

Fall  
2022

# LEGACIES

*A History Journal for Dallas & North Central Texas*

**Cultural  
Expressions**

**Carnegie Libraries in North Central Texas  
When Tinseltown Came to Cowtown  
100 Years of WRR in North Texas  
The Cultural Aspect of Food: Identity, Community, and  
Creating a Sense of Home in North Texas**



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**Front and back covers: The Carnegie Libraries constructed in North Central Texas in the early 20th century helped spread literacy and knowledge throughout the region.**

**Inside back cover: Four of the tables in this image are still in use at the J. Erik Jonsson Central Library, in the reading area of the 7th floor Dallas History and Archives Division. See “Carnegie Libraries in North Central Texas,” beginning on page 4.**



# LEGACIES

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**The Cultural Aspect of Food:  
Identity, Community, and  
Creating a Sense of Home in North Texas**

EDITED BY STEPHEN FAGIN

All previous issues of *Legacies* from 1989 through spring 2021 are online at the University of North Texas Portal to Texas History. The address is: <http://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/LHJNT>



**Gary Cooper, star of *The Westerner*, took the microphone during a Chamber of Commerce luncheon hosted by WBAP, the radio station owned by Amon Carter, left, during festivities marking the film's premiere in Fort Worth in September 1940. See "When Tinseltown Came to Cowtown," beginning on page 18.**

*D*uring the twentieth century, many forms of cultural expression began to spread more widely throughout the United States. North Central Texas was no exception, as the population grew and diversified, educational opportunities increased, and technical innovation thrived. This issue of *Legacies* explores a few ways in which local culture was enriched.

Literacy grew rapidly with the establishment of public school systems. But books were expensive to purchase, and most so-called public libraries served only subscribers who could afford to pay a fee. The creation of free public libraries became an early cause for the women's clubs that began forming in the late 1800s, aided enormously by the decision of steel magnate Andrew Carnegie to distribute much of his fortune toward construction of library buildings. Don Baynham describes the construction of Carnegie Libraries (as they were known) in North Texas. Those in Dallas and Fort Worth were razed long ago and replaced on the same sites with newer buildings. But several in smaller towns still stand, a few still functioning as libraries, others restored for use by local cultural organizations. All played an important role in making books—and the knowledge they contain—available to larger populations.

Motion pictures blossomed between 1900 and 1930 from primitive one-reelers to silent films to the talkies, with audiences growing exponentially. By 1940, the premiere of a new film could be a major event. So when publisher Amon Carter convinced producer Samuel Goldwyn to open his new film *The Westerner* in Fort Worth, it was a cause for a local extravaganza, including a parade through downtown, and appearances by the film's stars in both Fort Worth and Dallas. Frank Jackson describes the colorful activities that introduced a film set in West Texas (even if it was actually filmed in Arizona).

Radio was another invention that took off in the twentieth century, and Dallas was at the forefront in acquiring a municipal station carrying news, weather, and music into homes throughout the area—or at least those that had sets to receive the broadcasts, and those sets proliferated through

the 1920s and '30s, creating some competition for moving pictures. Kristi Nedderman and John Slate tell the story of the origins of WRR and provide a timeline of highlights during its 100-year history. The station's achievements are especially relevant as it enters into a new relationship with KERA, the area's public broadcasting affiliate.

As waves of foreign-born immigrants settled in Dallas and North Central Texas, they brought many aspects of their native cultures with them. These were most often expressed through their foodways, in which families and friends could gather to share a familiar meal even as they were adjusting to life in a new culture outside the home through their work and schooling. Sustaining traditional foodways generally involved finding sources for ingredients, at a neighborhood store, or even in a home garden. At the 23rd Annual *Legacies* Dallas History Conference, a panel discussed cultural expressions through foodways within Black, Hispanic, and Asian communities. Stephen Fagin has edited their conversation, and we are pleased to be able to include it in this issue.

Libraries, books, movies, radio, and traditional foodways all continue to spread their different forms of cultural expression through North Central Texas, building on a rich legacy.

—Michael V. Hazel

We are saddened to report the death of Dr. Elizabeth York Enstam on September 15, 2022, after a brief illness. Dr. Enstam was the leading historian of women in Dallas, the recipient of many awards for her work. She was also one of the most stalwart supporters of this journal, contributing a dozen articles over the past 34 years, each a model of scholarly research and beautiful writing. She also generously reviewed manuscripts submitted for publication and reviewed books for us (her last review appears on pp. 60-61 of this issue). Each issue would elicit a message of praise and appreciation from her. She will be deeply missed.



# Carnegie Libraries in North Central Texas

BY DON BAYNHAM

*I*n December 1901, Andrew Carnegie sold his steel company to J. P. Morgan for \$480 million (more than \$15 billion today). When the deal was done, Morgan shook Carnegie's hand. "Mr. Carnegie," he said, "I want to congratulate you on being the richest man in the world."<sup>1</sup>

This presented a challenge for Carnegie, who believed that a man should use the first part of his life accumulating money, and the last part giving it away. Indeed, he declared, "The man who dies . . . rich dies disgraced."<sup>2</sup> Carnegie would devise numerous ways to avoid such disgrace, but among the more popular was the building of public libraries.

Prior to Carnegie's program, tax-supported free public libraries were virtually nonexistent. There were a few—the first free public library was created in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1833<sup>3</sup>—and many subscription libraries were formed around the country, but the free public library was a rarity.

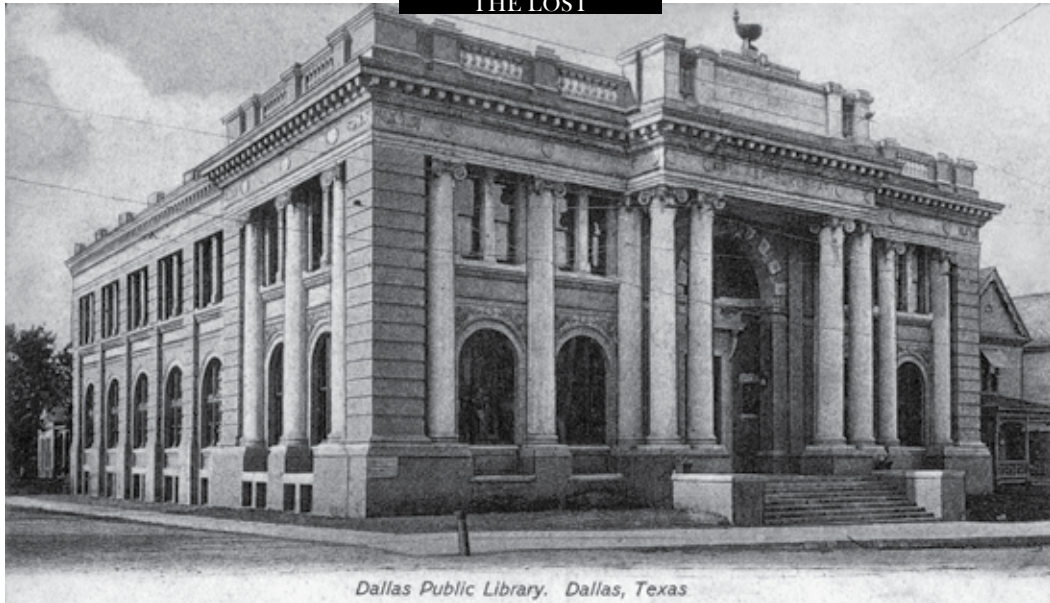
Carnegie's interest in libraries began in his youth in Pennsylvania. Colonel James Anderson was an Allegheny City manufacturer who established the city's first quasi-public library by opening his private library of 400 books to local boys.<sup>4</sup> Each Saturday, Andrew borrowed a book from that library, exchanging it for another the following week. Over time, he read almost all of them. In his autobiography Carnegie would

write, "It was from my own early experience that I decided there was no use to which money could be applied so productive of good to boys and girls who have good within them and ability and ambition to develop it, as the founding of a public library in a community which is willing to support it as a municipal institution."<sup>5</sup>

He began funding libraries in the late 1800s, mostly in places to which he had a connection, such as his hometown of Dunfermline, Scotland. His first in the United States was in 1887 (in Braddock, Pennsylvania) and by 1919 he had funded almost 1,700 libraries across America (a total of about 2,500 worldwide, almost all in English-speaking countries).<sup>6</sup> The typical arrangement had Carnegie paying for the building, while the community provided the land, books, and staff, as well as a commitment to fund the library's operation through taxation in perpetuity.<sup>7</sup>

After the Braddock library opened, word quickly spread of Carnegie's largesse, and requests for funding began to arrive from around the country, including Texas. Between 1899 and 1915, Texas received funding for thirty-two public libraries and one academic library (for Wiley College in Marshall). This article will provide an overview of the geneses of seven of those libraries in North Central Texas, three that no longer exist, and four which still stand.





**The first Dallas Public Library opened in October 1901 at the southwest corner of Commerce and Harwood streets. It was the third Carnegie library in Texas. The building was razed in 1952 and a new central library was built on the site.**

## Dallas Main

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In 1899, under the leadership of May Dickson Exall, the newly formed Dallas Public Library Association began raising money to create a free library for the city. When they had raised \$11,000, Mrs. Exall wrote to Carnegie requesting a \$50,000 grant to fund the building. A month later, Carnegie agreed.<sup>8</sup>

A request went out for design ideas, and many were received. The members of the association reviewed all the submissions in the blind, the names of the architects having been removed. In the end, the winning design was from a Fort Worth firm. Not pleased, they then reviewed the remaining submissions (again in the blind), only to find that the winner of the second round was from the same Fort Worth architecture group. Reluctantly, they awarded the contract to Sanguinet and Staats of Fort Worth.<sup>9</sup> So diligent was the association in

monitoring construction and the acquisition of furnishings and equipment that the total cost of the project came to \$50,097.<sup>10</sup>

The new Dallas Public Library opened at the southwest corner of Commerce and Harwood streets to great celebration in October 1901. During the first ten weeks, nearly 3,000 people obtained library cards, and more than 15,000 books were checked out.<sup>11</sup> It was the third Carnegie library built in Texas, after Fort Worth and Pittsburg (in East Texas).

It was an elegant affair, with an auditorium on the second floor (dubbed Carnegie Hall), an art room (which would eventually become the Dallas Museum of Art), and reading and reference rooms. On the roof was an elaborate skylight, specially designed to light the art room, the staircase, and the lobby.



**The Oak Cliff branch of the Dallas Public Library opened in 1914 at the corner of Marsalis and Jefferson streets. It was razed in 1966 and a new branch library was constructed on the site.**

## Dallas Oak Cliff Branch

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In 1900, Dallas's population was 42,638. By 1910 the city had more than doubled to 92,104, and the library was finding it difficult to provide services for the city's population. In 1903, Dallas had annexed Oak Cliff, a town on the other side of the Trinity River, adding another 4,000 people to the library's clientele. Reports from other libraries were showing that branch libraries were circulating twice as many books, at less than half the cost, as main libraries, so the decision was reached to open a branch. At the same time, a group representing the Oak Cliff Improvement Society proposed the creation of an Oak Cliff branch to the library board, promising to donate the site.<sup>12</sup>

Accepting the offer, the board again asked Carnegie for funding but was turned down. The board president, Maurice Locke, then sent a personal letter to Carnegie, who agreed. In his letter, Carnegie wrote, "I would be pleased beyond measure to get rid of \$25,000, thereby coming a little nearer to the dream of my life—to die poor."<sup>13</sup>

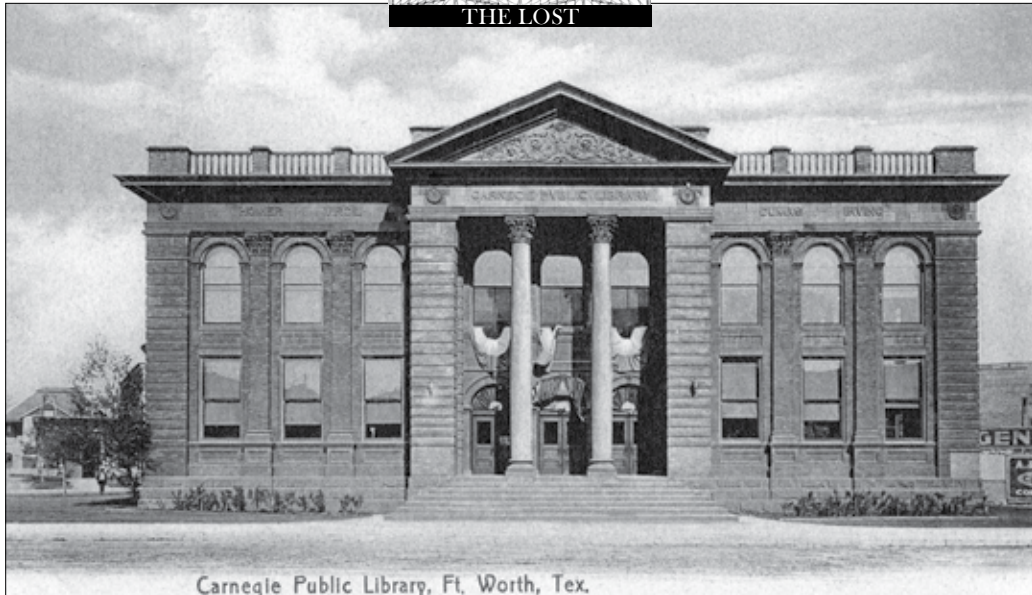
The new library, designed by C.D. Hill and Company,<sup>14</sup> opened on November 23, 1914, in Library Plaza (now Turner Plaza) at the corner of Marsalis Avenue and Jefferson Boulevard. The

building housed a reading room, children's room, and a 200-seat auditorium. The books (more than 4,000) were provided by a gift of \$3,000 from the Oak Cliff Library Association, by donations from Oak Cliff residents, and by a loan of some 200 volumes from the main library.<sup>15</sup>

Both the main and branch libraries were popular, well used, and plagued by underfunding and the city's rapid growth. The main library struggled to keep up, but was unable to maintain the building with the funding provided, and by the 1940s the second floor was in danger of collapse.<sup>16</sup> In 1945, the city included enlarging the library in a \$40 million bond issue, but that didn't happen. Instead a 1952 bond issue included money for a new library building. The Dallas Carnegie Library was razed in 1952, and a new library opened in 1954 on the site of the original.<sup>17</sup>

Like the main library before it, the Oak Cliff Library (as it was officially known) grew more crowded with each passing year. In 1957 the city commissioned a study of Dallas's library needs which found that the branch was overcrowded and in need of serious repair. The library board decided to replace the building, and the new library, located just behind the old one, opened in 1966. The old branch was razed in the same year.<sup>18</sup>





Fort Worth's Carnegie Library opened in October 1901 at the corner of Ninth and Throckmorton streets. It was demolished in 1936 and replaced on the same site by a new central library building.

