attendees, who crowded into the recently-built Dallas Memorial Auditorium each day. On Friday, designated “Booker T. Washington Day,” King was one of the keynote speakers. That evening he gave an address entitled “Facing the New Challenges of a New Age.”⁷

Following Abernathy’s introduction (the two men’s standard procedure throughout their long friendship), the always impeccably dressed

King, who had only five months earlier been chosen president of the newly-formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference—the flagship of the black civil rights movement in the United States—advanced to the lectern. Spread out before him, seated on the floor of the auditorium and in the balconies of the vast, “saucer-shaped”⁸ building (which was then so new that formal dedication ceremonies were still two months away), was a sea of welcoming faces, mostly black, numbering some ten or eleven thousand people in all. After spending the first few minutes articulating “his gratitude to his people and his God for the accomplishments gained in Alabama,” King launched into his speech, declaring prophetically, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth; I saw the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven!”⁹

Reports of King’s speech in Dallas’s two principal newspapers—the *Times Herald* and the *Morning News*—were noticeably dissimilar. During the hour-long address, reported *Times Herald* staff writer Reuben Noel, the “short, stocky minister” assured his audience that integration in states such as Texas where “Jim Crow” laws still separated the races was “inevitable,” asserting further that “to stand against it is to stand against a tidal wave.” Statutes, such as one that had recently been signed into law by Texas Governor Price Daniel, allowing local voters to decide the question of school district integration,¹⁰ were “merely delaying tactics by those who are attempting to hold on to a dying order.”¹¹ King observed further that in respect to the issue of integration, the states of the former Confederacy could be divided into three types: “The South of compliance, the South of wait-and-see, and the South of defiance.” Texas, he said, where there was neither total compliance nor “a courageous stand on segregation,” belonged in the middle category.¹² In conclusion, the stirring young speaker reminded his audience that, “There is a growing awareness that the technique of non-violence is the most effective method of overcoming this evil [segregation and racial injustice]

and will bring more permanent solutions to the problem.”¹³

In what appears to have been a deliberately conscious attempt to allay the fears and concerns of Dallas’s largely conservative white population, an unnamed writer for *The Dallas Morning News* reported that there were only 4,500 people in attendance at King’s speech—less than half the number cited by the *Times Herald*. Calling King “humorless and unsmiling,” the *News* reporter also said practically nothing about the up-and-coming civil rights leader’s comments regarding Southern white resistance to integration. Instead, he (or she) emphasized the articulate young minister’s call for African Americans to excel at whatever job they might hold. Echoing educator Booker T. Washington, who had made similar pronouncements decades earlier (with quotes such as “Excellence is to do a common thing in a common way”), Dr. King urged his audience to “Go out and do your utmost to be the best there is, regardless of race.”¹⁴

“If it falls to your lot to sweep streets, sweep them like Beethoven wrote music, like Shakespeare wrote poetry,” said King. Borrowing a line from Douglas Malloch’s 1926 poem “Be the Best of Whatever You Are,” he added: “If you can’t be a pine tree atop the hill, be a shrub in the valley, but be the very best shrub in that valley.” The *News* reported, too, that King urged his audience to love their enemies, saying, “We must live together without bitterness. . . . If we reflect on our past mistreatment and become bitter toward the white man, the new order will become a duplicate of the old order.”¹⁵

In early 1959, Vada Phillips Felder—the first African-American woman to earn a Masters of Religious Education at Brite College of the Bible in Fort Worth (now Brite Divinity School)—met the much younger Dr. King at a church education conference in Nashville, Tennessee. When Felder, who “shared his faith in the social gospel,” invited the dynamic young minister to come to Fort Worth, to address the African-American community of “Cowtown,”



Speaking before a crowd of 11-12,000 at Dallas Memorial Auditorium in 1957, Dr. King told his audience, “I have seen the new Jerusalem.” Here he is shown entering the auditorium with the Rev. Ernest Estell of St. John Baptist Church in Dallas.

he graciously accepted.

On Thursday, October 22, 1959, King took an early morning flight to Love Field, where he was met by “a group of Fort Worth negro leaders,” including Herb Baker, the African-American proprietor of the Baker Funeral Home, who drove him to Worth Hills—an-all-white neighborhood located about a mile west of the Texas Christian University campus—where he was the guest-of-honor at a prayer breakfast hosted by Brite College Professor Harold Lunger and his wife, Alberta, in the living room of their home on West Bellaire Drive.¹⁶ There, over cups of coffee, King “appealed to the Lungers and their friends and colleagues to put their religious faith to work in the cause of a great social movement: racial equality.”¹⁷

That evening, King gave a speech at the usually-segregated Majestic Theater on Commerce Street in downtown Fort Worth, where for the

first time ever, African Americans were permitted to come in through the front doors and sit in the main auditorium. It was estimated that some 400 people, who each paid \$1.25 for admittance, attended the event. Fortunately, a bomb threat that nearly halted the proceedings turned out to be a hoax. The only white people in the audience were reportedly the Lungers “and a TCU librarian . . . Mary Lu Hall.” A popular local gospel singer, Francine Morrison, “played piano and sang ‘If I Can Help Somebody as I Pass Along My Living Shall Not Be in Vain.’” King’s speech was entitled, “A Great Time To Be Alive.”¹⁸ In one part of his address, he said, “We stand between the dying old and the emerging new. There can be no birth and growth without pains. The infant freedom is dying to be born.”¹⁹

“Local lore,” writes author Richard F. Selcer, “says that the crowd was . . . small [only about a third of the seats were filled] not because the



Dr. King addressed a rally at the Fair Park Music Hall in 1963, urging his audience to pay their poll tax and work for meaningful civil rights legislation. Here he is pictured with Rabbi Levi Olan of Temple Emanu-El (center) and local civil rights leaders.

speaker was unknown but because local blacks were 'afraid they'd get fired if somebody found out they went.'"²⁰ According to retired District Judge Maryellen Hicks, "there were [likewise] ministers and leaders of color [in Fort Worth] who were afraid to extend him greetings."²¹

During his short stay in Fort Worth, King also attended a barbecue at the Hattie Street home of Aurelia Harris, and then spent the night in a second-floor guest bedroom at the home of Vada Felder on Stewart Street—a house that still stands today.²² The following day he flew back to Alabama. This was his one and only visit to Fort Worth.

On November 8, 1960—the same year that the “sit-in” movement began—Democratic Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts won the presidency of the United States, narrowly defeating Republican Vice-President Richard M. Nixon. Historians concur that one of the

myriad factors that gave Kennedy an edge over his opponent was his well-publicized phone call to Dr. King's wife, Coretta, on October 26, 1960, expressing sympathy for the plight of her husband, who had been arrested for his part in leading a civil rights demonstration in Atlanta. The charismatic young senator's subsequent help in getting King released from Reidsville State Prison, where, it was speculated by some (including King himself), the uneasy activist might not have survived his incarceration, almost certainly was a factor in Kennedy's winning some 70 percent of the nation's black vote.

During a pre-election meeting with Kennedy, and in subsequent discussions in the Oval Office, King had every reason to believe that the new President was intellectually friendly to the black civil rights movement, but that he lacked a sense of urgency that civil rights leaders like King found frustrating. On Friday, January 4,

1963, those sentiments were expressed by King when he spoke at a poll tax rally at Dallas's Fair Park Music Hall, to which he was invited by local African-American activists. Other participants included local labor union representatives, the heads of local black churches, and representatives of the Democratic Party. Texas GOP chairman Peter O'Donnell, along with local Republican officials, was also invited to take part, but they claimed the rally was partisan in nature and refused to participate in the event, which was held partly for the purpose of registering eligible African-American voters.²³

The rally was sponsored by the Dallas County United Poll Tax Committee, which had poll tax deputies stationed in the lobby to accept payments. In a related story, the *Dallas Times Herald* reported: "A quarter of a million Dallas Countians are expected to pay their poll taxes before the deadline on the last day of January," adding that there were "indications . . . that the Democrats will have more poll tax deputies out working this year than the Republicans."²⁴

Jimmy Robinson of Garland, a member of the National States Rights Party, picketed outside the hall. "We don't want to start a commotion," Robinson said when interviewed by the *Dallas Time Herald*, "We just want to let the people know that we do not believe in what the NAACP and Martin Luther King stand for." Robinson added that there were from 100 to 200 Dallas area members of the party, which was founded in Birmingham in 1958.²⁵

Before the rally began, King held a news conference backstage with local news reporters. Afterward, the chairman of the Dallas County United Poll Tax Committee, Rev. H. Rhett James, introduced him to the racially mixed audience of about 2,500 people.²⁶

In his forty-five-minute-long address, King initially praised President John F. Kennedy, saying that in his opinion the young chief executive had "done some impressive things in civil rights, especially when compared to the previous (Eisenhower) administration." As an example,

he cited Kennedy's fulfillment of his pledge to issue an executive order ending discrimination in federally funded public housing, announced on November 20, 1962. However, added King: "It does not do the full job." Although it was "a start," he said, Kennedy "must give the order teeth if it is to work."²⁷

King also announced his plan to lead a boycott of businesses that practice discrimination in hiring. In the near future, he said, they would "find themselves targets of a nationwide 'selective buying' program."²⁸ (At that time, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which would finally outlaw discriminatory practices in employment, was more than a year away from enactment.)