## Fort Worth

In 1892, twenty women, led by Jennie Scott Scheuber, formed the Fort Worth Public Library Association. Their intention was to create a public library and an art gallery for the city.<sup>19</sup> The Association consisted of twenty women, including the wives of John Peter Smith (known as the “father of Fort Worth”) and B.B. Paddock (Fort Worth’s mayor in 1892). It was a women-only organization, with a lifetime-membership fee of \$1.00.<sup>20</sup>

To raise money, they conducted numerous fundraisers, garnering \$12,000 by 1898. Club member Mrs. D. B. Keeler then proposed asking every man who smoked to donate the price of one cigar every day. She even wrote to Andrew Carnegie, asking him to do the same. She received his response on July 25, 1899, telling her that if the city would provide a site and furnish \$4,000 a year for maintenance, he would provide a grant of \$50,000.<sup>21</sup>

When he learned of the gift, Mayor Paddock urged the citizens to “come out and jubilate!”<sup>22</sup> He called for a mass meeting to be held at City Hall on July 26, for the purpose of accepting

Carnegie’s offer. After many speeches, the mayor made a motion to accept the grant. Many people seconded, the motion passed, and “bedlam broke loose, and never before was such an enthusiastic uproar heard in the vicinity of the city hall.”<sup>23</sup>

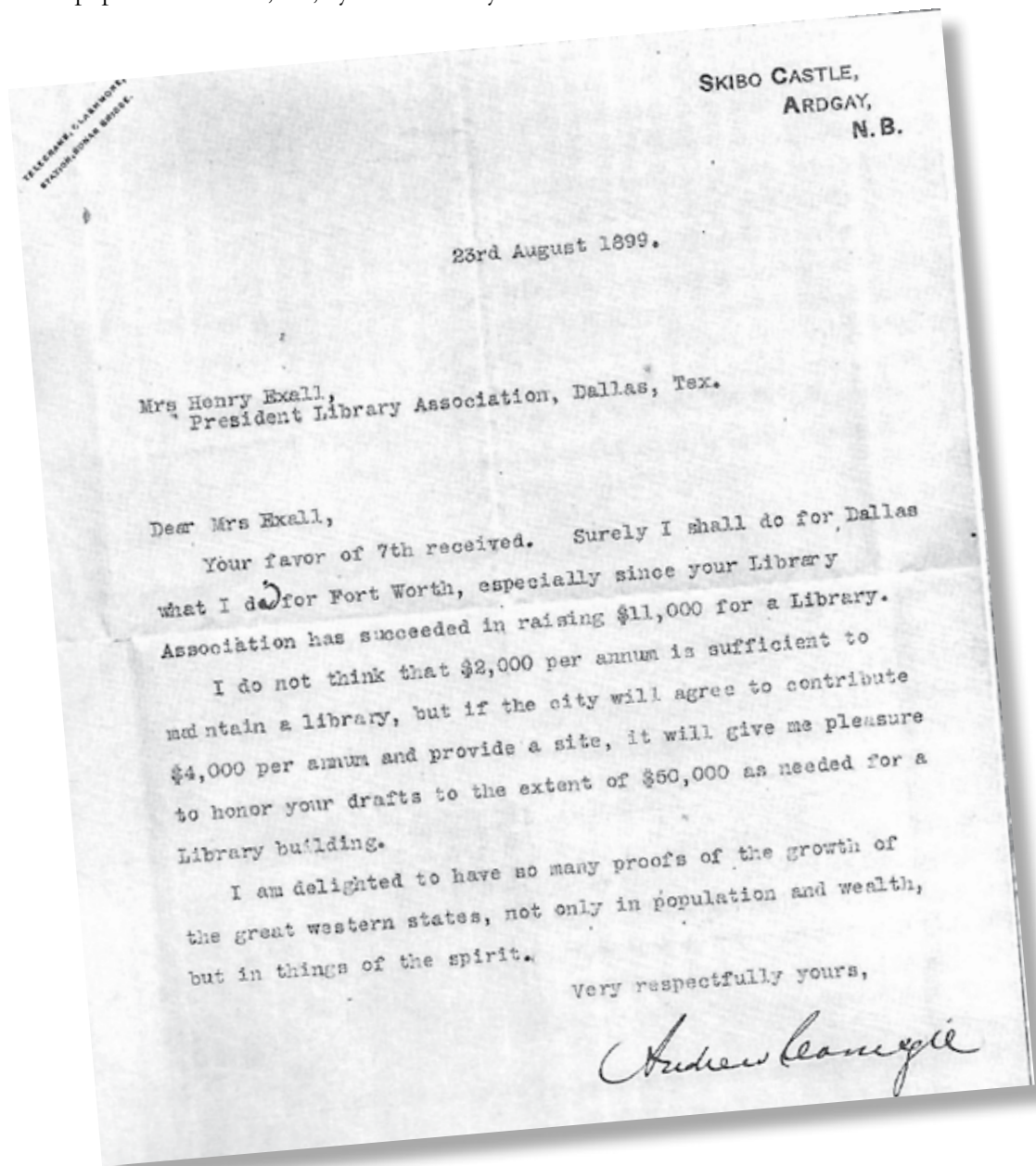
Land for the building was donated by Mrs. Sarah Gray Jennings, and by fall the city council had chosen Herbert H. Green as architect (ironically, Green’s firm was based in Dallas), and advertised for construction bids. The cornerstone was laid on September 24, 1899.<sup>24</sup>

The Carnegie Public Library of Fort Worth opened on October 17, 1901, at the corner of Ninth and Throckmorton Streets, with a collection of almost 7,000 books.<sup>25</sup> The first floor housed a large reading room, a reference room, and a stack room. Three counters staffed by librarians served the patrons’ needs. Offices, work rooms, and a main hall filled out the rest of the floor.<sup>26</sup> The main hall served as not only the lobby, but also as a mini museum. A 1924 photograph shows a display featuring mammoth tusks, photographs, and a Gatling gun, among other things.<sup>27</sup>

The second floor was given over to the Carnegie Public Library Art Gallery, and to rooms for the Association. The Library and Art Association became two different entities in 1910,<sup>28</sup> and the second floor became the Fort Worth Museum of Art.<sup>29</sup>

As was the case with many Carnegies before it, the library was soon outgrown. In 1900 Fort Worth's population was 26,668; by 1930 the city

had grown more than sixfold, to 163,447.<sup>30</sup> By the late 1920s the need for additional space was critical, but a bond issue in 1928 failed. Money for a new library became available during the Depression through the Public Works Administration; after years of wrangling the funds were finally acquired. In 1936 the Carnegie was demolished and replaced on the same site by a new library in 1939.<sup>31</sup>





STILL STANDING



**The Carnegie Library in Cleburne opened in 1905 on North Caddo Street. It now houses the Layland Museum and is part of a larger history complex operated by the city.**

## Cleburne

In 1901, Mrs. J. D. Osborne organized the Women's Club of Cleburne, with the express purpose of creating a library for the town. Without funding, however, all they could manage was a subscription library that was open only three afternoons a week. But their goal was to open a real library.<sup>32</sup>

In 1902, "a determined committee of ladies from the local Women's Club decided that the young town needed to become civilized,"<sup>33</sup> and appointed Mrs. D. E. Waggoner to represent them at the Carnegie Foundation offices in New York City and request a grant. Her first trip was unsuccessful, but she went back the following year, and Carnegie granted the Club \$20,000 provided they obtained the land, and could persuade the city to levy a tax for library maintenance.<sup>34</sup> The tax was soon levied, money was raised to purchase the land, and the architectural firm of Smith and Moore was hired to design the building.<sup>35</sup> The new library would be the first professionally designed structure to be built in Cleburne.<sup>36</sup>

The library opened in 1905, at 201 North Caddo Street, with 2,608 books. Most of them had been given by the people of Cleburne, but the Carnegie Foundation donated a bookcase

filled with volumes by contemporary authors on international relations, history, and philosophy.<sup>37</sup> A few of those books are still on display.

The first floor housed the main reading room, loan and reference departments, and a children's reading room. The second floor was a 400-seat auditorium with a large stage and two dressing rooms.

In 1953 the name was changed from the Cleburne Carnegie Library to the Cleburne Public Library. In 1963, the estate of local businessman William J. Layland donated part of his eclectic collection to the city, for a proposed museum. The second-floor auditorium being little used, the museum was placed there, and was open a few hours a week while the library operated downstairs.<sup>38</sup>

The growth of the community and overcrowding led to the construction of a new building, to which the library moved in 1978. This allowed the Layland Museum to expand into the entire building. That same year, a group formed to save the upstairs theater. Calling themselves the Greater Cleburne Carnegie Players, they spent two years renovating and began offering productions in 1980. They remained there until 2010,

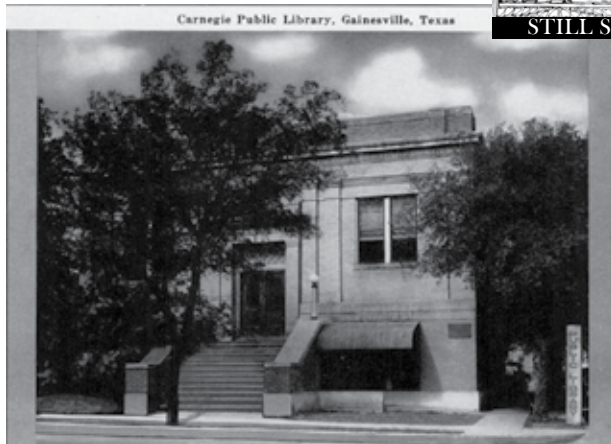


when they moved to the city's new performing arts center.<sup>39</sup> The theater is still beautifully preserved, though not much used these days.

The museum is well integrated with the old library, with artifacts shown to maximum effect, while having minimum impact on the original structure. Many original features remain, including lighting, elaborate ceiling work, venting grates,

columns, woodwork, and wooden folding chairs.

Today the Carnegie building is part of a larger history complex operated by the City of Cleburne. In addition to the old library, the complex includes a railroad museum, a research center, and a collections-care/education facility. The Layland Museum is open five days a week (Tuesday through Saturday), and admission is free.



**Gainesville's Carnegie Library opened in 1914 on South Denton Street. A new library building opened in 1962 and this structure sat vacant until 1979, when the Butterfield Players took it over as a performance venue.**

## Gainesville

In 1893, the city's first woman's club formed in Gainesville. It was called the XLI Club, because they limited the membership to no more than forty-one women the first year.<sup>40</sup> Like other such clubs forming across the country, it began as an association for intellectual development but soon began to work for better conditions in their community.<sup>41</sup>

In 1903 they formed a subscription library, supported by the city, which they ran for almost ten years. Lillian Gunter, who was president of XLI from 1909 to 1910, was appointed city librarian.<sup>42</sup> In 1912 she obtained a grant for \$15,000 from the Carnegie Foundation. William A. Tackett, an

architect from Sherman, drew up plans for the library, which were submitted to the Carnegie Corporation in New York.<sup>43</sup> After approval, construction began and the new library opened in October 1914, at 201 South Denton Street.

On the main floor were the main reading room, periodical room, librarian's area, reference department, and children's area. The basement housed an assembly room, an XLI Club room, and, in the rear of the building, the "Negro Reading Room," with its rear entrance. African Americans were not allowed in the main areas until the end of segregation, at which time the room was converted into a woodworking shop.

In 1962 a bond issue was passed for the construction of the new “Cooke County Library,” which opened in 1963. In 1979, the Butterfield Stage Players, a community theater group, set up shop in the vacant Carnegie building. The modifications made to accommodate theater seats and a stage were done with a sensitivity for the old library’s original purpose. Many original features remain, including the original librarian’s desk, the fireplace, woodwork, pocket doors, columns, and some lighting. The seating was repurposed from

the Cooke County Courthouse. An elevator was added to the side of the building to provide ADA access. Other than the elevator, the outside of the building is virtually unchanged and is in good condition, thanks to the theater’s partnership with the city. In their agreement, Gainesville maintains the outside of the building, and the theater is responsible for the inside. This relationship has been beneficial to the citizens of Gainesville, who get to enjoy both the beautiful old Carnegie and the prolific output of the Butterfield Players.

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## Sherman

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The Sherman Shakespeare Club began campaigning for a town library in 1898, and the first result was a subscription library. Having raised \$1,000 from 100 persons, the Club rented a room in the Murphy Building and charged patrons a nominal monthly fee. It failed, as did subsequent attempts in 1901 and 1910. In 1911 the Shakespeare Club had almost 1,000 books in its collection and its new president, Mrs. W. H. Lucas, was determined to use them as the basis for a free library. The club members went to the city council with a plan: the city would contribute \$50 a month, and the club would run the library. If, at the end of six months, the scheme was unsuccessful, it would be terminated.<sup>44</sup>

The plan was approved, and the library (in a rented room downtown) opened on July 12. The library would be open three afternoons a week, under the supervision of a young Daisy Polk, who would later move to Dallas and become an internationally known soprano.<sup>45</sup>

The pilot program was a success and was extended for another six months. At the end of that year, the mayor appointed a committee, made up of members of the Shakespeare Club and the Civic League, to pursue a grant from Andrew Carnegie. Working with the city, the committee made an application, and even travelled to New York, to secure the grant.<sup>46</sup>

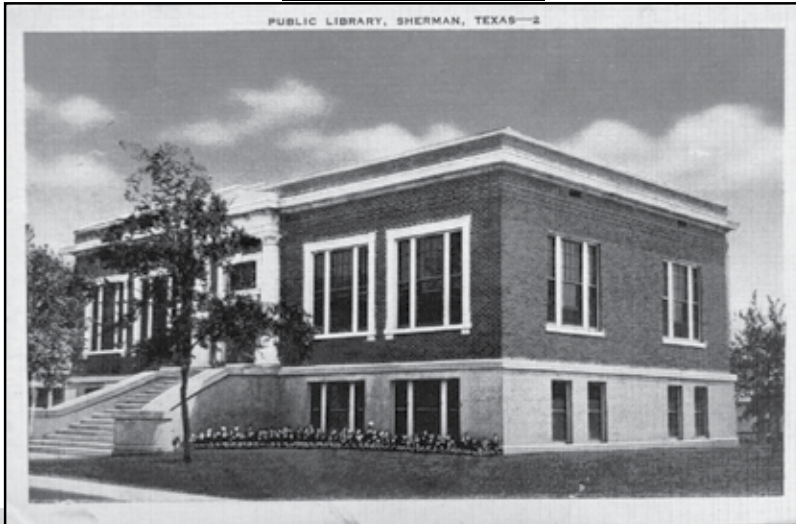
Once Carnegie’s grant of \$20,000 was approved, the city began to take action. A lot for the new building was secured for \$2,500, which, at the behest of the mayor, had been raised by the Shakespeare Club and the Civic League.<sup>47</sup> The city hired architect John Tulloch to design the building. Tulloch had designed a number of buildings in Grayson County and was the only architect practicing in Sherman at the time of the grant.<sup>48</sup>

The building, at 301 South Walnut, opened on July 10, 1915. The main floor contained two reading rooms, reference and magazine rooms, and the librarian’s office. The basement housed a lecture hall capable of seating 250.

By 1925 the library was bustling. The annual report for that year stated that 10,000 people had used the reading rooms, 6,000 held library cards, and books were being circulated at the rate of 2½ times per capita.<sup>49</sup> But by the 1970s, the community recognized the need for more space, and a new library was approved. The new facility opened in January of 1973.<sup>50</sup>

The old library was then used for storage by the city until a group of citizens persuaded the city council to adopt as a bicentennial project the creation of the Sherman Historical Museum, to be housed in the old library. The museum opened on July 1, 1976.<sup>51</sup> Now called the Sherman

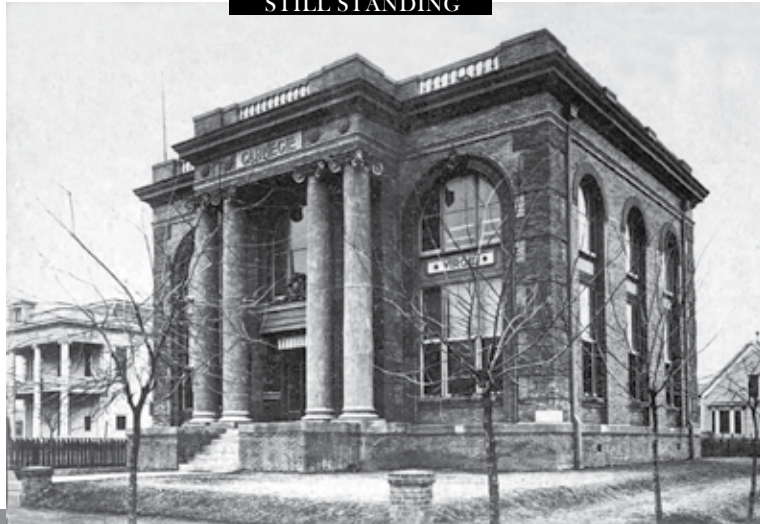




**The Carnegie Library in Sherman opened in 1915 on South Walnut Street. A new library building opened in 1973, and this structure now houses the Sherman Museum.**

Museum, the building houses displays of items of cultural, historical, and educational value related to Grayson County. In addition to its permanent exhibits, the museum hosts school field trips and community events, presents lectures and activities, and features a number of online virtual exhibits. Both the interior and exterior appear to be in

excellent condition; the exhibits are well done and don't interfere with the structure of the building. Partially funded by the city, the museum depends on grants, donations, and fund raisers. It is open Wednesday through Saturday; admission is \$2 for students, \$3 for seniors, and \$5 for adults.



**Terrell's Carnegie Library opened in 1904 on North Francis Street. The community replaced it with a new library building in 1984, and it is now occupied by the Terrell Heritage Society.**

## Terrell

At least 70 percent of the public libraries in Texas were founded due to the efforts of women's clubs, and the Terrell library is no exception.<sup>52</sup> In 1901, having seen Andrew Carnegie award library grants to five Texas cities, twenty women formed an auxiliary to the Pioneer Club of Terrell.<sup>53</sup> Named the Carnegie Club, its only goal was to bring a free public library to Terrell.<sup>54</sup>

In February 1901, the Club wrote to Carnegie requesting funding, but after two months they assumed the letter had been lost, and wrote again. Carnegie responded, requesting information on two key issues: the donation of the site and the guarantee of an annual allocation for the library's maintenance. (Carnegie required that the allocation be 10 percent of the grant amount.)

Acquiring a site for the building wasn't a problem, but the maintenance issue was. As the city of Terrell was already taxing property at the maximum rate allowed by state law, it could not levy a new tax to support the library and was unwilling to reallocate funds within the city's budget. The decision had already been made to request \$10,000 from Carnegie, so the yearly allocation would have to be \$1,000.<sup>55</sup>

To get around this, the city council approved the issuing of monthly warrants to the library which would total \$1,000 a year. Such warrants could be converted to cash, but only at a discount, which could run as high as 40 percent. So technically they were meeting Carnegie's requirement, but the library was at risk of receiving significantly less than \$1,000 per year.<sup>56</sup> By 1903 all commitments were in place. The Club notified the Carnegie Foundation and set about the tasks of acquiring the site and selecting an architect. Land for the new building was acquired from the Elks Club for \$750,<sup>57</sup> and, after analyzing design submissions, the Club chose Messer and Smith of Waco to design the facility. In March 1904, the library opened at 207 North Francis Street with a ceremony in the second-floor auditorium.