During the rally, detectives discretely searched the auditorium for a bomb after a threatening phone call was received, but the warning turned out to be hoax.²⁹

Using language similar to the famous speech that he would deliver later that same year in Washington, D.C., King said the "substance [of his dream]" was "that all men are created equal." In "a melodious voice that rose and fell with the tempo of his speech" and gesturing "with his arms and hands," he declared: "The Declaration of Independence does not say some men...it does not say all white men . . . it does not say all Gentiles . . . it does not say all Protestants . . . it says all men are created equal!"³⁰

He added: "If the American dream is to be a reality, the idea of white supremacy must come to an end now and ever more." This last remark was greeted by shouts of "That's right!" from his obviously enthralled audience.³¹ In closing, he "urged the citizens to pay their poll tax and work for meaningful civil rights legislation, and work with courage, determination, and zeal." He also restated his "appeal for non-violence in the struggle for civil rights."³² "One can struggle to end [the] reign of segregation," he remarked, "yet love the segregationist."³²

As anyone could plainly see, racial segregation was still very much a part of the Dallas of 1963. Although King's leadership in the 1956

Montgomery bus boycott had led to the court-ordered desegregation of city buses all over the U.S. (including Dallas), the city's public schools were still not fully integrated (despite the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling) and many places of business still practiced discrimination in serving customers, either by statute or custom. "Whites Only" and "Colored Only" signs could still be seen everywhere, particularly over water fountains and on restroom doors (including public buildings such as the Criminal Courts Building), while newspapers printed classified ads offering rental housing for "Colored Only" or jobs, generally of the menial type (such as maids or janitors), where the word "colored" was used as a qualifier.

Following King's departure, more than three years would pass before Dallasites would see him in person again. During that interval, the celebrated civil rights leader was notably busy. Only a few short months after his speech at Fair Park, King went to Birmingham, Alabama, to lead the now-legendary marches and demonstrations that were met by brutality and violence on the part of local authorities, capturing the attention not only of Americans but also, thanks to extensive national and international television and press coverage, people around the world. President Kennedy was moved to act. On the evening of June 11, 1963, the nation's chief executive appeared on television. As millions of viewers tuned in, he called attention to the recent events in Alabama, and then asked: "We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is the land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class or caste system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes?"³³

In conclusion, said Kennedy, "the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or State or legislative body can prudently choose

to ignore them." Consequently, he added, "Next week I shall ask the Congress of the United States to act, to make a commitment it has not fully made in this century to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law," adding that what he specifically sought was "legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public—hotels, restaurants, theaters, retail stores, and similar establishments."³⁴

Not surprisingly, King was elated, calling Kennedy's speech "a hallmark in the annals of American history." He also sent a telegram to the White House, hailing the President's address as "one of the most eloquent, profound and unequivocal pleas for justice and freedom of all men ever made by any president," adding this personal note: "I am sure that your encouraging words will bring a new sense of hope to the millions of disinherited people of our country."³⁵

A little more than two months later, Dr. King, along with many other civil rights leaders from across the country, led a massive March on Washington to show support for the President's proposed civil rights bill. The climax of the event, as history records, was King's now-legendary "I Have a Dream" speech," which was delivered from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to an audience of some 200,000 or more people, black and white alike. Afterward, all the leaders of the March met with President Kennedy and Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson in the Oval Office.

Sadly, things seemed to go downhill almost immediately after the success of the Washington March. On September 15, four little girls attending Sunday school were killed when white supremacists detonated a bomb outside the all-black Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. On September 18, King delivered the eulogy for three of the girls at their joint funeral. Two months later, on November 22, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, putting the future of his proposed civil rights bill in jeopardy. How far, King and other civil rights leaders wondered, would the new President, a Texas Democrat, go in promoting passage of the bill?

How enthusiastic a supporter of the bill was he?

As it happened, there was no need to worry. On November 27, 1963, in Johnson's very first address to a joint-session of Congress as the country's thirty-sixth chief executive, he made it abundantly clear where he stood on the issue of civil rights by declaring, "No memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the civil rights bill for which he fought so long. We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights. We have talked for one hundred years or more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in the books of law." Continuing in that vein, the President added: "I urge you again, as I did in 1957 and again in 1960, to enact a civil rights law so that we can move forward to eliminate from this Nation every trace of discrimination and oppression that is based upon race or color. There could be no greater source of strength to this Nation both at home and abroad."³⁶

Afterward, a "deeply encouraged" King sent Johnson a telegram, "expressing . . . deep appreciation" for the President's "heroic and courageous affirmation of our Democratic ideals."³⁷

Although Kennedy's civil rights bill, which called for an end to segregation and racial discrimination in public accommodations, was not passed by Christmas 1963, as King and other civil rights leaders had hoped, the new President worked tirelessly to assure its enactment, which came at last on July 2, 1964. Photos taken on that date in the East Room of the White House show a beaming Dr. King standing directly behind President Johnson when he signed the bill into law and then handed the no doubt joy-filled civil rights leader one of the pens he had used for that purpose.

King also received two prestigious personal honors in 1964. The first came in January, when *Time* magazine named him "Man of the Year." Then, in mid-October, it was announced that he had been chosen to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. On December 10, at Oslo, Norway, wearing

a "cutaway with a gray and white cravat" and in the company of his wife, Coretta, he accepted the award "in behalf of a civil rights movement which is moving with determination and a majestic scorn for risk and danger to establish a reign of freedom and a rule of justice." King added that "every penny" of the nearly \$54,000 award "would be spent on the civil rights movement." Afterward, King Olaf and Crown Prince Harald led the audience in giving the 35-year-old civil rights leader a standing ovation.³⁸

Early in 1966, Dallas's Southern Methodist University announced that Dr. King had accepted an invitation to make an appearance on campus, at 3:30 P.M. on Thursday, March 17, at McFarlin Auditorium. Sponsored by the Academic Committee of the Student Senate, the occasion was an invitation-only convocation ceremony, to be followed by dinner with "student leaders, faculty members, and administration in the Student Center."³⁹

The SMU student newspaper also called attention to the fact that King was scheduled to appear before, in 1964, but the event had been cancelled, said Student Senate Vice-President Bert Moore, "because of pressures from Negro leaders of the Dallas community."⁴⁰ Although none of the mainstream papers had reported it then, former *Times Herald* columnist Jim Schutze later explained in his controversial book *The Accommodation*: "During his life, King's relationship with the black clergy of Dallas had been tenuous at best. The Dallas clergy shunned him during his early visits to the city [with the obvious exception of Caesar Clark] and had only reluctantly come around to deal with him after their own parishioners had been swept ahead of them into the vast reverence most black people of the period felt for King."⁴¹ Moore further remarked that King had accepted this second invitation only after receiving a written assurance from SMU President Willis Tate that his visit met with administration approval.⁴²

Among the area colleges and universities that might have hosted King, SMU was unquestionably a sympathetic venue, insofar as some students



In March 1966, Dr. King addressed a packed audience at SMU's McFarlin Auditorium. "The time," he told the students, "is always right to do right."

and faculty members were concerned. In the spring of 1965, ten Perkins School of Theology students had traveled to Alabama to participate in the celebrated Selma to Montgomery March, while fifty of their classmates, brandishing homemade signs in support of black civil rights,

held a local version of the march, which took them from campus across the Mockingbird Lane bridge that spans Highway 75-Central Expressway.⁴³ Later that year, five white SMU ministerial students traveled to Huntsville, Texas, to join "Negro pickets in walking around the Walker

County Courthouse protesting alleged violation of Negro rights in regard to law enforcement.” Three of them were afterward arrested for attempting to hold a religious service on the courthouse square.⁴⁴

On March 17, an editorial in *The Dallas Morning News* called attention to the simultaneous arrival of Dr. King and the Spanish Ambassador, Merry de Val, saying, “Many people oppose the views and methods of Dr. King and his adherents in the civil rights movement,” likewise “some of the actions of the Franco government,” but, the paper conceded, both men were “guests in this city” and therefore “entitled to express whatever is on their minds in their missions. . . . Let them be heard.”⁴⁵

In point of fact, Dr. King was heard on three separate occasions that day, albeit to a limited audience. The first was a luncheon meeting of the Dallas Pastors Association, held at the Melrose Hotel on Oak Lawn Avenue, where unfortunately, any remarks he made went unreported in the mainstream press, although the *Morning News* did print a photo of the celebrated civil rights leader standing behind a tabletop lectern speaking into a microphone. Afterward, he appeared on stage at SMU’s McFarlin Auditorium, where an “overflow crowd of students” in the 2,700-seat venue listened intently as the controversial but charismatic activist repeated many of the same themes he had spoken of many times before in many other places.⁴⁶

“We have come a long, long way,” King began as he looked out over a sea of mostly white but attentive young faces, but he quickly added, “We still have a long, long way to go.” Nevertheless, he declared, “Segregation is on its death bed. The question now is how costly die-hard segregationists are going to make the funeral.”⁴⁷ He also called attention to “the appalling silence of good people,” which, he said, was “equally bad.”⁴⁸

Continuing, King conceded in his slow-paced but melodious southern tone that although “we’ve seen the legal walls of segregation tumble,” many people remained opposed to change. “I

agree that if we are to solve this problem [of racial prejudice], ultimately we must change men’s hearts.” Until that happened, he was happy with the fact that although “a law can’t make a man love me, it can restrain him from lynching me and I’m in favor of that.”⁴⁹ As for those who hold “that the Negro must be patient and ‘let time’ take care of his problems,” such arguments “have no merit,” he declared, adding, “The time is always right to do right.”⁵⁰

While he was “pleased by progress made in Civil Rights in the South,” he warned against “tokenism,” i.e., the “admission of one or two Negroes to previously segregated fields, then claiming that segregation had been achieved.” King also called for improvement in the “economic lot of the race,” pointing out that the underlying reason for the recent urban riots in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles was the frustration felt by people who live in “an island of poverty in a vast ocean of material prosperity.” The people who riot, he explained, are those who “feel they have no stake in society.”⁵¹

In the end, he concluded, “it comes down to the simple fact that racial prejudice is morally wrong. It is sinful.”⁵² “No lie,” he added, “can live forever.”⁵³

Following a dinner with SMU student leaders, faculty members and university administrators, an event to which the press was apparently uninvited (and one that gave him a third opportunity that day to deliver his message of hope and redemption), King returned to Love Field, to take a flight to Atlanta, headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the flagship of the civil rights movement, which King and others had founded in 1957 in New Orleans.