The library proved popular and, as in so many other cities, it became an important community center. For many years, the second floor was used by the community for cultural and entertainment programs, from Chautauquas (traveling lectures and cultural offerings) to musicals.<sup>58</sup> And also as in so many other cities, it was overcrowded and underfunded. The city's method of providing funds for maintaining the library resulted in a chronic

shortage of money. In fact, an important source of revenue was the rent received from various organizations for use of space.<sup>59</sup> The underfunding was compounded by what appears to have been shoddy construction. Early on, structural weaknesses appeared.<sup>60</sup> Board minutes in 1912 reflect concern over "cracks and separation of the walls."<sup>61</sup> Water seeping through the roof would be a problem for years to come.

Over the years, demands on the library exceeded its capacity, and in 1984, it was replaced by the new Riter C. Hulsey Public Library.

Today the Old Carnegie building is occupied by the Terrell Heritage Society.<sup>62</sup> It now serves as a museum displaying artifacts from the city's past, including a 1912 restored pipe organ on the second floor, and a painting attributed to Frank Reaugh, a well-known Texas artist, who had lived in Terrell as a child.<sup>63</sup>

The second floor auditorium is no longer open to the public and so is used for storage. However, it is worth seeing (ask to take a look). The interior walls have suffered water damage over the years, but a 2015 grant from the Texas Preservation Trust Fund paid for a new roof and parapets, which have stopped the water incursion. The museum is very crowded with artifacts, but displays and exhibits have not damaged the integrity of the building.

The Carnegie building is owned by the city, and supporters hope it will see more funding and grants in the future. The Heritage Museum is open Wednesdays and Saturdays (and by appointment) and the admission is free.

*We live in a time when the public library is taken for granted; for that, we owe a debt of gratitude to Andrew Carnegie.*



Of the thirty-two public libraries funded by Andrew Carnegie in Texas, twelve remain standing. A few are still libraries, but most have become museums or something else. (Carnegie also funded the library for Wiley College in Marshall; it is now the College's administration building.) Those still standing are in Ballinger (library), Belton (museum), Bryan (Carnegie History Center), Cleburne (museum), Franklin (library), Gainesville (Butterfield Players), Jefferson (library), Palestine (library), Sherman (museum), Terrell (museum), and Tyler (Smith County Historical Society).

Of the almost 1,700 Carnegie Libraries built in this country, it is estimated that between 1,300 and 1,400 are still standing, and that approximately 40 percent of those still serve their communities as libraries.<sup>64</sup>

During the latter part of his life, Carnegie worked hard to give away his money. He paid for more than 7,000 church organs, endowed what would become Carnegie Mellon University, started the Carnegie endowment for International Peace, endowed a fund for teachers' retirements that became TIAA/CREF, built over 2,500 libraries worldwide, and much more. By the time he died, he had donated almost 95 percent of his vast fortune. There remained about \$20 million in stocks and bonds, which he bequeathed in his will to the Carnegie Corporation.<sup>65</sup>

Carnegie's largesse made many significant and long-lasting impacts on America, but among the most enduring must be the creation of so many free public libraries. We live in a time when the public library is taken for granted; for that, we owe a debt of gratitude to Andrew Carnegie. **L**

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>David Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie*. Kindle ed., Penguin, 2006.

<sup>2</sup>Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Essays* (1889), Kindle ed., Digireads.com, 2010.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/peterborough-town-library>. Until they could afford a building, books were kept in a general store, then a pharmacy. In 1893 the library building opened, and (expanded and renovated) it still stands.

<sup>4</sup>Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie*.

<sup>5</sup>[https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17976/17976-h/17976-h.htm#CHAPTER\\_IV](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/17976/17976-h/17976-h.htm#CHAPTER_IV).

<sup>6</sup><https://www.history.com/news/andrew-carnegies-surprising-legacy>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/books>

<sup>8</sup><https://dallaslibrary2.org/about/history.php>

<sup>9</sup>Michael V. Hazel, *A Century of Service, 1901-2001* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2001), 12. Sanguinet and Staats also designed the Wilson Building on Main Street in downtown Dallas. It is now an apartment building known as "The Wilson."

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 14.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 21.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 40.

<sup>13</sup><https://oakcliff.advocatemag.com/2013/10/oak-cliff-libraries-wealthy-heritage/>.

<sup>14</sup><https://dougnewby.com/architect/charles-d-hill/>.

Charles D. Hill, former Dallas-office manager for Sanguinet and Staats, also designed the Dallas Municipal Building, First Presbyterian Church downtown, and the Davis Building, among others.

<sup>15</sup>Hazel, *A Century of Service*, 43.

<sup>16</sup><http://www.unvisiteddallas.com/archives/236>.

<sup>17</sup>[https://dallascityhall.com/government/citysecretary/archives/Pages/Archives\\_PF\\_05Bondsguide.aspx](https://dallascityhall.com/government/citysecretary/archives/Pages/Archives_PF_05Bondsguide.aspx).

<sup>18</sup>Hazel, *A Century of Service*, 48-50.

<sup>19</sup><https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/modern-art-museum-of-fort-worth>.

<sup>20</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zzEx8q-5Jo>.

<sup>21</sup>Capt. B. B. Paddock, ed., *History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest Edition, Volume II* (Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1922). 640. In 1997 The Fort Worth Public Library Foundation created "The Cigar Smoker" gala, which has become the most successful fundraiser in the Foundation's history.

<sup>22</sup><https://hometownbyhandlebar.com/?p=12304>.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup><https://www.fortworthtexas.gov/departments/library/policy/library-history#section-2>.

<sup>26</sup><https://www.loc.gov/resource/ppmsca.15365>.

<sup>27</sup>[https://www.reddit.com/r/PantherCity/comments/dmx7qb/lobby\\_of\\_the\\_carnegie\\_public\\_library\\_fort\\_worth/](https://www.reddit.com/r/PantherCity/comments/dmx7qb/lobby_of_the_carnegie_public_library_fort_worth/).



<sup>28</sup><https://www.themodern.org/retrospective-modern-art-museum-fort-worth-125th-anniversary-archives>.

<sup>29</sup><https://www.themodern.org/history#:~:text=The%20Modern%20Art%20Museum%20of,have%20evolved%20over%20the%20years>. The Carnegie Art Gallery evolved over the years, and is now the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.

<sup>30</sup><https://www.texasalmanac.com/drupal-backup/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup><https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/public-library-demolished-fort-worth-tx/>.

<sup>32</sup>The Johnson County History Book Committee, *The History of Johnson County, Texas* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1985) 130.

<sup>33</sup>Melissa Gaskill, "Literary Fortunes, Women of the Early 20th Century Wrangled Carnegie Grants and Libraries for Their Towns," *Texas Co-Op Magazine*, January 2021, p 15.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>Smith and Moore also designed the Carnegie Library in Belton, Texas. This building—now the Bell County Museum—still stands, at 201 North Main Street. The libraries in Belton and Cleburne bear a striking resemblance.

<sup>36</sup>Joe R. Williams and Michael Guarinol, "Cleburne Carnegie Library," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1976), Section 8.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup><https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/layland-museum>.

<sup>39</sup><https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=177760>.

<sup>40</sup>Bengta A. Culp, "The History of the Gainesville XLI Club and Its Relation to the General Women's Club Movement," thesis, February 1951, Denton, Texas. (<https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc663529/>: accessed March 1, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, UNT Digital Library, <https://digital.library.unt.edu>.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup><https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/gunter-lillian>. After the library was up and running, Lillian Gunter set out to make the library's resources available to everyone in Cooke County. She drafted the County Free Library Bill of 1915, but the addition of many amendments made the bill useless. She worked for two further years, getting the County Free Library Bill of 1917 passed, but her own Commissioners Court sued and got the law overturned as unconstitutional. Finally, the County Free Library law was enacted in 1919, and is still on the books today. Thanks to her efforts, the Gainesville Carnegie Library became the second county library in Texas, behind Dallam County.

<sup>43</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooke\\_County\\_Library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooke_County_Library).

<sup>44</sup>Virginia Hall and Rebecca Zimmerman, "Brief History of the Sherman Public Library, Sherman, Texas, in Partial Fulfillment for an Official Texas Historical Marker,"

Unpublished paper; in the collection of the Sherman Museum, p 1.

<sup>45</sup>"Home of Sherman's Public Library; Many Books, Collections and Art," *Sherman Daily Democrat* (Sherman, Texas), August 13, 1939. Daisy's Dallas home, purchased in 1944, would in 2003 become the "Daisy Polk Inn," Dallas's first B&B. At 2917 Reagan Street, it continues in operation.

<sup>46</sup>Royce Ball, "Red River Historical Museum Oral History Program, Sherman Public Library Carnegie Building 90th Anniversary, July 16, 2005," Unpublished transcript; in the collection of the Sherman Museum, p 4.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>John R. Stephens and Peter Phillips, "Old Sherman Public Library," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1986) Section 8.

<sup>49</sup>Hall and Zimmerman, "Brief History of the Sherman Public Library," p 2.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup><https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/texas-federation-of-womens-clubs>.

<sup>53</sup>Pittsburg, 1898; Fort Worth, 1899; Dallas, 1899; Houston, 1899; and San Antonio, 1900.

<sup>54</sup>Horace P. Flatt, "Cap'n Terrell's Town," Unpublished manuscript, 2004; part of the reference collection of the Riter C. Hulseby Public Library, Terrell, Texas, 241.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup>Jack Stoltz, *Terrell, Texas 1873-1973, From Open Country to Modern City* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1973) 116.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup>Flatt, "Cap'n Terrell's Town," 244.

<sup>60</sup>Paul M. Culp, "Carnegie Libraries of Texas, the Past Still Present," *Texas Libraries*, vol. 43, No. 2 (Summer 2001): p 87. When the building was only ten years old, huge steel rods had to be installed to stabilize the walls.

<sup>61</sup>Stoltz, *Terrell, Texas, 1873-1973*, 117.

<sup>62</sup>Culp, "Carnegie Libraries of Texas," 88. When the land had been acquired from the Elks Club, the deed had specified "that should the said premises at any time cease to be used for the aforesaid purpose and for said purposes only;" the land would revert to the Elks. Though the Elks were no longer in Terrell, the city found it did not have clear title. The issue was eventually resolved when the Elks' state office sent a letter releasing any claim on the land.

<sup>63</sup>Coincidentally, it was Frank Reaugh who donated the first painting to the Art Room of the Dallas Carnegie Library, establishing the Dallas Art Association (now the Dallas Museum of Art). The painting, "Scene on the Brazos," is on display on the seventh floor of the Dallas Central Library.

<sup>64</sup>Estimates of the author, based on his research.

<sup>65</sup>Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie*.





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# When Tinseltown Came to Cowtown

BY FRANK JACKSON

*W*hen you think of gala movie premieres, Hollywood would likely be the first locale you would think of. New York would probably be second. After that, the likely candidates would be debatable. Possibly San Francisco, perhaps Chicago, maybe even Dallas. Fort Worth probably wouldn't be in the mix. But on September 19, 1940, Fort Worth hosted a movie premiere that was, for all practical purposes, a citywide holiday.

In 1940 legendary producer Samuel Goldwyn was preparing to release a film called *The Westerner*, a Texas tale starring Gary Cooper and featuring Walter Brennan as the infamous Judge Roy Bean, the roguish jurist who was also an ardent admirer of British entertainer Lily Langtry. Though westerns had been relegated to B-movie status in the 1930s, that changed in 1939 with the release of several successful big-budget westerns with major directors, namely, *Stagecoach* (John Ford), *Destry Rides Again* (George Marshall), *Dodge City* (Michael Curtiz) and *Union Pacific* (Cecil B. DeMille). *The Westerner* (William Wyler) continued the trend.

Running into Fort Worth godfather Amon Carter at a publishers' convention in New York, Goldwyn mentioned that he was thinking of holding the premiere of *The Westerner* in Dallas. Not eager to see such a plum bestowed on his least favorite city, Carter managed to persuade

Goldwyn that a movie named *The Westerner* deserved a debut in the city "Where the West Begins," the longtime motto on the masthead of his newspaper, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Surely it was preferable to the city "Where the East Peters Out."

While Fort Worth has a colorful western heritage, Judge Roy Bean was not part of it. Bean held court in Vinegaroon, a remote border town he founded around 1881 to serve railroad workers. It was just west of where the Pecos River flows into the Rio Grande. By 1884 Bean was settled a few miles away at Eagles Nest Springs, which was renamed Langtry after it acquired a post office. Bean's self-styled characterization as "the Law West of the Pecos" might have been a response to the famous saying "West of the Pecos, there is no law, west of El Paso there is no God."

Situated roughly 400 miles from Fort Worth, Langtry just wasn't feasible as the site of a major movie premiere (the film was actually shot in Southern Arizona). The *Star-Telegram*, however, was a regional newspaper widely distributed throughout West Texas, so perhaps Fort Worth was closer to Langtry than Rand-McNally reckoned.

Goldwyn pictures were prestigious, regularly employing A-list directors and stars, and *The Westerner* was no exception. Over the previous five years, director William Wyler had done *These*



**Amon Carter (left) persuaded Hollywood producer Samuel Goldwyn (at microphone) to debut his film *The Westerner* in Fort Worth in September 1940.**

*Three, Come and Get It, Dodsworth, Dead End, and Wuthering Heights* for Goldwyn. During that span, Gary Cooper had appeared in four Goldwyn pictures: *The Wedding Night, The Adventures of Marco Polo, The Cowboy and the Lady,* and *The Real Glory*.

Cooper was brought on board for star power (he did not care for the script but he was under contract to Goldwyn so he eventually gave in) but many critics felt that his role was mainly as a foil for Judge Bean. Walter Brennan himself noted, “When I read the script of *The Westerner*, I saw immediately that despite the fact that Gary was the star of the picture, my part was better.”

Cooper and Brennan both had roughly the same amount of screen time, but that was not enough to confer leading-man status to the latter. A highly esteemed character actor, Brennan was not a “name above the title,” i.e., a box office draw. His portrayal of Roy Bean brought him his third Best Supporting Actor Oscar in five years. The first was in 1936 (the first year Supporting Actor/Actress Oscars were awarded) for *Come and Get It*; the second was for *Kentucky* in 1938. Before *The Westerner*, Brennan and Cooper had appeared together in *The Wedding Night* and *The Cowboy and the Lady*, and would be reunited in *Meet John*

*Doe, The Pride of the Yankees,* and *Task Force*.

Ballyhoo for *The Westerner* started at the beginning of production when Arizona Governor Robert Taylor Jones proclaimed that the film location where Langtry was recreated would henceforth be known as Goldwyn City, Arizona. The production also attracted attention since it featured the largest herd of cattle (7,000) ever assembled for a movie. So Amon Carter had likely heard of *The Westerner* long before he ran into Goldwyn in New York.

The Fort Worth premiere was set for 8 P.M., Thursday, September 19, 1940. The film would be shown simultaneously at the Worth and Hollywood, two capacious movie palaces in the West 7th Street theater district downtown. The actual screening of the film, however, was neither the beginning nor the end of the festivities.

The day started with the 8:37 A.M. arrival of three chartered American Airlines planes at Meacham Field. The overnight flights included fifty members of the Hollywood glitterati, among whom were Walter Brennan, Gary Cooper, Samuel Goldwyn, and William Wyler and his wife, actress Margaret “Talli” Tallichet (who had been considered for the female lead in the picture), who was not only Dallas-born but a former Society

Editor for *The Dallas Morning News*. Also present were co-stars Lillian Bond, Doris Davenport, and Chill Wills—the pride of Seagoville—whose breakthrough movie, *Boom Town*, was on local screens while he was in Fort Worth.

The junket also included Bob Hope and veteran character actor Charlie Ruggles. They were enlisted by Goldwyn to emcee the scheduled activities. (Hope hosted the Oscars for the first time in 1940). Other visitors included Bruce Cabot (best known as Jack Driscoll, Fay Wray's savior in *King Kong*), Ona Munson (recently onscreen as Belle Watling in *Gone With the Wind*), and Edward Arnold (ironically, though he was renowned for playing bloated, corrupt villains, he had recently been elected president of the Screen Actors Guild).

To ensure national press coverage, the roster also included a contingent of movie journalists, notably Jimmie Fidler and Sheilah Graham, who had embarrassed herself the night before by throwing up on the plane after champagne was served.

The whole kit and kaboodle was aptly described by the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* as “the greatest single group of movie stars ever to visit the city.” To say that the visitors had a full itinerary would be an understatement. Various events, public and private, involving numerous business and civic leaders were involved. Amon Carter, of course, was the most prominent.

The 11:15 luncheon at the Fort Worth Club was hosted by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce with the radio broadcast handled by Amon Carter's WBAP. Gary Cooper, in typical “aw, shucks” fashion, commented, “I've just finished a picture in which I do a lot of radio talking [*Meet John Doe*] but the experience hasn't helped me much.” Such modesty might have endeared him to the American public, but there was nothing modest about his income. According to the U.S. Treasury Department, he was the top individual taxpayer for 1939, based on his income of \$482,819. His price per picture in those days was \$150,000.

Even in 1940 Bob Hope was known for self-deprecating humor. His cohorts were often enlisted to further deflate his ego. During the broadcast, Charlie Ruggles observed, “In Hollywood an actor is rated by the performance he gives in his latest picture. If he's good they give him four bells. If it's very good, five bells and if it's an extraordinary good performance, he gets six bells. Well, I'd like to introduce my candidate for the Nobel Prize in Hollywood, Bob Hope.”