By coincidence, the very same day that the nation’s best-known civil rights leader appeared at the Melrose Hotel and then at SMU, 350 Dallas-area school administrators attended a meeting at the Hotel Adolphus, where representatives of the U.S. Office of Education and the Texas Education Agency told them “that taking a passive attitude toward new federal school integration guidelines

would not be acceptable” and that “they must actively promote desegregation if they expect to continue receiving federal aid.”⁵⁴ After hearing from John Hope II, federal director for desegregation in the Southwest, who told them they must set school boundaries that “promote desegregation,” Texas Education Agency attorney John Hogdon implored them to “figure out what you can do, and then do twice as much.”⁵⁵

As it happened, Dallasites did not have to wait as long as they had in the past for a chance to see Dr. King and hear him speak again in their city. A little more than six months later, on Sunday evening, September 25, 1966, following a long, hard summer of leading marches and demonstrations in Chicago, where white supremacists had surprised the Atlanta-born activist with a virulence that often matched their southern counterparts’, King arrived at Love Field, where he was met by Howard E. Dentler, assistant secretary of the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), who escorted him to Memorial Auditorium. There, very likely occupying the same spot where he had stood in 1957, he and two other speakers—Catholic Bishop John J. Wright of Pittsburgh and Dallas attorney Robert G. Storey, both white men—addressed the Sunday night session of the convention, the theme of which was “The Churches and the Struggle for Human Freedom, Dignity and Brotherhood.”⁵⁶

In staff writer Stewart M. Doss’s report of the event, which appeared the following afternoon in the *Dallas Times Herald*, he contrasted the sentiments of King and Wright, who seemed to fundamentally agree that churches ought to take an active role in promoting peace and brotherhood, with those of Storey, who seemed to have nothing but scorn for King’s well-known tactics of non-violent civil disobedience. Speaking last, Storey declared, “Some of the participants excuse themselves with the statement that the law against which they protest is itself illegal, but the decision of alleged illegality of laws,” he added, “is the sole responsibility of the courts of the land.”⁵⁷

Not surprisingly, Dr. King, who received a standing ovation from his non-segregated audience of approximately 9,400 convention attendees, at both the opening and the closing of his address, had a very different message to deliver. “We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of walking the earth like brothers,” King lamented, criticizing religious institutions for failing “to be faithful to their prophetic mission on the question of racial justice.” “Too often,” he continued, “churches are content merely to mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities.” Just as frequently, he added, employing the sort of descriptive analogies for which he was famed, “the church has been an echo rather than a voice, a taillight behind the Supreme Court and other secular agencies, rather than a headlight guiding men progressively.” The churches’ first order of business, he declared, should be “to recognize that segregation is morally wrong and sinful.”⁵⁸

As he did in most of his addresses since passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, King conceded that progress had been made, but stressed that if African Americans were to be truly free, they needed to achieve economic as well as social equality. “Negroes . . . are still far from equal,” he proclaimed, “straitjacketed in society as its most unskilled, most underpaid strata . . . damned to hold the dirty jobs, the most poorly paid jobs.” Nevertheless, he was hopeful, reported Doss, “that acceptance of basic morality principles will enable the races to fashion a truly great nation.”⁵⁹

In contrast to the *Times Herald’s* coverage, writer Don Smith’s report in *The Dallas Morning News*, titled “King Says Rifts Hurt Rights Drive, Disunity Expected to Continue,” focused primarily on the award-winning activist’s disapproval of the recently-emerged “Black Power” movement, promoted by seemingly angry young leaders like Stokely Carmichael. Overall, as in 1957, the *News* report seemed purposely written to reassure fearful white citizens. Calling “Black Power” “an unfortunate choice of words” at a press confer-



In September 1966, Dr. King shared the stage at Dallas Memorial Auditorium with Bishop John J. Wright of Pittsburgh (center) and Dallas attorney Robert G. Storey.

ence held at Love Field, King reportedly said, “If it means the massing of the economic and political strength of the Negro to achieve his goals, I think no one can argue about it.” “But,” he added, “if it means black separation and to gain power for power’s sake, I would have to disagree,” saying further: “I feel that a philosophy of black supremacy is just as evil as a philosophy of white supremacy. I much prefer to talk about striped power, where both black and white work together.” Without criticizing any one person or persons in particular, he admitted, wrote Smith, that “socially destructive and self-defeating” riots in northern cities, “apparently fomented by black power advocates,” had harmed the civil rights movement. Reflecting on the “gains . . . and . . . losses” of the past summer, he concluded, “Every movement worth its salt has peaks of united movements and valleys of disunion. And I think we may be in that valley now.”⁶⁰

The Dallas Express, which provided its readers

with thorough but largely uncritical front page coverage of King’s speech, also included two photographs of the celebrated civil rights leader, one taken at the Love Field news conference and the other showing him shaking hands with convention goers inside Memorial Auditorium.⁶¹ An editorialist writing in the same issue, much less reluctant than King to criticize anyone by name, echoed the sentiments he had expressed in his airport press conference by blaming the recent defeat of the “open housing civil rights bill” in Congress, which fell short of success by ten votes, largely on “Black Power,” urban riots, and more specifically “Stokely Carmichael, head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who is neither a student nor non-violent,” adding: “The sooner the Negro community rejects the alien philosophy and tactics of the many Stokely Carmichaels fomenting unrest and disorder around the nation, the sooner we can get on with the business of securing the



In his speech in September 1966, Dr. King stressed the need for economic as well as social equality.

rights promised to us in the Constitution of these United States.”⁶²

Less than two years later, on April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis while visiting that city in support of striking sanitation workers. Upon learning of this tragic event, few outside his family and close personal friends mourned his loss more than the people of North Central Texas. Although he had never led a single march or demonstration in the area (which had passed through the civil rights years a little more quietly than many other places) nor had he addressed more than a few thousand of its citizens at any one time at events that were not always open to the general public, King’s influence had been felt in the region just as deeply and as surely as it had been felt throughout the entire nation, which thanks to him and all the people who stood beside him and marched with him and went to jail with him, was at long last beginning to emerge from the darkness of its racist past.

At 2 P.M. on Sunday, April 7, 1968, thousands of Dallasites, both black and white—including

dignitaries such as Mayor J. Erik Jonsson—gathered at the People’s Missionary Baptist Church, a modest red brick building located at 3119 Pine Street in South Dallas, to pay tribute to the man who had touched their hearts and the heart and conscience of the nation. There, “in the warm sanctuary,” wrote *Dallas Morning News* reporter Douglas Domeier, “they heard the slain civil rights leader eulogized by city leaders and particularly by the Rev. Caesar Clark, in a 90-minute memorial service.”⁶³

Clark, who had known King as a teenager in Atlanta, and had invited him to address his congregation in Dallas twelve years earlier, recalled that in Georgia, friends of the now-dead activist had “called him Mike.” “Now Mike,” said Clark quietly, “I say not to you goodbye, but good-night.”⁶⁴

Clark added, “Mike wasn’t an American Negro, he was a Negro American.” He also told the assemblage, “All of us share a little of the guilt. We can’t put it all on the man who pulled the trigger,” saying that God would punish “those who were passive” when they should “have been active.” Clark also criticized the “looting, burning, killing, and throwing Molotov cocktails” that had broken out in cities across the country in the wake of the assassination. Those things, he preached, “will do him no honor.” His friend, he added, “had gone to the mountaintop and seen a better way.”⁶⁵

Mayor Jonsson, who also spoke that day, said: “I’ve always thought what’s important is not the color of a man’s skin but what kind of man is inside that skin,” while Clarence Laws, deputy regional director of the Office of Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, “urged citizens to wire their congressmen for passage this week of the pending civil rights bill and emphasized Dr. King’s spirit of nonviolence.”⁶⁶

Two days later, on Tuesday, April 9, in keeping with a resolution passed by the Dallas City Council the previous day, “many Dallas residents paused for a minute of silence . . . in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”⁶⁷

Unfortunately, as history has all-too-often demonstrated, tragedies such as the murder of a beloved public figure can sometimes move lawmakers to take action on a pending bill or proposed legislation that they might not have taken otherwise, or as quickly. As it turned out, the untimely demise of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was precisely such an event. Although the so-called “Open Housing” bill had passed the U.S. House of Representatives on August 16, 1967, and also the Senate, with amendments, on March 12, 1968, it was not until April 10, 1968, six days after the assassination of King, that the House concurred with the Senate amendments, allowing President Johnson to sign it into law the next day. The timing of the act’s passage was not lost on an editorialist for the *Dallas Express* who wrote plaintively, “WHY DID WE HAVE TO PAY THAT PRICE FOR JUSTICE?”⁶⁸

During the fifty years that have passed since his all-too-early passing at the age of thirty-nine, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has not been forgotten by the North Central Texas residents—both black and white—whose lives he touched, nor by the generations who have been born and come of age since his death. In 1974, the Crossroads Community Center in South Dallas was renamed in honor of King.⁶⁹ A little less than a year later, in December 1975, his widow, Coretta Scott King, visited the center, where at a banquet held in her honor she made a speech in which she echoed her late husband’s call for equal economic opportunities for African Americans.⁷⁰

On Saturday, July 4, 1976, King’s elderly father, Martin Luther King, Sr., also visited the center, where he helped unveil an eight-foot-tall bronze statue of his son. Lt. Governor Bill Hobby, Dallas Mayor Robert Folsom, and City Councilwoman Juanita Craft—a local civil rights legend in her own right—also attended the event. On that day, by city council resolution, Forest Avenue in South Dallas was temporarily renamed in honor of the slain civil rights leader, a move that was made permanent in January 1981.⁷¹ King’s memory is also kept alive in Dallas, as elsewhere,

by annual celebrations and commemorations of his birthday—January 15—which was made a federal holiday in 1983.