Yet another feature of the luncheon was the introduction of all the contestants in the “Most Typical Texas Girl” pageant. The votes were tallied that afternoon, and the winner was to be announced just before the showing of the movie.

The screening of *The Westerner* was the main event of the day, but the biggest event was the 1 P.M. parade that started at Weatherford and Commerce Streets, wound southward through downtown, went west on 7th Street past the movie theaters (where a banner saying “Where *The Westerner* Begins” spanned the street), and continued west to the Will Rogers Coliseum. An estimated 300,000 people turned out for the parade (Fort Worth public schools had closed at noon). That would be an impressive total for any parade anywhere, but since Fort Worth was credited with 177,662 people in the 1940 census, the head count was particularly impressive. Mayor I. N. McCrary had requested parade attendees to wear western duds and most folks heeded the call.

The western motif was not limited to attire. The area around the movie theaters was enhanced by the installation of a hitching post and a boardwalk installed over the 7th Street sidewalk between Throckmorton and Taylor Streets. Bales of hay were delivered to hotel lobbies for extra seats, and an old-fashioned “Room and Meals” sign appeared in front of the Worth Hotel at 7th and Taylor.

Some paraders might have been puzzled by the theaters covering their movie posters with chicken wire. Ostensibly, this was to protect the posters from theft and was likely a reference to a scene in the movie when Bean's henchman





Although he didn't appear in the movie, character actor Edward Arnold was among the celebrities on the junket to North Central Texas. This photo was probably taken while the guests were being entertained at Amon Carter's Shady Oak retreat.

Southeast, played by Chill Wills, literally rips off a Lily Langtry poster for his boss's collection of memorabilia.

Heading up the parade were Amon Carter, on a fawn-colored horse decorated with silver spangles, and Gary Cooper on a white horse. After growing up on a ranch and working as a trick rider and stuntman in silent westerns, Cooper

was at home on horseback. At 6'2" tall and lean, he embodied the image of a long, tall Texan, even though he was Montana-born. The rest of the Hollywood personnel followed in buggies, stage-coaches, chuckwagons, and antique autos.

Law enforcement was represented by Fort Worth Police Chief Karl Howard, Tarrant County Sheriff Arthur B. Carter, Tarrant County District





**A parade winding through downtown Fort Worth attracted an estimated 300,000 spectators—nearly twice the population of the city.**

Attorney Marvin H. Brown, and a contingent of Texas Rangers led by the legendary Lone Wolf Gonzauillas.

Another prominent participant was Elliott Roosevelt, one of President Franklin Roosevelt's four sons. A Fort Worth resident who would accept a captain's commission in the Army Air Force a few days after the parade, Elliott Roosevelt and his wife, Ruth, owned radio station KTAT and started the Texas State Network (still operating today). In effect, he was competing with Amon Carter's WBAP and KGKO, but Carter was a big fan of the New Deal, and FDR had been nominated to run for a third term at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago two months before. So Elliott Roosevelt's presence was something of a political plug.

The marching musical entertainment was provided by the Hardin-Simmons Cowboy Band and the Singing Westerners, a Fort Worth Junior Chamber of Commerce chorus. For good measure, the Texas Christian University band held court in front of the Worth Hotel, while the Texas Wesleyan College band played on in front of the Hollywood Theater.

After the parade terminated at the Will Rogers Center, a show was put on for seniors and children from various local institutions, among them, the Home for Aged Masons, the Eastern Star Home at Arlington, the Lena Pope Home, St. Teresa's Home, and the Fort Worth Children's Hospital.

From there, the scene shifted to Shady Oak, Amon Carter's weekend retreat near Lake Worth. The Hollywood guests were wined and dined, and



**Gary Cooper, left, and Amon Carter headed the parade. Both were experienced riders. The rest of the Hollywood guests rode in buggies, stagecoaches, chuckwagons, and antique autos.**

everyone was given one of Carter's famed Shady Oak Stetsons. A visit to Shady Oak was *de rigueur* for all V.I.P.s visiting Fort Worth and the hat, the same model Carter always wore, had become a symbol of his hospitality.

Then came the screening of the movie at the two downtown theaters (yes, there were searchlights) with the Hollywood folks appearing on stage. At the Worth Theater it was announced that Abilene's Evelyn Lou Foote, a student at Hardin-Simmons, had been voted "Most Typical Texas Girl."

The final item on the agenda was the *Star-Telegram* Goodfellows charity ball held at the Crystal Ballroom of the Hotel Texas (now the Hilton). A Cinderella-like touch was added when Evelyn Lou Foote was accompanied by Gary Cooper. The ball ended at 2 A.M., but one wonders how many of the Hollywood folks were still awake at the conclusion.

There's no question that Fort Worth got the drop on Dallas when it came to the debut of *The Westerner*, but Dallas at least cleared the holster. The first showing of the movie in Dallas was the next day, Friday, September 20, when the film went into general release (69 theaters in Texas alone). But Dallas was not entirely left out of the premiere festivities. After spending the night in Fort Worth, the Hollywood caravan moved to Dallas, where they were feted again but on a smaller scale. The Adolphus Hotel was the official headquarters for the tour.

The Hollywood folks were given a tour of the city, and Cooper and Goldwyn paid a visit to the Hall of State, where they examined an official document (a surety bond) signed by Judge Bean. Meanwhile, Sheilah Graham was the guest of honor at a luncheon.

Among the civic leaders involved in the festivities was George Bannerman Dealey, publisher of





**The Hollywood guests were entertained for dinner at Amon Carter's retreat, Shady Oak.**

*The Dallas Morning News* and president of the A. H. Belo Corporation. Having actually seen Lily Langtry perform when he was a young man (he had just turned 81 years old in 1940), he enjoyed a unique status among the local hosts.

As in Fort Worth, all stars were onstage before the 8 P.M. showing of the film at the Majestic Theater on Elm Street. Notably, Bob Hope did some improv with Goldwyn, sandbagging the producer into discussing his fee for a proposed film project (eventually made in 1943 as *They Got Me Covered*) in front of an audience of witnesses.

After the Hollywood folks went home, the film was left to the critics and the audience. The film received decent but not great reviews. As far as box office take, *The Westerner* finished 28th out of 226 features with \$3.5 million, which may not sound impressive, but the average ticket price in 1940 was 24.1 cents (tickets for the premiere of *The Westerner* went for \$1.20). Nineteen-forty was a particularly rich year for Hollywood product, and the films that finished 1-27 on the list are all staples on Turner Classic Movies. In addition to Walter Brennan, Oscar nominations went to



**Bob Hope was photographed ogling a young woman in western attire. As part of the festivities, a contest was held to select the “Most Typical Texas Girl.”**

Stuart N. Lake for Best Original Story and James Basevi for black and white art direction.

In retrospect *The Westerner* has achieved a loftier status than it enjoyed on release. For one thing, it provided the first speaking parts for Forrest Tucker and Dana Andrews, who would both carve out lengthy careers in Hollywood.

*The Westerner* was not William Wyler’s first rodeo, as he had directed several silent westerns in the 1920s, plus one sound western (*Hell’s Heroes*) in 1929. He would direct one more western, *The Big Country*, in 1958, but he is better known for *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), *Roman Holiday* (1953), *Friendly Persuasion* (also with Gary Cooper, 1956), *Ben-Hur* (1959), and *Funny Girl* (1968), among others.

Composer Dmitri Tiomkin, then in the early

stages of his career, was scoring his first western. In the years to come, he specialized in big budget westerns (among others, *Duel in the Sun*, *Red River*, *The Big Sky*, *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral*, *Rio Bravo*), including two iconic Texas films (*Giant* and *The Alamo*).

The script was by veterans Jo Swerling and Niven Busch. The latter was working on his first western (he also worked as a story editor for Goldwyn), a genre which would solidify his reputation in postwar Hollywood. Busch would go on to write the novel and screenplay for *Duel in the Sun*, as well as the scripts for *Pursued*, *The Furies*, *Distant Drums*, *The Man from the Alamo* and *The Treasure of Pancho Villa*. Lillian Hellman also worked uncredited on the film.

Then there is the cinematography by the

veteran Gregg Toland, who was nominated for an Oscar for his work on *The Long Voyage Home* in 1940, but really cemented his place in film history with *Citizen Kane* the next year.

Historians readily pointed out the differences between the real Judge Bean and the cinematic Judge Bean. As befits a legend, Bean was often charged with misdeeds that he never performed. For example, historians agree he never hanged anyone. He was a very creative jurist, but he did keep a copy of *Revised Statutes of Texas for 1879* in his barroom/courtroom. How often he consulted it is debatable.

Although the film shows Bean re-naming the town of Vinegarroon as Langtry in honor of Lily Langtry, the town was actually named after George Langtry, an employee of the Southern Pacific Railroad. And while the climax of the film takes place at a Fort Davis theater, where Bean dies immediately after meeting Lily Langtry, in real life Bean saw her perform in San Antonio in 1888, then returned to Langtry, where he continued to hold court till he died in 1903. Later that year, while traveling by train from New Orleans to San Francisco on her third American tour, Lily Langtry paid a visit to the town of Langtry. The townspeople gifted her with Bean's revolver and pet bear (who was omitted from *The Westerner* but was included in *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean* with Paul Newman in 1972). She declined the bear but kept the revolver, which was on display at her home in London till her death in 1929.

Today when newly released movies are often available on streaming services as soon as they appear in theaters, a movie premiere isn't the big deal it used to be. A city might shut down for a pandemic or a prolonged blast of arctic weather, but not for a motion picture. Before the coming of television, home video, and online streaming, a "major motion picture" was something to look forward to. The budget of *The Westerner* qualified it as a "million dollar movie," which was a big deal in those days.

Even by 1940 standards, the Fort Worth



**Always a glib stand-up comedian, Bob Hope entertained guests at several events during the two-day festivities, including a showing of *The Westerner* at the Majestic Theater in Dallas.**

premiere of *The Westerner* was highly unusual. Such extravagance would soon be unthinkable in America, however, as newspaper headlines in September 1940 were rife with stories about the Battle of Britain and war news from the European mainland. After Pearl Harbor, many folks from the movie colony, including the people from the Fort Worth premiere, found themselves embroiled in the war effort in some form or fashion.

Forrest Tucker enlisted in the Army and received a commission as a lieutenant. Bruce Cabot went to Officers Candidate School and was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Army Air Force. Gary Cooper visited hospitals and entertained troops. Dana Andrews appeared in a string of war-related movies: *Berlin Correspondent*, *Crash Dive*, *The North Star*, *Up in Arms*, *The Purple Heart*, *A Wing and a Prayer*, and *A Walk in the Sun*, concluding in 1946 with the revered postwar drama *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Three of these (*The North Star*, *Up in Arms*, and *The Best Years of Our Lives*) were all produced by Goldwyn.

Perhaps the most distinctive military gig was assigned to William Wyler, who served as an Air Force major and experienced aerial combat while directing *The Memphis Belle: a Story of a*



*Flying Fortress*. This documentary of a B-17 flight crew on its 25th and final mission also inspired a dramatic film in 1990.

Of all the Hollywood folks who appeared in Fort Worth, the one most affected by the war was Bob Hope, whose entertainment revues for troops in the field continued long after the end of World War II and became as much a part of his show business resume as vaudeville, movies, radio, and TV.

When *The Westerner* premiered, the 1940 U.S. Census was being conducted. The final tally was 132,165,129 people. Roughly 80 million movie tickets were sold every week. Attendance remained strong during the war years, peaked in 1946, then started downward. The postwar decline of the studio system is an oft-told tale with television usually cast as the primary cause.

As ticket sales declined, the movie studios' overhead continued. Consequently, after their contracts expired, most actors, directors, writers, and practitioners of other crafts became free agents. Backlot real estate was sold off. Costumes, props,

and artifacts from old movies were auctioned off.

Another casualty, though rarely noted, was the studio publicity department. With so many people under contract, studios had the power to commandeer them for publicity junkets. Major studios could generate hoopla on a level difficult to achieve today. We still hear "buzz" about upcoming movies, but most of it seems to emanate from film festivals and the media, not from barnstorming movie stars. The premiere isn't what it used to be as most mainstream films open in widespread release nationwide. For the most part, the movie palaces that hosted the gala openings are long gone.

Still, it would be wrong to characterize the Fort Worth premiere of *The Westerner* as the last round-up. Even today, the red carpet may be rolled out for an eagerly anticipated motion picture. But in terms of scope and star power, not to mention crowds, the 1940 shebang in Fort Worth might have been the biggest and best of them all.

Amon Carter, who knew a thing or two about promotion, likely would have agreed. ■

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100 Years of

# WRR

## in North Texas

*By Kristi Nedderman and John Slate*

**WRR**, owned by the City of Dallas, celebrated its centennial on the airwaves on August 4, 2021. The station is the first licensed radio station in Texas, the oldest radio station west of the Mississippi River, and the second commercial broadcasting license in the United States [Pittsburgh's KDKA is the first].

**WRR** is the oldest single-owner station in the country.

# Origins

**While its formats have changed over time,** WRR's roots are in public safety. On May 6, 1912, a fire broke out at the Markham Lumber Yard/Conkling Planing Mill near Main Street and the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks. All city fire resources rushed to address the blaze. Soon after, a second fire erupted in a different part of Dallas. The first fire destroyed the central fire station's signal lines and prevented communication from the central station. Consequently, no firefighters or equipment could respond to the new fire until much later.

At this time, Henry "Dad" Garrett, an electrical engineer, was superintendent of the Dallas Police and Fire Signal System. After the disastrous double inferno, Garrett pondered how to prevent a recurrence. He believed that the new medium of radio would be an effective way to communicate both in the field and with the central station. The beauty of radio, to Garrett, lay in its wirelessness—no lines to burn and prohibit communication again as with the Markham fire. With a homemade radio, wires, and antenna, Garrett experimented and fabricated equipment for sending and receiving messages from his car.

In 1920, Garrett persuaded city officials to see the safety value of his concept, and he installed a 50-watt radio transmitter at the central fire station at 2012 Main Street. He increased it to 100 watts the next year. The equipment's purpose was to transmit alarms to the other fire stations as well as to the portable radio receiver that Garrett mounted in his car. Garrett had created the United States'

first fire and police dispatch network.

While Garrett was working on his plans for wireless transmissions and communications, fellow Dallasites Frank Corlett and Ben Emerson, both Western Union telegraphers and amateur radio enthusiasts, were working independently on their own broadcasting sets. In 1920, the three eventually came together. Corlett and Emerson broadcast messages for the Fire Department from Emerson's home, and the following year, in July 1921, Garrett purchased Emerson's broadcasting set for \$250.

After being on the air for several months, Garrett applied for a license for a land radio station from the federal government. Under the Radio Act of 1912, licenses were managed and assigned by the Department of Commerce (Bureau of Navigation, Radio Service); neither the Federal Communication Commission nor the Federal Radio Commission existed yet. The station's provisional license—and call letters—was issued on August 4, 1921, establishing WRR as the second commercially-licensed radio station in the country and the first west of the Mississippi River.

The origin of the specific call letters for the station (WRR) is unknown. They were not requested by Garrett, and no explanation of the assignment remains with the Department of Commerce materials. Local lore humorously suggests options including "We Reached Rockwall"; "Where Radio Radiates"; "White Rock Radio"; and "We Received Radio."

## Beyond Fire Dispatch

**With the dispatching process working** smoothly, Garrett soon discovered a second use for the city's radio equipment. He connected the transmitter to a phonograph and played his collection of classical records over the air between fire department alarms to confirm continuity of transmission.

Soon colleagues brought their own records, and Dallas citizens began to listen. The AM station soon had a

regular daily schedule that included broadcasting police bulletins and sports scores (all firsts in the burgeoning radio world). After a weather forecast at 7 P.M. in the evening, a classical music concert followed at about 8:30. In those early days when radio receivers were not yet commercially available, local radio amateurs listened to these concerts via their own home-made receiving sets.



**Henry "Dad" Garrett, an electrical engineer who was superintendent of the Dallas Police and Fire Signal System, conceived of using the new medium of radio as a means of communicating with officers in the field.**





# Highlights by Decade



WRR traces its origins to a 50-watt transmitter Garrett installed at the central fire station, 2012 Main, in 1920. A year later, he obtained the first commercial radio license west of the Mississippi, with the call letters WRR.

## 1922

The first known non-fire department announcer and disc jockey on WRR was John Henry Stone. He participated in what is believed to be the first marriage ceremony conducted over the radio.

## 1925

WRR moved to the parlor floor of the Adolphus Hotel in 1925.

When the city could not finance improvements needed by WRR to meet federal standards, Dallas citizens raised funds for the station.

The Federal Radio Commission allowed WRR to increase power to 500 watts.

The City Radio Commission was organized to develop programming suitable for Dallas.

## 1926

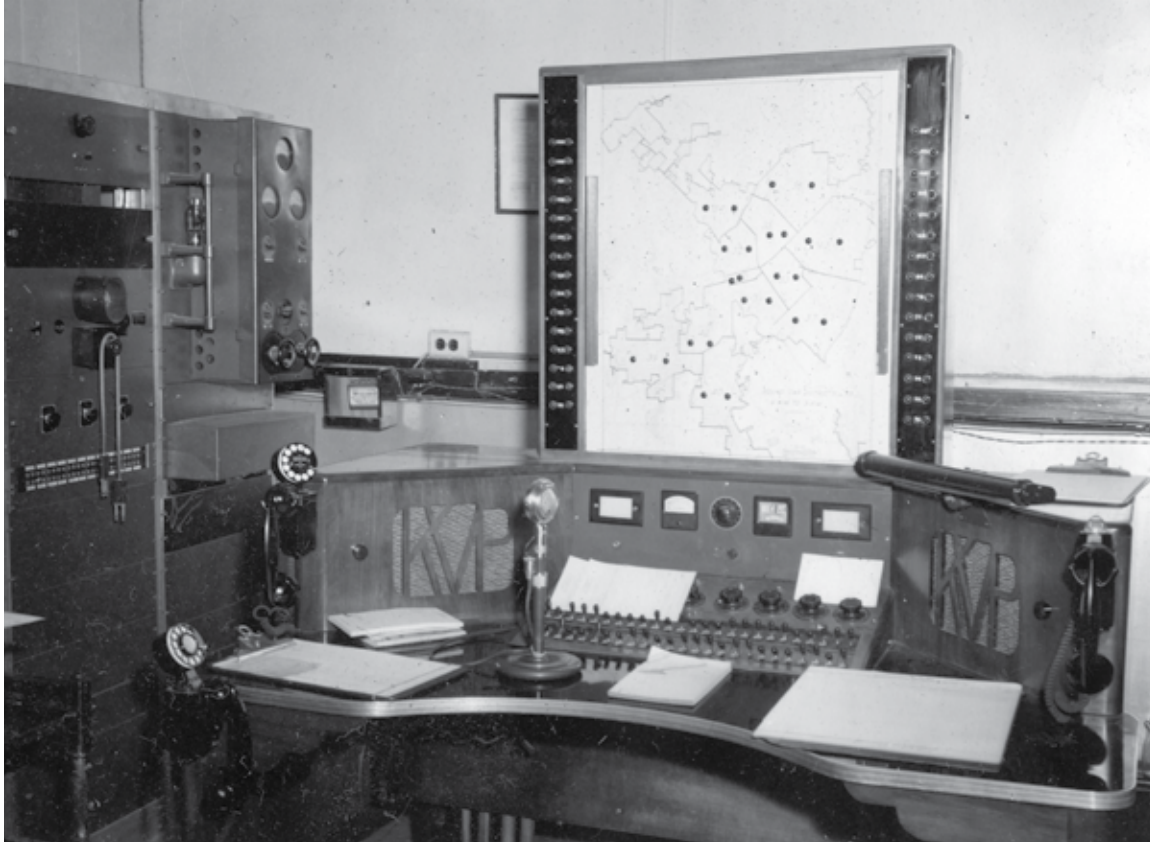
WRR moved to the roof garden Paradise Studios of the Jefferson Hotel.

## 1928

The Federal Radio Commission allocated WRR a single-entity frequency, 1280 AM; WRR had been sharing frequency time with WFAA, KRLD, and WOAI.

## 1929

Daily programming was published in local newspapers.



In 1931 Dallas Police and Fire Departments installed 5-ZAQ, later called KVP, a transmitter used specifically for police and fire dispatch. If you look closely at the speaker housing, it includes the letters KVP.

**During the 1930s,** WRR was a stable operation with a growing audience. Radio receivers became a standard piece of furniture in American homes, and WRR provided news, weather, sports, religious broadcasting, and musical entertainment for North Texas. WRR now had competitors in the Dallas-Fort Worth market, including WFAA, KRLD, WBAP, and KGKO.

### **1931**

WRR studios moved to the Hilton Hotel in a new, \$42,000 facility with 1000 watts of operating power.

WRR ceased public safety functions. Dallas Police and Fire Departments installed 5-ZAQ, later called KVP, a transmitter used specifically for police and fire dispatch. The fire department transferred control of WRR to the City of Dallas

### **1932**

WRR sponsored public events, such as western movie star Hoot Gibson appearing at the Melba Theatre, for the "Betty Boop-WRR Radio Club."

### **1933**

Durward Tucker, pioneering radio engineer, joined the staff of WRR.

## 1934

WRR studios moved to the Southland Life Building's tenth floor.

## 1936

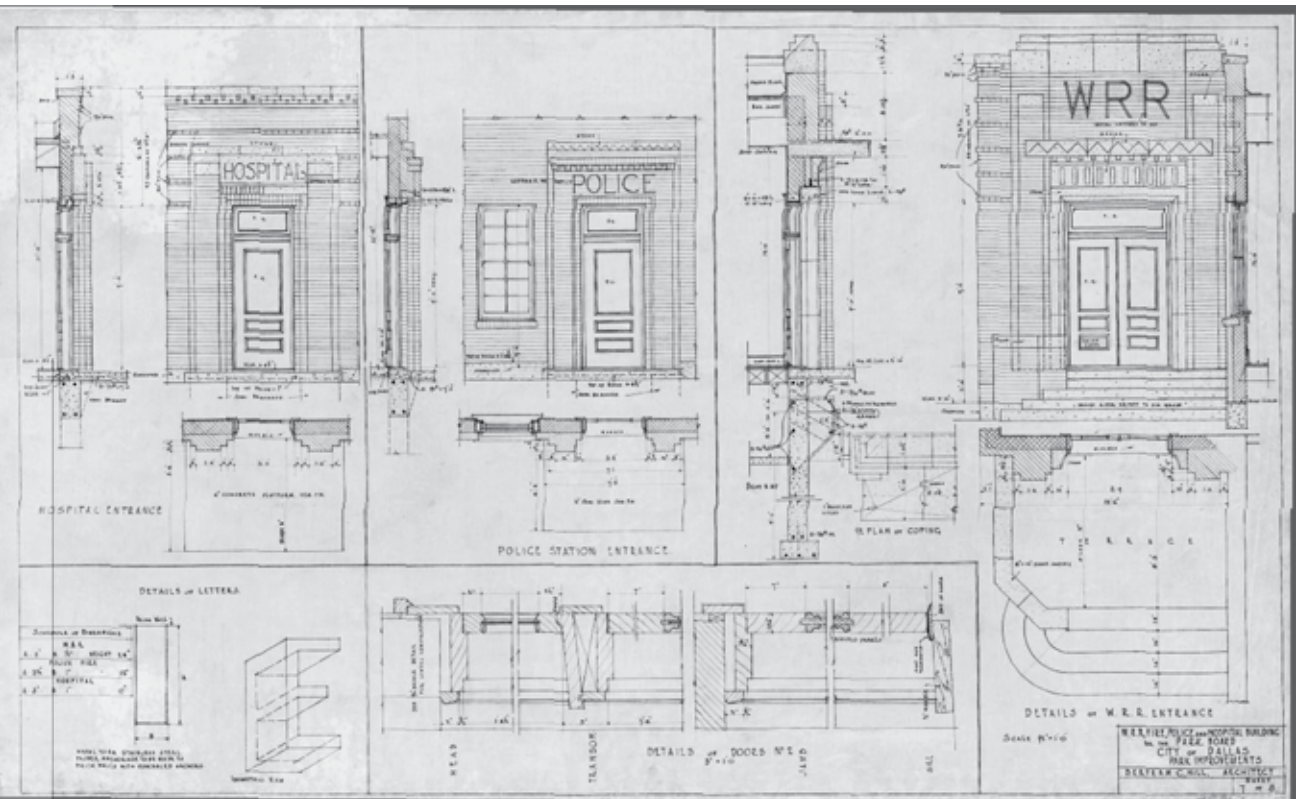
WRR studios moved into a customized studio in the Art-Deco style WRR, Police, and Fire Building in Fair Park in time for the opening of the Texas Centennial Exposition.

Bill Boyd, "The Cowboy Rambler," western swing pioneer, was the most popular local talent on WRR during the 1930s.

## 1939

The City of Dallas created a Municipal Radio Department to administer WRR.

WRR moved to the Centennial Building at Fair Park, remodeling the south end and adding larger studio space.



This elevation drawing depicts the 1936 Art Deco-style WRR, Police and Fire Building at Fair Park. WRR moved into a customized studio in time for the opening of the Texas Centennial Exposition. But the station quickly outgrew the facility, and the studios moved to Fair Park's Centennial Building three years later.



WRR spent **the 1940s** changing and evolving. WRR was a valued source of both information and entertainment during the World War II years.

### 1940

After receiving FCC authorization to increase power from 500 watts to 5,000 watts, radio engineer Durward Tucker designed and supervised the construction of a \$50,000 transmitter building that was situated northeast of White Rock Lake, behind Doran's Point.

### 1941

WRR's frequency changed from 1280 to 1310 kilocycles.

WRR introduced the first regional college football broadcasts and high school football, basketball, and other sports programming. WRR was the original flagship station for Southern Methodist University basketball and football.



The large records shown in this undated studio interior photo are transcription discs, used for recording and replaying programs. Prior to magnetic recording tape, this was the most common method of recording and replaying radio programs





Al Jones was known as the “Donuts to Dollars” man on WRR. This photo dates from the late 1940s.

### **1944**

WRR contributed throughout the war and after through fundraisers for the eight War Loan bond drives.

### **1946**

WRR became a lucrative division of the City of Dallas, turning a profit of \$185,721. The station assumed operating costs of both KVP and KVPA, the Police and Fire Department stations.

### **1948**

WRR debuted on the FM spectrum in 1948 at 101.1 MHz and continued to broadcast on AM and FM via new 600-foot tower beams—a then-powerful 68,000 watts.

WRR applied for a television station license through the Federal Communications Commission, the fourth filed in Dallas behind area competitors WFAA, KIXL, and Leo Corrigan. A projected set-up cost of \$200,000 for the studios was rejected by the Dallas City Council, thus preventing WRR from branching out into television.

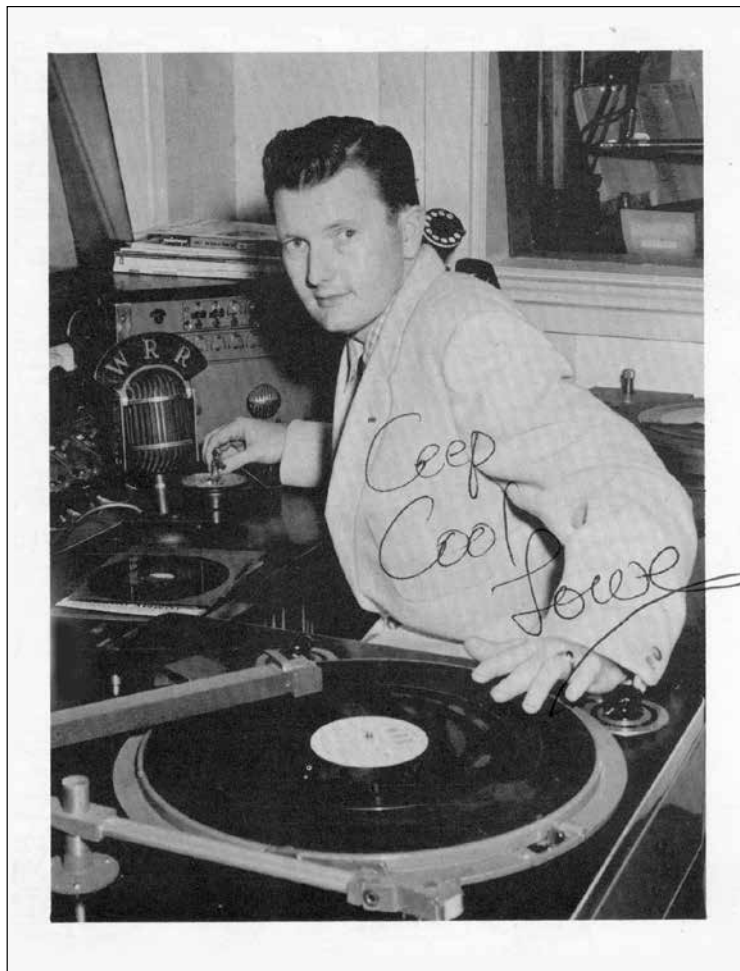
Al Jones (1918-1956) began his tenure at WRR. Jones provided the original voice of Big Tex at the State Fair of Texas for the mascot’s first three years.

**The 1950s** were marked by the post-World War II boom, the dawn of the Cold War, and the civil rights movement in the United States. WRR's programming during these times reflected these facets of a new and changing America.

### 1950

WRR initiated "block programming," playing one genre of music for several consecutive hours, ushering in the music and news radio format. The move to block programming was likely due to competition from television.

James E. "Jim" Lowe Jr. (1926-2000) joined WRR and became one of the station's best loved personalities for twenty four years. For 41 years, Lowe was also the familiar voice of Big Tex—from 1953 to 1980 and again from 1986 to 1998.



**James E. "Jim" Lowe Jr. joined WRR in 1950 and became one of the station's best loved personalities for 24 years. For 41 years, Lowe was also the familiar voice of Big Tex—from 1953 to 1980 and again from 1986 to 1998.**

## 1951

Listener games and contests held sway over WRR through the late 1960s. Cash prize games included Lucky Number 13, named in honor of the frequency 1310 AM.

## 1953

“The Cool Fool,” Jim Lowe, debuted Kat’s Karavan. The rhythm-and-blues radio program aired through 1967 and was legendary in North Texas. The program broke barriers by playing African-American music hosted by and aimed at whites. The show was divided into two parts: the first began at 10:30 weeknights and centered on R&B vocal groups while the second began at 11:15 and focused on both electric and acoustic blues.

Durward Tucker designed an updated police and fire communication system, KKB-364, which ranked Dallas as one of the best radio-equipped city governments in the nation. WRR also furnished radio communications for Dallas County, Cockrell Hill Police Department, and seven Dallas city departments, in addition to the Police and Fire Departments.

## 1956

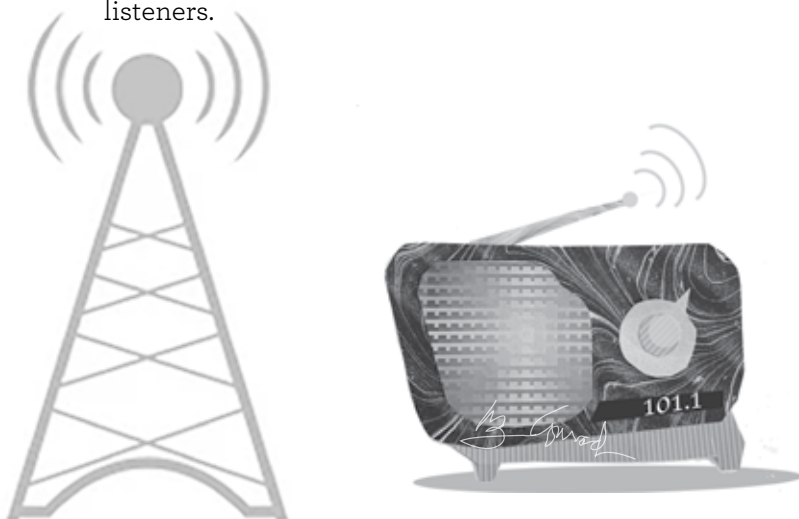
Frank Glieber joined WRR as a “stacks of wax, mounds of sounds” disc jockey who also filled in on news and sports. Glieber later became sports director at KRLD-AM, a Dallas Cowboys radio announcer, and a golf and football announcer for CBS Sports.

## 1957

WRR conducted the Mystery Sound Contest, a wildly popular game with cash prizes. In one example, WRR received 30,000 cards, letters, and telegrams over a five-week contest period. Twenty-one clues were revealed before the winning answer: “The sound of two pieces of bread being rubbed together.”

## 1959

WRR-FM expanded its classical music format to seven hours a day. The well-loved series World of Music began and reached a reported 150,000 FM radio listeners.





This classic WRR ad image played on a jet age theme to demonstrate the station's modernity.

**The 1960s** built on the success of the fifties by packaging its AM style as Fun Radio and adding scheduled traffic congestion reports. Sports were also a key reason for spinning the dial to WRR. WRR-AM covered both Southwest Conference collegiate teams, such as Southern Methodist University, and professional teams, such as the Dallas Rebels, Dallas Cowboys, Dallas Texans, and Dallas Blackhawks.

### 1960

The Fun Radio format hit North Texas. To compete with other stations and to expand its listener base, WRR-AM combined multiple formats in one station. It played so-called adult music, the Library of Laffs comedy series, variety music, news, and sports. The format proved a success and, in 1961, netted an almost \$6,000 gain over the previous year.



WRR-AM became the flagship station for the inaugural Dallas Cowboys season, with station sportscaster Frank Glier as the original voice of the team.

### 1961

Announcer John Peel (aka John Ravenscroft) led Kat's Karavan Part 2. This show spotlighted both electric and acoustic rhythm-and-blues artists. Playing this black music to a predominantly white, teenage audience meant that the show and its announcers were on the leading edge supporting and broadcasting all kinds of music to its listeners and influencing a new generation to the sound of R&B.

### 1962

WRR became the first station to feature scheduled traffic reports, sponsored by American Petrofina Company. Live traffic spotters reported information to the WRR central control room.

### 1963

On November 23, WRR joined other radio and television stations in agreeing to present no entertainment programs through Sunday, November 24, as long as news from either network or local was available. WRR also adhered to the local policy of airing no commercials until after the funeral services for President John Kennedy.