More recently, on Wednesday, April 4, 2018—the fiftieth anniversary of King’s assassination—a bronze plaque was erected at Worth Square in downtown Fort Worth, across the street from the JFK memorial, to commemorate the celebrated civil rights leader’s only visit to “Cowtown.” Initiated by the Reverend Kyeve Tatum of Fort Worth and sponsored by Dr. Gary Lacefield, a professor at the University of Texas at Arlington, the plaque is one of a series of Heritage Trail markers erected by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. It also recalls Vada Felder and her role in bringing King to town, and ends with an appropriate quote from an interview Felder gave just a few years before her death at age ninety-seven (in 2008). Dr. King, she said, “Gave us courage. He taught us that we could stand up and do what was right—and do it in peace.”⁷² Indeed he did. ■

NOTES

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SIDEBAR

Robert F. Kennedy in Dallas

Tragically, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was not the only important public figure to have his life and career cut short by an assassin’s bullet in 1968. On Tuesday, June 5, only two months and a day following the untimely death of Dr. King, New York Senator Robert F. Kennedy, while campaigning for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States, was shot and killed

by a Palestinian Christian named Sirhan Sirhan, only moments after the senator had addressed a primary election victory celebration at the Ambassador Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. Kennedy died the following day. Afterward, he was buried on a hillside in Arlington National Cemetery, only a few yards from the grave of his brother, President John F. Kennedy.



Of all the major political figures sympathetic to Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement of the 1960s, none, with the notable exceptions of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, was more visible or active in the drive to remove the stain of segregation and racial injustice from the fabric of America than “Bobby” Kennedy. Although his older brother was credited for arranging King’s release from prison in 1960, it was actually Bobby who had pulled the behind-the-scene strings that made it possible. Likewise it was not John Kennedy but Bobby, who, as Attorney General of the United States, had sent federal marshals to escort black students into

previously all-white universities and to protect the now-legendary “Freedom Riders” from harm by virulent white racists. And although by the time his brother died, RFK was still struggling to understand the anger and resentment that black people in America then felt, at least he was making an effort, which in time, as one modern-day writer has put it, led him, shortly before his death, to become “the most trusted white man in black America.”¹

Several years earlier, while serving as Attorney General of the United States in his brother’s administration, Bobby Kennedy made a brief trip to Dallas, which attracted little attention at the

time and consequently, is now largely forgotten.

The event that brought the young Justice Department head to “Big D” late in the afternoon of Tuesday, November 14, 1961, was a convention of Associated Press managing editors, which he had been invited to address. After being greeted at Love Field by federal attorney Harold “Barefoot” Sanders and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* editor Edward T. Stone, a reportedly “fatigued” Kennedy was taken to the Sheraton-Dallas Hotel on Live Oak Street, adjacent to what was then known as the Southland Life Insurance building—at that time the tallest structure in Dallas. The following day, at a luncheon meeting at the hotel, he addressed the newspapermen on a variety of topics that were then making headlines across the country.²

In his opening remarks Kennedy praised Dallas, and several other cities, for the way they had recently desegregated their schools “without disorder or disrespect for the law.”³ It was true, up to a point. On Wednesday, September 6, 1961, the racial integration of first grade classes at eight Dallas elementary schools “came quietly and without incident.” What Kennedy failed to remark upon, however, was that in Dallas, only the first grade had been desegregated in what was termed a “stair-step,” or gradual, approach to integration, approved by a federal court earlier that year. Under this plan, the second grade would be desegregated in 1962, the third grade in 1963, and so on, until 1972, when all Dallas schools would, at least in theory, be “mixed.”⁴ Kennedy also did not mention that the “stair-step” plan had come about only after five-and-a-half years of contentious debate and delay, following the United States Supreme Court’s landmark “Brown vs. Board of Education” decision in 1954.⁵

In addition to racial discrimination, Kennedy touched upon the subjects of organized crime, against which he was then pursuing a vigorous campaign, the free enterprise system, and the threat of Communism, challenging his listeners to “send your reporters out to dig into the activities of the Communist Party in your areas and learn

the facts.”⁶ Toward the end of his speech, he called attention to the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday and then he quoted Governor William Bradford of the Pilgrims, who had written, “as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled shone unto many.” In conclusion, he left his audience with these words: “As editors, you more than most people, are keepers of the light. With your dedication to the truth and your courage to print it, we will continue to go forward here at home, sending America’s light—ever brighter—to dark continents and distant lands.”⁷

Almost immediately following his appearance at the Sheraton, Kennedy returned to Washington. Seven months later, he was back. Upon arrival at Love Field, on Thursday, June 28, 1962, Kennedy took questions from reporters during a 15-minute-long press conference, greeted and signed autographs for well-wishers, and then departed for his hotel, where he met privately with federal attorneys Barefoot Sanders of Dallas and the aptly-named Wayne Justice of Tyler, which was the purpose of his visit. “Although there was no official announcement of the subjects to be discussed,” said news reports, “informed sources said the Billie Sol Estes case, a federal investigation of the Teamsters Union and the slant drilling of oil wells in East Texas were probable topics.”⁸ The next day, the young attorney general left Dallas on an early morning flight to Nashville never to return, not even after his brother was killed in Dallas the following year.

Unlike Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert F. Kennedy has not been remembered in Dallas by any statue or memorial, although from June 5 through September 3, 2018, The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza hosted a special exhibit, “Rebel Spirits,” which called attention to the “overlapping paths” of the two men and their “shared interests in civil rights, poverty and opposing the war in Vietnam.”⁹ **L**

—Steven R. Butler

NOTES

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Taking Dallas Vertical

BY JAY FIRSCHING

By the middle of the twentieth century, Dallas was facing a series of problems common to most cities of its day: degradation of its downtown core, congestion, suburbanization and related sprawl, and incredible pressure brought on by the popularity and abundance of the automobile. With industrialization came new ideas in town planning intended to respond to the fact that our rapidly-changing cities were gradually less livable.

In the nineteenth century, industrialization and the advent of the railroad created major disruptions that began to break down these integrated cores ever more rapidly. Towns tended to spread out along rail lines, and industry brought with it greater density as land was repurposed to provide space for new industrial uses. Space for housing in the central city diminished even as the population grew. Expanding commercialization of downtown areas further broke them down, with massive buildings constructed on blocks originally intended for smaller, human-scaled structures. Homes, churches, and other amenities that provided a higher quality of life were generally squeezed out in favor of industry

and commerce. Typical street grids that once accommodated pedestrians and slow-moving means of transportation became overwhelmed by automobiles that were prevalent and fast. As a single-person conveyance, the automobile created issues of congestion downtown, and provided a greater ability to escape the center of the city for less dense areas.¹ Both living and working in the core of our cities became gradually more difficult and unsatisfying, and leaving it for the suburbs ever more desirable.²

The industrialization and commercialization of cities gave rise to urban planning movements which sought to create cities that were again balanced and livable with a minimum of conflict between pedestrians and automobiles. While planners behind such concepts as the English garden city movement and the new town movement sought to achieve these ideals in new communities, others looked to apply them to existing urban cores. Key to these urban plans was the idea of vertically-integrated architecture.³

In 1922, Swiss planner and architect Le Corbusier unveiled the first major concept in



Traffic congestion on downtown Dallas streets was nothing new when this mid-20th century photo of Main near Akard was taken. It had concerned city planners for decades. New ideas for separating pedestrian and vehicular traffic were soon proposed.

three-dimensional superblock planning. His “Contemporary City” or “City of Tomorrow” sought to solve the problem of density and overcrowding by taking the concepts of garden city planning and applying them to vertical architecture. The City of Tomorrow envisioned organization through intentional separation of residential, commercial, and transportation functions that would create an elegantly proportioned and calm environment.⁴

In instances where Corbusier-influenced superblock projects were successfully constructed, large areas of historic buildings were sacrificed in

the name of progress. Examples of this trend can be found in the urban renewal and public housing projects in Europe and the United States. Notable U.S. examples are the Cabrini Green housing complex in Chicago and the massive Pruitt Igoe housing complex in St. Louis. Both required the extensive clearing of historic buildings for their construction.⁵ Le Corbusier’s ideas are largely credited with starting the modern movement and strongly influenced planning and architecture in the twentieth century. Notable examples are the work of planners Robert Moses in New York City and Edmund Bacon in Philadelphia.