### 1964

WRR-FM became an all-classical station for its air-time. Its previous format was a mix of classical music and simulcasts with WRR-AM.

### 1967

After decades of publishing programming schedules in newspapers, WRR-FM began publishing a monthly program guide.

### 1969

Dispatching services for Dallas County, Cockrell Hill Police Department, and private ambulance services ceased.



Popular book reviewer Evelyn Oppenheimer presented Book Talk on WRR for more than 25 years, beginning in 1960.

**The 1970s** welcomed efforts to boost the professionalism of WRR and to strengthen the station's local impact by offering competitive salaries, moving into new Fair Park facilities, hiring announcers adept with the formal delivery expected of a classical station, and adding more news-only team members. The FM airwaves had become the preferred ones, and despite efforts to maintain the AM audience, the AM side was sold.

### **1970**

Andrews Ford furnished a 1971 Ford Galaxie 500 Sedan for the station to use as a mobile broadcasting unit and sales car.

Social programs aired, including Preventing Suicide, The Poor Speak at the Polls, The Crucial South Dallas Dropout and Wealth, and Unhealthy America.

### **1972**

The National Association of FM Broadcasters presented Durward Tucker and WRR-FM the FM Radio Pioneer award.

Brad Sham began his radio career as the station's sports editor.

### **1973**

The current studio on 1st Avenue, in Fair Park, was dedicated, and WRR moved for what is, so far, its final move.

### **1974**

WRR produced The Resignation of Richard M. Nixon, a compilation of the highlights and lowlights of August 8 and 9, the days that President Nixon left office.

### **1978**

Dallas City Council meetings began being broadcasted on WRR-FM.

Dallasites Sis Carr, Bette Mullins, and Sarah White formed the Friends of WRR to ensure continued support and recognition of WRR as a vital cultural asset in North Texas.

The City sold WRR-AM to the Bonneville Broadcasting Company for \$1.9 million, ending WRR's presence on the AM dial.





**Van Cliburn autographs a program at one of the quadrennial Cliburn competitions, which were carried live on WRR-FM.**

**The 1980s** brought a host of activities occurring outside the station walls. From holiday programs at the Adolphus Hotel to picnics, WRR worked diligently to engage and entertain the public.

### **1985**

Caroling at the Adolphus began. Performers have included the Turtle Creek Chorale, the Women's Chorus of Dallas, The Dallas Symphony Chorus, The Wesleyan Singers, The Meadows Chorale, The Texas Boys Choir, and the Dallas Symphony Chorus.

### **1986**

Dallas City Council voted unanimously to continue the city's ownership of the station. Before the vote, Mayor Pro Tem Annette Strauss declared, "The people have spoken and they want us to keep WRR."

### **1988**

Quin Mathews and Sharon Benge began hosting Art Matters. Running for 25 years, the show highlighted weekly, local art events and included feature segments with local groups and artists.

**The 1990s** showed WRR embracing technological breakthroughs, promoting a new image for itself, and readying itself for the new century. Moving from vinyl to compact discs (CDs) and embracing the Internet gave the station new ways to interact with its audience.

### 1991

After incorporating in 1990, the Friends of WRR obtained full non-profit status. Dallas Mayor Annette Strauss was pleased, calling WRR “one of the city’s greatest cultural assets.”

### 1995

Picnic in the Park began at the station in Fair Park then continued at either the Dallas Arboretum or NorthPark Center until 2011.

### 1998

Evelyn Oppenheimer, host of Book Talk, died at age 90. Book Talk was the longest running radio book review show in the U.S. Oppenheimer began reviewing books on the radio in 1948, and starting in the 1960s, she spent over 25 years at WRR.

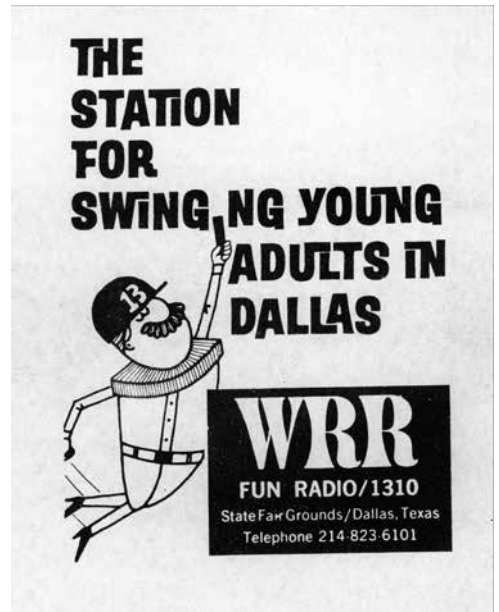
WRR launched its website.

### 1996

The station unveiled its “Break the mold” advertising campaign. Designed to engage younger listeners to both classical music and the WRR community activities, the program included signs, the station van, buses, and giveaways with contemporary twists on classical names, such as “Yo quiero Pachelbel,” “Bach & Roll,” and “Get a Handel.” This successful promotion plan is still part of WRR’s marketing, with newer items encouraging people to “Bach Off” and stating that the station was “Bringing Sexy Bach.”

### 1999

WRR released Smart Babies, a CD of works by Mozart, Beethoven, and other known composers. The CD was in the going-home package for every newborn at local Baylor Hospitals and for newborns in intensive care at Parkland Hospital.



**Sharon Bengé and Quin Matthews began hosting Art Matters in 1988, a program highlighting local arts events that aired for 25 years.**



WRR continued its stalwart support of the local arts scene in **the 2000s**. The station's history was recognized by the Texas Historical Commission for its legacy to radio and to the city. Station announcers were frequently seen in the Dallas Arts District doing live remotes of grand openings and Cliburn competitions. Social media was instrumental in expanding the station's reach and engagement with fans and listeners worldwide. The Friends of WRR continued sponsoring commercial-free hours of music.

### **2005**

The Texas Historical Commission erected a historical marker in front of the WRR studio in Fair Park.

The Roll Over Beethoven CD took classical music to the dogs (and cats) with selections specifically chosen to calm pets and with music written by composers who received inspiration from their pets. WRR donated a portion of the proceeds to Operation Kindness and the SPCA of Texas.

### **2006**

WRR became the first station in Texas to broadcast in all-digital and to offer online streaming.

### **2009**

The Dallas Opera performance for the opening of the Winspear Opera House was aired live.

The finals of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition were broadcast in real time.



**In the 2010s**, WRR continued to showcase the DFW arts community. Station announcers were frequently seen in the Dallas Arts District doing live remotes of grand openings and Cliburn competitions. Social media was instrumental in expanding the station's reach and engagement with fans and listeners worldwide.

### **2010**

WRR gave \$5.2 million to the City of Dallas's general fund to help with the city's budget shortfall following the amendment of the 2009-2010 budget.

### **2011**

The final Picnic in the Park was held at NorthPark Center.

### **2012**

The opening of the City Performance Hall (now Moody Performance Hall) was transmitted live.



## **2015**

WRR broadcast the inaugural year of the Cliburn International Junior Piano Competition.

## **2016**

The Friends of WRR donated a new van to the station, nicknamed the “Ludwig Van.”

## **2017**

For the month of April, WRR became the official radio station for Dallas Arts Month.

## **2019**

Dallas Municipal Archives and WRR personnel uncovered a previously-unknown recording of Van Cliburn performing Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in 1967.

Classical Carpool Karaoke launched on Facebook Live. Chauffeured by WRR, Dallas Winds, or other area organizations, local and visiting musicians sang or played their instruments while riding in comfort through downtown Dallas.



## **2020**

Programming on International Nurses Day featured works by composers who worked in the medical field, such as Franz Berwald and Alexander Borodin, to commend front-line medical personnel treating COVID-19 patients.

WRR held a “Keep Calm and Listen to Classical 101.1” video contest. Participants submitted videos demonstrating how WRR helped them cope with the shelter-in-place days of COVID-19.



**Classical Music & The Arts for North Texas**



## 2021 HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY, WRR!

A pioneer in police, fire, and city communications, this “crown jewel of Dallas” has built a legacy of serving the residents of Dallas and the North Texas community. From WRR’s origins in public safety, to broadcasting decades of music and news programs on the AM band, to becoming a fixture in DFW’s arts community as a classical music FM station today, WRR has touched countless listeners with entertainment, brought a variety of arts into homes, and launched the careers of numerous media legends.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, content for this article came from sources in *WRR Municipal Radio, 1921-2020* (Collection 1991.024) at the Dallas Municipal Archives, a division of the City Secretary’s Office, City of Dallas (TX).

<sup>2</sup>Lloyd Lloyd, “1912 Fires Led to Car Radio Invention, Gave Dallas First Municipal Station in World,” *The Dallas Morning News*, April 2, 1939: 9.

<sup>3</sup>Robin Leslie Sachs. *A History of Station WRR: Pioneer in Municipally Owned Radio*. Master’s Thesis, Denton, Texas: North Texas State University, 1978; the Dallas Police Department did not use this dispatch network until 1928.

<sup>4</sup>*The Dallas Times Herald*, September 27, 1925.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>For more on Garrett, see Steven R. Butler, “Henry ‘Dad’ Garrett: The Wizard of Dallas, Texas,” *Legacies*, 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 16 – 30.

<sup>7</sup>Radio Commission, “First Meeting: Radio Commission,” Dallas: City of Dallas, June 15, 1931.

<sup>8</sup>City Secretary’s Office, City of Dallas (Dallas Municipal Archives). “Ordinance 3019,” *Dallas Ordinance Book, Volume 31*. Dallas: City of Dallas, February 14, 1939.

<sup>9</sup>Sachs, *History of Station WRR*.

<sup>10</sup>City Secretary’s Office, City of Dallas (Dallas Municipal Archives), “Radio Coverage of City Council Meetings (Council Action 78-0309),” February 1, 1978.

<sup>11</sup>Chris Kelley, “Dallas Remains Owner of WRR-FM,” *The Dallas Morning News*, March 6, 1986: 30A.

<sup>12</sup>Friends of WRR. Friends of WRR Mission. 2019. <https://www.friendsofwrr.org/our-mission> (accessed June 3, 2021).

<sup>13</sup>Arvid Nelson, Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarian, Southern Methodist University, email response, “Evelyn Oppenheimer,” August 6, 2020.

<sup>14</sup>Amy Bishop, email response: “Station histories,” May 15, 2020.

<sup>15</sup>Amy Bishop, email response, “Historical marker,” July 2, 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Amy Bishop, email response, “Station histories,” May 15, 2020.

<sup>17</sup>The Cliburn. Cliburn International Junior Piano Competition and Festival. n.d. <https://cliburn.org/cliburn-international-junior-piano-competition-and-festival/> (accessed June 9, 2020).

<sup>18</sup>Amy Bishop, email response, “2020 COVID contests and response,” June 30, 2020.

<sup>19</sup>In 2022, the city entered into a seven-year agreement with North Texas Public Broadcasting (KERA) for the management and operation of WRR and the WRR studios. The city retained ownership. The effective date was undecided as of the publication of this article. The Friends worked diligently with the station, citizens, and council members to gain this result versus selling the station, as some council members preferred. City Secretary’s Office, City of Dallas. “Resolution from Council File 22-1226.” Council Agenda. June 8, 2022.

# The Cultural Aspect of Food







# Identity, Community, and Creating a Sense of Home in North Texas



## Panelists

### Alberto Gonzales

co-founder, Dallas Mexican-American Historical League

### Deah Berry Mitchell

Director of Marketing and Programming,  
Dallas Historical Society

### Betsy Brody, Ph.D.,

Mellon/ACLS Faculty Fellow, Collin College, Plano

Moderated by **Kim Pierce**

Dallas food journalist

*This conversation was edited for space and clarity from a transcript by Stephen Fagin, Curator, The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza*

**PIERCE:** In your individual presentations, you each talked about so many traditions that were bedrock to the groups that came to Dallas. How do you think these traditions have been strengthened or died away with time? For example, have they been co-opted when you have places like Central Market making tortillas? Or have they somehow been strengthened within the communities?

**MITCHELL:** As far as traditional foodways within the Black community, I spoke about celebratory food traditions from my own experience.

I was born and raised in Sherman, Texas, and food was such a large part of our community. I'll speak about Juneteenth briefly since that's something that has rightfully received a lot of hype and publicity lately and is now a national holiday. Juneteenth started here in Texas. When I was younger, growing up in the 1980s, it is something that we celebrated, and it was just a part of the community. I grew up knowing about the holiday, and obviously, food was a large part of that. The red drink that I spoke about earlier, red velvet cupcakes, cakes, barbecue, and things like that played a huge part, especially near the Red River where

we were from. As far as whether or not it has been co-opted, well, while it has grown, I don't feel like it's been coopted. It's just made it larger and strengthened it. During my research I noticed that Juneteenth actually died out for a time. The first Juneteenth, or Freedom Day, took place in a lot of communities in 1866, with the very first one in Joppee, Texas, an African-American settlement known as Freedman's Town. From there it grew, but it eventually died down in the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1990s, it comes back. So, I'm really grateful to see it being recognized nationally now. All of these people are celebrating it, and it's really been an amazing experience that I hope will continue.

**BRODY:** In terms of the research that I'm doing, one of the emerging themes is this idea of authenticity and status. So, when I'm talking to people who are restaurant owners or grocery store owners, they have their reasons why they put this or that on their menu. It's a choice. In some cases, that choice is motivated by a desire to educate and to introduce a culture to their customers. In other cases, it's a choice about sales. This is a thing that people like and will buy, right? We want to please our customers, and we want to sell a lot of this product, whatever it is. In other cases, it's a particular desire to make sure that we have this on our menu or in our store because it's important to us. So, it's really interesting when I'm juxtaposing that research straight from the narrators' mouths with restaurant reviews. The restaurant reviewer puts the person who is eating at the center of the story, how they feel about this dish on this particular day. That's an entirely different calculation than what the person who put it on the menu in the first place is thinking. When you read a restaurant review in *The Dallas Morning News* or the *Dallas Observer* or *D Magazine*, it's a guide for a whole different population to make judgment calls about that restaurant or grocery store. So, that's been interesting to think about—what the eater perceives as authentic versus what the person who is creating the

menu thinks is authentic or is important to have on the menu. I don't know if that's the same as co-optation but rather, you know, this question of "what's authentic?"

**GONZALES:** "Where's your favorite Mexican restaurant?" When I got asked that, I always used to say "at home" because my mom was a great cook. I'm going to show my age. I was around in the '50s and '60s, OK? There's a story about a family in Little Mexico. A young man was going to Crozier Tech High School downtown. His mother used to make handmade tortillas with frijoles for his lunch. At school, he was so embarrassed that students would make fun of him that he would eat it and make sure nobody saw him. One day, a big Anglo football player says, "What've you got there?" And he said, "These are tacos." "Can I try it?" The young man gave him one, and the football player loved it. He said, "Have your mom make more of these, and I'll buy them from you." So, the next day, the young man brings some in and gets a couple of dollars. So, the football player takes a taco home to his family. The family then comes to our friend's house, wanting to buy some tacos. All of a sudden, that young man became popular. Everybody was eating them. That's how Mexican food—or Tex-Mex, they call it now—first got started. Now, food has really become tacos and margaritas. The first frozen margarita machine was invented here in Dallas. It now sits in the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Again, it goes back to the taste. A lot of people love the Tex-Mex food, like nachos, you know. We used to love menudo. We used to call it the "Breakfast of Champions" before Wheaties came out with that phrase. We had all kinds of food like huevos rancheros and frijoles. Let me tell you a little story about beans. We used to have beans for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It was during the polio epidemic, and my aunt always said, "You've got to eat beans. It'll keep you from getting polio." So, we ate beans because we didn't know any better, you know. And now, refried beans are so popular. Mexican



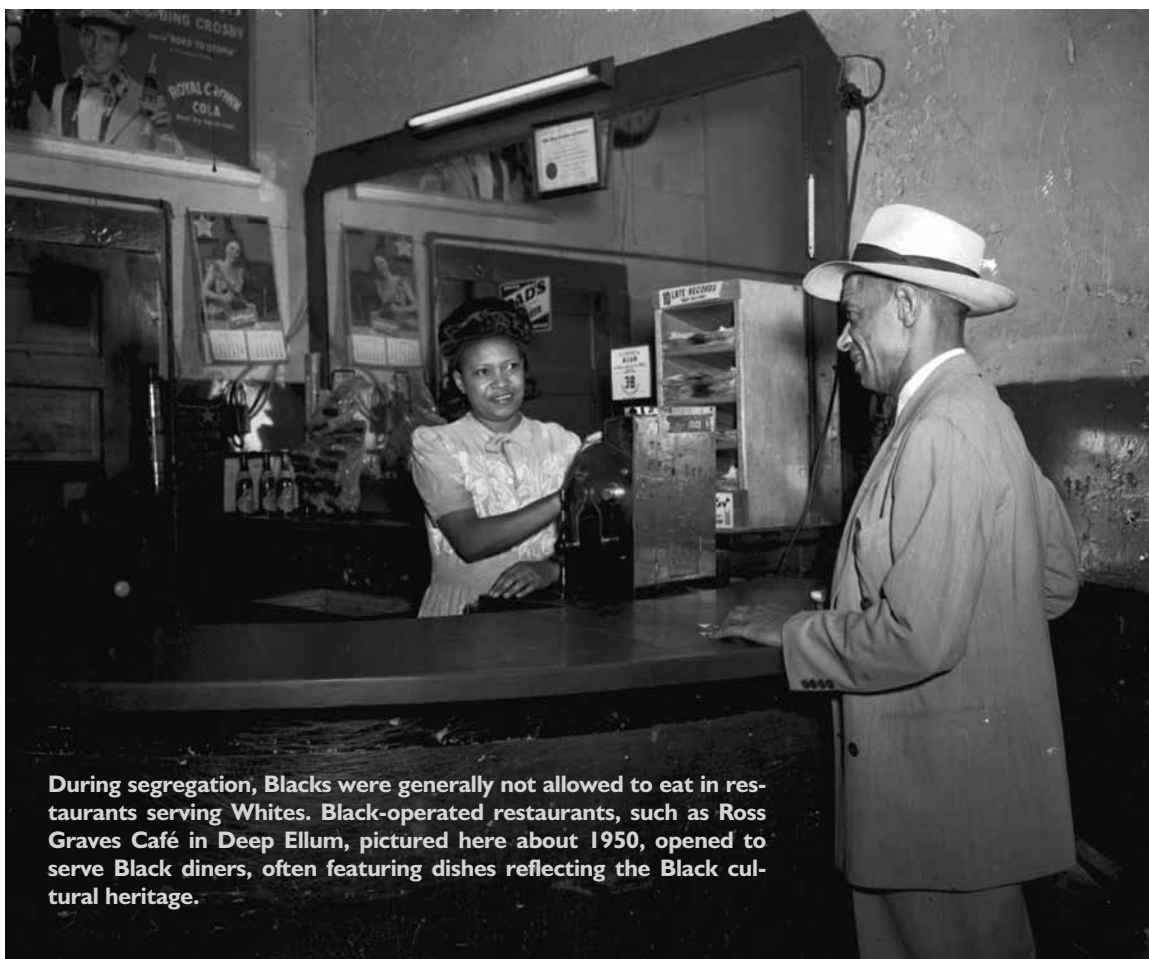
food has been around for years, and it's been embraced by everybody. So many restaurants now serve Mexican food. For example, do you know what the most popular dinner is at a place called Dunston's Steakhouse? Enchiladas! A waiter told me a lot of people come in to eat enchiladas. So, it's all mixed in there.

**BRODY:** That's a really interesting story about the tacos, and I think there are some parallels within the Asian communities as well. In the projects that I'm working on, this theme of sharing food came up a lot. The equivalent of the taco in this world is the eggroll. So, particularly with the Vietnamese refugees that I interviewed, a lot of them had grandmothers that lived in the same household and stayed busy while the kids were in school by making eggrolls and sharing them with neighbors, sponsors, and church communities. This was something that was new to most people, which they really liked and wanted more of. So, the grandmothers quickly became entrepreneurs, selling eggrolls to all the people that wanted them. It turned out to be quite a good cross-cultural exchange as well as a business opportunity.

**MITCHELL:** We've talked a lot about when other cultures or maybe restaurateurs take certain foodways and begin selling those for profit. How do the two of you feel about when those foods are sold and there isn't necessarily a history about the foods known by the people who are selling them? I'm asking because this actually happened to me a few years ago. I went to a traditional southern restaurant, and a hoecake was on the menu. If you don't know, a hoecake is like a traditional bread from within the Black diaspora. So, when I began talking about hoecakes with the person I was with, the waitress really didn't know what it was. You know, I couldn't fault her for it, but it did make me wonder how other people feel about their foods being sold for profit in restaurants when there isn't any history known about the ingredients or the foods. How do you feel about that?

**BRODY:** Well, this question of appropriation is always a little bit fraught, right? On the one hand, this idea of a bridge is really appealing with the restaurants and foods being an avenue into people understanding each other better and people appreciating cultures that are different than their own. So, on the one hand, it's appealing to have people reach across those cultural boundaries. On the other hand, the question of respect and understanding needs to go hand-in-hand with that. So, I don't really have an answer to the question, but it's coming up a lot in this project because some fancy restaurants serve these types of foods as high cuisine versus what some would characterize as the more authentic mom-and-pop shops that would never be conceived of as being fancy or upscale enough. So, it's a hard line to walk.

**GONZALES:** There's always this secret ingredient, recipe, or something that you may not want to share with people, you know. You sometimes read in the paper about one restaurant owner suing another for stealing their recipe. Take tortillas, for example. They were made at home by moms. Then, all of a sudden, some chef somewhere figures, oh yeah, I can put an egg or beans in there, and then he becomes the one that started the tortilla. It just goes on. Growing up, my favorite tortilla was the one made out of corn—masa harina, we called it. Even when I was in high school and college, every time I'd visit my grandmother, I would bring her a five-pound bag of masa harina. The next time I came, she would have some tortillas made for me. My mom did the same thing, and to this day, my wife will make them. You know, I guess people do things for money. It's all about money. If I can take something that you made and tweak it a little bit, I'm going to do it whether you like it or not, right?



During segregation, Blacks were generally not allowed to eat in restaurants serving Whites. Black-operated restaurants, such as Ross Graves Café in Deep Ellum, pictured here about 1950, opened to serve Black diners, often featuring dishes reflecting the Black cultural heritage.

**PIERCE:** It's almost like there's tension between sharing and being able to introduce people to the culture. And you know, you're exactly right. A restaurant reviewer writes from their own experience, which may or may not be appropriate at this time. I remember for many years we would call your foods "ethnic foods." Well, they're not ethnic to you. So, there's certainly been a learning curve. And then you have places like Taco Bell, which to me is a real corruption of your food and your culture.

**GONZALES:** Interestingly, I saw an article on Facebook that said Taco Bell was rated #1 in Tex-Mex food. And I thought, darn, who voted for that? I can probably count on one finger how many times I've been to Taco Bell, probably because it was the only place open late at night.

But that's what's happening nowadays. People are beginning to confuse everything. I don't hear the words "ethnic food" anymore, but I used to, you know. Believe it or not, more and more people of color are being represented. I don't want to use the word "overtake," but it'll eventually become the majority.

**PIERCE:** We're on our way to that.

**MITCHELL:** I would like to add that I do think this gives us an amazing opportunity for education. My company, Nostalgia: Black, aims to preserve Black culture. One of the ways we do that is through tourism. So, if you take my "Soul of DFW" bus tour, we love to educate about Black culture through two different ways. One is visiting historical sites. The other is foodways. It gives you an opportunity to take control of





the narrative and feed people and teach them about your community within your food. So, when you see that there's an issue with people not necessarily knowing about where a food comes from or how it originated, that gives us an amazing opportunity to take advantage of that and educate.

**PIERCE:** Who tends to come on your tours?

**MITCHELL:** That's a great question. Obviously, we've been on hiatus for almost two years now due to COVID. I really loved hosting the tour because each one is like a learning experience for me because we get a mix of people. We get all different classes, ages, and ethnic groups. I can't wait to get back to doing the tours again so I can help people learn about different restaurants that they maybe haven't heard of here in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

**PIERCE:** To digress a moment, when I worked for the food section at the paper, there was a time in the 1990s where we did a whole cover on how to eat pho and even how to pronounce it because people didn't know.

**BRODY:** Yeah, it is fascinating looking at old newspapers and magazines. I know exactly what you're talking about. There was a bus tour of "ethnic" restaurants that you could go on. It was literally billed as an "ethnic" restaurant tour that would allow you to try all these "exotic" things. But just to bring these two threads of the conversation together, I think food is different than a lot of the other arguments and conversations that people have about race and ethnicity and identity because people have, for all



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**This neighborhood grocery in Little Mexico was one of the corner stores where the family of Alberto Gonzales and other residents of the community shopped for everyday items as well as specialized foods such as tortillas.**

of history, come together to eat, right? Whether it was cavemen around the campfire or whatever, people share meals together. It's a social activity. It's a really nice, easy, and oftentimes beautiful way to be introduced to a different culture. So, I feel hopeful when we're talking about food because there's so much to learn—the education piece that you talked about and so much to learn from other peoples' stories. Yet, there's so much that people can appreciate and agree on. Like, this is delicious. Right? I really had a good time eating this. I really had a great time learning about this aspect of your culture. And I will have that with me from now on. I learned about a new thing that I like to eat that I can share with my friends. It sort of feels like a ripple effect is possible.

**PIERCE:** Let's go back into some of the history. I would like each of you to expand on the role that the corner store plays in these different communities. I know that with the Asian community, that's a little more challenging because for a long time there were more diffuse areas where people lived. They didn't all live in one small area like

the Barrio or Black neighborhoods. But to the extent that you can, tell me how the corner store anchored these communities and anchored them to their foods.

**MITCHELL:** I mentioned a little bit about the Freedman's communities and Deep Ellum specifically, just within that kind of block radius that we spoke about. That's one example. There were corner stores everywhere, obviously out of necessity and accessibility because the Black community was not able to just walk into any other corner store. Once construction of the highways came through, you had zoning and policy laws and infrastructure that really impacted people so that it was still kind of a segregated smaller section. So, again, it was out of necessity that they had these corner stores, and that corner store held a very special significance in the community. It was a place where people could come and congregate for news, get food to eat, and things like that. I think even today, it's still significant in a number of communities. In South Dallas, for example, corner stores are still very popular.



**TajMahal Imports specializes in Indian groceries and spices, serving as a gathering place for Asian immigrants, who can meet there to exchange news and information while they shop for ingredients with which to prepare traditional meals.**

You can go in and pay bills and get some small grocery items. They have a grill, so you can get food to go. There are hard-to-find grocery items that are very specific within the Black community, such as a drink called Nehi Peach that is highly popular. You can get things like that at corner stores in South Dallas today. And so, I think it still holds a very special significance even though we obviously can venture out and go to different stores. We have vehicles and can access highways to get where we want to go. But it still holds a very special place in the heart of the communities there.

**GONZALES:** You know, when we were growing up in Little Mexico, there were some corner stores. One in particular across from the housing project where I grew up was called La Villita. It was very unique in the sense that, back then, my mom would go buy stuff and sign for it. On Fridays, my dad's payday, he would go in and pay because back then a man's word was a handshake. I remember stopping by to get some gum. The owner would see me, and he'd write it down, you know. He never saw the one I put in my pocket before that! So, my dad would go down the list, pay for everything, and he'd ask

me, "Did you go by and get some gum?" "Yeah, but I didn't think he saw me." "Well, he did." The corner stores were always there. We used to go buy bread, milk, and other things because there were really no big grocery stores close by. The nearest one was Safeway, and it was on the corner of Fairmount and Maple, which was on the outskirts of Little Mexico. We would only go there maybe once a month. The majority of the time, when we needed something fast, we would go to the little stores. We had pharmacies, doctors, and even the funeral home in the neighborhood there. So, it was really important. There were several little stores like that. There was one, Nicolas Store, close to St. Ann's Catholic School. Now, it was interesting. After school, we'd be walking home and all try to go into the store to buy something. But he would stop us at the door and say, "Wait a minute. One at a time." It never dawned on us. I thought, you know, he was giving us special attention, but it was because he thought we were all going to gang up in there and start picking things up. That's the way he ran his business, you know. One block down was the barbershop. The man would cut our hair. We didn't have money, but when my dad went to get his hair cut, the barber would say, "Oh, Gonzales.

On this day, I cut your son's hair." My dad said, "OK. No wonder I saw him the other day with short hair." He'd pay, you know. It was that kind of relationship between the corner stores and the community.

**BRODY:** That's really interesting. Kim, you're right, within the Asian community, it wasn't exactly a corner store, but literally people were driving every weekend almost like an appointment kind of thing where they would go, not just because they needed to get groceries for the week but also because they were going to see other people there and exchange information. I can remember one whole wall of the store was what they called the "networking wall." And before the internet, if you needed a babysitter or were a babysitter or needed help finding an insurance company or had an insurance company, those types of things could be posted on that. It was one whole wall. And from my interviews, it sounds like it was particularly helpful for newcomers, people who were coming in and even later on in the 1990s on H-1B visas. During the buildup to Y2K, there were a lot of Indian H-1B visas issued for people in the tech industry. And so, during that time period, people wanted to hit the ground running and get, you know, apartments and childcare and insurance and all those things. So, that's where people would go to get trusted information. It was a bustling atmosphere every weekend because people were coming not just to get their food but to exchange information and socialize. There was a little fast food area in the corner of the grocery store where they sold samosas and snack food. People would bring their families, have fresh squeezed juice and things like that, and sort of spend several hours just hanging out at the store. So, there was that element as well, even though people had driven in.

**PIERCE:** Has there been an increase in the kinds of ingredients that makes these foods really good? I'm thinking of the import side, and I'm also thinking about community gardens.

**GONZALES:** Let me tell you something. My wife is a master gardener, and she volunteers putting together community gardens. One of her pet projects right now is at Mountainview College where they have a community garden. She has brought a lot of vegetables home to me. Now, I've got to tell you, when I first started dating her and we'd go out to eat, the first thing I'd usually reach for was the salt. The first time we went out, she didn't say anything. The next time we went out, she stopped me and said, "Salt is not good for you. If you come to my house, you won't find any salt." And to this day, I don't use salt anymore. She is really into community gardens and vegetables, which is where we need to start going more and more.

**PIERCE:** Now, does she grow vegetables specific to your heritage?

**GONZALES:** Just everything, you know. My daughter started my little granddaughter eating vegetables. Now, that's all she eats. We started teaching them about healthy eating at a young age. I'm going to be seventy-five in a couple of days, and I don't know how much longer I'm going to be around. But I want to live as long as I can, and I want my kids to live longer. We've been to Bonton Farms, and it's fantastic. I live in beautiful Oak Cliff by choice and not out of necessity, but it's a food desert. There are not many grocery stores out there. So, we need to have some type of gardening that's better for people because, from the Hispanic point of view, we have the highest





rate of diabetes and the highest rate of COVID deaths because of conditions that we have. We ate stuff we shouldn't have eaten growing up. You know, I always blame my mom. As she was getting older, she used to say, "You're putting on too much weight." "Yes, mom, and guess who put it there?" And she said, "No, don't you do that. Don't you blame me." That's what we need to teach our kids nowadays. There's better food to eat.

**MITCHELL:** I also grew up in a community that was largely urban-based, I guess you would say. So, we had a lot of gardening in our home. I grew up with a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables, and I was spoiled in that way. But moving here to the metroplex, you know, you mentioned a little bit about food deserts and food swamp communities. You have a plethora of unhealthy food options, which are food swamps, with lots of fried food places, fast food restaurants, and things like that. And then there are little to no grocery stores that offer viable food options, which are the food desert communities. I think there's not enough emphasis on the fact that we can use growing gardens as a way to sustain and offer healthy ways of living. I think there are lots of places that are doing that to raise awareness about it. We definitely place a lot of blame sometimes on the communities themselves, but that's hard to do when you don't have any other options near you. I mentioned the corner stores, for example. They take on a lot of responsibility because when there aren't any grocery stores nearby and when the options are fast food restaurants or a corner store, if you don't have transportation to get to those places, you have to eat what's readily available to you. So, by offering gardening and sustainable living, that gives people the chance to not only

save money but feed themselves and be healthier. So, that's a really great topic of conversation.

**PIERCE:** Isn't that almost getting back to what these communities were doing originally? Because they didn't come here and just start eating macaroni and cheese and drinking soft drinks.

**MITCHELL:** You're right. Those were just for special occasions. Now, because they're so readily available, we just eat those things all the time. We're spoiled in that sense. You have to know how to temper it a little bit, you know. It would be really fun and easy for me to fall into something like that if I wanted to, but luckily, you know, it wasn't how I was raised. I was raised with people that gardened in my family that showed me the proper ways to prepare those foods. And so, I think that's really important. But I could kill a big bowl of macaroni and cheese without a second thought!