The problems facing Dallas in the 1950s and 1960s were a clear example of the urban decay and suburbanization superblock proponents sought to reverse. Ironically, it was growth and prosperity that created these destabilizing pressures. True to international trends, in a growing Dallas, small scale commercial blocks gave way to ever larger and taller buildings and greater density. Downtown streets, choked with pedestrians and automobiles, became ever more difficult and unpleasant to navigate. The city's central residential areas were in decline in favor of suburbs to the north and east. Both Dallas and Fort Worth, its sister city to the west, found themselves in need of a plan to reverse these trends.

Early Planning in Dallas

Dallas as a city developed rapidly in the late nineteenth century, the growth spurred on by the arrival and expansion of the railroad. As might be expected, the Dallas boom brought with it congestion and new problems, most notably a snarl of tracks, depots, and freight terminals overlaying a traditional street grid designed to accommodate pedestrians, horses and wagons.⁶

By the twentieth century, the city was eager for a plan. George Kessler, a prominent city planner and designer, was commissioned by the city and presented the Kessler Plan in 1910. This plan was the first adopted by the city that stressed an idea central to the success of downtown: for the city to function effectively, the problem of congestion must be addressed and the efficient flow of people and goods promoted. Kessler called on the city to eliminate the complex and inefficient web of railroad tracks and depots from downtown, eliminate at-grade railroad crossings, and establish a system of boulevards and connecting loops to ease traffic. Kessler's vision was that the city's major transportation networks would operate with as little interference with one another as possible. Only a fraction of Kessler's ideas were realized, although many, such as the realignment of the Trinity River, the establishment of a boulevard system, and a

city-wide parks plan were highly significant.⁷

While Kessler's plan did lead to many improvements in the city, political and business rivalries prevented broad and even implementation of Kessler's ideas.⁸ Additional plans followed, each resulting in limited successes. In 1925 the Ulrickson plan achieved the final realignment of the Trinity River, levee construction, and the completion of a number of viaducts connecting Dallas with Oak Cliff to the south, but the broader effort at city-wide improvements was again a failure.⁹ A 1943 city-wide planning study by St. Louis planning expert Harland Bartholomew resulted in a sweeping twelve-volume plan of city improvements with the goal of implementing the proposals at the completion of the war.¹⁰ However, overwhelmed by the growth, the city found itself unable to keep up, much less implement the proposals of the Bartholomew Plan, completing only piecemeal components.¹¹ Additional but less comprehensive studies were implemented in the 1950s with little result. Notable among these was city planning engineer Marvin Springer's plan for a new system of highway improvements including freeway loops around the central business district.¹²

It is worth noting that government-funded urban renewal programs implemented in the years after World War II did not have a major impact on development in Dallas. Title 1, passed in 1949 and authorizing the clearing of urban slums to make way for new development, was a tool used in many major metropolitan areas, most famously by Robert Moses in his efforts as part of city and state government to reshape the City of New York. The provisions of Title 1 proved unpopular in Dallas, a city where individual property rights were highly valued, and efforts to clear slums such as those found in West Dallas, were roundly rejected.¹³

The Early Underground in Dallas

A primary focus of Kessler's ideas was railroad traffic, particularly downtown. The railroad companies of early twentieth-century Dallas operated independently of one another, each

with its own tracks and separate passenger and freight terminals. This web of infrastructure was highly inefficient and choked the city's streets. Kessler proposed a consolidation and simplification of the trackage downtown, the elimination wherever possible of at-grade railroad crossings, and the construction of a single Union Terminal and rail yard on the west end of downtown.¹⁴

In 1916, Union Terminal was completed one block southwest of the courthouse square. This was the catalyst that allowed for the simplification of the track network downtown and made the city's many downtown passenger terminals obsolete, including that of the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railroad. On the site of its downtown station and on several adjoining blocks to the south, the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe constructed four large freight terminals. Each was connected to the other by a set of tunnels that further connected to the main line to the south. This was the first example in Dallas of vertically-separated infrastructure in the downtown core and allowed the daily transport of tons of freight into the central business district with no disruption to the streets and sidewalks above. When the freight terminals fell into disuse after World War II, the tunnels were abandoned, eventually being disconnected from the main line by the construction of the Dallas Convention Center.¹⁵

The further development of vertically-separated infrastructure in Dallas was largely incidental in the first half of the twentieth century. An underground tunnel was constructed under Main Street in 1913 to connect the 1912 Adolphus Hotel and the 1913 Busch Building, but this was used largely to connect the large power plant in the hotel to its new neighbor.¹⁶ At Union Terminal itself, the massive rail yards were originally navigated by passengers via a long overhead transit-way above the tracks. With the continued expansion of the yards, this transit-way was removed in 1947 in favor of an underground tunnel system connecting the terminal to the various tracks and to other buildings nearby.¹⁷ A portion of this tunnel remains in use today, serving

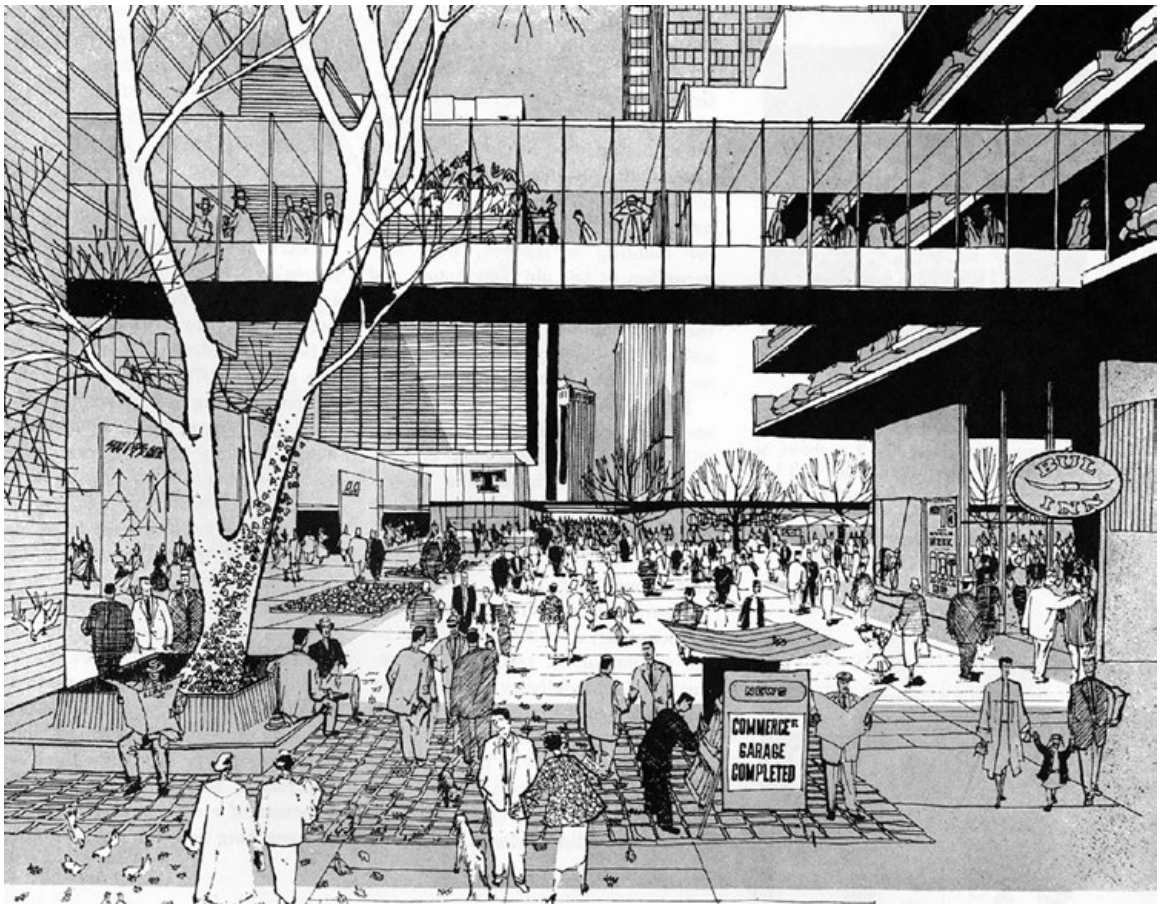
its original purpose of distributing passengers to trains, and now to the modern Reunion Center complex. This was the city's first use of a tunnel system to separate pedestrians from the transportation systems above them.

In 1951, the Mercantile National Bank was the first to take downtown Dallas's growing parking problem underground with the construction of the Mercantile Commerce Building (later renamed the Mercantile Continental Building). The three-story structure featured an additional five levels of parking below ground and a large set of freight docks. The parking structure was connected to the Mercantile Bank Building across the street by the city's second underground pedestrian tunnel.¹⁸ The parking structure now serves the newly-rehabilitated Continental Lofts and the tunnel remains intact, but abandoned.