**BRODY:** It's kind of a cool thing to jump in on the garden question. When the Vietnamese refugees first came to Dallas in 1975, that area in East Dallas was called Little Asia. That area is still there, and there are still some of the original restaurants. But part of that area was a community garden. The Vietnamese refugees who were in all the volunteer organizations and had their apartments and were settling people in that area within walking distance, they established this little piece of land that's still there as a garden where the refugees could grow the vegetables that would, you know, be familiar to them and helpful in cooking and feeding their families and also save money by not having to purchase other vegetables in the grocery stores. That piece of land was very much

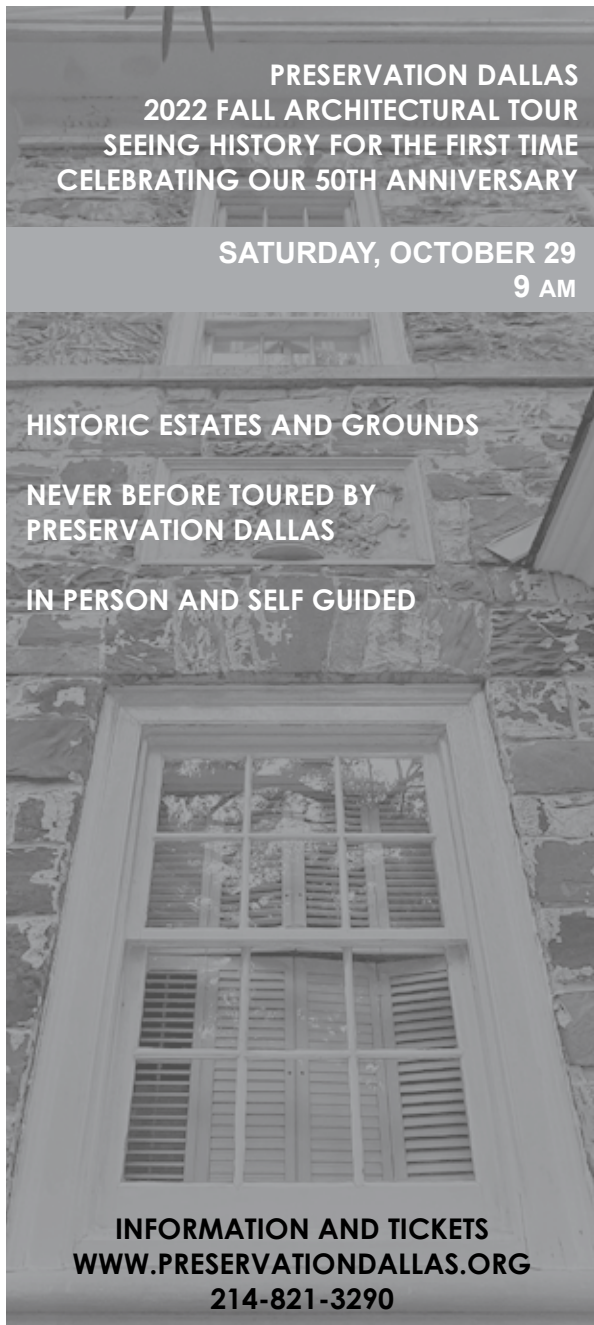
used by the Vietnamese refugees, and then in subsequent waves, as the Vietnamese refugees moved out of that particular area, refugees from other countries and other parts of the world have continued to use that garden. It's still there and being used but with different vegetables.

**PIERCE:** Is there anything else as we look at identity, community, and creating a sense of home in North Texas?

**GONZALES:** I would like to add that we can never and should never forget the older generations. I tell my wife that the older I get, the more I realize what the Greatest Generation did for us, whether they were black, white, or brown. The Greatest Generation really made America great. And in studying my genealogy and visiting with other people who have done their genealogy, we find out that—black, white, or brown—our families all went through the same thing. We're all the same. You know, I'm going to say something, and I hope I don't offend anybody. I was in the funeral business for many years, and I prepared a lot of bodies. And you know what we all had in common? Every time I made an incision, what color came out? Red. We're all the same. And that's how we need to start thinking.

**MITCHELL:** That's a wonderful note to end on.

**PIERCE:** We will keep building those bridges with food, and we'll work on refining our understanding. This has been an exhilarating panel. I really appreciate all of you. **L**



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## Dallas Legends: Fact and Fiction

**Saturday, January 28, 2023**

**Registration: 8:00 A.M.**

**Conference: 9:00 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.**

### Location

Dallas History & Archives Division  
Dallas Public Library  
7th Floor, J. Erik Jonsson Central Library  
1515 Young Street, Dallas, TX 75201



### Conference Presenters (in alphabetical order)

**Samantha Dodd**, *“Louise Ballerstadt Raggio: Legendary Lady of the Law”*

**Jack Duncan**, *“Dock Rowen: Legendary Black Entrepreneur”*

**Frank Jackson**, *“Tex Avery: Cartoonist, Animator, Director”*

**Teresa Judd**, *“The Lakewood Rats: Deconstructing the Myth”*

### Panel discussion:

*“The Myths of the DFW Rivalry,”* featuring historians

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Morning refreshments will be included in the registration fee of \$40. Patrons (\$100) will be invited to a reception with the speakers on Thursday evening, January 26, 2022. Online registration will be available in late December. For more information, contact Conference Coordinator Dealey Campbell [LegaciesDHC@gmail.com](mailto:LegaciesDHC@gmail.com).



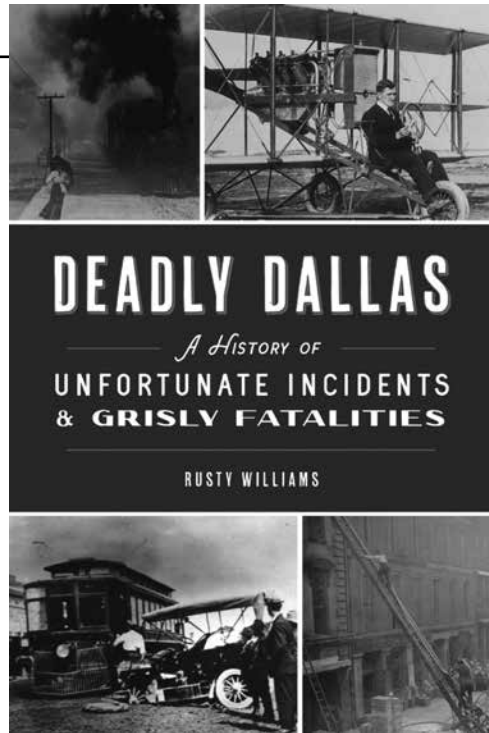
## BOOK REVIEWS

**Rusty Williams, *Deadly Dallas: A History of Unfortunate Incidents & Grisly Fatalities* (Charleston: The History Press, 2021, 139 pp., \$21.99).**

Dallas has grown over the centuries since its humble beginnings, and with that growth, like America itself, have arisen new technologies that change the way we live our lives. Whether it's electric streetcars, the advent of the automobile, natural gas lighting, etc., there are risks associated with any new technology. As society adapts to accommodate new, "modern conveniences," safety protocols often come only after the destruction or death that too often followed the early adoption of a technology.

This phenomenon is at the heart of Rusty Williams's examination of accidental deaths in Dallas at the turn of the twentieth century in *Deadly Dallas: A History of Unfortunate Incidents & Grisly Fatalities*. Born out of presentations given by Williams at the Annual *Legacies* Dallas History Conferences in 2018 and 2020 (subsequently published in *Legacies*), Williams has expanded his study into a new book, *Deadly Dallas*, consisting of eight chapters, each focusing on a specific topic that led to the death of Dallasites: traffic, weather, explosions, entertainment, airships, disease, fire, and calamities.

The incidents discussed in the book come from cited primary sources, largely from newspaper accounts published in the *Dallas Herald* and *The Dallas Morning News*, but also city directories, insurance maps, historic photographs, and more. Despite being written at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when many archives were closed for in-person research, Williams was still able to utilize remote resources from institutions including the Dallas Public Library, the digital collections of Southern Methodist University Libraries, the University of North Texas' Portal to Texas History, the Library of Congress



Chronicling America, and the HathiTrust Digital Library.

By utilizing contemporary newspaper coverage of the time, Williams gives the reader a window into the reactions and feelings felt by those around when these tragedies occurred. Runaway horses caused many deaths up through 1906 in Dallas, like one incident around 1887 when a horse pulling a buggy was spooked, causing what newspapers at the time described as follows: "an unmanageable horse, pitched in fearful speed through one of our principal driving avenues, maimed three men, two being seriously injured, with death sitting at the bedside of the third." From describing the brutal death of a young boy in 1902 run over by a streetcar to the 1914 burning death of 17-year-old Vesta Boatner, who caught herself on fire while "doing the wash" as kerosene set most of her body aflame, dying in hospital not long after, Williams treats these accounts with a respectful, yet academic eye.

He provides context as to common standards of living at the time and shows how it is often only through hindsight that we learn to better protect ourselves from the myriad hazards we have lived with in the past.

Perhaps the most chilling incident in the book is the explosion that didn't happen. In 1888, two ten-gallon glass bottles of nitroglycerine were lowered into a well dig site in City Park during a water shortage, but they failed to explode after two weeks of trying, so they were left inside the hole and covered. They are presumably still underground in what is now Old City Park. Williams's book makes the reader wonder what hazards are lurking around Dallas today, hazards that residents of the next century may ponder with alarm that we didn't know to protect ourselves against.

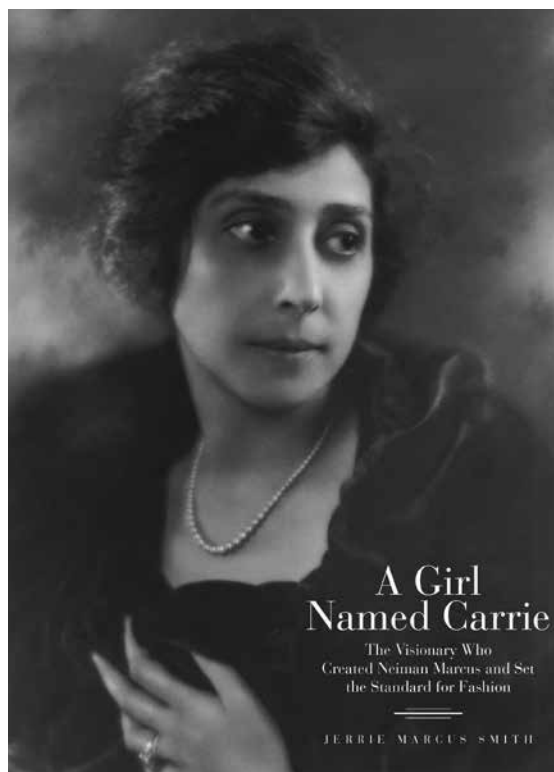
—Brandon Murray  
Dallas Public Library

**Jerrie Marcus Smith, *A Girl Named Carrie* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2022, 184 pp., \$34.95)**

On Tuesday, September 10, 1907, a new store named Neiman Marcus opened for business in Dallas, Texas. Owners Al Neiman, Herbert Marcus, and Carrie Marcus Neiman were in their twenties—29, 27, and 24 years old, respectively. All had some previous experience in retailing. Their merchandise would be, they announced in the local press, truly fine and fashionable ready-made clothing for women. However safe and ordinary such plans may seem today, in 1907 this was a risky venture, a gamble. Upper- and middle-class ladies had their dresses, suits, and formal gowns made by highly skilled dressmakers who worked in the larger clothing stores, their own shops, or their homes. No one could be sure such customers would buy ready-made clothing.

The three young entrepreneurs in Dallas also faced another, more immediate risk which, at the time, they likely took for granted. Al Neiman and Herbert Marcus acquired the money for the new venture by selling their former business of directing sales events for various companies. Offered \$25,000 in cash or in Coca-Cola stock, they chose the money instead of the risk and also accepted small investments from relatives. Coca-Cola was a new product from a new company. No one knew whether it would succeed.

One of the most important, if not the most crucial, decisions had to be made early on, the division of labor among the three partners. Herbert and Al handled the financial decisions and searched out a good location for the store, but Carrie accepted responsibility for the heart of the venture. It was she who went to New York to buy their merchandise, what Neiman Marcus would have to offer customers. Relying on her personal tastes, her sense of style and



value, Carrie spent \$17,000—which, in 2022, would be approximately \$600,000.00. The rest, as they say, is history, and for Neiman Marcus, much of that history relied on Mrs. Neiman’s work. She created the store’s reputation—indeed, its mystique—for quality of merchandise and concern for customer satisfaction.

Jerrie Marcus Smith’s *A Girl Named Carrie* gives us the story of the founding and early years of Neiman Marcus in a way that, for all its charm, is also somewhat frustrating. We get only a vague sense of Mrs. Neiman’s many years of work with the store or with individual customers, only repeated assurances of her superior sense of style and taste for quality. Personal memories of descendants of former employees or customers could give examples of her handling of difficult personalities or unexpected outcomes, such as the drama of, say, a wedding gown that arrived later than expected. Such stories would be very difficult to find, although the “society” pages of the local newspapers often included reports of social events.

The narrative of *A Girl Named Carrie* is very well written, very enjoyable. In essence, the book is more family memoir than history or even biography. However important pictures are for such a story, the sheer number of this book’s photographs is almost overwhelming. More serious, the numerous pictures have no captions. Instead, they are identified elsewhere, even two, three, or four pages away. Readers who want to know, as they read, who those people or where those places were, must do a lot of flipping back and forth. The book itself is handsome and a fine contribution to Dallas history. But to call a woman so capable—brilliant, really—and distinguished “a girl” is to classify her with children and, however inadvertently, to deny her the full respect she so well deserves.

—Elizabeth York Enstam

## Other Review Copies Received

Steven R. Butler, *A Sesquicentennial History of Richardson, Texas, Volume One: Rural Roots, 1841-1924* (Richardson, TX: Poor Scholar Publications, 2022)

James Haley, *Passionate Nation: The Epic History of Texas* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, paperback reprinting of 2006 edition with new preface, 2022, 672 pp., \$24.95)

George Keaton Jr. and Judith Segura, editors, *Our Stories: Black Families in Early Dallas* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2022, 319 pp., \$39.95)

Elizabeth Whitlow, *Identified with Texas: The Lives of Governor Elisha Marshall Pease and Lucadia Niles Pease* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2022, 432 pp. \$45 cloth)



## PRESERVATION PARK CITIES

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## PHOTO CREDITS

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Don Baynham: pp. 9 (right), 10 (right), 12 (top and bottom)

Steven Butler: p. 30 (left)

Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library: pp. 6, 8, 31, 50

Dallas Municipal Archives: pp. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42

Fort Worth Star-Telegram collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries:  
pp. 2, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26

Al Martinez: p. 52

Mark Rice: Front and back covers, pp. 5, 7, 9 (left), 10 (left), 13 (top and bottom), 58 64

Pramad and Renuka Shah: p. 53



## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Don Baynham** retired from Eastfield College, after a 45-year career. He has served as Chairman of the Dallas Historical Society, Dallas Heritage Village at Old City Park, and the Dallas County Historical Commission. He is a former Trustee of the Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza, a current board member of the Old Red Museum of Dallas County History and Culture, and a Life Trustee of the Dallas County Heritage Society.



**Stephen Fagin** is Curator of The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza. He provides content expertise in the development, growth, research and interpretation of the Museum's collections, exhibits and programs, while also directing the institution's ongoing Oral History Project. Fagin is the author of *Assassination and Commemoration: JFK, Dallas, and The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza* (2013), as well as several magazine and journal articles. Fagin holds a BA in history and English from Southern Methodist University and an MA in museum studies from the University of Oklahoma.



**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 and entries for the Handbook of Texas Online. He has been a frequent contributor to *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas*.



**Kristi Nedderman** is the Assistant City Archivist for the City of Dallas, Texas. Her work entails not only processing and protecting the archival collections related to the city's governmental history but also documenting departmental histories and conducting outreach activities to citizens and peer institutions. Besides creating the WRR Centennial exhibits and articles, other projects with the Municipal Archives include creating a website showing the city's change to a more representative government, giving talks on Dallas history topics to local groups, and writing articles for the Handbook of Texas Online. She previously worked as an archivist at Arkansas State University and the George W. Bush Presidential Library.



**John H. Slate** is City Archivist for the City of Dallas, where he has been responsible for historic city government records in the Dallas Municipal Archives since 2000. He is a member of the Academy of Certified Archivists and possesses a B.S. and a Master's degree in Library and Information Science from UT Austin. He has written numerous articles on archives, photography, music, and Texas history and is the author or co-author of four Arcadia *Images of America* series books.

### Book Reviewers

**Elizabeth York Enstam** earned her Ph.D. from Duke. She taught at several Dallas area universities and published widely, especially in the field of women's history. Her book *Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920*, won both the Tullis and Carpenter awards from the Texas State Historical Association as the best book published in 1998, as well as the Fehrenbach Award from the Texas Historical Commission. She was a longtime member of the *Legacies* Editorial Advisory Board. . . . **Brandon Murray** is a Certified Archivist working at the Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library. Born in El Paso, but raised in Fort Worth, Texas, he has a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University of Texas at Arlington, and a Masters of Library Information Science degree from the University of North Texas. His article, "Do It For Pappy: The Legacy of Pappy's Showland and C.A. 'Pappy' Dolsen," was published in the spring 2022 issue of *Legacies*.

# Dallas THEN & NOW

## Magnolia Service Station



As the 1920s dawned, Dallas streets were being transformed by an explosion in automobile traffic. The World War I years had spurred innovation and change and demonstrated the efficiency of motorized transportation. Once ubiquitous, horses and buggies were now disappearing from local roads. At the jumbled intersection of Commerce, Jackson, and Preston Streets, an area known as the Five Points due to its unique confluence of three major streets, a large concrete watering trough still stood as a reminder of the days when horses ruled the local thoroughfares.

Magnolia Petroleum was one of the pioneering companies providing gasoline and oil products to automobile owners. Service stations and car dealerships quickly sprang up along downtown streets. At the edge of the Five Points intersection, the Magnolia Oil Company erected a handsome and costly service station in 1920. Designed by the renowned architectural firm of Lang and Witchell, the highly-detailed, triangular structure has endured for more than a century. Once its original purpose became unfeasible, the attractive building was used as the highly visible studios of KLIF radio during the 1960s and '70s and the offices of the **Dallas Observer** in later years. Today, the former Magnolia station houses National Anthem, an upscale restaurant and bar.

—Mark Rice



Interior View of Reading Room,  
Carnegie Hall, Dallas, Tex.