While some warehouse complexes such as Sears (now Southside on Lamar) south of downtown connected buildings with overhead walkways, overhead pedestrian connections prior to 1950 were rare. A "Venetian bridge" was constructed in 1934 to connect the mezzanine levels of the Adolphus and Baker Hotels. The temporary bridge was utilized to prevent congestion along Commerce Street during the American Petroleum Institute convention and was removed soon after.¹⁹

Superblock Planners Come to North Texas

In the 1950s, visionary urban planners such as Victor Gruen and Vincent Ponte were promoting the idea of efficient multi-level cities on a scale that George Kessler might never have imagined possible. These planners drew on the ideas promoted by Corbusier in his vertical garden cities but sought to overcome what was perceived as their greatest flaw, a lack of humanity and human scale.²⁰ Gruen and Ponte sought to create diverse and fully-integrated superblocks in which people could work and live with great convenience and personal satisfaction. These would then be connected to similar adjoining superblocks



In 1956 Victor Gruen proposed a series of shopping malls and plazas, surrounded by parking garages, for downtown Fort Worth, which would have destroyed much of the historic core. His plan was never implemented.

to cover the larger urban core. Transportation within the superblock system would be provided by pedestrian tunnel systems, moving sidewalks, and personal conveyances.²¹

In 1956, the City of Fort Worth commissioned Victor Gruen to develop a plan for its central business district. True to the ideals of multi-level planning and superblock development, Gruen designed a plan that eliminated surface parking lots downtown to create plazas, providing instead six massive centralized parking structures served by an outer highway loop. People would be moved throughout the core with a system of dedicated above and below-ground walkways and automatic conveyances. Other forms of transportation such as trucking, rail, and commuter traffic would be separated

from pedestrians with their own networks. The illustrations depict a downtown Fort Worth that appears as a series of interconnected shopping malls and office towers. From a historical standpoint, implementation of the Gruen plan would have been disastrous, with much of the historic downtown core we see today lost to demolition.²²

In Dallas, Gruen's work in Fort Worth did not go unnoticed. The Dallas Texas Corporation soon initiated its own plan for a Dallas superblock. The Dallas Texas Corporation was the brainchild of William W. Overton, Jr., Chairman of the Texas Bank and Trust, Co. and founding member of the Dallas Citizens Council. Overton's office overlooked the area of downtown buildings along Main and Griffin Streets, some of which he owned. While full of thriving businesses at

the time, Overton saw the collection of aging buildings as an area of decline and eventual blight. In 1953 he approached another area businessman, Clint Murchison, who also owned property in the area including his offices in a small building at 1201 Main. The two men resolved to combine their property holdings on Main Street into a single entity, the Overton-Murchison Interests, and work together to purchase the remaining tracts to construct a major new development.²³

The Overtons and Murchisons created the Dallas Texas Corporation as the entity to undertake their new development and began to accumulate additional property along Main Street in the heart of downtown. The corporation also funded its own study of the Dallas central business district centered on the idea of constructing a superblock as a catalyst project for the redevelopment of the downtown core.²⁴ The plan was presented in 1961.

Conceived by the Columbia University School of Architecture Master's Program, the ideas in the 1961 Columbia plan for Dallas closely paralleled those of Corbusier, Ponte, and Gruen and it was described in the press as Dallas' "City of Tomorrow."²⁵

According to the plan, successful development projects at the hearts of our cities would encompass multiple functions, including corporate, government, financial, retail, residential, and cultural. These functions would be grouped into related and overlapping clusters to provide continuity without congestion across the entire central core.²⁶

In addition to providing facilities for various interrelated functions, the study also found the connections of these facilities to one another to be of critical importance. Specifically, the study called for transportation systems to be layered horizontally and vertically with a minimum of conflict and interference with one another. The plan stated that vertical transportation should be accommodated on three levels. The uppermost level, open to the sky, was strictly for the use of pedestrians who must be able to move from place to place without the interference of other types

of transportation. This level would also include low-speed automatic conveyors. The level below was designed for higher speed conveyance including cars, taxis, and local city buses. The lowest level was for the use of trucks and long-range commuter vehicles. The plan called for the accommodation of these transportation systems and nodes of activity above ground by bridging the street grid.²⁷

Visually, the plan was striking. Covering thirty-six blocks, the proposal would have enveloped the street grid between Austin Street on the west and Akard on the east, Pacific to the north and Jackson to the south. The superblock plan included below-grade service and parking levels. At grade, the street grid was to provide distribution of cars and transit across the entire superblock. Other above-ground levels were reserved for pedestrians. Parking for the massive complex was to include both flat parking and parking pits. The pits were to consist of continuously-operating mechanical conveyors carrying cars hundreds of feet below ground. A 30-minute full-cycle would have required careful planning by patrons of the system wanting to retrieve their vehicles. The centerpiece of the superblock was a pair of massive twin towers bridging Main Street.

According to the Columbia Plan, Main Place was to be implemented in three phases. The first phase was to cover the almost ten acres already owned by the Dallas Texas Corporation. The second phase would include the thirty-six-block area as conceived in the plan and illustrated in its pages. Finally, the third phase would cover a full sixty-three blocks. A diagram of the complete superblock showed that it would stretch from Ross Avenue to the north, Akard Street to the east, Young street to the South, and Houston Street to the west.²⁸ Such a plan, if implemented, would have erased the western portion of downtown, and with it the entire Dallas County Government Center, the Adolphus Hotel, and Republic National Bank Buildings, among many others.



In 1961 the Dallas Texas Corporation commissioned a plan from the Columbia University School of Architecture Masters Program. The ambitious plan encompassed 36 blocks downtown and proposed a vertical transportation scheme, separating pedestrian, automobile, and truck traffic. Like Gruen's proposal for Fort Worth, this would have destroyed most of the historic structures in central and western downtown. Also like his, it was never implemented.



In 1964 Gordon Bunshaft of SOM designed One Main Place, with 33 stories above ground and an underground pedestrian network.

Main Place

While the lofty aspirations of the Columbia plan might have seemed out of reach to the Dallas Texas Corporation, it is clear that many of the major ideas for the superblock were embraced and that the company believed it could, in fact, complete some version of the massive project. Representatives of the company and of the city of Dallas traveled to a number of major North American cities to examine various approaches being undertaken elsewhere. Most significantly, an 85-person delegation made up largely of members of the Dallas Central Business District Association visited both Constitution

Plaza in Hartford, Connecticut, and Place Ville Marie in Montreal, Canada. Constitution Plaza, constructed on the site of one of Hartford's oldest neighborhoods, was under construction and designed as a series of interconnected buildings bridging the street grid. Place Ville Marie, on the other hand, pushed the lower levels of the superblock below ground, leaving much of the street grid intact.²⁹ It is clear that the approach taken in Montreal impressed the delegation. The Dallas Texas Company immediately appointed David Owen, vice president of Webb & Knapp Canada and director of development of Place Ville Marie, to its staff and board of directors. Owen would

be head of construction and leasing responsibilities at Main Place.³⁰ Dallas's appreciation of the Montreal scheme would be further exemplified by the hiring of Ville Place Marie planner Vincent Ponte in 1968.

In May 1964 a plan for phase one covering the initial ten acres and developed by SOM with Gordon Bunshaft as lead designer, was revealed in *The Dallas Morning News*.³¹ Gone from the plan were Columbia's visions for a vast island of infrastructure bridging the downtown street grid, mechanical pedestrian conveyors, and complex automated parking systems. What remained were the plan's more fundamental concepts. The above-ground hierarchy of layers for pedestrian, auto and freight traffic was pushed below ground. Automobile and bus circulation would remain at street level. Primary pedestrian circulation, including a network of tunnels connecting major downtown buildings, was placed on the first level below ground, thus eliminating pedestrian and automobile conflict at street level. This level also included plazas, retail amenities, and other conveniences.³²

Architecturally, phase one of the superblock plan was broken down into three sub-phases. One Main Place was to be thirty-three above-ground stories with 1,000,000 square feet of office space. Two Main Place, spanning Main Street much as the central architectural piece of the Columbia plan had envisioned, was to be fifty stories with 1,400,000 square feet of office space. Finally, Three Main Place was to include a 300,000 square foot department store with a 400-room hotel above. Below grade and surrounding the sunken-plazas and courtyards was to be 225,000 square feet of retail and recreational amenities, a drive-through bank, and 3,000 parking spaces. Freight docks were also placed at this level in anticipation of a future downtown freight tunnel system dedicated completely to truck traffic. Missing was any attempt at providing a residential component or the amenities necessary for residential living.³³

According to the developer, the Main Place Concept was designed to:

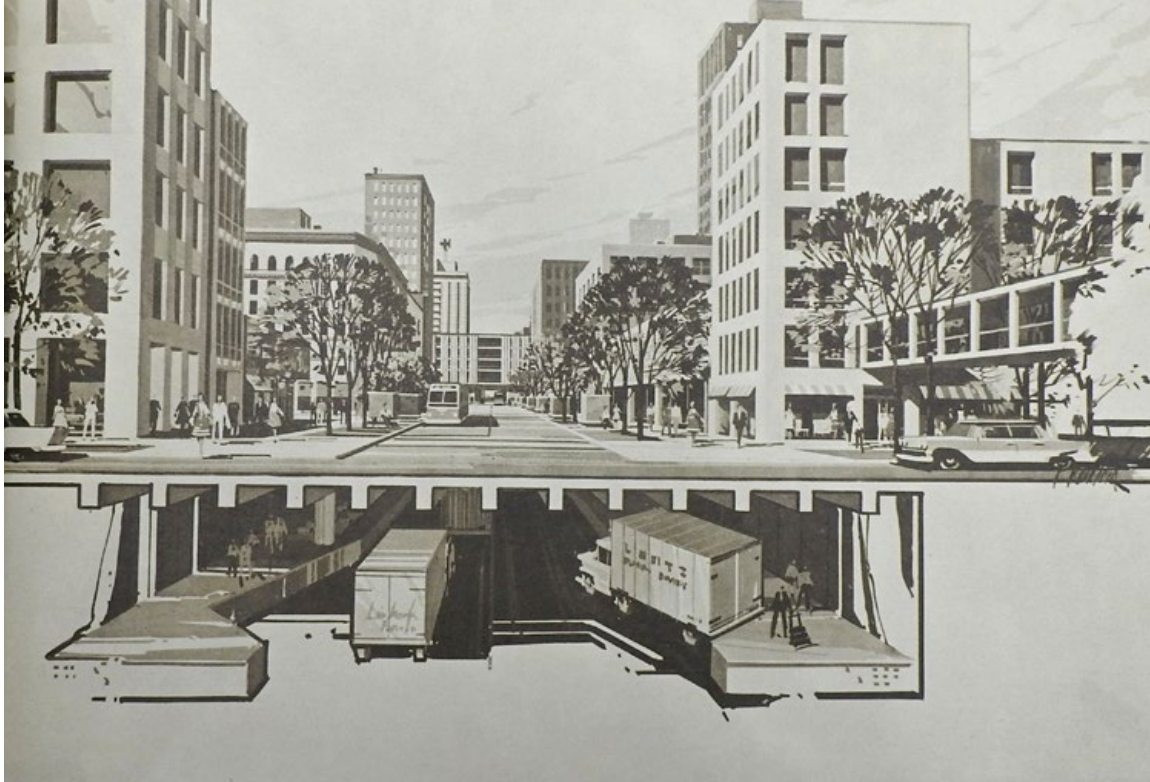


Additional components of the Main Place project, including additional towers, were never completed.

- Function as a single unit so that pedestrians may have continuous access over the entire ten acres.
- Maximize the site's incomparable access from all parts of the metropolitan area to the massive underground parking garage.
- Ease the flow of traffic into and out of the project by separating conflicting movements.
- Relate complimentary uses to produce a dynamic union of various activities.
- Create on this vast land area carefully organized open areas which blend with each other and the building masses surrounding them to develop a true urban scale.³⁴

The Public-sector Plan for Dallas

In the shadow of Victor Gruen's multi-layered plan for Fort Worth, the privately-funded Columbia plan, and with SOM's concept for Main Place under development, the City of Dallas found itself playing catch up and commissioned its own plan for the city focusing largely on traffic and transportation. Conducted by DeLeuw, Cather and Company of Chicago and released in July 1965, the plan was yet another comprehensive example of a multi-layered city plan and



The City of Dallas commissioned its own plan in 1965 from DeLeuw, Cather and Company of Chicago. Few of its recommendations, such as this underground freight tunnel, were implemented.

included many of the general concepts for the city core presented in the Columbia Plan while leaving out the massive 36-block superblock. The DeLeuw, Cather document included detailed studies of traffic and growth patterns downtown and made specific recommendations for future development including freeways, new street alignments, centralized parking structures and transportation terminals, layered transportation networks including freight tunnels, and pedestrian conveyances.³⁵

The 1965 plan for downtown made direct references to the Main Place development which was not yet under construction. Maps, diagrams, and even artwork in the plan clearly identified Main Place as a central part of the overall proposal. Although the public plan coordinated closely with the ideas of the Dallas Texas Corporation for the Main Place development, it failed to effectively address how the massive new infrastructure proposed for downtown might be constructed. The expressway loop around downtown was completed, though the parking

and transportation terminals it was to feed were not. The downtown street grid was modified as suggested by the planners and the Griffin Street connector completed through the heart of the proposed Main Place development.

By 1965, the three-acre site for One Main Place was fully cleared and the massive excavation of the site underway, an effort claimed by the *Dallas Times Herald* to be the largest excavation project for a single building in history.³⁶ Also in 1965, the first segment of an underground pedestrian network was constructed. It was an 800-foot long collection of tunnels connecting the Davis, Metropolitan Federal Savings, and First National Bank Buildings. The meandering tunnel included several shops.

The Ponte-Travers Plan

In 1969, with One Main Place fully complete and the future of the development hanging in the balance, the City of Dallas completed a revised study for downtown. Compiled by Vincent Ponte, the visionary behind Montreal's massive

underground network, and traffic planner Warren Travers, the plan revised and expanded upon DeLeuw and Cather's 1965 effort. The team was also hired to provide an update to the plan. Completed in 1986, the document was evolutionary, stressing the same concepts as the 1969 plan but in the context of twenty years of additional development.

Many of Ponte's ideas for revitalizing the downtown cores of major cities again called for the development of large, centrally-located land areas or superblocks controlled by a single owner. Such developments would become part of a network of similar, contiguous developments, connected to one another through the cooperation of public and private interests. As with his contemporaries, he envisioned dense cores with large central parking facilities served by outer freeway loops, vertically-separated transportation networks, and the provision of multiple overlapping functions including business, residential, civic, and service.³⁷ In 1957, Ponte famously implemented his ideas in his home town of Montreal, where he, Developer William Zeckendorf, and architect I. M. Pei designed Place Ville Marie, a superblock development and catalyst for what would grow to become one of the largest underground complexes in the world. With over twenty miles of above and below ground connections, the system serves 500,000 people daily.³⁸

The Ponte-Travers plans shared many of the basic concepts of the DeLeuw-Cather Plan and even that of George Kessler. Like their predecessors, they stressed the need to improve efficiency in the core by carefully controlling various modes of transportation to reduce conflicts and related congestion. However, their plans were a more pragmatic analysis than those put forth in the DeLeuw-Cather Plan, and in Victor Gruen's plan for Fort Worth. Ponte's plan focused less on futuristic ideas such as a street grid enveloped by new construction and moving sidewalks. The plan focused more on improving the efficiency of the existing street grid and the use of traditional means of transit downtown like

buses to distribute people. Also central to the Ponte-Travers plans for Dallas was the incremental establishment of a layered transportation network and an extensive pedestrian network that was to be placed primarily underground with strategically-placed overhead connections.

Ponte believed that new development and the construction of major new buildings downtown was inevitable. What was important, he stressed, was that the city work in coordination with these new developments to incrementally provide new infrastructure. For example, the proposed underground pedestrian network could be expanded relatively inexpensively and with a minimum of disruption downtown if completed while new buildings were under construction. He stressed the importance of establishing design standards for the tunnels to ensure they were of uniform width and height, conveniently accessible, constructed with durable and attractive finishes, and had a minimum of blank walls in favor of retail storefront. The tunnels would improve efficiency, provide shops and amenities to attract visitors much as suburban shopping centers did, and provide a critical link to a future subway/commuter rail system. By 1986 the subway was still in the planning phases and Ponte-Travers again stressed its importance to the health of the core and to the pedestrian network.

Ponte and Travers agreed that the construction of a downtown freight tunnel system was a necessity. However, the DeLeuw/Cather idea of a single one-way tunnel under Main Street was seen as inefficient and unrealistic. Ponte developed a far more detailed plan for a zoned system of nine independent freight terminals serving specific areas. Such a system, he said, would be more efficient for freight operators, could be implemented in phases as development allowed, and would cause far less disruption downtown during construction. One such zone was planned for the then-proposed Dallas Municipal Complex and the I. M. Pei-designed city hall, and was intended to connect city hall and the convention center. Another was planned to the



Vincent Ponte's 1969 plan for the city, updated in 1986, focused on improving the efficiency of the existing street grid, layering traffic through extensions of the underground pedestrian tunnels and overhead walkways, such as this one on Elm Street near the Majestic Theater.

northeast near Republic National Bank at Ervay and Pacific Streets (now Thanksgiving Square). These two sections of the freight tunnel network and another smaller one beneath Browder Street servicing the Southwestern Bell Tower were the only ones completed. A little-known third level of parking and a transit tunnel remain in place but unused under city hall.

Ponte, both in 1969 and 1986, believed that to attract visitors downtown the city needed to do what suburban communities had done: construct a massive shopping mall similar to Northpark and the Galleria to the north. Accessible by the proposed new subway system and the pedestrian network, the mall would take the form of a massive retail superblock enveloping several blocks between Commerce/Elm and Ervay/Akard. The plan would have involved the clearing of some of the city's most important historic buildings, described by Ponte in 1986 as "disposable," including the Neiman Marcus Building, Wilson Building, Dallas National Bank Building, Titcher's Department Store, and the entire Mercantile block.³⁹ The plan never materi-

alized due to the monumental effort required to accumulate the necessary land.

In April 1970, for reasons both personal and financial, the One Main Place superblock project was discontinued.⁴⁰ Although the Main Place superblock was not ultimately the catalyst project the Dallas, Texas Corporation envisioned, the idea of a multi-layered city continued to have an influence downtown for years to come. Other attempts were made to construct superblock projects downtown. In fact, the Bank of America Plaza was envisioned as Main Place Center, a project that would have included a twin tower connected to the existing one over Main Street, an 800-room hotel, and an extensive underground pedestrian network. As with Main Place, Main Place Center failed after completion of the first phase. In the late 1960s, Wesley Goyer, Jr., gathered thirty-two acres of land near the convention center to create a large new multi-purpose superblock development. Phase one and central to the development was to be the construction of the cylindrical 913-foot Dallas Tower, which was to be surrounded by office buildings, retail shops,



Today the food court below Bank of America is one of the few remaining successful areas of the underground tunnel system.

night clubs and which would be surmounted by three rotating restaurants. The development was said by *The Dallas Morning News* to be in keeping with the new Ponte-Travers Plan for downtown. The land, consisting largely of railroad freight warehouses, was cleared for the development, the plans for the major tower were abandoned, one small structure completed, and the project shut down due to lack of financing.⁴¹

Large building projects were undertaken downtown in the years to follow, and these new developments aligned more closely with the ideas put forth by Ponte and Travers. Lower levels included extensive parking and retail arcades tied to the tunnel system. Lacking was significant connectivity between buildings, residential components, and the amenities that would support downtown living. Some properties were tied to the underground freight system where it was available. For example, the terminal in the north central part of downtown along Ervay Street was dedicated in 1976 at Thanksgiving Square and included a signature entry into the pedestrian tunnel network along with the Bullington Freight Terminal. Freight trucks enter the underground terminal where they transfer

shipments to cartways for delivery to surrounding office buildings.

The expansion of the tunnel system both by the city and by private developers was disjointed and uncoordinated, and with a lack of design standards resulted in a network that is not ideal functionally or aesthetically. The subway system and its stations, so integral to the success of the network were constructed at-grade, a decision contrary to the recommendations of every city plan, even that of George Kessler in 1911. Although some isolated nodes of the underground remain successful today, other sections lie in disrepair or have been closed altogether.

There is an ongoing debate in Dallas on the question of whether the tunnels promoted in the Ponte-Travers plan accelerated the demise of downtown by removing pedestrians from the streets, thereby killing street-level retail. This argument ignores the historical context in which the system was developed. It is possible that, with the ongoing, coordinated, and cooperative efforts of public and private interests to complete significant projects, the concepts promoted by superblock planners might have resulted in a revitalized downtown core. Had those plans been implemented across the core, the

face of Dallas would be much different today and its historic architecture largely lost to demolition. It is apparent that the implementation of piecemeal aspects of the plan had some negative impacts on the downtown core. For example, the construction of an inner freeway loop around downtown further exacerbated problems in the core by disrupting the street grid, requiring the demolition of significant residential and commercial neighborhoods, disconnecting surrounding areas from the core, and by bringing yet more automobiles downtown without the planned garages and transportation systems necessary to alleviate congestion. Similarly, the construction of a pedestrian network that provided access to relatively few amenities or conveniences, and without direct connection to the transit system, was doomed to failure. **L**

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Dallas County Historical Commission
Dallas County Pioneer Association
Dallas Heritage Village at Old City Park
Dallas Historical Society
Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library
Dallas Municipal Archives
DeGolyer Library at SMU
Historic Aldredge House
Old Red Museum of Dallas County History & Culture
Park Cities Historic and Preservation Society
Preservation Dallas
The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza
Texas State Historical Association
William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies at SMU

*As of September 15, 2018

CONTRIBUTORS



Steven R. Butler, a Dallas native and distant cousin of Dallas founder John Neely Bryan, earned his Ph.D. in history at the University of Texas at Arlington. He is currently an Associate Professor of History at Richland College in Dallas and Collin College in Plano. A two-time presenter at the annual Dallas History Conference, Butler is also a frequent contributor to *Legacies*. His most recent article was “Infidels of Denison” in the fall 2015 issue.



Jeff Dunn is Attorney at Law with Munsch Hardt Kopf & Harr, PC. Dunn served as Chairman of the Dallas County Historical Commission and Trustee for the Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza (1999-2003) and Chairman of the San Jacinto Historical Advisory Board (2000-2007). He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Texas State Historical Association. His article, “The Development of Automobile Roads in Dallas County, 1905-1926,” was published in the spring 2000 issue of *Legacies*.



Jay Firsching earned a B.S. degree in Communications from Texas A&M University before attending the graduate program in historic preservation at the University of Texas at Austin. He is currently Senior Historic Preservation Specialist at Architexas in Dallas, where his work focuses on historical research, grant administration, tax-credit projects, building assessment and documentation, county courthouse rehabilitation, and marketing. Recipient of numerous awards for preservation, Jay is a member of Preservation Dallas and serves as Vice Chair of Dallas Central Business District, West End, and Individual Sites Task Force, a role he has filled for more than sixteen years.



Frank Jackson received a B.A. in English from the University of Pennsylvania and an M.A. in Radio-TV-Film from Northwestern. Currently employed by the Turley Law Firm, he has written more than 250 articles for the *Hardball Times* web site and has also written several articles for the Texas Rangers program magazine. His article “Alexander the Once Great” was published in the fall 2016 issue of *Legacies*.



Courtney Welch holds a Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration and Law and a Ph.D. in History. She is currently a Senior Lecturer and Associate Chair in the History Department at the University of North Texas. Her research and teaching interests include Labor, New Deal, and Southern history.

Dallas THEN & NOW



RECORD CROSSING



As the city of Dallas approached the twentieth century, a reliable and plentiful source of clean water for drinking, bathing, firefighting, and other uses was increasingly necessary. Water supplied from springs, wells, and creeks was no longer sufficient to meet the city's needs, and the "coffee-colored" water from the nearby West Fork of the Trinity River was heavily contaminated by waste from packing houses in Ft. Worth.

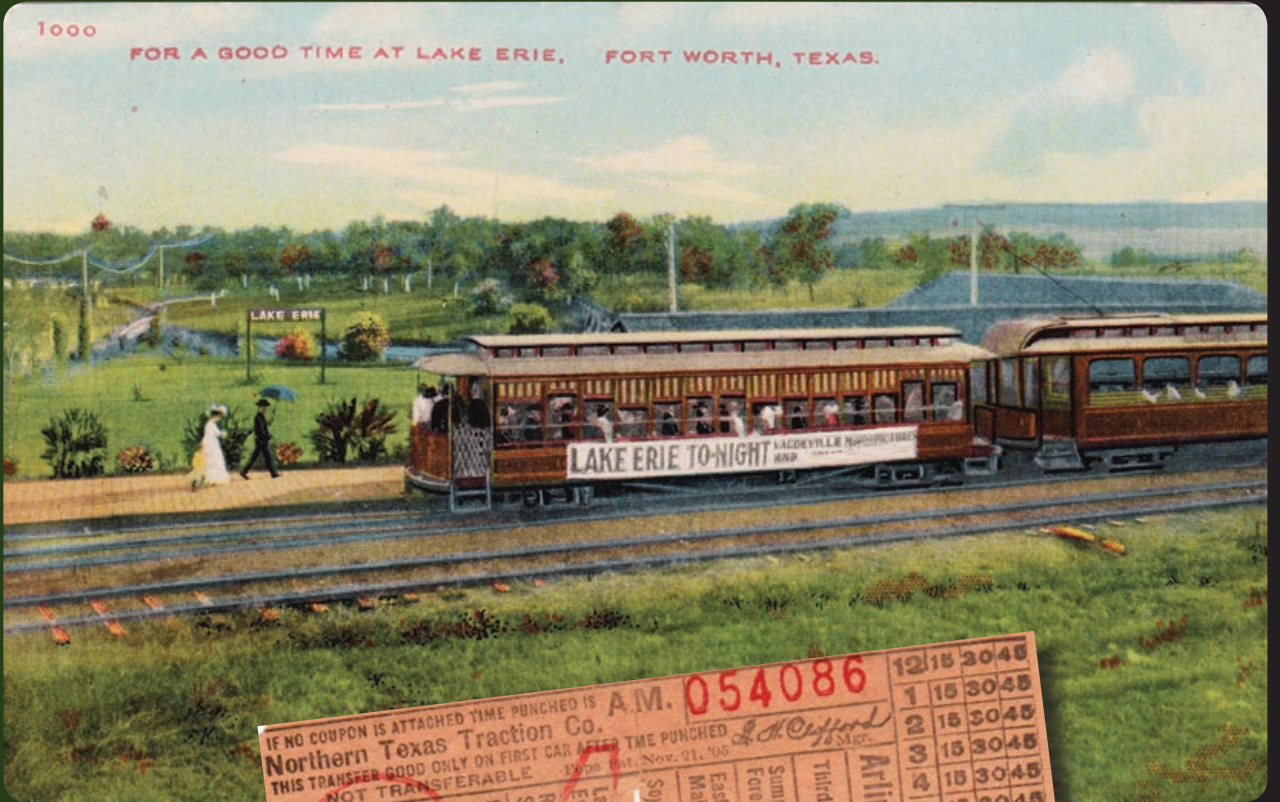
As early as the 1850s, settler George Record had begun operating a grist mill on the Elm Fork of the Trinity, about seven miles northwest of downtown Dallas. Elm Fork water was vastly superior to the supply from the West Fork, so around 1895 the city of Dallas took advantage of the old Record mill site and built a dam and pump house to send Elm Fork water through a buried, leaky wooden conduit to another pumping station on Turtle Creek, approximately three miles to the southeast. From here the water was sent on to downtown Dallas.

In 1901, the city began construction of a dam to impound Bachman Creek water as a supplement to the existing supply. Bachman Lake, White Rock Lake, and other future reservoirs would eventually render the Record Crossing pumping station unnecessary. After 1930, the site was abandoned. The old pump house eventually disappeared, but the brick foundations and the breached dam are still visible along Record Crossing Boulevard in an industrial district just to the west of UT Southwestern Medical Center.

—Mark Rice

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7th St.	9th St.	9th St.	9th St.	9th St.	9th St.	9th St.	9th St.	Summit Ave.	Summit Ave.	Trinity Park or 5th St.		1	15	30	45
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